



**FREEDOM
IN THE
WORLD** **1997
1998**



**The Annual Survey of Political Rights
And Civil Liberties, 1997-1998**

Freedom in the World

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The findings of *Freedom in the World* and the Map of Freedom include events up to January 1, 1998.

Freedom in the World
The Annual Survey of
Political Rights & Civil Liberties
1997-1998

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Foreword

Freedom, in the World is an institutional effort by Freedom House to monitor the progress and decline of political rights and civil liberties in 191 nations and 60 related territories. These year-end reviews of freedom began in 1955, when they were called the *Balance Sheet of Freedom* and, still later, the *Annual Survey of the Progress of Freedom*. This program was expanded in the early 1970s into the *Comparative Survey of Freedom*. It has also been issued in a more developed context as a yearbook called *Freedom in the World* since 1978.

Since 1989, the *Survey* project has been a year-long effort produced by our regional experts, consultants and human rights specialists. The *Survey* derives its information from a wide range of sources. Most valued of these are the many human rights activists, journalists, editors and political figures around the world who keep us informed of the human rights situation in their countries.

The *Survey* team is grateful to the considerable advice and input of our *Survey* of Freedom Advisory Board, consisting of Prof. David Becker, Prof. Daniel Brumberg, Dr. Larry Diamond, Prof. Charles Gati, Prof. Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, Dr. Seymour Martin Lipset, Prof. Alexander Motyl, Dr. Joshua Muravchik, Dr. Daniel Pipes, Prof. Robert Scalapino, and Prof. Arthur Waldron.

Throughout the year, Freedom House personnel regularly conduct fact-finding missions to gain more in-depth knowledge of the vast political transformations affecting our world. During these investigations, we meet a cross-section of political parties and associations, human rights monitors, religious figures, representatives of both the private sector and trade union movement, academics and journalists.

During the past year, Freedom House staff traveled to Albania, Austria, Bangladesh, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Cuba, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Hungary, India, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Mexico, Nepal, Pakistan, Peru, Romania, Russia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Tanzania, Uganda, and Ukraine. The *Survey* project team also consults a vast array of published source materials, ranging from the reports of other human rights organizations to often rare, regional newspapers and magazines.

This year's *Survey* team includes project coordinator Adrian Karatnycky, Martin Edwin Andersen, Charles Graybow, Kristen Guida, Marshall Harris, Thomas R. Lansner, Arch Puddington, Leonard R. Sussman, and George Zarycky. The general editor of *Freedom in the World* is Roger Kaplan. The production coordinator is Tara Kelly. This year's research assistants were Dagmara Dominczyk, Steven Graham, Fazela Kapadia, Tulip Lim, Katerina Semyonova, Lindsay Stein and Naana Winful.

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The Comparative Survey of Freedom 1997-1998

Freedom in the "Democratic Age"

Adrian Karatnycky

At the start of 1998, there were 81 Free countries in which basic civil liberties and political rights are respected, the largest number on record and a gain of two from last year. Forty-two percent of the countries observe a high degree of political and economic freedom and respect basic civil liberties. There were 57 countries (30 percent of the world total) that were Partly Free, with limited political rights and civil liberties, often in a context of corruption, weak rule of law, ethnic strife or civil war. This represented a drop of two. And there were 53 countries (28 percent) that were Not Free with basic rights suppressed and civil liberties denied.

THE GLOBAL TREND

In all, 1.266 billion people (22 percent of the world's population) live in Free societies, 2.282 billion (39 percent) live in countries that are Partly Free, and 2.285 billion (39 percent) live in Not Free countries.

The Freedom House Survey of Freedom found that at the start of 1998 there were 117 electoral democracies, representing over 61 percent of the world's countries. In all, 55 percent of the world's population lived under democratically elected leaders. Yet despite the fact that electoral democracy was the world's predominant form of government, major violations of human rights and civil liberties characterize the state of affairs in the vast majority of countries. While freedom made modest gains throughout 1997, there was growing evidence that the wave of democratization that began in the 1970s may have crested and may be receding, as democratically elected governments fell in **Sierra Leone** and **Congo (Brazzaville)**.

Honduras and **El Salvador** were new entrants into the ranks of Free countries. Honduras registered significant progress in reforming and strengthening civilian control of the country's security structures and by reducing the size and influence of the military in political life. El Salvador's improved status was the result of openly contested, free and fair national legislative and municipal elections. Improvements, too, in rule of law and a better record in the punishment of officials involved in major human rights violations also contributed to Honduras's improvement. Additionally, significant progress in **Liberia** and **Azerbaijan** resulted in both countries exiting from the ranks of the Not Free to the ranks of the Partly Free. Liberia's progress resulted

Freedom in the World—1997

The population of the world this year is estimated at 5,771.0 million persons, who reside in 191 sovereign states and 59 related territories—a total of 250 entities. The level of political rights and civil liberties as shown comparatively by the Freedom House Survey is:

Free: 1,266.0 million (21.71 percent of the world's population) live in 81 of the states and in 44 of the related territories.

Partly Free: 2,281.9 million (39.12 percent of the world's population) live in 57 of the states and 4 of the related territories.

Not Free: 2,284.6 million (39.17 percent of the world's population) live in 53 of the states and 11 of the related territories.

A Record of the Survey (population in millions)

SURVEY DATE	FREE	PARTLY FREE	NOT FREE	WORLD POPULATION
January '83	1,665.1 (36.32%)	918.8 (20.04%)	2,000.2 (43.64%)	4,584.1
January '85	1,671.4 (34.85%)	1,117.4 (23.30%)	2,007.0 (41.85%)	4,795.8
January '87	1,842.5 (37.10%)	1,171.5 (23.60%)	1,949.9 (39.30%)	4,963.9
January '89	1,992.8 (38.86%)	1,027.9 (20.05%)	2,107.3 (41.09%)	5,128.0
January '90	2,034.4 (38.87%)	1,143.7 (21.85%)	2,055.9 (39.28%)	5,234.0
Januaiy '91*	2,088.2 (39.23%)	1,485.7 (27.91%)	1,748.7 (32.86%)	5,322.6
January '92	1,359.3 (25.29%)	2,306.6 (42.92%)	1,708.2 (31.79%)	5,374.2
Januaiy '93	1,352.2 (24.83%)	2,403.3 (44.11%)	1,690.4 (31.06%)	5,446.0
January '94	1,046.2 (19.00%)	2,224.4 (40.41%)	2,234.6 (40.59%)	5,505.2
January '95	1,119.7 (19.97%)	2,243.4 (40.01%)	2,243.9 (40.02%)	5,607.0
Januaiy '96	1,114.5 (19.55%)	2,365.8 (41.49%)	2,221.2 (38.96%)	5,701.5
Januaiy '97	1,250.3 (21.67%)	2,260.1 (39.16%)	2,260.6 (39.17%)	5,771.0
Januaiy '98	1,266.0 (21.71%)	2,281.9 (39.12%)	2,284.6 (39.17%)	5,832.5

*The large shift in the population figure between 1991 and 1992 is due to India's change from Free to Partly Free.

from the holding of what international observers judged to be a generally free and fair election. Azerbaijan's progress included the return of its deposed former president, Abulfaz Elchibey, and the emergence of a more vibrant civic life.

But these gains were offset by disturbing developments in Africa, where two countries, **Congo (Brazzaville)** and **Sierra Leone**, registered significant regression in freedom and left the ranks of Partly Free countries and are now Not Free.

Modest improvements in freedom were registered in nine countries—**Bolivia**, where a free and fair election was conducted in June; **Cote D'Ivoire**, where non-governmental civic activism is on the rise; **Georgia**, where greater institutional stability and pluralism developed in a climate free of civil strife and ethnic warfare; **Ghana**, where there were signs of a more vigorous press, more active non-governmental organizations and more dynamic political life; **Kenya**, where small improvements in political rights were registered as a result of the legalization of opposition parties; **Latvia**, where there was progress in the development of civil society, a more financially viable independent media and a dynamic multiparty system; **Romania**, where a reform government deepened the process of economic and political liberalization amid a more vibrant civil society; **Sri Lanka**, where civilian control was restored in areas formerly under the rule of separatist Tamil rebels; and **Tajikistan**, where a civil war abated.

Erosion of freedoms occurred in seven countries and in one autonomous region: **Brazil**, where violence against the country's small indigenous Indian community was on the rise amid a slowing of efforts to demarcate Indian lands; **Cambodia**, where a coup ended power sharing and completed the consolidation of power by Hun Sen's

Cambodian People's Party; the **Comoros**, where rising tensions and civil unrest led to a declaration of a state of emergency; **Mali**, which saw democratic elections marred by a low voter turnout, opposition boycotts, and administrative incompetence; **Micronesia**, where press inquiry was stifled; **Peru**, where the government exerted growing pressure on the media and on the judiciary; and **Singapore**, whose dominant party swept elections after significant pressure on the free choice of voters and used the judiciary to harass opposition politicians. Moreover, the **Hong Kong Autonomous Region** of the People's Republic of China saw an erosion in representative governance after its hand-over to the jurisdiction of Beijing.

The Global Trend

	Free	Partly Free	Not Free
1988	58	58	51
1998	81	57	53
1997	79	59	53

Tracking Democracy

	Number of Democracies
1988	66
1993	99
1998	117

THE MOST REPRESSIVE

Sixteen countries were judged to be the world's most repressive and have received Freedom House's lowest rating. In these states basic political rights and civil liberties are nonexistent, there is no free press, and independent civic life is suppressed. The most repressive countries, the "world's worst" in terms of freedom are **Iraq, North Korea, Cuba and Sudan**. Others states among the "world's worst" are **Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, Burundi, China, Equatorial Guinea, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Syria, Turkmenistan and Vietnam**. Of the 16 most repressive societies four are one-party Marxist-Leninist states. **Tajikistan**, which saw an end to much of its civil strife, exited the ranks of the world's worst, although it remains Not Free.

FREEDOM'S GAINS AND LOSSES

While there were few dramatic shifts in favor or away from democratic rule this year, there were significant events in the ebb and flow of freedom.

The five greatest gains for freedom of 1997 were:

- 1) Mexico's free and fair legislative elections: Mexico's elections ended more than seventy years of uninterrupted rule by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and offered the promise that the country would join the ranks of the world's democracies;
- 2) Iran's presidential election: Despite nearly 20 years of radical fundamentalist indoctrination, Iran's voters overwhelmingly elected as President Muhammad Khatami, the only candidate, who—despite anti-US and anti-Israel rhetoric—spoke favorably about democracy and greater openness;
- 3) NATO's decision to expand: The Atlantic Alliance's offer of membership to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic strengthens the sense of security in these new democracies and sends a signal to all democratic reform forces in East-Central Europe that the Western community of nations is open to their political and military integration. NATO's decision was paralleled by the European Union's declaration that it intends to begin membership talks with several Central and East European democracies;

4) "Asian values" rebuffed: The economic and ecological crises that have befallen Indonesia and Malaysia, two of East Asia's authoritarian tigers, took the steam out of their claims that restrictions on personal liberty are the engines for economic growth and social prosperity;

5) Balkan gains: Romania and Bulgaria had lagged behind post-Communist East-Central Europe. Both countries made major strides forward in 1997 under the leadership of free-market reformist parties led by politicians with strong democratic convictions.

The year's greatest setbacks for freedom were:

1) Serbian ultra-nationalism: The dramatic surge in the popularity of the Serbian Radical Party and its extremist leader Vojislav Seselj represents a serious obstacle in the search for Balkan peace and reconciliation;

2) Growing pessimism about democracy in the West: At a moment when democratic values are spreading to most parts of the world, critics on the right and left are suggesting—against all evidence—that democracy may not be desirable;

3) Hong Kong's transfer to the People's Republic of China: While inevitable, the transfer of Hong Kong to Beijing's jurisdiction nevertheless saw the immediate introduction of restrictions in voting rights for the autonomous region's population;

4) Iraq's defiance: Saddam's successful stare-down of the Gulf War alliance points to a troubling erosion of the democratic world's consensus on dealing with rogue states;

5) Setbacks in Africa: 1997 was not a good year for Africa, with major setbacks in Sierra Leone, Congo (Brazzaville) and the worrisome record of the Democratic Republic of Congo's President Laurent Kabila.

REGIONAL VARIATIONS

Free societies and electoral democracies can be found in all parts of the world and across a wide expanse of cultures. Democratic governments can be found in prosperous societies and in less developed countries confronting the challenges of massive poverty. Still, there are important regional variations in the degree to which freedom has made inroads in different parts of the world. At the end of 1997, democracy and freedom are the dominant trends in the Americas, in Western Europe, in East-Central Europe and the Asia/Pacific region. In the twelve non-Baltic countries of the former USSR, the picture is decidedly more mixed, and there are no Free countries. In Af-

The 16 Worst Rated Countries

Afghanistan
Bhutan
Burma
Burundi
China
Cuba
Equatorial Guinea
Iraq
Korea, North
Libya
Saudi Arabia
Somalia
Sudan
Syria
Turkmenistan
Vietnam

The 5 Worst Rated Related Territories

East Timor (Indonesia)
Kashmir (India)
Kosovo (Yugoslavia)
Tibet (China)
West Papua (Indonesia)

rica, Free societies and democracies are a distinct minority of states. And in the Arab world, there are no democracies or Free countries.

Western Europe remains the most democratic and free part of the world. All 24 West European countries are electoral democracies and are rated free.

Among the post-Communist countries of **East-Central Europe** and the **former USSR**, 19 are electoral democracies. Nine of the region's countries are Free, 12 are Partly Free, and six are Not Free. With the exception of the Baltic states, no former Soviet republic is Free, six are Partly Free and six are Not Free. The country that made the greatest progress in the last year toward the liberalization of its democratic and civic institutions was Georgia, a republic that had been ravaged by civil war and inter-ethnic conflict. Azerbaijan, which edged gradually toward limited freedom and joined the ranks of the Partly Free, remains a repressive state dominated by President Heidar Aliyev. Problems of rampant corruption dealt setbacks to political and economic progress in Ukraine and Russia. And Belarus, under the virtual one-man tyranny of authoritarian President Aleksandr Lukashenka, saw the tightening of freedom with the closing down of the country's only independent daily and intimidation of opposition political leaders and civic activists.

Among the 35 countries of the **Americas**, 31 are electoral democracies. The exceptions are Antigua, Cuba, Peru and Mexico. Mexico, which saw successful free and fair parliamentary elections must await similarly open elections for president to join the ranks of the region's electoral democracies. Twenty-two of the countries in the Americas are Free, 12 are Partly Free, and Cuba is the region's only Not Free country.

In the **Asia/Pacific** region, despite the arguments advanced by proponents of authoritarian "Asian values," 24 of the region's 38 countries (63 percent) are electoral democracies. Sixteen Asian countries (42 percent) are Free, 11 (29 percent) Partly Free, and 11 (29 percent) are Not Free.

In **Africa**, which is the world's most volatile region, democracies are weak and under attack. Seventeen countries, representing less than a third of the region's 53 states are electoral democracies. And only nine African states (17 percent) are Free; 19 African states (36 percent) are Partly Free; and 25 (47 percent) are Not Free. Moreover, amid persistent poverty and inter-ethnic tensions, the ideology of the "big man" is again reemerging unchallenged in parts of the region. The toppling of new democracies in Sierra Leone and Congo (Brazzaville) reflects this trend. Regrettably, the collapse of President Mobutu Sese Seko's dictatorship in Zaire, renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo, resulted in no improvement in civil liberties as authoritarian militaristic rule was reasserted under Laurent Kabila.

In the **Middle East**, the roots of democracy and freedom are weakest. In this region, there is only one Free country, Israel, there are three Partly Free countries—Turkey, Jordan and Kuwait—and ten countries that are Not Free. The region's two electoral democracies are Israel and Turkey.

ELECTORAL DEMOCRACIES

In addition to examining the state of freedom— i.e., the basic infrastructure of rule of law, civil society, open political processes, free elections, press freedoms, freedom of association, protections of the rights of women and minorities and economic freedom—Freedom House also tracks the ebb and flow of electoral democracies. We define electoral democracies as countries in which there are reasonably free and fair elec-

tions characterized by significant choices for voters in a context of free political organization, reasonable access to the media and secret ballot elections. In 1997 there were 117 such electoral democracies, a net drop of one from 1996 and the same number as at the end of 1995, suggesting that the decade's dramatic surge in the number electoral democracies may be over.

Two countries exited the ranks of electoral democracies: **Congo (Brazzaville)**, where a coup led by the country's former Marxist ruler toppled a democratically elected government and **Sierra Leone**, where an elected president and parliament were toppled by the military in May 1997. One country—**Liberia**—became an electoral democracy in July 1997.

While electoral democracies allow for a political space to emerge for competing political interests and hold open the promise for greater freedom and respect for human rights the record of some electoral democracies is marred by weak rule of law, corruption, inordinate influence by the military, ethnic conflicts, weak protections for minority rights, and media subject to external pressures. As a result, 81 of the world's electoral democracies are Free, and 36 are Partly Free. These Partly Free electoral democracies represent the arena in which there is the most potential to make significant progress in the expansion of freedom.

Where there is electoral competition among political parties, there is the possibility for open criticism of government policies and the airing of alternative viewpoints through a multiparty parliamentary system. Many new democracies are beginning to establish the rule of law, provide for independent judiciaries, create the circumstances for the emergence of a vibrant civil society, privatize formerly state-owned and state-controlled broadcast media and ensure effective civilian control of the police and the military.

While a number of electoral democracies are weak and incapable of guaranteeing basic civil liberties and although some democratically elected leaders seek to centralize their power or to exercise power arbitrarily, most such leaders function within the context of checks and balances on their power.

Some commentators have characterized Partly Free countries with open electoral processes as "illiberal democracies." They argue that in such countries the absence of a system based on the rule of law and the absence of checks and balances leads to fundamental violations of civil liberties. Yet while Partly Free democracies face great problems, in most such states, citizens can engage in significant debate over public policy—a right rarely enjoyed in non-democratic regimes. Some critics even suggest that electoral democracy leads to bad governance, increases instability, places ethnic minorities at peril and legitimizes efforts to suppress political opponents. But the record suggests otherwise. In all, 81 of the electoral democracies successfully protect a broad range of political and civil rights in a climate of significant civic activism and private economic activity. As a rule, the 36 electoral democracies that Freedom House rates as Partly Free are not states that brutally suppress basic freedoms. Rather, they are countries in which civic institutions are fragile, poverty is rampant and there are intergroup tensions. This is not surprising as many such fragile democracies are emerging from periods of intense civil strife and most are building new state and civic institutions.

In Partly Free **Slovakia**, a democratically elected Prime Minister engages in demagoguery and intimidates the press. Yet there is a vibrant civil society and a strong and

growing political opposition that is coalescing and has good chances of winning elections scheduled for 1998. Other electoral democracies are making progress in strengthening the rule of law and expanding freedom. This year, for example, **Honduras** reasserted greater civilian control over a military which had a long-standing record of interference in political life and violations of human rights. And in **El Salvador**, democratic electoral politics have helped the country strengthen rule of law and attain national cohesion after a period of debilitating insurgencies and civil wars.

Around the world, many Partly Free electoral democracies confront the problems of communal violence with roots in religious and ethnic differences. Yet such electoral democracies have not seen an explosion of fratricidal conflict among ethnic or religious groups. **India**, which faces separatist movements among Sikhs and Kashmiris and religious tensions between Muslims and Hindus, has avoided fratricidal war and pursued free market liberalization in a setting of widespread poverty.

There are many cases where ethnic or civic strife has abated as a result of the influence of democratic processes. Electoral politics in the post-Soviet state of **Georgia** have enabled a new generation of leaders to emerge in the legislature and government and have strengthened the legitimacy of President Eduard Shevardnadze, who is pursuing policies aimed at healing a country divided by civil war and ethnic secessionist movements. In **Russia**, President Boris Yeltsin turned away from the carnage of war in Chechnya in part because of the pressure he felt from voters. He began energetic negotiations with the Chechen side in a bid for peace in the months before the elections of the summer of 1996. In **Moldova**, despite the conflict that erupted over the breakaway, ethnically Russian region of Transdniester, democratic politics did not inflame ethnic hatreds and Moldovan voters demonstrated political maturity in rejecting parties that appealed to ethnic differences. Similarly in the partly free electoral democracy of **Ukraine**, elections at the national and regional levels have become an instrument through which pressures toward separatism have dissipated in the predominantly-Russian Crimean peninsula. In the new democracies of Romania and Bulgaria, ethnic scapegoating has been rejected by voters who have chosen governing majorities that include—in Romania's case—a Hungarian minority party, and—in Bulgaria's case—a Turkish minority party.

By contrast, there are numerous examples of non-democratic systems fanning the flames of inter-religious or inter-ethnic conflict. In **Tajikistan**, a coup which toppled a duly elected government plunged the country into civil war that in turn contributed to the strengthened appeal of Fundamentalist Islamic groups. There also is no sign of an end to the military campaign prosecuted by the military dictatorship in **Burma** against the Karen ethnic minority.

As a rule xenophobic parties are usually rejected by the vast majority of voters in electoral democracies. Xenophobic currents emerge far more often in one-party and dominant party states, and in states with authoritarian leaders who exercise unlimited power. In **Bosnia** a foreign-backed civil war undermined a democratically elected, secular government and plunged the country into prolonged ethnic turmoil. That conflict was exacerbated not by the forces of democracy, but by the manipulation of the media by a dominant ruling elite in **Serbia** that made common cause with Bosnian Serb ultra-nationalist elements.

Some critics of electoral democracy claim that majoritarian systems are often driven by popular passions to circumscribe the rights of ethnic minorities. **Turkey**, which

continues to suppress its Kurdish minority, is cited as one such example. Indeed, Turkey is the electoral democracy with perhaps the worst record of human rights and civil liberties abuses. Its military has significant influence on government decisions. Yet because Turkey also has a courageous press, vibrant civic groups, and an assertive community of human rights and civil liberties groups, the most egregious violations of human rights are exposed to the light of day. Moreover, few would argue that this state of affairs is not preferable to the period of military rule, when there was no internal pressure on a military dictatorship that governed the country with impunity in the 1970s and engaged in the systematic violation of the rights of Turks and Kurds.

At times, electoral democracies face terrorist movements and insurgencies which seek to undermine public support for the rule of law, due process, and limited government. In such circumstances public sentiment occasionally grows for the adoption of an iron hand. But the record shows that most electoral democracies resist such anti-liberal solutions.

DEMOCRACY AND STABILITY

Democratic elections also contribute to national reconciliation after conflict, to stability and to cohesion. In settings as diverse as **South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, El Salvador** and **Nicaragua**, democratic electoral politics have brought stability after years of unrest, civic war and terrorism. Yet some journalists and scholars have begun to justify the need for enlightened authoritarian rule, which is seen as a better guarantor of stability than democracy. The record around the world shows that instability is the byproduct of efforts to suppress the popular will rather than the admittedly contentious process of policy formation in open democratic systems.

Democratic processes frequently create a mechanism through which conflict can abate and stability can be restored. One recent example is **Albania**. After violent civil strife ravaged the country in early 1997, pitting rival criminal gangs against political groupings, and political groupings against an authoritarian government, European negotiators, backed by European troops, restored order and forced an agreement on new elections. The elections that took place in June-July 1997 were certainly far from perfect. They may have been rushed in part out of fear by Italy and other Europeans states about the mounting flood of refugees fleeing chaos. Yet surely Albania's imperfect electoral process was preferable to continued chaos and the imposition of police rule under an authoritarian strong man. Despite such irregularities, the defeated Democratic Party made a strong showing and retains a vigorous opposition voice in parliament. Moreover, the victorious Socialist party has established a broad-based coalition with moderate social democrats and pro-reform defectors from the Democratic Party. Western engagement combined with a reasonably open democratic process helped end chaos and has increased the chances for stability and eventual national reconciliation.

DEMOCRACY, RULE OF LAW AND CORRUPTION

In the absence of parliamentary oppositions, an adversarial press and media and independent civic groups which exert internal pressure on behalf of political openness, repression is likely to be more severe, brutal, and arbitrary than that which occurs under the scrutiny and pressure of such independent forces. Corruption which undermines weak states also is better dealt with in a context of electoral politics in which

leaders can be booted out of office, and sovereign branches of government can pursue investigations of official wrongdoing through hearings that have resonance in the media. Rule of law societies tend to emerge not through the actions of authoritarian leaders who govern without constraints on their power, but through the complex interplay of civic forces, a free media and an open, democratic political process.

THE AUTHORITARIAN RECORD

In reality, the suppression of political rights usually leads to the suppression of other civil liberties and to the corruption of economic systems. Of the 74 countries that are not electoral democracies, 53 are rated Not Free—i.e., they abridge a broad range of civil liberties. Indeed, there is not a single electoral democracy among the 53 most repressive countries. And the majority of the lowest rated Partly Free states are likewise non-democracies.

For every putatively enlightened despot, such as Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad and Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew—there are dozens of examples of authoritarian leaders who practice arbitrary rule. The suppression of alternative voices and of the free flow of information rarely leads to sustained enlightenment. It usually results in leaders who gradually become removed from reality, impervious to criticism and unwilling to adapt. Enlightened authoritarianism becomes an oxymoron.

Electoral democracy—even as practiced in Partly Free countries—is not the same as manipulation of the public through staged elections or the use of the politics of referenda by tyrants. These are the traditional mechanisms of populist authoritarian regimes, of dominant-party states and even of one-party states. Authoritarian leaders will often resort to the ballot box the same way that one-party Marxist-Leninist states have done throughout much of this century. That they do so today, in an age that is predominantly democratic, should not surprise us. They understand that elections constitute a basis for political legitimacy. But such efforts to manipulate the symbols of democracy should be distinguished from the genuinely open competition that is characteristic even of the Partly Free electoral democracies.

Indeed, there are some democratically elected leaders who, like Slovakia's Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar, practice an authoritarian style of rule and resort to nationalist demagogy, or who, like Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, appear to be using an overwhelming parliamentary majority to concentrate power and weaken the independence of the judiciary. But they are exceptions. In most cases, free and fair elections create pressures for the creation of limited government and a framework based on the rule of law. But the transformation of electoral democracies into free societies takes time. It requires the establishment of new democratic institutions, the emergence of a mature press and the development of a civic infrastructure of non-governmental organizations including chambers of commerce, free trade unions, charitable organizations, women's groups, public policy institutes and environmental groups.

There are other challenges for electoral democracies. Among these is the phenomenon of ethnically or religiously exclusive political mobilization. Some Partly Free democracies—particularly in Africa—are characterized by ethnically-based political mobilization. Such mobilization impedes the spread of democracy, which requires the emergence of other forms of interest-based politics. This is why free societies are often states with a preponderant ethnic group. In this regard, the multi-ethnic

U.S. is an exception.

A second challenge to democracy is how to cope with the emergence of anti-democratic forces that use the electoral path to power. As critics rightly point out, some authoritarian politicians have used elections on their road to absolute power—Hitler being the most notorious case.

Each of these problems and issues is part of the broad range of threats that have confronted open societies throughout the 20th century. But the last quarter century's dramatic expansion of democratic politics suggests that democracy can survive in a very wide variety of settings and resolve most of these issues in ways that expand the scope of human liberty. It also suggests that the establishment of electoral democracy increases the chances for the creation of a broader range of freedoms. Indeed, the recent evidence contained in the Survey of Freedom suggests that electoral democracies are gradually expanding the broad range of rights enjoyed by their citizens. In 1995, of 117 electoral democracies 76 were Free (64 percent). By 1997, of 117 electoral democracies, 81 are Free (nearly 70 percent). This trend suggests that far from inhibiting the emergence of rule of law, a vibrant civil society and limited government, electoral democracy is propelling the global expansion of freedom.

RELIGION, CULTURE AND FREEDOM

Increasingly, scholars are re-examining the relationship between culture and political development. Some have posited a clash of cultures emerging from fundamentally opposing sets of values. While there are broad differences among civilizations, even within the variety of cultures within single countries, it cannot be denied that democracy and human rights find their expression on all continents and in a very wide array of cultures and beliefs. Moreover, there are democratic voices in virtually all societies.

Still, it is useful to examine the correlation between aspects of culture and democratic development. Moreover, to characterize one or another type of culture or religious system as more or less related to democratic development is not to engage in stereotyping or even to suggest that one or another culture is inherently more or less democratic. Such relationships nevertheless are important to further our understanding of the vast array of cultural, religious, ethnic, economic and social factors that contribute to or threaten freedom.

While religions certainly reflect fundamental beliefs and values, history shows that religions can rapidly adjust their attitudes toward politics and public policy. One trend worthy of attention is the correlation between political freedom and religious belief. Of the 81 Free countries in this year's Survey, 74 are majority Christian. Of the seven Free countries that are not majority Christian, one is Israel, which can be considered a part of Judeo-Christian civilization. Two others, Mauritius and South Korea, have Christian communities that account for nearly a third of their populations. In the case of South Korea, Christian communities were active in the pressure towards the country's democratic opening. Only four Free countries do not have strong links to the Judeo-Christian tradition: Mali, which is predominantly Muslim; Taiwan, where nearly half the population is Buddhist; Mongolia, which is traditionally Buddhist; Japan, where a majority observes both Buddhist and Shinto traditions.

The correlation between Christianity and freedom is very strong according to the Freedom House data. While 74 of the 81 countries we rate as Free are predominantly

Christian, just 11 of the 67 countries that have the poorest record in terms of political rights and civil liberties are Christian. By this indicator, predominantly Christian countries are five and a half times more likely to be Free and democratic as they are to be non-democratic and suffer from serious abridgment of basic human rights.

Among countries with majority Islamic populations, only one—Mali—is Free; 14 are Partly Free, and 28 are Not Free. Six countries with a predominantly Muslim (or traditionally Muslim) population are electoral democracies: Albania, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Pakistan and Turkey.

Religions that accentuate the values of tolerance create a good framework for the emergence of democratic procedures. But the emphasis that religious leaders place on tolerance ebbs and flows throughout history.

Certainly nothing in Freedom House data should suggest, for example, that Christianity is inherently pro-democratic or Islam inherently anti-democratic.

Indeed, just a quarter century ago, scholars examining the state of freedom in the world would have drawn a different correlation than today. The majority of Catholic countries in Latin America were corporatist systems under military rule. Oligarchic autocracies prevailed in the predominantly Catholic countries of Central America. And the Iberian Catholic countries of Spain and Portugal were under dictatorship. In East-Central Europe, predominantly Catholic Poland and Hungary and historically Roman Catholic Czechoslovakia suffered under Communist dictatorship, while the Catholic Philippines were in the thrall of the Marcos dictatorship. The conclusion might have been that there is a strong correlation between Catholicism and autocratic political rule.

One also might also have concluded that the traditionally Orthodox Christian countries were incompatible with democratic governance. Greece was under dictatorship as were Bulgaria, Romania, and the European republics of the Soviet Union.

In less than a quarter century, this state of affairs dramatically changed. Thus, while scholars are right to point to the fact that culture is a significant factor in the political evolution of different societies, it is wrong to underestimate the capacity of religious and other cultural values to accommodate themselves to emerging political trends and to reinforce society's emerging democratic values—i.e., it is wrong to suggest that religious and other cultural values cannot undergo rapid transformation.

On the basis of the Survey of Freedom, we can conclude is that as the 20th century draws to a close, ideas of electoral democracy and freedom correlate most closely with Christianity. There is also a strong correlation between electoral democracy and Hinduism (India, Mauritius, and Nepal). Moreover, there is a significant proportion of free societies (Japan, Mongolia, Taiwan) and electoral democracies (Sri Lanka and Thailand) among the traditionally Buddhist societies and societies in which Buddhism is the most widespread faith.

It is important to ensure that Western policy-makers be aware of these relationships. The promotion of democracy and democratic values is, after all, a multi-faced process which is not simply the purview of governments, or political parties. The more political leaders are aware of the role of religion in relation to democratic and free societies, the more they can engage religious leaders in the effort to promote human rights and civil liberties.

Clearly, the role of religious belief in movements for freedom is not lost on tyrants. This is why traditionally Marxist-Leninist regimes sought to suppress or con-

trol religious life. Today, China suppresses Evangelical and Baptist Protestant groups, Roman Catholics, Muslims, and Tibetan Buddhists. In Cuba, the Catholic church is under strict state control. And in Vietnam, the state routinely violates the rights of its Christian minority.

POLICY PRESCRIPTIONS

What policies should the U.S. and all the world's established democracies adopt in this democratic age? The answer is not simple.

Progress in the expansion of free societies and electoral democracies is slowing. The dramatic gains for freedom toward the expansion of liberty has slowed, and the year's decline in the number of electoral democracies from 118 to 117 suggests that democratic momentum has slowed and may be reversing.

Many of the remaining non-democratic countries seem impervious to democratic openings. They include the one-party Communist-led states of China, Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam and Laos, which have survived the collapse of Soviet Communism by resorting to a mixture of repression, appeals to nationalism and Leninist forms of political organization. Some of these societies have liberalized their economies, while maintaining strict political and cultural controls, resulting in impressive growth rates that reduced the chances for social and political unrest and serve as an argument for their political legitimacy.

Other states in which there is little evidence of democratic political ferment include the Muslim states of the Middle East. Some of these states are ruled by hereditary sheiks who control populations with a mixture of repression and economic welfare generated by the export of oil. Other such states—Syria, Iraq and Libya—are under the rule of secular tyrants who rely on repression and political mobilization. Others, like Iran, are governed by extreme forms of religious fundamentalism.

Some ex-Communist states are not moving toward democracy but are building new forms of tyranny. These include Belarus, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

STRATEGIES AND MECHANISMS OF CHANGE

During the Cold War, under United States leadership, the Western democracies employed a vast array of resources to promote change within totalitarian societies of the Communist bloc and in the 1970s and 1980s to help bring about political openings in closed authoritarian societies. These efforts included support for the exporting of books and periodicals to closed societies. There was modest, sustained assistance to democratic forces within these closed societies, some of it provided through the National Endowment for Democracy. And there was Western broadcasting to countries in which the state-controlled the media.

Today, the resources for such activities are in decline as is the commitment to help foster democratic forces and democratic values in closed societies, often for reasons related to commerce. Additionally, the uncritical view that trade and a limited liberalization of state-dominated economies leads to political reform has also gained currency. But the reality is that democratic political openings in formerly closed societies do not occur in the absence of the emergence of pro-democratic movements and the spread of democratic values. In closed societies this means outside support from the established democracies.

There may be geopolitical and geo-economic reasons for a "hands off" approach

by the U.S. in the case of some of the most tightly-controlled countries in the world, including the monarchies in the oil-rich Arabian Gulf states and political tyrannies with rapidly growing economies. Still, there is no question that the decision not to press for democratic reforms, not to promote access to democratic ideas through international broadcasting, and not materially to assist democratic forces in these countries reduces the chances that these societies will undergo democratic transitions.

Serious thought should be given to increasing the scope of broadcasting to closed societies. While the funding for Radio Free Asia has been increased in recent months, its level of support pales in comparison to the vast region it is required to cover.

The importance of decades of broadcasting by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in reaching broad audiences that eventually played a central role in the political openings in the former Soviet bloc cannot be over-emphasized. The role of these services is no less important today as many of the ex-Communist countries are in the midst of democratic transitions or are witnessing the emergence of new tyrannies. Radio Marti's role in broadcasting to Cuba is no less important. Similarly, assistance to democratic forces in closed societies provided by the National Endowment for Democracy should be enhanced.

PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC TRANSITIONS

As the resources of governments that are available to help countries in transition to democracy shrink under budgetary pressures, assistance should be targeted on helping countries that have already achieved a limited democratic opening .

As the record of the Freedom House Survey shows, it is the Partly Free electoral democracies, that stand the best chance of establishing the civic and state structures necessary to protect basic freedoms. They should become the focus of aid and assistance efforts. Such targeted assistance to the new and weak democracies should of include assistance for transitions to more open economic systems and preferential treatment of democracies in terms of integration into free trade areas and trading blocs. A broad range of programs aimed at deepening democratic culture and effective governance also should be supported. These include: efforts to promote inter-ethnic reconciliation and cooperation; support for reform-oriented think tanks to serve as incubators for the expansion of political and economic freedom; assistance to civil society and the non-governmental sector; assistance to promote a free and independent media, including assistance in support of the financial self-sufficiency of the press and broadcast media; continued assistance to civic groups promoting voter participation and free and fair elections; assistance for anti-corruption efforts; efforts to strengthen the rule of law, reform prison systems, and establish civilian control of the military and police.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORM

With growing economic interdependence and the emergence of a global economy, greater attention should be paid to the links between the free flow of accurate information and economic effectiveness. Societies that suppress the open discussion and do not have a free press are frequently able to mask ineffective economic policies and internal corruption. The emergence of a more globally inter-related system has been accomplished in large measure because the free market economies set clear standards for the entry of the state into the international trading system. More recently, loans

from international financial institutions, too, have been more rigorously conditioned on the implementation of rigorous economic reforms.

But the thorough integration of countries into the international system should also take into account their internal political evolution. Established and new democracies should seriously consider constituting themselves as a mutually-reinforcing community that could work to propel democratic openings through democratic transitions to successful free societies.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES

Despite the rapid growth in democracy around the world in the last two decades, today there is no international forum for world leaders from established, young and emerging democracies to meet, engage in a dialogue, and evaluate strategies for strengthening democratic rule of law, enhancing political rights and protecting civil liberties.

The time is ripe for established democracies and emerging democracies to engage in a discussion about how to propel democracy and to strengthen its roots throughout the world. A regular international gathering of world leaders from government, business, civic groups, universities, think tanks, and labor unions would signal the international community's deep commitment to sustaining the democratic dynamism of recent years. It also could contribute to sustaining the global momentum toward democratic change and the deepening the roots of fragile new democracies by:

- maximizing cooperation and coordination of efforts by democratic governments, NGOs and business to promote pluralism, the free market, the rule of law, civil and political rights and civil society;
- evaluating effective strategies for democratic change; and
- encouraging the commitment of increased resources toward democratic development.

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Russia: Man on His Own

Otto Latsis

The Russian state has left man alone. It allows him to freely elect his representatives in government, to own property, to make money, to choose his place of residence, to choose his own faith or to be a non-believer, to choose any ideology or to follow none, to criticize the authorities as he pleases and wherever he pleases. Man is free, and this is the most important positive outcome of the changes that have taken place in Russia in the 1980s-1990s. So say the supporters of Russian reform. And it's all true.

The Russian state has left man alone. It is unable to keep its citizenry safe from criminals. It does not meet its obligations to provide for social welfare. It cannot ensure the smooth functioning of free health care and education. It does not protect citizens from abuses by corrupt government officials. The oppressed, deprived ordinary man has nowhere to go to complain or to seek protection. He cannot count on anyone but himself. He is left to the mercies of fate, and this is an intolerable negative consequence of the changes which have taken place in Russia. So say the opponents of Russian reform. And this, too, is true.

It is very difficult to balance these two truths on a national scale, and to say with confidence which one outweighs the other. But one can try to identify the basic trend in which direction the changes are going. To do this, one must start by defining our criteria and our starting points, since the normative standards—what is good and what is bad—differ from country to country. In Russia, these norms are especially and starkly distinctive.

THE STARTING POINT

For centuries, the fundamental quality of the Russian state was the quest for total control over every aspect of the life of every one of its subjects. The authoritarian state could strike, with greater or lesser severity, only at those who had committed some offense against it or were suspected of committing such an offense. But the totalitarian state inevitably crushed each and every one. In Russian history, totalitarianism reached its pinnacle under the rule of Stalin. This era ended with the dictator's death in 1953, but major elements of Stalinist totalitarianism survived until the final collapse of the Soviet state in 1991.

The only close parallel to the Stalinist totalitarian system can be found in North Korea today. From the late 1920s to the early 1950s, Soviet people rarely gave any thought to the fact that they didn't have a multiparty system, or free elections, or freedom of speech, or freedom to travel. They had too many other things to be concerned about, beginning with physical survival.

Even within the country, a person could not choose his place of residence without seeking permission from the government: He was compelled to do so by the residency

registration system. A peasant could only leave his village if the party bosses gave him his passport—and they were under no obligation to give it to him. Only in the mid-1950s did peasants receive the same rights as other citizen. Nonetheless, the system of residency registration survived; only today is it slowly changing. (Although residency registration has been abolished by new legislation, local authorities—especially in Moscow—have introduced a host of administrative rules which hinder the right to the free choice of residency.)

As a result of government-imposed price controls, most goods were not freely available for sale. This gave the government a pretext to take charge of the distribution of goods—that is, to decide not only how much money people could earn but how they could spend it. Without government authorization, one could not get an apartment, a car, a place at a vacation resort, or many other goods. The state decided which citizens would get standard health care services and which ones would be served by the elite medical institutions.

The state decided which goods would be produced domestically, which ones could be imported, and which ones would not be available at all; which books and newspapers citizens could read; which radio shows they could hear and which jokes they could tell without risking arrest. In the post-Stalin era, the government legalized abortion after the ineffectiveness of the ban became evident; but state interference in the family did not end with this. In particular, the state—directly, or through government-controlled trade unions and other organizations—imposed penalties for divorce.

All this (and the list of restrictions on personal freedoms could go on) refers only to what the totalitarian state did within the limits of its own laws. In addition, there were widespread violations of the Soviet Constitution—including actions by which the government could, in just a few minutes, deprive a person of the very right to life.

If we take those times as the starting point (which would be only natural for millions of Russian citizens who were raised in the totalitarian era), what stands out is the tremendous progress, fantastic both in its scope and in its speed, which Russia has made toward democracy, human rights, and civil liberties. As far as the most fundamental rights and liberties are concerned, these gains can be considered quite solid and irreversible. Even the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPFR), which proclaims itself the successor to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, no longer advocates the repeal of the multi-party system, of free elections, of freedom of speech, of the right to own property, or of other individual rights and freedoms. Only fascist-type parties and groups, which have little popular support (which is not to say that they pose no political danger—but more on this later), openly reject basic democratic rights and freedoms in their platforms and declarations. The real problem on the Russian political scene today is not that democracy's gains must be defended from outright destruction, but that democratic rights and freedoms are not adequately realized and remain, to a large degree, rhetorical.

THE THIRD BRANCH OF POWER

Analyzing the present condition and the future prospects of Russian democracy, observers usually focus on the interaction between two branches of power: the executive and the legislative. It so happened that from the very beginning of radical reform, the Russian parliament has been a stronghold of the conservative anti-reform opposition, while the executive branch represented by the president and the government has

been the principal mover of reform. The tension between these two branches of power in 1992-93 was exacerbated to the point of armed conflict before the referendum on Russia's new constitution. But even after the adoption of the new Constitution, which replaced the old Congress of People's Deputies with a Federal Assembly, opposition forces have continued to dominate in parliament.

True, under the 1993 Constitution, the Federal Assembly's actual power to influence the day-to-day functioning of the executive is quite insignificant; virtually all real authority is concentrated in the hands of the president. From the perspective of general democratic principles, one may regard this as a sign of inadequate democratic control over government. However, under the specific circumstances which now exist in Russia, the limitations on the power of the parliament, and especially of its lower chamber, the State Duma, is precisely what is needed for the defense of democracy. The latter point of view is bolstered by the fact that under the flawed parliamentary election laws, party nominees have too many advantages over independent candidates, and major-party candidates over those representing small parties. In fact, in the party-slate voting in 1995, half of the electorate essentially wasted their votes: that was the share received by small parties which won fewer than five percent of the vote each. These votes were then "given" to major parties—whose representation from the party slates automatically doubled compared to the actual election results.

However, in the clamor of the conflicts between the legislative and the executive, one important fact has remained virtually unnoticed. The daily lives of millions of people are shaped, to a large extent, by the actions of the third branch of power: the judiciary. Yet the current condition of this branch and its ability to function are a serious cause for concern—as is the overall condition of law enforcement in Russia. Since the days of the repressive Stalinist state, courts, prosecutors' offices, and police agencies have changed less than any other part of the Russian government structure.

Formally, for example, Russian criminal law is founded on the principle of the presumption of innocence and does not view the confession of the accused as the "crowning evidence"—as was the case in the Stalin era, when any confession could be obtained under torture. However, actual investigative and judicial practices are very different. The police still have broad latitude to detain the accused before he has been charged, for up to 30 days. The conditions in preliminary detention are far worse than in actual prisons in Russia (where, in turn, they are far worse than in Western prisons). In a cell filled with hardened criminals, the very life and health of the accused are in jeopardy, even if he is detained briefly. Many people sign confessions just to get out of detention. Later, at trial, the defendants often recant, but the courts view them with distrust. Many criminal cases based on such confessions collapse, and convictions become impossible. However, in a startling departure from international norms, when Russian courts are unable to convict, they rarely acquit. More often, a special procedure is used: the case is referred "for further investigation," and the defendant's ordeal enters a new round. The Criminal and Procedural Code currently being discussed in the State Duma, which has received initial approval, retains the practice of "referral for further investigation." The police and court system are riddled with many other perversions which create the danger of wrongful convictions.

Even more people are personally affected by the flaws of the judicial system in civil cases, and in litigation between businesses in arbitration courts. True, the new Civil Code of Russia adopted in late 1995 was one of the greatest accomplishments of

reform, raising Russia's civil legislation to a level consistent with a market economy based on private property rights. Nonetheless, the weaknesses of the justice system itself—personnel shortages; unqualified staff; the powerful legacy of lawlessness that permeates the system; low judicial pay, which breeds corruption; inadequate funding of the courts, such that cases sometimes grind to a halt because there is no money for postage and subpoenas cannot be sent—prevent the rights provided by the new legislation from becoming a reality. Often, it is difficult not only to have a case decided fairly, but to have it heard within a reasonable time frame. Yet in property disputes, particularly between businesses, a timely resolution of the case is often of the essence. For instance, if it takes months or years to reclaim illegally appropriated money (which is common in Russia), turning to the courts makes no sense. This has given rise to such a peculiarity of modern Russian life as the tendency to settle disputes between business partners out of court—with the help of criminal gangs which will perform any "services" for pay, including the rubout of an inconvenient partner.

THE THREAT OF FASCISM

The weaknesses of law enforcement are evident not only in civil cases or run-of-the-mill criminal cases. They also manifest themselves in criminal cases with political overtones—cases that have to do with the dangers posed by fascism and other varieties of political extremism. In Russia, there are dozens of parties and organizations championing the ideas of both Russian fascism and Nazism, of national and racial superiority and ethnic hostility. Their numbers and their popularity are low, but that was also true in Germany before Hitler's rise to power. What is dangerous is that the state is doing next to nothing to combat these groups, even as Russia's social ills create a fertile soil for fascist propaganda.

The prosecutors and the courts remain idle, citing the flawed legislation which does not define "fascism"—and this critique of anti-fascism laws has a grain of truth. But legislators, in turn, refuse to do anything about this, pointing out that specific provisions scattered through various laws from the Russian Constitution down allow for fascist groups to be prosecuted. And that, too, is true: existing laws do provide some, albeit limited, basis for such prosecutions.

The outcome of these debates is rather depressing: nothing is done either to fine-tune the laws or to change law enforcement practices. For a long time, prosecutors simply ignored citizens' complaints about overt anti-Semitic propaganda, dissemination of other fascist ideas, training of paramilitary fascist squads, and even actual use of these squads by local authorities in some Russian provinces to "enforce public order." As a result of public pressure and direct orders from the president, prosecutors are now taking a somewhat different approach. In a few cases, fascists have been prosecuted. But these trials have ended either in acquittals or in penalties that are simply laughable, including suspended sentences. One notorious recent episode of this kind was the disgraceful acquittal of Nikolai Lysenko, one of the most prominent Russian fascists.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH: A NEW KIND OF PROBLEM

In other spheres, the foundations of Russian democracy look more solid. The multi-party system, free elections, free speech—all these rights are taking hold in modern Russia in accordance with universal civilized norms. Even in these areas, however,

problems exist, and in some cases they are getting worse. This is particularly true of protections for freedom of speech, which, as we know, is crucial for genuinely free elections as well.

Even under Gorbachev, the policy of *glasnost* was rightly seen as the most important event and the greatest achievement of the reform era. Yet this policy had less to do with institutional changes than with modifications in political practice. The laws remained the same; the only difference was that the Communist Party leadership now allowed some things which it had previously forbidden. Of course, in Soviet political tradition, changes in the political practices of the state had always been the primary source of all changes in society. However, the state could always take back the freedoms it had granted.

Even as colossal an innovation as the end of censorship and the abolition of the agency which had performed this function—Glavlit—did not require any new legislation: Glavlit had always acted in violation of Soviet laws, and in strict secrecy. What happened was simply that the Soviet state stopped violating its own laws. Meanwhile, TV and radio stations were still the property of the government, and newspapers and magazines were still the property of the Communist Party, or the government, or state-controlled public institutions. The party also retained its control over personnel decisions in the media through the *nomenklatura* system.

It was only after the defeat of the August 1991 coup that things changed dramatically. In the wake of the ensuing collapse of the Communist Party, not only former Party publications but virtually all newspapers and magazines declared their independence. Publications formerly owned by the government were converted to stock ownership as part of the privatization program, in the same manner as all other state enterprises, and thus became something akin to journalistic cooperatives. New publications, privately owned from the start, sprung up as well.

However, the independence granted by the law immediately ran into financial difficulties. In the Soviet era, newspapers sold at low prices which ensured vast circulation, and stayed afloat thanks to government regulation of paper, energy, printing, and postage prices—and to direct state subsidies. In a market economy, rising newspaper prices have not been able to keep up with rising production costs. In the past few years, the circulation of national newspapers has fallen to about one-twentieth of earlier levels, making these newspapers less attractive to advertisers and leading to a loss of advertising revenues—which have become the newspapers' main source of income.

Most local newspapers found themselves unable, even in the early years of reform, to retain their economic independence and were forced to accept financial aid from governors—for which, naturally, they had to pay back in political favors, especially editorial support for certain candidates in elections. For national publications, the loss of financial independence happened at a slower pace and in a very different way. The principal difference is that national newspapers have become dependent not on the government but on large industrial and financial corporations.

By mid-1997, the daily national newspapers with the largest readership and the greatest political influence—*Kosmomolskaya Pravda*, *Trud*, *Izvestiya*, *SelskayaZhizn*, *Rabochaya Gazeta*—had been essentially divided between such Russian business giants as OneximBank, Gazprom, the LukOil oil company, and the Menatep bank. *Pravda*, once the number-one newspaper and the official organ of the Communist

Party, was first bought by a Greek businessman, and then, having lost its influence among readers and gone through a series of schisms, more or less ceased to exist.

One can take comfort in the fact that an absolutely independent press does not exist anywhere in the world. One can also say, with good reason, that the present state of freedom of the press in Russia is immeasurably better than it was under Communism. There is no longer a monopoly of information; journalists, like readers, have choices, and the new owners of newspapers have to take that into account. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to say that what is happening to the Russian media today is simply a normal process, similar to any other market economy anywhere in the world.

The problem is that even the speediest privatization could not have created a genuine private capitalist business structure in Russia in so short a time. To this day, the Russian economy is dominated by state-controlled monopolies—and this applies, first and foremost, to the largest corporations. Gazprom and LukOil, in fact, are formally semi-state property, since the government holds large packages of shares in these companies. The Onexim group has strong personal ties to powerful government officials. Most important, however, the success and indeed the very survival of any large company in Russia depends largely on the goodwill of the government. That is why, when financial and industrial corporations assume control over the press, this means that the press is controlled not so much by competing private individuals or groups as by the state. If this trend prevails, this would mean, to some degree, a return to the Soviet system of monopoly state control over the mass media.

This hypothesis is confirmed by the recent fighting over the ownership of media organizations, particularly in those instances when scandals explode and secrets come out into the open. The latest and most explicit example is the takeover by OneximBank and the LukOil company of the country's most influential daily, *Izvestia*. The money these corporations spent to buy a controlling package of shares in the newspaper exceeds *Izvestia*'s annual revenues by tens if not thousands of times. From a strictly commercial standpoint, these expenditures will never be recouped, and the new owners certainly couldn't count on getting their money back. The money is being invested to buy political clout. Moreover, there is ample evidence that the clout is being sought not by the companies themselves but by the politicians behind them. This is a struggle over strategic turf in the propaganda wars, in anticipation of the parliamentary and then the presidential elections in the year 2000. Apparently, the 1996 elections convinced everyone of the tremendous influence the mass media can have on the outcome of major political conflicts, and the politicians have learned their lesson.

On the other hand, past experience shows that freedom of speech is becoming its own defense. Changes in ownership of the mass media are receiving a great deal of publicity and are the subject of lively public discussions; journalists, competing financial groups, and ultimately readers respond. At one time, the schism in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, caused by some staffers' dissatisfaction with the new owner's policies, led to the birth of *Novaya Yezhednevnyaya Gazeta* ("The New Daily"), which later evolved into the very successful and influential weekly *Novaya Gazeta*. The recent schism in *Izvestia*, caused by the protest against the actions of Oneximbank, has led to the birth of *Noviye Izvestia*. At the same time, journalists have set up a Freedom of Speech Foundation whose long-term goal is to provide a financial basis for an independent press. So far, such efforts cannot be said to have achieved significant gains. Nevertheless, civil society is coming into its own.

THE "NEAR ABROAD" AND RUSSIAN DEMOCRACY

Russia today is not simply a large country. It is also the metropole of a recently dissolved empire—and an unusual empire at that: united into a single territorial entity, it provided the conditions for the creation of a single supranation composed of a number of ethnic groups. If even parts of the former British empire, separated from the metropole by thousands of miles, have retained strong and sensitive ties decades later, the survival of far stronger ties between former Soviet republics is inevitable. There is no need to discuss the magnitude of Russia's influence over such small countries within the Commonwealth of Independent States as Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, or Moldova. But it is worth noting that even small countries of the "near abroad" can, in turn, exert significant influence on domestic developments in Russia. This has been, above all, the case with Belarus.

As we know, in the spring of 1997, the signing of a treaty on a Russia-Belarus Alliance, with provisions that would have enabled a coalition between the Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenka and the anti-Yeltsin opposition in Russia to legally remove Yeltsin from power, was blocked at the last minute. Needless to say, had the original version of the treaty been signed and had Lukashenka and the Russian opposition tried to take advantage of these provisions, Yeltsin would have broken the treaty rather than surrender power. Still, this would have created unforeseeable complications, including the possibility of new armed conflict, and would have led to a senseless loss of the dominance in domestic political affairs handed to Yeltsin by the 1996 elections. How, then, could the Russian government have flirted with so obvious a danger?

Boris Yeltsin has a perfect instinct of power; he senses danger even when it comes from people who were once close to him. He certainly should have noticed the danger from the "patriot" opposition, which he had never trusted and had always held at bay. In this case, prominent opposition leaders, such as Sergei Baburin and Oleg Rumyantsev, were officially part of the working group which prepared the draft treaty on the Russian side, as representatives of the State Duma. This might have appeared harmless, since members of the government and the administration—Deputy Prime Minister Valery Serov, foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov, presidential aide Dmitry Ryurikov — were to be ultimately in charge of preparing the treaty. But they slipped up.

At work was the instinct of imperial revanchism, which infected, as it turned out, not only the "patriot" opposition which quite openly articulates this instinct. The story of the Russia-Belarus treaty demonstrated that revanchist sentiments, in the guise of "geopolitical interests," are not alien to many members of the government and the administration—particularly those in charge of foreign and defense policy. Serov, a representative of the government, found himself united with opposition leader Baburin, and certainly not because Serov wants to see his president removed. He simply believed (and he was not alone in this) that the newly available opportunity to gobble up Belarus justified the risk posed by excessive confidence in Lukashenka. Of course, the geopoliticians constantly exaggerate the probability of reabsorbing the smaller country, and just as tenaciously minimize the risks of allowing Alexander Lukashenka a role on the Russian political scene.

What, then, did Serov do? Realizing that Yeltsin, who was recovering from his illness and beginning to take a closer interest in affairs of the state, might notice some

of the "peculiarities" in the draft treaty, Serov tried to navigate the reefs of this debate by going through the bureaucratic motions. He received stamps of approval on the draft treaty from every ministry—nearly always, however, not from the minister himself but from one of his deputies. In each case, moreover, he would go to a deputy minister who, like Serov himself, was interested in "geopolitics." The only place where this tactic didn't work was the Central Bank, which rejected the conditions wanted by the Belarussian side—after which the Belarussians themselves made concessions on currency issues in order to win on the issues of power. With the draft approved by every department, Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin gave his approval as well, and the treaty was initialed and ready for signing. Only then did the clamor in the press force the head of the administration, Anatoly Chubais, to look into the matter and make an effort to convince the president that a fateful mistake was about to be made.

The scandal caused by the refusal to sign an initialed treaty cost Ryurikov his post. But the lessons which should be learned from this episode go far beyond the admission of an administrative oversight. This became especially clear several months later, when the campaign of persecution unleashed by Lukashenka against Russian journalists caused an uproar. The three-month detention without trial of Pavel Sheremet, a correspondent for Russia's Channel One in Belarus, on a frivolous charge (essentially, for doing his job) made the peculiarities of the Russian-Belarussian alliance even more evident.

The way Lukashenka behaved on this and other occasions is not the way allies—or even heads of states which have a normal relationship—should behave. Yet the Russian ambassador in Belarus, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Deputy Prime Minister Serov let Lukashenka off the hook for as long as it was possible, ignoring not only human rights violations and violations of the alliance treaty between the two countries, but the outright rudeness of the Belarussian president toward his Russian counterpart. Finally, Yeltsin had to firmly state that respect for human rights was his top priority. Even then, Lukashenka did not react; he simply deceived his partner, promising to take measures to ensure Sheremet's release and then failing to do so. Only after Russia humiliated Lukashenka by cancelling his planned tour of Russia's provinces did the Belarussian leader give in, and Sheremet was finally released before trial.

There is only one possible explanation for the way both Lukashenka and high-level Russian government officials acted: they believe that the Russian president himself is not above "geopolitical" calculations. Lukashenka in particular made no secret of his hopes to play on Yeltsin's displeasure—shared by a large segment of the Russian political establishment—with NATO's eastward expansion. Yeltsin realizes, of course, that NATO today is not Russia's strategic adversary. He also knows that the Russian public remains indifferent to this development, which provides the strongest evidence of how much the world has changed. But he is piqued by the West's mistrust of Russia demonstrated by the NATO expansion, by the double standards, and by his Western partners' unwillingness to make allowances for the difficulties he faces. There is, moreover, essentially nothing he can do to retaliate, and Lukashenka was hoping to tempt Yeltsin with at least the appearance of a response to provocation by the West.

Of course, Lukashenka does not even for a moment think of subordinating his

country, as he has promised to do more than once, to its mighty neighbor. He is playing his own game, hoping to lure his partner with tempting promises, to receive the financial and political support he needs from Russia, and maybe even to become the president of a united state. But the very nature of his calculations suggests that he understands the weaknesses of modern Russian politicians very well.

ELECTIONS 2000

The young Russian state is at an important turning point in its development. The so-called transitional period—the period when the old is being torn down and the new is being built, the period of storm and strife, of constant, perilous battles with the opposition and breathtaking changes—is nearing its end. The economy is stabilizing, and there is very little doubt that the economic upturn of which some signs appeared in 1997 will become an unquestionable fact in 1998. Slowly but surely, the worst social problems are receding. Following the adoption of the new Constitution in 1993, the new Civil Code and a number of other laws have created the legal basis for a modern, civilized democratic state with a market-based economy. It is becoming increasingly clear that the presidential elections of 1996 were the last chance for the revanchist opposition—a chance it wasn't able to use. The elections of 2000 will be fundamentally different. The question they will settle is not whether the new Russia will live or die, but what the new Russia will look like in the future.

The events of the fall of 1997 (the conflicts surrounding the vote of no confidence in the government and the 1998 budget) have shown that the contest between the "party of power" and the opposition is no longer at the center of Russia's political life. The opposition cannot get over the knockout punch it was dealt in 1996, and its uncompromising political stance is more a show than a reality. Increasingly, events are shaped by "backroom" struggles within the "party of power" itself.

In early 1996, at the most dramatic moment of the pre-election campaign, when Yeltsin's situation was thought by many to be hopeless, a coalition of major Russian financiers (the "seven bankers") and politicians led by Anatoly Chubais was formed. This group came out of the former "Gaidar team" and is, in a way, a political heir to the reformers of the first wave. The members of this coalition shared an awareness of two facts: first, that a possible victory by Gennady Zyuganov in the presidential election posed an unacceptable level of risk to Russia; second, that the people closest to Yeltsin—the Korzhakov-Barsukov-Soskovets group—lacked the political or professional skills, the intelligence, or the personal qualities needed to stop the Zyuganov threat. The removal of the Korzhakov clique not only played a key role in setting the stage for Yeltsin's victory in the elections but laid the foundation for the realignment of forces around Yeltsin after the election—which proved quite favorable to the urgent tasks that had to be dealt with in 1996-97.

However, with the consolidation of power after the 1996 election, politicians have increasingly turned their sights to the year 2000—and differences have emerged among former coalition partners. To simplify a little, the differences boil down to this: despite a shared allegiance to the values of the market economy and of political democracy, some believe that business should play the leading role in the partnership between business and government, while others think the state should be the senior partner. The most prominent champion of the former view has been the deputy secretary of the presidential Security Council, the well-known financier Boris Berezovsky; of

the latter, first deputy prime minister Anatoly Chubais.

In November, Berezovsky was removed from his post by presidential decree, signifying at least a temporary victory for Chubais. In this case, however, individual personnel changes mean little for the strategic balance of forces, and even less for the fundamental debate. What will the state be like? What will business be like? Will large and super-large property owners retain their economic dominance, and will small and mid-sized business remain weak, hindering the rise of the middle class? Will government policies focus more on social welfare once the problems of the transitional stage have been solved? The future of Russian democracy depends on the answers.

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The non-Russian States: Progress But Unfulfilled Promise

Fiona Hill

In 1991, the collapse of Communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union were viewed in the West as events heralding a new era of freedom for the region and its peoples. The high expectations for political freedom and economic development in the six years that have followed have not been fulfilled. The Newly Independent States (NIS) are a study in contrasts. The independence of the states themselves now seems assured, but the civil liberties of their populations are not.

On a macro level, the new post-Soviet regimes have established their legitimacy and secured the trappings of independent statehood. International alternatives to association with Russia have emerged, regional economies have attracted foreign investment, and Moscow's inclination for forceful intervention has been tempered by the debacle in Chechnya. On the micro level, however, the newly independent states of Eurasia have effectively transformed into oligarchies rather than representative democracies. States are largely controlled by networks of elites based on geographical association, common educational background, and extended family ties. Citizens' freedoms, for the most part, are still restricted.

THE EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT—NEW FREEDOM FOR MANEUVER

Although a core group of states—Armenia, Belarus and Tajikistan—remain close to Russia, because of state weakness, economic dependency, poor relations with their immediate neighbors, or the personal political aspirations of their leaders, the other successor states of the former Soviet Union have moved away from Moscow's dominance. In spite of the new designation of the former Soviet Union as Eurasia, and the long association with the Russian and Soviet Empires, the 15 newly independent states no longer form a single bloc. Unique political cultures, and discrete historical and geographic regions and sub-regions are reemerging.

In the North, the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have distanced themselves from Russia to pursue re-integration into Scandinavia and Western Europe. Estonia's accession to membership in the European Union is scheduled for discussion in 1998, along with a review of the applications of Latvia and Lithuania. Further south, a free trade zone is emerging along the historic route of the "silk road" from Central Asia across the Caspian Sea and the Caucasus to the Black Sea and Ukraine. Black Sea littoral states such as Ukraine and Georgia have forged new partnerships, and Central Asian states have revived traditional ties with the adjacent Muslim world to the south, as well as with China to the east.

Moscow's ambitions notwithstanding, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) failed as an organization to promote the political, economic and military reintegration of Eurasia. While Moscow viewed the CIS as the basis of a new union around

a Russian nucleus from its inception, Kiev saw it as a mechanism for a gradual and civilized divorce between Ukraine and Russia—a means of maintaining dialogue among the formerly fraternal states while new and more attractive alliances develop. Russia's attempts to force the pace of reintegration through policies of intimidation and obstruction in the so-called "Near Abroad" between 1992-1995 have also played a major role in hamstringing the CIS and have been detrimental to Russia's own previously dominant position in the region. Heavy-handed intervention in ethnic and civil conflicts, pressure for military basing rights, economic blackmail, and the brutality of the military operation in Chechnya engendered a backlash against "Big Brother."

In this atmosphere of mistrust, the Baltic states refused membership in the CIS, and Moldova and Georgia joined only under duress. From Central Asia to the Caucasus and Ukraine, since 1991 states have sought means to bypass Russia in communications and trade, to dilute the CIS system of bilateral relations with Russia, and to transform any future regional association into a multilateral organization along the lines of Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbaev's proposed "Eurasian Union"—a European-style economic and political community of equals. Although the CIS states, and indeed the Baltics, remain anxious to continue existing cooperation with Russia in business and economic issues and on trans-border questions, such as the environment and organized crime, they have shied away from deeper political and military engagement. In spite of the mutual-security provisions of the CIS accords, the states of Eurasia have joined NATO's Partnership for Peace program. All three Baltic states hope to be considered for NATO membership in 1999 and have spurned Russian offers of unilateral security guarantees. Azerbaijan has resisted Moscow's pressure to place Russian troops on its borders and, in late 1997, Georgia was considering replacing Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia with a Ukrainian contingent.

The process of regional differentiation has been aided by a number of factors—not least Russia's difficulty in articulating coherent "positive" policies for the newly independent states beyond stressing the CIS and some form of political and economic re-integration. The increasing political involvement of the United States and US economic and technical assistance to key states such as Ukraine have also played a major role, along with growing international investment, especially in the Caucasus and Central Asia in response to new assessments of the volume of Caspian oil reserves. Today, intra- and inter-state conflicts, rather than the "bogey-man" of Russian hegemony, are the biggest obstacles to sub-regional integrative processes in Eurasia.

THE INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT—NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR ELITES, NEW DISADVANTAGES FOR POPULATIONS

While fears of a new Russian imperial surge are receding, enhancing the independence of the non-Russian successor states, their populations do not enjoy the full exercise of their rights as citizens. In theory, political and economic freedoms have been secured and enshrined in constitutions; competitive elections are now held for presidencies and parliaments; official censorship on the press has been lifted; and the right to private property has been restored. The desire for integration with the world community has also encouraged states to seek accession to organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe (CoE), and to agree to abide by their norms on civil rights and the treatment of minorities. In practice, however, democratic institutions and respect for human rights

have not yet taken hold.

Civil society remains weak and inchoate. Regional polities are distinguished by strong executives and weak legislatures, with politics focused on elections and the struggle between presidents and parliaments over respective authorities—especially over who has ultimate control of the privatization of state property and the resulting distribution of resources. Presidents routinely rule by decree to bypass parliament and there are no intermediaries between high politics and the people. Average citizens have few mechanisms available with which to make their voices heard in the political process beyond the blunt instruments of the ballot box and public demonstration.

Within parliaments, debates often reflect the concerns of cliques in the legislature, not those of the deputies' constituents. Indeed, there is no constituent tradition in Eurasia. Beyond contesting elections, fielding candidates, and producing manifestos, there has been little activity on the part of nascent political parties towards responding to the population's grievances or building grassroots bases of support. Parties, for the most part, are organizationally weak with small and fluid memberships, and represent the interests and ambitions of political personalities. The broad "popular front" movements that brought many of the states to independence in 1991 collapsed in the years immediately following, and the rump Communist parties remain the only political organizations with a mass base.

Opposition political parties have also experienced difficulties in presenting themselves as viable alternatives to the ruling regime. Parties hoping to run in regional parliamentary elections have been excluded from the ballot by electoral commissions. In Armenia, the Dashnak Party, which was formed before the Russian Revolution and remained influential in the Armenian diaspora, was banned by the President in late 1994. In Azerbaijan, however, President Aliev's bold decision in late 1997 to allow Abulfaz Elchibei, the deposed former President and leader of the Popular Front, to return from exile to head the democratic opposition, is perhaps a sign of a long-awaited thaw in regime-opposition relations.

As for the press, it tends to reflect the interests of regional elites. Although there is little overt censorship, the press relies on the patronage of the state or powerful business cliques with their own agenda who routinely withhold essential financing or attempt to oust recalcitrant editors and journalists. Bribing journalists to write stories favorable to particular candidates is a common practice during elections. There is also no tradition of investigative journalism. Those who attempt it report intimidation, beatings and detention. Belarus in fact has established a tradition of cracking down on Russian and other foreign journalists as well as its own. Freedom of communications and information are in general problematic in the region. Inadequate, antiquated telephone systems, and the state's near-monopoly control of access to telecommunications and information technology all serve to constrain communication with the outside world.

In protecting civil liberties, the rule of law is weak. Constitutional guarantees for freedoms of speech and assembly, and minority rights, are in place, but often are not enforced. Political dissidents languish in jails in the Caucasus and Central Asia, the positions of the titular nationalities of the new states are bolstered at the expense of members of other ethnic groups from Central Asia to the Baltics, and refugees from regional conflicts are routinely denied the protections afforded by international law. Indigenous human rights and other civil organizations are also weak and largely de-

pendent on outside funding, while trade unions have been emasculated and are unable to press workers' grievances effectively.

In the face of disregard for individual rights, and with little opportunity for influencing the larger political process, the general population of Eurasia has become both apolitical and apathetic. As public opinion polls and the slogans of public demonstrations across all the states reveal, the interests of elites and populations across the NIS are out of step. While elites debate the extent of presidential prerogative, privatization and policy choices, the population is concerned primarily with day-to-day well-being.

Ensuring individual well-being is, however, extremely difficult for the populations of Eurasia. With the notable exception of Estonia, regional economies are chronically weak and in some cases serious reform has yet to begin. In the Soviet period, the economies were dependent on subsidies from the center; they are now propped up by credits from international financial institutions and aid from the West, used to cover severe budget deficits. In Ukraine, reforms have ground to a halt. Uzbekistan, in spite of a promising start, has also suffered severe economic reversals over the last two years, exacerbated by poor harvests of its major export commodity, cotton, on which the state budget is heavily reliant. Indeed, outside the Baltic states, the export of raw materials such as oil, gas, non-ferrous metals and cotton, which are usually tightly controlled by the state and associated elites, are the major sources of budget revenue.

Raw materials export and general commodities trading has also resulted in the considerable enrichment of elites with ties to the state. In most of Eurasia, property, enterprises, and land have not been fully privatized, but the state in effect has. Corporatism has become a notable feature of NIS economies. The elite networks that dominate politics also dominate the economy, and "big government" and "big business" are often one and the same. State officials in charge of a particular industrial sector often indirectly own controlling interests in private companies that have exclusive operating rights within that very sector, or secure high positions for their closest relatives in key industries. Cronyism and corruption are rife, as underscored in a report released in early November by the EBRD, where Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan scored the highest ratings for corruption among public officials for any region of the world.

As in the Soviet period, access to education, jobs and capital in Eurasia is very much dictated by connections. In contrast to the situation under Communism, however, a peasant or worker's child is no longer assured a roof over his head, a meal in his belly, a job for life, and the possibility of social mobility through the party ranks. For all but the ruling elites, post-Soviet attempts at economic reform have brought about a decline in living standards, especially for groups such as pensioners who are dependent on state payments, and workers in the old-style heavy industries that dominated the pre-1991 economies. In spite of a conspicuous rise of consumption among the elite, the easing of the egregious Soviet shortages in consumer goods, and the appearance of Western products and amenities in major cities, there has been little trickle-down of prosperity to the general population. Outside the Baltic states, small business development is constrained by a lack of investment capital, high taxation, and rampant corruption, impeding the emergence of a dynamic middle-class. In addition, the savings of the working class have been wiped out by hyperinflation. There has yet to be what Russian Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov terms "people's capitalism"

anywhere in the CIS.

Perhaps the greatest threat to the well-being of populations across Eurasia is the problem of salary and pension arrears—the result both of attempts at monetary stabilization and persistent failure to raise state revenues. In 1997, for example, in an effort to restrict inflation by limiting the money supply Kazakhstan had accumulated \$500 million in unpaid pensions since 1995 and a similar sum in unpaid wages to workers in state enterprises, resulting in protests in the capital and major cities. In Uzbekistan, on the other hand, the failure to collect taxes sufficient to meet the state's budget needs was met by withholding payments to cotton farmers, in spite of the fact that the state is the only buyer of raw cotton in the country.

The inevitable effect of economic decline and falling or even non-existent incomes, has been a major public health and consequent demographic crisis across the whole of the former Soviet Union—the Baltic states this time included, as disease does not respect political boundaries. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 1997, Russia, Latvia and Estonia all became hot spots for drug resistant tuberculosis. Other highly infectious diseases such as polio, diphtheria, cholera, typhoid—and increasingly AIDS—are now rampant in all the states, and deaths from cancer and heart disease have risen sharply. Outside the more traditional societies of Azerbaijan and Central Asia, birth rates have declined, along with life expectancy, while death rates have increased—although beyond Russia the full extent of this has yet to be extensively documented.

In certain regions of Eurasia, the public health crisis is exacerbated by environmental catastrophe, which is itself the product of economic decline as well as Soviet mismanagement of natural resources. There are insufficient internal funds to tackle the lingering effects of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster in Belarus and Ukraine, Soviet nuclear testing in Kazakhstan and the reckless use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides and excessive diversion of water for irrigation in areas of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan around the Aral Sea. Even in the event of economic recovery, these environmental problems will continue to threaten regional populations.

Faced with such a magnitude of problems, Eurasian states are anxious to attract international direct and equity investment in addition to government loans and credits. Western investors' overarching desire for political stability and a predictable business environment, however, poses additional threats to individual political liberties. Democratization does not bring stability in its initial phases and, indeed, often increases the likelihood of political and civil conflicts, as has been the case in all of the states of the former Soviet Union. In their anxiety to present themselves as reliable partners who are in firm control of their states, regional presidents and governments have moved toward authoritarianism, clamping down on any dissent in parliament, press, and the nascent civic movements. With the rule of law weak, guarantees for investors in Eurasia are largely based on personal connections with powerful individuals and networks. This serves to consolidate the existing oligarchies as foreign companies now have a vested interest in keeping the individuals and their networks in place, and high-level international financial connections give an additional boost to the position of domestic power brokers.

While these general political and economic features are common to all the non-Russian successor states to the USSR, each faces a different set of challenges and is following its own path of development.

BALTIC STATES

Although they are by no means a single unit, the three Baltic states have emerged as the most developed economies and polities in the region—boasting GDP growth in 1996 and 1997, promoting the rule of law, and tackling corruption. Estonia has taken the lead in adopting radical economic reforms, and Latvia has followed suit, in spite of some considerable political instability and governmental changes. Lithuania has been somewhat more cautious but still liberal in its economic and social policies.

The long-term stability and successful democratic development of the Baltic states, however, is by no means assured. Problems persist in absorbing ethnic Russians into body politics, in resolving territorial disputes with Russia, and in heading off an adverse Russian reaction to NATO membership. The status of the ethnic Russian populations of Estonia and Latvia is perhaps the most difficult issue. Although both states have taken the step of submitting legislation to international scrutiny, Russian-speakers still feel that their rights as national minorities are infringed by Latvian and Estonian citizenship, education, and language policies. In the case of Latvia's draft language law, the OSCE has in fact declared it in contradiction with the international conventions Latvia has signed.

MOLDOVA, UKRAINE AND BELARUS

Moldova and Ukraine face similar problems to Estonia and Latvia in creating inclusive polities that can accommodate their Russian and other minority populations. Moldova is a divided state. In spite of dropping a proposal to pursue unification with neighboring Romania, and devising a generous autonomy arrangement for its tiny ethnically Turkic area of Gagauzia that brought praise from the OSCE, it has been unable to find a formula that will persuade the Slavic population of the secessionist Transdnister region to end demands for independence.

Ukrainian politics are in turmoil. Its economy continues to decline, and frequent changes of government and corruption scandals exasperate international donors. Ukraine has also been unable to reconcile competing demands for autonomy from the Tatars and ethnic Russians of the Crimea, and the Russians of Eastern Ukraine, with its goal of maintaining a unitary state. Although Ukraine has espoused the ideals of a civic rather than a national state since independence, ethnic Russians have increasingly bemoaned the imposition of the Ukrainian language in schools and central government, with Russians in Crimea reverting to "Moscow time" in 1997 in a blatant act of defiance against Kiev. The Crimean Tatars, returning from Soviet-era exile in Central Asia, have been particularly hard hit by Ukraine's economic crisis, and have yet to see the full restoration of their rights. Reports of discrimination against Tatars by local authorities are frequent and add a further dimension to the already difficult relations between Kiev and Crimea.

Belarus is the region's "basket case" and has the appearance of being frozen in time at some point in the unrepentant Soviet period. There are no economic reforms to speak of, the tentative attempts at democratization immediately after independence have been reversed, and President Alexander Lukashenka has encouraged the development of a Stalinesque personality cult. Indeed, Lukashenka's activities have become a major embarrassment to the Russian government as it pursues a new union with its Slavic neighbor. The CoE has also revoked Belarus' "special guest" status as a non-member country. Underscoring the state's increasing isolation in the region, in

September 1997 at a summit of states between the Baltic and Black Seas, the Belarussian President was roundly rebuked for his anti-democratic behavior by his neighbors.

THE CAUCASUS

In the Caucasus, there has been an upturn in fortunes since 1994—particularly in Georgia and Azerbaijan as a result of the exploitation of Caspian oil and the end of the most violent phases of civil war. Regional conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and elsewhere, however, remain the major threat to stability, democracy, and economic development. They have impeded the progress of the three Caucasian states in joining organizations such as the CoE and in restoring traditional regional ties. The conflicts have created a serious refugee crisis, with no real sign of the refugees returning to their homes. In recipient areas, refugees are condemned to a life of poverty, routinely blamed for a rise in crime, and denied full civil rights. They are also a source of hard-line pressure on governments to resist concessions and thus continue confrontation. The issue of refugees is one of the major stumbling blocks in negotiations between Abkhazia and Georgia to find a means of ending their five-year conflict.

In Nagorno-Karabakh, although Armenia and Azerbaijan are now both anxious to overcome the conflict, and a formula for resolution has been identified by the OSCE's Minsk Group, the Armenians of Karabakh have yet to be persuaded of the potential benefits of peace. The persuasive powers of Armenia's government have been weakened by the disastrous handling of the 1996 presidential election, which sullied its international reputation and ultimately led to the appointment of Robert Kocharian, the charismatic former leader of Nagorno-Karabakh, as Prime Minister. Mass protests also met President Ter-Petrossian's statement in October 1997 that Armenia must seek compromise in resolving the conflict. Armenia's close ties with Russia, and reports in March 1997 of illegal Russian weapons transfers to Armenia, pose an additional obstacle to eventual friendship and cooperation with Azerbaijan.

CENTRAL ASIA

As in the Caucasus, persistent conflict in Tajikistan and the civil war in neighboring Afghanistan are the major threats to regional stability—although some observers predict that these will be replaced by the eventual sharpening of a regional rivalry between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. In Fall 1997, clashes in Tajikistan were reported to have spread to its border with Uzbekistan, in spite of the conclusion of a peace agreement in May. Throughout 1997, the respective advances and retreats of the Taliban, and the Uzbek and Tajik coalition forces, in Afghanistan were met with increasing alarm in regional capitals and calls for military intervention.

In this charged atmosphere, there has been little movement on political and economic freedoms in Central Asia. Tajikistan barely exists as a state. Turkmenistan is an old-style authoritarian bastion with a cult of personality around President Niyazov akin to that in Belarus, but along traditional Central Asian rather than Communist lines. Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have emasculated parliaments, and presidents who dominate decisionmaking. Kyrgyzstan is touted as the regional pillar of market reform and democracy, but this masks economic disparities, a lack of civil discourse, and frequent crack-downs on journalistic dissent.

Economically, things look more promising in the long-term, particularly in

Kazakhstan which has begun large-scale privatization and attracted millions of dollars in foreign investment since 1992. Kazakhstan's attempt to turn itself into a Central Asian "snow leopard" (a version of the so-called Asian "Tiger") in its newly-announced "Strategy 2030" promises an end to the sole fixation on oil and gas resources and broad wealth distribution. The government has even begun to pay off wage and pension arrears. However, the desire to adopt an Asian model of economic reform also seems to suggest a stronger presidency and greater rather than less political authoritarianism over the short-term, and breaking the elite stranglehold on the economy will not be easy in a country where genealogy and geography have traditionally been the primary determinants of power.

FROM INDEPENDENT NATIONS TO INDEPENDENT PEOPLE

In sum, although the Eurasian states have had the chance to establish themselves as independent players internationally, their leaders have not given civil society the same opportunity to constitute itself as an independent player domestically. The worst of the external crises may be over for the countries, but internal problems are still acute—a fact not sufficiently recognized in the West. While intra-elite squabbles in the NIS have become the fixation of Western observers, the human dimension of the post-Soviet transition has faded into the background. There is no doubt that significant progress has been made in formulating liberal constitutions, holding free elections, and lifting censorship on the press, but the people deserve more. The challenge for the United States and other donor countries now is to move beyond geopolitical competition with Russia, and establishing ties with regional elites, to promote respect for the civil liberties of the population, and the genuine establishment of the political freedoms so much anticipated in 1991.

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South Asia: Democracy Adrift

Charles Graybow

The fiftieth anniversary of freedom from colonial rule on the South Asian subcontinent, in August 1997, was marked with fireworks, speeches and pageantry in India and Pakistan.

But for many, the event was characterized by ambivalence. Optimists can point to impressive accomplishments since Nehru and Jinnah led their countries to independence: a growing middle class in both countries, food self-sufficiency and, for India, five decades of robust parliamentary democracy in a vast, populous, multiethnic state that has defied predictions it would succumb to strife and insurgencies.

Yet something is clearly wrong. South Asia's per capita income of \$309 is far lower than sub-Saharan Africa at \$550, and its literacy rate of 48 percent trails the 77 percent average for developing countries. Pessimists look not at what India and Pakistan have accomplished since independence, but at how far short they have fallen economically compared with South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan and other East Asian countries. In the 1960s East Asia had an average per capita income just \$200 higher than South Asia. By 1993, after three decades in which per capita income rose four times as fast in the East Asian tiger economies, the gap was \$10,000.

But, the economic crises that swept across East Asia in 1997 have exposed the terminal weaknesses of authoritarian capitalism, while underscoring the important role of democracy in promoting sustainable economic development. Meanwhile, South Asia's experience has shown that political freedoms—vigorously contested elections, freedom to organize into political parties, a press that freely criticizes the government, the rights of women and minorities to participate in politics—while forming the cornerstone of democratic societies, are not enough to foster true accountability and protect basic human rights. With the exception of Bhutan and the Maldives, which are ruled by autocrats, five of the seven countries in South Asia are electoral democracies. Yet throughout the region the rule of law is weak and democracy is being eroded by corruption as well as political violence, harassment of journalists, police impunity, and other civil liberties violations. Politics are synonymous with criminality.

South Asian countries therefore face the challenge of strengthening democratic institutions while retooling statist economies. Decades of statist economic policies arrested India's development and spawned a ruling class of politicians, bureaucrats and special interests that has wielded the system to its advantage while ignoring the needs of ordinary citizens. India's independent judiciary is one of its most notable strengths, but only in the past two years has it begun serious efforts to bring politicians to account for corruption.

Military rule and corruption stunted democratic institutions and economic development in Pakistan and Bangladesh, while a stifling absolute monarchy similarly crippled Nepal. These countries have few democratic traditions to draw upon and

politicians have shown little inclination to rebuild institutions damaged during years of autocratic rule.

Sri Lanka has maintained its parliamentary democracy since independence in 1948 despite periodic ethnic rioting, two Marxist insurgencies, and, since 1983, the civil war in the north and east between government forces and the Tamil-based Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The island nation off the southwestern tip of India boasts one of the best education and health records in the developing world. Yet political power remains centralized in Colombo, and ethnic tension and civil conflict are fueled by limited access to educational and economic opportunity for both the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils.

Elected governments have been slow to carry out reforms that would strengthen the rule of law, make governments and security forces more accountable, and make government decisionmaking and bureaucratic affairs more transparent. So as the region marks a major anniversary, countries must look ahead to the related challenges of broadening democracy and of catching up to their more prosperous East Asian neighbors.

CORRUPTION AND CRIMINALITY

In February 1997 the nongovernmental Human Development Center in Islamabad issued a damning report that concluded that South Asia was the most economically deprived region in the world. According to the report, "Human Development in South Asia," the subcontinent, with 1.2 billion people, has 22 percent of the world's population but 46 percent of the world's illiterate people and 50 percent of the world's malnourished population. Its share of global income is only 6 percent, and by per capita GNP it is the poorest region of the world. Some 260 million people lack access to even rudimentary health facilities.

One of the most obvious problems is the pervasive corruption and criminality in politics. The sheer magnitude of corruption can be staggering. In July Laloo Prasad Yadav resigned as chief minister of the northern Indian state of Bihar after authorities charged him and 55 others in a \$285 million dollar "fodder scam." Prosecutors say that for 20 years the group created fictitious livestock herds at state-owned farms and billed the state for their upkeep.

Yadav and his cronies are among the most brazen examples of criminality in Indian politics but they are hardly alone. Rajiv Gandhi, the late Indian prime minister, once reckoned that 85 percent of all development money directed towards the poor in his country was skimmed off before it reached them. The Indian Election Commission estimates that 40 members of parliament and 7,000 members of state assemblies face charges or have been convicted of crimes ranging from murder to extortion.

Political criminality is even more widespread in Pakistan. Some members of parliament run private jails for bonded laborers, even though a 1992 law made bonded labor illegal and canceled enslaving debts. The Berlin-based Transparency International rates Pakistan as the second most corrupt country in the world, behind only Nigeria's military dictatorship. Under these conditions, reform-minded politicians face nearly insurmountable difficulties in strengthening democracy or alleviating poverty.

Many politicians see getting into office as a way of avoiding prosecution. But even those who are convicted generally have little to worry about, since courts in In-

dia, Pakistan and Bangladesh are hugely backlogged. Appeals can drag on for years, in India, even decades. Politicians therefore have little incentive to build the capacity of the judiciaries.

Moreover, with coalition governments rising and falling in India and Nepal, and with four elected governments sacked by the army in Pakistan since 1985, politicians know their term in office may be short. So the incentive to take advantage of opportunities for corruption is high. With a relatively small private sector, being out of power means being out of the money.

Yet corruption is only a symptom of deeper, systemic flaws. The Hong Kong-based *Far Eastern Economic Review* (*FEER*) has editorialized that in India, corruption, bad management and flawed policy implementation are less the cause than the by-products of a control-bound system that gives bureaucrats excessive power over the economy. "Any economy that tethers business so closely to government will produce not cooperation but collusion," *FEER* noted.

In India the benefits of the vast maze of price controls, regulations and subsidies are captured mainly by the well-off, including politicians and bureaucrats, as well as businessmen, large farmers, trade union leaders, and any group capable of organizing itself. The World Bank estimates that only one-fifth of subsidies actually reach the poor. Vijay Joshi, a fellow of Merton College, Oxford, has written that the real challenge of Indian democracy in the coming decades will be whether it can make the tough decisions necessary for far-reaching economic reform. These include shutting down or privatizing loss-making state enterprises, scrapping many subsidies and cutting the fiscal deficit, devoting more money to primary education, and investing more on power generation, roads, ports, railways and other infrastructure.

Nevertheless, political developments in India are already leading to genuine shifts in power, from wealthy to poor, upper to lower castes, and from the center to the states. Under the Congress party, which has ruled India for 45 of 50 years of independence, successive governments invested little in basic healthcare and primary education and concentrated power in New Delhi. In the 1970s and 1980s, regional parties began gaining strength in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Tamil Nadu and other states. In the late 1980s, low-caste parties in the northern Hindi-speaking belt, which is the most caste-ridden part of the country, gained prominence by appealing to a poor strata of low-caste voters.

These regional and caste based parties drew much of their support from the low-caste Hindus and Muslims that had formed Congress's core constituency. In the May 1996 elections Congress, awash in corruption scandals and viewed as morally and politically bankrupt, suffered its worst defeat ever. After these elections, Congress backed the United Front (UF) government, a coalition of leftist, regional and caste-based parties, in order to keep the Hindu nationalist Indian People's Party (BJP) out of power. But Congress veterans, unable to accept that theirs is no longer the natural party of government in India, withdrew the party's support in November 1997 after a commission investigating the 1991 assassination of Rajiv Gandhi linked a Tamil Nadu-based, UF constituent party to the LTTE, Gandhi's presumed killers.

Elections now scheduled for February 1998 will likely confirm that India has entered an era of coalition politics. This may be the best way that the interests of such a geographically, ethnically, linguistically and religiously diverse country, wounded by the fissures of caste, can be represented.

LEGACY OF MILITARY RULE IN PAKISTAN...

Pakistan and Bangladesh are still coping with the destructive legacy of military rule. The army ruled each country for nearly half of the years since independence, suspending political rights and civil liberties, suppressing democratic institutions, blocking the development of political parties and, in Pakistan particularly, fostering a culture of violence.

Elected politicians, many of whom fought against military dictatorships, now capitalize on the weakness of institutions, running roughshod on the judiciary and the rule of law and harassing journalists. This is particularly true in Pakistan. When Benazir Bhutto was in office from 1993 to 1996 she appointed cronies to judicial posts and transferred judges at will. Politics in Pakistan is often literally a blood sport. Successive elected governments have tried to incapacitate political opponents through arbitrary arrests, torture and other harassment.

Only 35 percent of the electorate bothered to vote in the February 1997 national elections that brought Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League to power. That month's issue of *Herald*, a Karachi-based magazine, carried a poll in which 95 percent of the respondents agreed that most politicians are corrupt; 43 percent believed that Pakistan had benefited from periods of martial law; and 55 percent doubted that politicians would be held accountable for corruption in office.

The country's slums and depressed villages are breeding grounds for Islamic fundamentalists. It's not surprising that in the ongoing sectarian violence in Punjab province, extremists are frequently targeting doctors, lawyers and businessmen as symbols of wealth. In Karachi, where political violence flared again this year, the private security business is booming. The major Islamist party, the Jamaat-i-Islami, boycotted the February elections in a sign that it might turn to more confrontational tactics.

In 1997 Sharif, a Punjab-based industrialist, used his parliamentary majority to repeal a martial law-era constitutional amendment that had allowed successive presidents to sack four elected governments, including one headed by Sharif in 1993, and two headed by Bhutto. But, Sharif also got parliament to pass a harsh anti-terrorist act, aimed at curbing sectarian and political violence. Human rights activists have denounced the anti-terrorism act for creating a parallel court system with limited due process rights, while expanding the powers of the police and creating the possibility of greater abuses.

In December Sharif emerged from a protracted struggle with the judiciary that began over appointments to the High Court, climaxed with the premier's supporters storming the High Court building while the justices heard a contempt case against him, and ended with the chief justice and president resigning after the army chief intervened. Sharif emerged from the wreckage as arguably Pakistan's strongest prime minister ever, and there are fears that he could rule in an autocratic manner.

A key step toward political reform in Pakistan would be to hold a fresh census. The electoral system concentrates political power in a rural landowning elite that dominates both main parties. Some 80 percent of parliamentary seats represent rural areas, but this is based on a 1981 census, and there has since been a significant shift to urban areas. Reducing the political power of the landowners would also make it easier to levy a much-needed agricultural tax. In the balance is a three-year, \$1.56 billion IMF loan, secured in October, that is predicated in part on cutting the fiscal deficit and increasing tax revenues.

...AND IN BANGLADESH

The army influences politics far less in Bangladesh than in Pakistan, preferring to polish its image and earn revenue through participation in United Nations peacekeeping duties. But military rule in Bangladesh created divisive political fissures that continue to reverberate.

The current premier, the Awami League's Sheikh Hasina Wajed, was a student in Germany in 1975 when the army took power in a coup after murdering her father, then-prime minister Sheikh Mujibar Rahman, and most of her family. Today her political nemesis is Khaleda Zia of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Hasina accuses Zia's late husband, General Ziaur Rahman (himself assassinated in a military coup), of being involved in the murder of her father. The animosity between the two leaders, which has very real and tragic roots, has dominated Bangladeshi politics since popular protests swept aside the last military dictator, General H.M. Ershad, in December 1990.

In March the BNP began staging major strikes and parliamentary walkouts to protest alleged harassment of its workers and a proposed treaty giving India transit rights through Bangladesh. But in reality the Awami League and the BNP differ little on domestic policy. The BNP is simply using the same obstructionist tactics the Awami League had used to bring down a BNP government in 1996, in the process rendering normal parliamentary workings nearly impossible.

ABSOLUTE MONARCHY TO DEMOCRACY

In Nepal two centuries of repressive palace rule, broken only by a brief tryst with elected government in 1959, chilled the development of the rule of law and the institutions necessary to maintain it. But the optimism that swept the country after a mass movement toppled the monarchy in 1990 in favor of a parliamentary system is gone. In its place is disillusionment with a political class beset by corruption charges, popular frustration with opportunistic parliamentary coalitions and the excessive salaries and perks enjoyed by the political elite.

Among ordinary Nepalese one word characterizes politicians: Pajero. Its the name of a car that MPs have given themselves the right to import duty-free. Then there are the junkets to Bangkok that some ministers took in 1997 during a crucial parliamentary vote. *The Kathmandu Post* editorialized in August that it is as if "political culture is now formed on the basis of facilities to be provided to members rather than on ideological grounds." In a less philosophical moment, the paper called it simply, the "political whoring game."

In Nepal parties hardly encourage a civic activism and do little of the difficult, constituency-building work at the grassroots level. Activists generally visit villages just before elections and then not again.

The 1994 mid-term elections resulted in a hung parliament in which the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) (CPN-UML) gained an 88-seat plurality in the 205-seat parliament. In March 1997 the tiny, pro-monarchist National Democratic Party (RPP) used its leverage to bring down government headed by the centrist Congress Party and install one of its two faction leaders as the head of an opportunistic alliance with the anti-monarchist CPN-UML. In October Surya Bahadur Thapa, 69, a two-time premier under the absolute monarchy formed a coalition government that brought the NC back into power.

With all this political maneuvering, politicians are failing to provide direction on socio-economic development. A Maoist insurgency continues to target government offices, landowners and local party officials in the central and midwestern hills, where the government acknowledges 62.4 percent of villagers live in poverty.

DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL WAR

South Asian politics tend to be confrontational, with little notion of loyal opposition. In Sri Lanka, politicians of all stripes tend to view political opponents as the enemy. This is undoubtedly caused in part by the very real stresses, including the LTTE's long record of political assassinations, that the civil war places upon the country's resilient democracy.

Some 50,000 people have been killed in the civil war since 1983. This is in many ways a poor person's war: The country has a volunteer army, so the children of the well-off are generally spared. In 1997 defense spending consumed 22 percent of the budget, crowding out spending on social welfare.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga came to power in 1994 as the peace candidate, but after the LTTE broke a ceasefire in 1995 she turned the army on the rebels, if only to maintain leverage for a political solution. Kumaratunga's government has been hostile to the media, filing criminal defamation suits against several journalists, restricting access to the war front and sending police to raid the offices of newspapers. In 1997 there was a clear pattern of harassment against Tamil journalists.

The government also unveiled a long-awaited draft constitution that would devolve more power to regional councils. The package, which is designed to grant Tamils greater autonomy, could be put to a popular referendum in 1998. The LTTE has already rejected the plan, as have many moderate Tamils, who say it does not give them enough autonomy. The center-right opposition United National Party says it goes too far towards creating a separate Tamil state.

Meanwhile, the war drags on. In May, the government launched its biggest military offensive yet in an effort to capture a 46-mile road, through rebel-held jungles, to the northern Jaffna Peninsula. The army captured much of the highway, but there were heavy casualties on both sides. On October 18 a truck bombing and ensuing shootout in Colombo's commercial district, which bore the hallmarks of an LTTE attack, killed 18 people.

FLAWED POLICY

Elected governments in the region have also made policy decisions that tend to keep power in the hands of the well-connected. According to the Human Development Center in Islamabad, East Asian governments spend, proportionately, an average of up to three times more on basic education than South Asian governments, which disproportionately fund higher education. Educational systems in South Asia therefore benefit society's elites at the expense of ordinary citizens. The Center also notes that South Asian governments have largely failed to enact land reforms or grassroots credit policies of the sort that helped East Asian countries develop faster and more equitably.

LOOKING TO THE COURTS

Ordinary citizens are increasingly looking to the judiciary as a check on executive power. The region's five democracies all have independent Supreme Courts, and ul-

timately this should help make politicians more accountable. In recent years India's Supreme Court has taken action on a host of corruption, human rights and environmental issues brought to its attention through public interest litigation. In Bangladesh, the High Court in April ordered the government to free four opposition leaders arrested under the Special Powers Act and to pay compensation. The same month, the Sri Lankan Supreme Court canceled a bill that would have set up a broadcasting authority with powers to regulate radio and television, calling it a serious threat to free expression.

In 1996 Pakistan's Supreme Court ruled that judicial vacancies should be filled with permanent appointments rather than temporary ones, and the appointments should be made with the advice of chief justices. Sharif has shown contempt for the judiciary, and it is too early to tell whether he will abide by these terms.

DEMOCRACY'S BENEFITS

Despite the failings of politicians, the region has benefited from democratic rule. India's free press, with some newspapers well into their second century, has helped spare it from the brutality of many nondemocratic societies, including in neighboring Communist China. In an August poll in the Delhi-based *India Today* magazine, 95 percent of the 12,000 respondents said they considered their vote "valuable." Indians decisively rejected authoritarian government when they voted Indira Gandhi out of office in 1977 after two years of emergency rule, and they do not want to go back. Despite the difficulties of consolidating democracy in Pakistan and Bangladesh, both countries are far freer now than under military rule.

Most Nepalese blame the absolute monarchy, which grew increasingly corrupt and repressive in the 1980s, for the severe neglect that has left their country as one of the ten poorest in the world. Today ethnic minorities are becoming more assertive about long-repressed rights and can freely practice their religion. Social ills such as untouchability and caste still have a crippling effect, but there is now serious discussion of these and other problems. Women are fighting for equal inheritance rights guaranteed by the constitution.

WHERE AUTOCRATS RULE

Neither Bhutan nor the Maldives have any experience with democracy, nor are they facing outside pressure for liberalization. Bhutan, which the World Wildlife Fund praises as "one of the ecological wonders of the world," is ruled by one of the world's last absolute monarchs. Political rights and civil liberties are repressed in the name of cultural preservation, and its territory is used as a rear-base by anti-Indian-militants. Rule is based on power rather than law and Nepali-speakers face continuing harassment, discrimination and cultural restrictions.

In the mid-1980s the government, dominated by the minority, Tibetan-descended Ngalong Drukpa ethnic group, increasingly viewed the Nepali-speaking community (also known as Southern Bhutanese) as a threat to its absolute power. The regime began arbitrarily tightening citizenship requirements and enforcing dress and language codes based on Drukpa culture.

This ethnic purity campaign reached a brutal peak in the early 1990s when soldiers raped and tortured ethnic Nepalese villagers, burnt their homes and forcibly expelled tens of thousands from the country. There are now some 90,000 Bhutanese

refugees in southeastern Nepal, and perhaps 15,000-20,000 more in India and elsewhere in Nepal.

Bhutan's political crisis is not an ethnic rivalry between Drukpa and Nepali speakers. Rather, it is a broad-based struggle for freedom from absolute rule. During the year authorities cracked down on an underground pro-democracy movement in the ethnic Sarchop community, a third major ethnic group, arresting more than 100 monks and civilians and closing at least 13 monastic learning centers.

In the Maldives, a string of low-lying atolls in the Indian Ocean, President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom has generally relied on a tightly-controlled political system rather than overt repression to maintain power over the past two decades, although several journalists have spent time in jail for their reporting. In November Gayoom introduced a new constitution before presidential elections scheduled for 1998. Currently parliament nominates a single candidate for the presidency who is voted on by citizens in a yes-or-no referendum. The new charter reportedly allows candidates to actively compete for parliament's nomination, probably indicating that Gayoom is confident of being approved for a fifth five-year term.

A COLD AND HOT WAR

The bilateral relationship that has the most bearing on the Subcontinent's future is obviously that between India and Pakistan. In May 1997 Indian premier I.K. Gujral and Sharif met in the Maldives in the highest level talks between the two countries in three years, the first of three held during the year. In June the countries agreed to set up eight working groups, including one dedicated to Kashmir.

But any euphoria was dampened by a June report in the *Washington Post* that India had deployed its medium range Prithvi missiles in Punjab. In early July Pakistan responded by declaring that it had test-fired its Chinese-made, locally-assembled Hataf-III missile. The two countries have fought three wars since 1947, and trade artillery rounds daily across the Siachin Glacier in Kashmir in what is, at 22,000 feet, the world's highest front. This hot and cold war has huge social costs. Defense spending sucks up a quarter of the Pakistani government's budget. The fiftieth anniversary of independence in 1997 also served as a reminder of the trauma of partition, which led to a million deaths and created permanent enmity between the countries.

ON THE EDGE

On the fringes of South Asia lie three areas battered by conflict. The seven states of northeast India, a resource-rich, strategic region awash in arms and drugs from Burma, continue to be swept by anti-government militancy and intertribal and internecine conflict. In recent decades hundreds of thousands of migrants from other parts of India and Bangladesh have settled in the region, generating local unrest over land tenure and underdevelopment. More than 40 mainly indigenous-based rebel armies are seeking either greater autonomy or independence. Guerrillas commit hundreds of killings, abductions and rapes each year, and extort millions of dollars annually from tea gardens and merchants. The army has committed human rights violations during counterinsurgency operations in Assam, Manipur and other states.

In the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, a pro-New Delhi state government that took office after controversial elections in 1996 has brought some stability to a territory where since 1989 an anti-Indian insurgency has killed some 20,000 civilians,

militants and soldiers. The central government has promised \$2 billion in development aid and has pulled soldiers out of some strategic towns in the Kashmir Valley. But soldiers continue to harass and attack journalists, ordinary citizens get caught in the crossfire between militants and security forces, and neither India nor Pakistan have indicated a willingness to include Kashmiris in their proposed bilateral talks on the territory.

The bleakest corner of South Asia is Afghanistan. The country is essentially partitioned along ethnic lines, with the ultra-conservative Taliban firmly in control of the Pashtun-dominated south but unable to wrest the far north from the local Uzbek, Tajik, Hazara and Turkmen communities. Since the Taliban took power in September 1996, fighting has displaced more than a quarter of a million people, including tens of thousands of ethnic minorities forcibly relocated by the Taliban on suspicion of loyalty to Tajik commander Ahmad Shah Masood. Taliban decrees banning women from working, except in hospitals and clinics, have created widespread hardship and sharply curtailed many female-based relief services.

Afghanistan is a failed state. The central government barely functions. Any hope for revival probably depends on talks involving a diverse group of regional players, including the United States, Iran, Russia, Uzbekistan and Pakistan. For a country that has spent much of its modern history under foreign control or influence, the future is again in the hands of outsiders.

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East Asia: A Year of Uneven Progress

Josef Silverstein

In East Asia 1996 had ended on a cautiously optimistic note: With no major international or inter-regional conflicts on the horizon and economic growth expected to continue, only the persistence of authoritarian practices in the region threatened the efforts of the peoples in several countries to strengthen freedom and democratic institutions. While the international political environment in 1997 was largely as predicted, unforeseen economic reversals in most Southeast Asian countries, together with serious environmental problems in many, challenged the unbridled optimism of government leaders in the region. As they scrambled to find help and restore their economies without changing the power structures and the political institutions in their countries, opposition leaders, often with substantial support but no effective power, continued to speak out and to work for political change to democracy and political freedom with varying degrees of success.

By far the most serious shock to East Asian stability came when, during the second half of the year, the overextended banking system and the overheated markets cracked. With plunging markets and failing banks, East Asian countries faced the prospect of widespread business failures, rising unemployment and the return of mass poverty.

This was not entirely bad for Asia's democratic prospects, since many regional leaders had used prosperity as a pretext for authoritarian rule. With the trade-off no longer credible, East Asia's liberals and democrats could argue that economic well-being and political liberty are linked.

The region received a second shock when Hun Sen, the leader of the Cambodian People's Party, seized power in Cambodia and brutally overturned the unstable political balance between himself and Norodom Ranariddh, the leader of Funcinpec. Lost in the contest between the two leaders were the international obligations and efforts to help the Cambodian people establish a viable democratic political system which would protect freedom under law, give the people a say in who would rule and a means to control their government. The coup left the United Nations and ASEAN with the responsibility for overseeing the gradual emergence of a democratic system but without a plan and real leverage to accomplish their tasks.

I

Many East Asian leaders argue that the evolving international standard is alien to their "Asian Values" and traditions; they resent pressure being put upon them to accept foreign ideas and practices which, they say, is an intrusion into their internal affairs. Many reject the priority of politics before economics. The leaders in Singapore and Malaysia are strong spokesmen for this position. They argue that a nation's economic

growth and the improvement of the people's standard of living, health, education and safety must be the first priorities and can only be achieved with a growing and expanding economy which is achieved in conjunction with the preservation of traditional values and practices. With obedience to law and the dictates of the government under strong rulers who are able to establish and maintain order, nations can develop without losing their cultural identities.

But their views are not without challenge within the region. There are untold numbers of people who are precluded by law and intimidation from speaking out and challenging the theories and pronouncements of the government leaders. Asian liberals refuse to accept the belief that international standards of freedom and human rights are alien to Asian traditions. They do not deny the importance of economic well-being. They, too, care for cultures and traditions; but, they argue, these are being reshaped as their nations encounter new and different ideas and practices coming from abroad. Many believe that the economic, social and cultural goals pursued by a nation can best be achieved within a political system under law where power belongs to the people. They support the Declaration of Human Rights and work for the adoption of the two International Human Rights Covenants which translate their ideals into international law.

II.

During the past twelve months, both progress and setbacks were experienced in the struggle for political freedom in the Philippines and Thailand; in Burma, Brunei, Vietnam and Laos no progress was made, while in Cambodia what little progress had been made until midyear was wiped out by Hun Sen's ruthless quest for power. In the remaining states, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia, the constitutional forms of political freedom remained but were limited in actual practice. Corruption and cronyism in Malaysia and Indonesia and the historical unequal distribution of wealth and power in the Philippines gave economic opportunities and benefits to a small circle of relatives and close associates of the rulers while the rest of the population gained indirect benefit from the general growth of the economy.

Since generalizations such as these do not tell the whole story, a review of the efforts by the peoples in the several nations to gain and enjoy political freedom is necessary to complete the picture.

III.

In the Philippines, the central issue relating to freedom turned on the efforts of friends and supporters of President Ramos to amend the constitution to allow him to run for a second term. This provoked fear amongst the people that any change in the constitution could provide a basis for a determined president to abuse his power and, like Marcos in the 1970s, transform democracy into dictatorship.

The present constitution was written in 1986, in the aftermath of the "People's Revolution." It limits the president to a single seven-year term.

Under Ramos' leadership, the economy has been growing and political changes he instituted have begun to bear fruit. Believing that there still was much to be done, his supporters, with his public approval, began their movement to amend the constitution. As the effort went forward, opposition quickly formed under political, religious and business leaders. In the face of opposition coming from all quarters of the

nation and a planned mass political rally against constitutional change, Ramos declared that he had no intention of running in 1998. This ended the movement to amend the constitution and political peace was restored.

During 1997, nationwide elections for village leaders were carried out in 77 provinces. Impartial observers judged them to be the most peaceful on record.

Freedom of speech, association and assembly were generally well respected. The press in the Philippines is one of the freest in the region, and the people exercise their rights of speech and peaceful assembly without interference. The nation continued its good record of protecting labor, including those employed overseas.

Offsetting these successes were continuing reports of murders and disappearances. The Commission on Human Rights, an independent government agency, reported that police and members of the security forces were involved in extra-judicial killings and a variety of other illegal activities. Private security forces in the employ of wealthy and criminal organizations were reported to be involved in killings, disappearances and various forms of extortion.

In Thailand, there were two contradictory trends in the progress of freedom; one related to constitutional change while the other dealt with the treatment of refugees seeking asylum.

Since the political crisis of 1992 when the military attempted to seize power, democracy and freedom have been threatened by corruption, weak administrations unable to cope with the problems facing the nation and cabinets filled with political leaders who placed personal gains ahead of the national interest.

In 1995, parliament created a committee to prepare a draft constitution for adoption by the legislature. As its work neared completion in 1997, the nation faced a major financial crisis and a slow-down in the economy. In this environment, legislators and members of the Cabinet mobilized supporters both in and outside of parliament to back or oppose changing the fundamental law. With weak and indecisive leadership, it remained for the head of the army, who also was a member of the Senate, to speak out in favor of the constitutional draft and consolidate support for its adoption while ending threats of a military coup. Outside the parliament, peaceful public demonstrations, both for and against constitutional change, were a constant reminder to the legislators how concerned the public was about this issue.

The draft was adopted in October 1997. It will strengthen freedom in Thailand. It declares that the people are the source of sovereignty; the right of assembly is the basis of civil society; individual rights and freedom including press freedom are guaranteed; no state religion is established; both chambers of parliament shall be elected with an increase in the number of seats in the lower house; and elections shall be controlled by an Election Commission. To improve the quality of representation, all MPs must have university degrees and to reduce corruption cabinet members must resign their seats in parliament. At the same time, these changes will weaken the traditional patron-client system and make it possible for modern political parties to grow and have a greater role in mobilizing the people and leading the nation.

The advances of freedom and democracy in Thailand were not matched in its treatment of refugees from Burma seeking to escape persecution and brutality at the hands of the Burma army. Since 1984, Thailand has given protection without official acknowledgment to civilians seeking escape from the civil wars in Burma. It established camps and allowed nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to provide food, medi-

cine and other help. In 1994, Thailand changed its policy from extending sanctuary to closing its borders and refusing asylum.

In 1996, the Thai government hardened its policy by designating refugees inside government camps as "displaced persons" and those living outside as "illegal immigrants" and attempted to force the latter to return home. Meanwhile, Burma army units and their Karen Buddhist allies illegally entered Thai territory to attack the refugees and force their return. Thailand protested, but gave the victims little protection. Despite being unwelcome, Burma refugees continue to come. In 1997, even though fighting continued in Burma, Thailand declared it a safe area and said it would disallow new asylum seekers after June. Before the deadline, it relented.

Thailand's actions violate the widely recognized customary international law principle of *nonrefoulement*. Although it is not a signatory to the Treaty on the Status of Refugees, it has affirmed its principles.

On its eastern border, where Thailand has had an agreement with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees since 1979, it continues to permit Cambodians, escaping war at home, to enter and take refuge. The refugees are designated "displaced persons" rather than "illegal immigrants" and enjoy freedom and protection.

The influx of thousands of refugees places a heavy burden on Thailand, but the treatment of Burma refugees could be improved if the Thai government shielded them from Burma army predators and permitted NGOs to give them assistance.

The Thai people continue to enjoy freedom of speech, press and assembly. Labor has freedom to organize, but there are legal restrictions on its right to strike.

Burma is a lawless society and has been since the military seized power on September 18, 1988. It governed through the military created State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) until November 15, 1997, when it changed its name to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), and has suppressed all freedoms and rights formerly protected under law.

During the past year, it made no effort either to transfer power to the National League for Democracy (NLD), which won the 1990 national election, or honor any of the UN Resolutions on Burma which call for the unconditional release of all political prisoners and urge SLORC/SPDC, "to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and assembly, the right to fair trial and the protection of the rights of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, and to put an end to violations of the right to life and integrity of the human being, to the practice of torture, abuse of women, forced labor and forced relocation, and to enforced disappearances and summary executions." Despite signing the Forced Labor Convention, Burma has not halted the practice; and, although it signed the four Geneva Convention, it has not honored its obligations under Common Article 3 which relates to giving international relief organizations access to civilians caught in the midst of internal warfare.

As 1996 drew to a close there was repression of the NLD and its leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the closing of the universities and the arrest of demonstrators as the students called for the restoration of democracy and the right to reestablish campus student unions. Throughout 1997, most universities remained closed.

Burma's admission to ASEAN in 1997 produced no real advances in persuading SLORC/SPDC to begin a serious discussion with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other NLD leaders or to implement the results of the 1990 election. The National Conven-

tion (NC), which SLORC/SPDC created in 1992 to draw up the guiding principles for a future constitution, remains tightly controlled by the military rulers, denying freedom of speech and assembly to its appointed delegates. The NLD withdrew from the NC in 1995 because of the way the convention was run and its representatives' inability to speak, assemble and discuss issues with the NC and with nonmembers outside. It strongly objected to the NC leaders' insistence that the delegates adopt principles guaranteeing permanent military leadership of Burma. As 1997 drew to a close, there were no reports that the NC had met and concluded its work.

SLORC/SPDC held no discussion of political issues with the NLD and the ethnic minorities. Restrictions against public gatherings of more than five persons remain in effect; religious groups occasionally held processions and public meetings, but they were monitored and broken up if political issues were raised and discussed. Only the SLORC/SPDC-created and sponsored Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) demonstrated when the SLORC/SPDC mobilized it to action. There are a few government-registered trade associations and professional groups who are permitted to meet.

Freedom of the press does not exist. In November 1997, SLORC/SPDC increased its capability to interfere with private communications through the creation of a high-tech surveillance center where it can eavesdrop on phone conversations throughout the country and intercept faxes and e-mail.

Most barriers to a free and fair public trial remain in place. While most nonpolitical trials are held in public, political cases are tried inside of prison compounds and are not open to the public. Defense lawyers in criminal cases are permitted to cross-examine witnesses but not in political trials. Prisoners, whether convicted in a court or jailed without trial, continue to be imprisoned under inhumane conditions, are forced to perform hard labor, whether physically able or not, and given inadequate food and drink, medical attention and medications. SLORC/SPDC continues to disallow international inspections of prisons. In 1995, it denied the International Committee of the Red Cross' request to investigate jails and the condition of prisoners; as a result, the Red Cross closed its offices and withdrew from Burma. It prevents the UN Special Rapporteur from entering and investigating human rights and political conditions, which the UN Human Rights Commission charged him to do.

In the border areas the Burma Army brutalizes civilians whether or not they are involved in fighting or supporting opposition groups. Men, women and children are forced to porter for the army and walk ahead of military units in suspected mine areas; women are raped and physically abused; all are forced to labor without pay and subjected to extra-judicial killings. Many who seek to escape fail because the army blocks the border and places pressure on its neighbors to return them.

In the Tenasserim, where the gas line crossing the Burma-Thai border is being built, roads are constructed and railway track is laid with the use of forced labor; in addition, workers and their families are subjected to illegal demands by soldiers for money and food.

On the western frontier, Burma Muslims continue to seek asylum in neighbor states because of religious and other forms of persecution. In the north, where the Burma army is at war with the Chin National Front, it wages a religious war against its enemy and rewards soldiers who marry Chin women and get them to convert from Christianity to Buddhism. It also destroys churches and erects pagodas on the sites where the

churches stood.

After nine years of SLORC/SPDC rule, Burma remains a prison fashioned out of a once free and democratic state.

The peoples of Brunei also are without political freedom. They, too, live under a dictatorship where the Sultan rules firmly but not oppressively and shares the wealth of the nation with the people. Brunei has a constitution but, in 1962, the Sultan used a provision to take full executive powers; since then he has renewed his authority regularly.

Although there are no restrictions on free speech, assembly and the press, citizens use them cautiously and sparingly. They have neither attempted to change their government and restore the full constitution nor to criticize the Sultan's actions. Since 1992, citizens have been permitted to elect village chiefs by secret ballot.

An Internal Security Act permits the government to detain suspects without trial for up to two years. Police can make arrests without warrants in extraordinary circumstances.

Islam is the state religion, but other religions are practiced. According to Islam, as practiced in Brunei, women are not equal to men in the areas of divorce, inheritance and custody of children. They can hold government jobs and serve in the armed forces. Under the Brunei Nationality Act, citizenship is passed through males only; children whose fathers are not Brunei citizens are considered stateless; they are permitted to live in Brunei and are given Government documents when they travel.

Unlike in Burma, there is little or no demand for the restoration of democracy; most of the people seem satisfied to forego it in exchange for the economic and social benefits provided by their benevolent Sultan.

Between the extremes of the nations reviewed lie Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. With a strong leader and government in Indonesia, a single dominant party in Singapore and a dominant party in a multi-party Malaysia, these authoritarian administrative states are cloaked in the dress of democracy. Freedoms exist but are limited. All three states have constitutions which call for periodic elections. But the governing elite have been in power for so long that, in practice, elections have been transformed into popular ratification of past performance and the award of new mandates to continue rather than as contests between candidates, ideas and policies with the voters deciding the outcome.

In Singapore and Indonesia, there were parliamentary elections in 1997. In Singapore, the ruling party, the People's Action Party (PAP) has been elected to office continuously since 1959. With its record of achievements in transforming the nation from poverty and backwardness to a modern, well-run state where the people enjoy a high standard of living, the PAP contests elections as though its removal from power would threaten internal security and the nation's advances. It discourages potential and intimidates actual opposition by filing law suits over statements made during the campaign which courts have judged as slanderous, defamatory and/or false and award large financial penalties. It also threatens voters with the loss of services and/or improvements in the government housing estates, where more than 50 percent reside, if opposition candidates are elected in their constituencies.

In the recent election, the PAP won 47 uncontested seats, more than a majority of the seats in parliament, before the votes were cast. Still, seeking overwhelming approval for its past performance, it campaigned as though the outcome of the election

was in doubt. During the campaign it used its tactics of intimidation and threat. In the end, it won all but two seats and increased its percentage of the vote over the previous election.

In Indonesia, parliamentary elections have no real political effect, since the President is chosen by the People's Consultative Assembly, a congress of 1,000, which consists of the elected members of parliament and a majority of nominated members. Suharto has been the nation's leader since he led a military coup in 1965. Over the past three decades he has reduced the parties from nine to three and tightly controls them. While elections do not effect power, they provide the people with political theater and a means of expressing their sentiments.

In the election of 1997, the contest was won by Golkar, the government group which, technically, is not a party but an organization of functional groups and civil servants. Unlike in the Singapore election, the public expressed its discontents with government interference in the leadership of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), corruption, election fraud and other pent-up complaints through demonstrations and riots. Despite the public displays, Golkar won with 74 percent of the vote.

In Malaysia, parties are based on race and the state is governed by a coalition of parties known as the National Front (NF). The United Malay National Organization (UMNO), which led the nation to independence in 1957, continues to lead through the NF. Its leader is always the Prime Minister, and the party has the largest number of seats in parliament. Elections are taken seriously—there are strong memories of the 1969 election which reduced UMNO's margin of victory and triggered the most serious racial riot since independence. UMNO controls the distribution of constituencies between its coalition partners and together they campaign as though the outcome is in doubt.

In all three countries, governments have wide powers, and freedom is sharply curtailed. All have some form of internal security law which allows the government to detain people arbitrarily and restrict their freedom of travel and association. They also have powers to limit freedom of speech and the press. While there is social peace and acceptance of the political system in Singapore and Malaysia, in Indonesia there are restrictions on freedom which the government does not hesitate to enforce. For two decades, Indonesia has used various forms of repression and violence, including extra-judicial killings, to deny the people of East Timor the right of self-determination as they force the annexation of their land.

These countries justify their use of restrictions as necessary protection for the maintenance of internal security, improving their economies and raising the standard of living. Consistent with the common belief held by the leaders of the three countries that economics must precede democracy there is little likelihood of seeing real improvements in freedom so long as that theory informs policy.

Vietnam and Laos remain socialist states. Following the fall of communism in most East European states, they began to modify their economic and political systems. Both continue the dominance of one party: the Communist Party (VCP) in Vietnam and the People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) in Laos. The common goal in both countries is "real" democracy, which is defined as decisions made in the interests of the people, not necessarily with their consent. Both adopted constitutions—in Vietnam in 1992 and in Laos in 1991—confirm the primacy of the party in a political system. Both nations have elected legislatures and provide protection for some rights.

Citizens have the right to contest for seats in parliament, but each candidate must first be approved by the party. Candidates can be nonparty members, and, in the 1992 Laos election, a few actually were elected. The people do not have the right to form opposition parties or change the form of their government.

The constitutions of both countries provide freedoms of speech, the press, assembly, association, privacy and religion; but in practice, they are severely limited. Prison conditions are harsh. Although the law prohibits physical abuse, brutality and psychological coercion are reportedly still in use by the police. Medical treatment often is withheld from prisoners. An administrative court system in Vietnam was created in 1996 to deal with complaints about abuse and corrupt officials, but it is unclear how widely it is used and whether or not it has real power to respond to complaints.

The two communist states still lag far behind the noncommunist states in Southeast Asia in the advance and protection of freedom and human rights.

IV.

Freedom in Southeast Asia in 1997 advanced in several ways. It was strengthened in the Philippines and Thailand when used by the people in their reactions to constitutional crises. It was weakened by the growing flood of noncombatant refugees seeking asylum in neighboring states, only to find themselves unwelcome and even being driven back. The unforeseen financial crisis and economic downturn tested nations in a different way: whether they could solve the problems within the existing political systems, with no change in the freedoms and rights of the people, or whether they needed to devise stronger and more restrictive policies to restore their nations' economic health. As the year closed, there were no clear answers.

These issues will persist in 1998. Solving the financial and economic problems will become the first priority in most nations. Democrats will find fewer allies in their fight unless they can demonstrate that free societies are better equipped to solve the economic problems than those under authoritarian government. In the debate on this question, it will not do the defenders of freedom much good to remind their opponents that the downturn also came to strong and restrictive states despite authoritarian governments and restraints on freedom. Defenders will argue that more restrictions and less freedom might well have prevented it. Faced with loss of jobs and income, the public, in general, will defer to their leaders and hope the course they choose will be the right one.

The refugee issue also will persist. With a steady flood of people seeking to escape from Burma, the already overcrowded border areas of Thailand will become even more inhospitable than they have been. Whatever freedom refugees legally have to escape oppression and seek asylum will not be meaningful so long as the paper right is not given substance and recognition by both governments. It remains to be seen if the other members of ASEAN become sufficiently alarmed by the battle between one army trying to keep the refugees from leaving and another trying to keep them from entering to try and help solve it. Its members may finally come to realize that they must bring pressure upon the state which is forcing its citizens to flee and disrupting the region. ASEAN intellectuals and leaders began discussing a change in the policy of constructive engagement to constructive involvement in mid-1997. Grasping the refugee issue may be the way to begin.

FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY IN "ONE CHINA, TWO SYSTEMS": IS THIS A MODEL FOR TAIWAN?

A new era in Chinese political life began on July 1, 1997 when the People's Republic of China resumed sovereignty over Hong Kong. While the event most immediately and dramatically affected the lives of the peoples in Hong Kong, its reach extended well beyond the territories returned to China. If there was euphoria amongst most of the people in Beijing and Hong Kong, there also was concern behind their smiles and worry on faces in Taiwan. All, in varying degrees, asked two questions: whether or not political freedom and the promise of democracy will accompany Hong Kong's return; what effect it will have upon political life in the People's Republic of China and will it, in anyway, influence the future of Taiwan-PRC relations?

In the few months since Hong Kong returned to China, Beijing has remained steadfast to its word: the British promises of a free and democratic Hong Kong were replaced by the reality of a PRC-installed administrative state which is more akin to the way Hong Kong was governed before the arrival of Governor Chris Patten than to the democratic state he envisioned and promised. Those elected in 1995 to serve in the new legislative council and the parties they represented were consigned to the "dustbin of history." More important to the growing middle-class and business community, the financial, banking, legal and judicial systems remain intact the press remains free, if self-censorship is overlooked. In short, business is still the business of Hong Kong and the political institutions which support it are at work giving the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region an aura of continuity with the authoritarian system of 1994 rather than of change.

In the PRC, there has been no real change toward freedom and democracy in the past year. While a willing community of foreign investors, scholars and commentators and a growing class of Chinese middle-class and entrepreneurs continue to repeat the mantra—business and foreign investments will bring in their wake a freer and more democratic China—a repressive dictatorial state continues to rule and ignore criticism from abroad.

Power in China still resides in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP); it controls government at all levels through the instruments of power—the military, police and bureaucracy. The party spokesmen still stress order and stability under its leadership. If the Constitution acknowledges freedom of speech and the press, in reality, the people still have no rights to express their disagreement, to form rival parties, hold public rallies and contest for power. Opposition parties nominally exist on paper, as they have since the PRC came into existence, but all are pledged to follow the leadership of the CCP.

On January 1, 1997, changes in the Criminal Procedures Law came into effect, bringing it into line with international norms. But there are reliable reports of continuing extra-judicial killings, disappearances, torture and degrading punishment. The PRC does not permit independent monitoring of prisons or reeducation-through-labor camps. The government continues to employ its "strike-hard"—executions—of convicted criminals through speedy high court reviews of sentences. Although the state denies that it holds political prisoners, thousands continue to be held for counterrevolutionary crimes. The 1988 Law on State Secrets continues to be employed as the justification for the denial of public trials.

Freedom of religion also is a constitutional guaranteed right; but in practice, it is limited to government sanctioned religious groups and registered places of worship. In 1996, dozens of underground churches, mosques, temples and seminaries were closed, while leaders and itinerant teachers were arrested and investigated over long periods of time.

Economic development has brought some measure of freedom in forming businesses, employment and worker mobility. Social control through a system of identity cards has weakened as a "floating population," estimated at 100 million, move to new job opportunities. But there is a social cost: Movement to new areas causes the loss of resident status and full access to social services and education. These can be purchased, but at a high cost. Restrictions on travel abroad for students, however, have been eased. According to the 1995 census, the 55 ethnic minorities represented nearly nine percent of the total population. Government policy toward most is to give preferential treatment on matters of marriage, family planning, university admissions and employment to them. Under its policies, the standard of living of most has risen.

All this seems not to be the policy of the PRC in Tibet. There it continues its repression of the indigenous people, commits widespread human rights abuses, intensifies its hold over religion through control of the monasteries, restrictions and denial of freedom of speech and press. It does not tolerate religious manifestations that advocate Tibetan independence; it rejects the government in exile of the Dalai Lama and his nominee for the office of Panchen Lama. It has opened membership in the CCP to Tibetans who adhere to the Party's code of atheism. Unlike its policies toward other minorities, the PRC has downgraded the use of Tibetan in education. At the Tibetan University, all but one of the seventeen courses on history and language are taught in Chinese, even though the university was established to increase the study of Tibetan language and culture in Tibetan.

It is PRC policy to encourage non-Tibetan migration into Tibet, especially to the capital, Lhasa, where a third of the population is non-Tibetan; this migrant population supports itself by establishing businesses, filling positions in the slowly emerging development projects and becoming a permanent part of the modernizing section of the city and towns.

Across the Straits of Taiwan, a second model of Chinese society is emerging. Taiwan has transformed itself from an authoritarian regime to a democratic polity. There, the president is elected by popular vote; he appoints the premier who is confirmed by the members of a popularly elected legislature. The judiciary is an independent third branch of government. There are three dominant political parties; the Kuomintang is the largest and most powerful but holds only a two-seat majority in the parliament. While the armed forces and police play a prominent part in maintaining law and order, they are under civilian control.

In this political environment there generally is respect for human rights, although occasionally there is police brutality, some evidence of political and personal pressure on the judiciary and some restrictions on the freedom of assembly and association. Prisons are overcrowded. Violence against women and prostitution exist.

Taiwan is making rapid strides in its political transformation while at the same time enjoying a growing economy and a rising standard of living.

As 1997 closed, the two models of Chinese society and politics stood out in bold relief; it seems clear that the ingestion of Hong Kong is unlikely to modify or weaken

the Communist Party's hold on the PRC; Hong Kong will gradually fit into China's authoritarian polity with a minimum of resistance so long as the economic sector remains free and contributes to China's wealth and power. Taiwan surely cannot misunderstand the message of the drama that is unfolding on the mainland.

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Africa: Democracy as Survival

Thomas R. Lansner

A wave of shockingly violent but sadly unsurprising conflicts rolled across the heart of Africa in 1997. Their pervasiveness and their predictability—most were long seen coming—raised difficult questions of democratic development, the integrity of colonial frontiers, and intervention in countries' internal affairs from within Africa and beyond. War and domestic violence rippled through the continent from Kenya's Indian Ocean resorts to the Republic of Congo's Atlantic oilfields. It included ethnic insurgencies in Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, full-scale civil wars in Congo, Sudan and Zaire and renewed rebellion in southern Senegal, and was marked in several instances by decreasing tolerance and broad mistreatment of refugees.

The downfall of Zairean dictator Mobutu Sese Seko was doubtless the year's most dramatic event. Zaire received its new name, Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa), after the rebel Alliance of Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL), led by Laurent Kabila, seized the capital, Kinshasa, in May. Mobutu's army crumbled before a stunningly rapid rebel advance. The Central African kleptocrat had ruled for over three decades, a creature of the cynical Cold War calculus that evoked Western support for leaders willing to oppose socialism, no matter how brutal or corrupt their rule. He died of prostate cancer in Moroccan exile in September, leaving an estimated \$10 billion fortune that Congolese authorities are seeking to recover from Switzerland and other countries.

But Mobutu's demise offered only a too-brief glimmer of hope that the country's new rulers would seek to mend the deep wounds that years of dictatorship had inflicted on the country. Kabila has promised presidential and legislative elections in April 1999, but the new regime's willingness to allow genuine democratic change is so far uncertain. It is narrowly based and strongly influenced by Rwandan and Congolese Tutsi who helped launch the rebellion and by Katangans from southeastern Congo who together dominate the new government. All political parties and public demonstrations have been banned, and the independent media harassed. Reports of massacres of thousands of Hutu refugees and other killings continued. Ethnic fighting again flared late in 1997 in the still-troubled northeastern Congo.

QUIET THAT IS NOT PEACE

Kabila's emerging strongman rule raises little optimism for his country's prospects for positive change and genuine development. The apparent quiet that authoritarian regimes may temporarily impose is far from the peace for which it is too often mis-

taken. Strength to suppress violence is too often falsely equated with stability in Africa's multi-ethnic societies. But Africa's authoritarian, opaque and utterly unaccountable regimes are inherently unstable. Barring popular participation in governance ensures the relative or utter failure of sorely-needed development. Blocking avenues to democratic expression leaves only violence as a viable avenue for dissent. Africa's strongmen have never brought long-term peace, and Kabila's repression, like Mobutu's before him, will likely only provoke an eventual paroxysm of violence.

International policies towards Africa should not promote the expedient cycle of temporary, repressive quiet that inevitably evokes violent response. Hopes for sustained democratic development in Africa must be premised on five interlocking pillars: respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; accountability and transparency and the rule of law; promotion of popular participation through stronger civil societies; pro-democratization and open markets policies; and an end to external interference that restricts and distorts Africa's growth. Realization of all these foundations will be strongly encouraged by open and independent media. Absence of any will hinder and perhaps cripple lasting long-term progress.

LESSONS UNLEARNED

If the above recipe appears obvious, its lessons are still too rarely applied. International financial assistance and political support, as will be discussed below, should be firmly targeted toward countries whose rulers are pursuing policies built on these fundamental pillars. Encouragement of good governance, effective economic management and human rights under the rule of law should be the basis for positive relations with and assistance to African states. The United States should so shape its own policies and urge its allies and other states to do the same. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's December tour of sub-Saharan Africa was a welcome sign of greater U.S. Government attention to the region. However, by lavishing praise upon and promising aid to authoritarian and indeed dictatorial rulers, America's top diplomat did a grave disservice to Africa's democrats, who have for decades fought and suffered for the same ideals America calls its own—in recent years often with explicit U.S. encouragement and assistance.

The message of Secretary Albright's tour—and for President Clinton's scheduled March visit to sub-Saharan Africa—must not be that the United States no longer supports protection of basic human rights and democratization, as is being interpreted in some quarters. Security concerns are certainly a legitimate and sometimes most immediate piece of the larger and perplexing puzzle of international policy towards Africa. Yet backing "strongmen" may buy temporary quiet, but cannot build institutions that promote long-term peace and prosperity.

Close on the heels of Albright's entourage was French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, who visited several Francophone countries in West and Central Africa, where for decades the French government has sent its soldiers to prop unprofitable client states among its former colonies. Jospin pledged a shift from French paternalism to genuine partnership, but the impact of a lower-profile Africa policy is not yet clear. Paris is still smarting from the overthrow of its genocidal Rwandan client regime in 1994 and its loss of influence in Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo) after Mobutu Sese Seko's ouster in May. Eager to retain control of the neighboring Republic of Congo's oil resources, France reportedly strongly backed the return of Congo-

lese dictator Denis Sassou-Nguesso, who had garnered only 17 percent of the vote in open elections in 1992. France's revised post-imperial policy may feature fewer overt interventions but seems a shift more in style than substance; Paris's blood-for-oil invoices may in future be paid only in African blood.

GOOD NEWS, AND BAD

Not all news from Africa was bad. A tenuous peace took hold after elections in Liberia, and democratic gains were further consolidated in a few countries like Benin, Botswana, Mozambique and South Africa. Free market economic reform in many countries is unleashing entrepreneurial energy and attracting investment to produce sustained growth that has outstripped burgeoning populations for the first time in decades. Increased access to information through the Internet and other new communications technologies across the continent is enhancing development opportunities and making suppression of open societies more difficult.

But transitions to properly elected governments were endangered in the Central African Republic, Madagascar, Mali, Zambia and elsewhere, and in Sierra Leone destroyed utterly by a mutinous soldiery. Authoritarian rulers refined the art of draping themselves in democracy's trappings to nominally legitimate their rule, but without building civil institutions that firmly root the rule of law and respect for basic rights—and which would make their personalized rule untenable. In Algeria, Chad, Gambia and Niger, soldier-presidents have barely paused to strip their epaulets before declaring themselves "statesmen." It is an example Nigerian military junta chief General Sani Abacha may seek to emulate in elections now set for October 1998 in Africa's most populous nation.

ELECTORAL MASQUERADES

The international community is too prepared to accept stage-managed electoral masquerades that have entrenched opaque and utterly unaccountable regimes in several countries mentioned above as well as Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Cameroon, Gabon, Mauritania and Kenya. At the first instance, this is a denial of an internationally-guaranteed fundamental freedom. It is further a proven formula for fomenting conflicts that cause immense human suffering, sap economic vitality, deter investment and divert resources desperately needed for development to war-making and merely temporary relief for millions of refugees. Supporting democratization within a constitutional framework of the rule of law should not be dismissed as merely the imposition of Western values. Even within an African cultural tradition of collective and individual responsibilities as well as rights, the principle of fair, equal and consistent application of law serves as an important prophylactic against the cycle of repression and resistance that has for decades torn African societies, as well as a form of preventive diplomacy and a persuasive inducement to investment.

Open elections are necessary but not sufficient to implant a civic culture that promotes rights and popular participation. Even the most honest polls can produce a majoritarian tyranny. The prerequisite of civil peace for genuine development demands the broadest possible representation and fair accommodation within government of a society's different elements. Regimes that cannot accomplish this basic task, be they democratically elected or installed at gunpoint, will never serve their people well. In some instances, this seems of little concern to the outside world, especially for com-

panies driven by short-term commercial gain or countries seeking "strategic" influence to control natural resources or merely to bolster national pride.

CONDITIONING AID

Establishing democratic institutions is no quick or easy task, especially in countries with low educational and literacy levels and histories of repressive rule. But it is the cornerstone for long-term domestic peace and Africa's best chance to achieve sustainable development. Growing donor intolerance of corruption, mismanagement and poor governance is leading to increased conditionality on development assistance, as demonstrated by the International Monetary Fund's August refusal to release over \$200 million in loans to Kenya after it failed to address endemic corruption. Applying this policy more broadly would allow a greater proportion of diminishing international aid to reach governments that use it well. Drought in several areas (that might be intensified by the 1997-98 *El Nino*) and war across Central Africa diminished Africa's overall growth rate in 1997. But results of competent administration may be seen in several countries still enjoying healthy economic expansion by pursuing liberalization and privatization that enable local entrepreneurs and farmers—and foreign investors—to help themselves as they help grow the economy.

Conditioning grants, loans and other assistance is sometimes denounced as external interference in the domestic affairs of a recipient nation. But demands for accountable and competent administration may be better viewed as a form of collateral against funds disbursed. Most African countries need extensive debt relief to stand any chance of even playing catch-up with the world economy, relief they will not receive—and in any case could not use well—without implementing more open economies. No government or institution should shy from encouraging policies that promote peace and prevent kleptocracy—and at the same time protect the investment they are making in Africa's development. Africa is currently attracting less than three percent of international investment; making their countries more attractive for investors must be an urgent priority for Africa's leaders.

Arguments over how best to maintain provision of social services and reduce poverty while liberalizing economies are contentious. International finance officials imposing structural adjustment austerity should be fully aware of the human impact of such shock therapy. But the higher levels of well-targeted and honestly utilized international assistance that could best address these basic human needs are no longer forthcoming. Programs that promote civic education, popular participation in governance and the growth of civil society can help make better use of available resources. International assistance to build independent judiciaries, open media and other democratic institutions should be a perennial priority even in repressive lands. This is for socioeconomic reasons as well as to promote civil liberties, for such institutions provide the accountability and transparency that helps ensure scarce resources are not squandered.

For the foreseeable future, the companion to efforts to improve governance and management will be official promotion of increased private trade and investment initiatives in Africa, a policy promoted by the United States at the June G-7 summit in Denver. In a post-Cold War world in which Africa's strategic importance is marginalized, the U.S. is increasingly wary of any large-scale intervention in Africa. The failed and costly 1992-94 effort at nation-building in Somalia has left a profound

distaste for hands-on military engagement. Focusing on trade and investment is the de facto adoption of a policy of helping those who also help themselves by rewarding countries most able to establish conditions of domestic tranquillity, administrative consistency and legal predictability that private enterprise requires and foreign investors demands.

External involvement by powers East and West in Africa's conflicts is not new. Angola is struggling still to resolve a civil war fanned for years as a Cold War proxy conflict. Ethiopia and Somalia exchanged their American and Soviet sponsors but continued battling each other in the mid-1970s. African states are also deeply engaged in each others' many domestic conflicts. Eritrea, Ethiopia and Uganda support (with U.S. assistance) the guerrilla war against Sudan's Islamist regime, which responds in kind by aiding rebel groups in those countries. Rwanda and Angola sent troops to help oust long-serving Zairian dictator Mobutu. Angolan forces also invaded the Republic of Congo to seal the defeat of democratically-elected President Pascal Lissouba at the climax of a four-month civil war in October.

AFRICAN SELF-HELP?

How Africa chooses to help itself is also crucial. Most aid to Africa goes to resolving man-made disasters resulting from war and civil strife. Africa's own efforts to avert or dampen such conflicts remain weak. Conflict resolution has long suffered from lack of enforcement mechanisms and sometimes transparent insincerity. Nigerian-led West African peacekeepers helped guide Liberia through peaceful elections in July, but only after prolonging the agony of that country's civil war for several years. A similarly-constituted force is pressuring Sierra Leone's army junta to allow the return of the civilian government it ousted in April—the Nigerian generals' apparent message being that coups by *junior* army officers in the region will not be tolerated. Francophone African troops backed by a French army garrison are maintaining a tenuous peace in the Central African Republic, but have been accused of serious human rights abuses in the process.

During her six-nation African tour in December, U.S. Secretary of State Albright emphasized African self-help programs, including an Africa Crisis Response Initiative peacekeeping force proposed by the U.S. in 1994. Creation of a continental peacekeeping force has made little headway, even as American soldiers traveled to Africa to train units of Malawi's, Senegal's, Togo's and Uganda's armies in peacekeeping duties in 1997 (although the Uganda battalion was soon dispatched to fight domestic rebels in the west of that country). Serious obstacles to the multi-national force include a lack of consensus on what conditions would trigger interventions, who would order action and importantly, who would pay for it. No institutional peacekeeping framework exists, although *ad hoc* coalitions may continue to meet specific challenges in small or weak states.

In December, African attorneys-general and justice ministers agreed at an Addis Ababa meeting to establish a permanent African court on human rights. The court will be based on the Charter of the African Human and Peoples' Rights, which is ratified by all 53 members of the Organization of African Unity. The court's jurisdiction, however, is not yet defined, and its legal and effective power to enforce any rulings if it becomes operational are uncertain.

Where African cooperation is improving is in the economic sphere, as wider pref-

ential trade zones are established and the vision of a broader African common market beckons. The East African Community of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda is reviving after two decades in abeyance. Serious efforts to build trading blocs in Southern and West Africa are also taking off.

CONTINENTAL REVIEW

The overview above should neither evoke readers' sense of "Afro-pessimism" nor instill a sense of futility in facing the continent's vast problems. The success of some countries in stimulating economic growth and practicing good governance and tolerance—in societies as diverse as those wracked by terrible conflict—proves Africa's challenges are not intractable. Addressing them, however, requires a humanity and humility that few African leaders have exhibited, and which the outside world has too little encouraged. A review of the year's events in a number of countries outlines some positive as well as many troubling developments.

RULE OF THE GUN

Events across Africa amply demonstrated the immense suffering and waste of human and economic resources that wars have visited on Africa, and the increasingly overt involvement of African states in each others' conflicts. Among the countries worst affected were Zaire, now Congo-Kinshasa, discussed above, and:

Algeria, for a sixth year wracked by civil war and ghastly violence that has claimed about 80,000 lives. Severe official censorship and an Islamist murder campaign against journalists precludes accurate reporting and clouds comprehension of the conflict. Islamist radical groups are principal perpetrators of grisly massacres of men, women and children, but attacks in government-controlled areas raise questions regarding some assailants' identities. Human rights groups report that security forces are also responsible for gross abuses. A series of elections are returning the structures of representative government but Islamist and military hard-liners seem unable to approach genuine compromise. October municipal elections under blanket security returned sweeping victories for the government-backed National Democratic Rally party but likely did little to promote peace. The polls excluded the main Islamic opposition groups and were marked by irregularities that elicited bitter protests from even the legal moderate opposition parties.

Burundi, which suffered massive human rights violations as both majority Hutu and minority Tutsi extremists blocked tentative moves towards settlement of the country's ongoing civil war, which has taken nearly 200,000 lives since 1993. The savage military campaign against Hutu guerrillas is encouraged by Tutsi chauvinists who refuse to share power with Hutu who comprise about 85 percent of the country's seven million people. Most Hutus have been driven from the capital, Bujumbura, and as many as 400,000 have been forced from their rural homes to relocation camps where abysmal conditions include disease and malnutrition. Sanctions to pressure the country's Tutsi-dominated military to negotiate a new power-sharing arrangement with the Hutu majority have been porous. A Paris meeting between Tutsi representatives and the main armed Hutu opposition party in September kindled slight hope for serious negotiations.

Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), where elected President Pascal Lissouba was ousted in October by troops loyal to ex-military dictator Denis Sassou-Nguesso with Angolan military backing. Sassou-Nguesso, who received less than one-fifth of the vote in 1992 presidential elections, has declared himself again president with clear political backing from France. Ten thousand or more people were killed in fighting among "Cobra," "Zulu" and "Ninja" militias. The civil conflict is effectively between northern ethnic groups loyal to Sassou-Nguesso and southerners backing Lissouba and other leaders. Angolan intervention assured Sassou-Nguesso's victory. Beyond its immediate human suffering, the civil war will leave long-term damage to relations among the country's diverse ethnic groups and has gravely harmed the country's economic development. Now in exile, Lissouba claimed that French anger at his award of oil contracts to American companies caused Paris to support the ex-dictator's bloody return to power, and has filed suit against France's ELF oil company for allegedly bankrolling rebel forces.

Rwanda, whose continuing tragedy is adding another terrible chapter to Central Africa's recent history. Amnesty International estimated that 6,000 people were killed in the first nine months of 1997, most of them civilians and many by the Tutsi-controlled government's Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) in its campaign to stifle an insurgency by the majority Hutu in the country's northwest. Many other people were murdered by Hutu militias seeking to destabilize the government. About 120,000 people suspected of involvement in the 1994 genocide, which saw over a half million Tutsi murdered, are detained in massively overcrowded Rwandan jails. Trials of alleged perpetrators have begun, but at the current rate would take several centuries to complete.

Sierra Leone, which descended into near anarchy after a May 25 army coup evicted the 14 month-old elected government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. The new Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) formed an alliance with its former rebel foes of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which had waged a five year guerrilla war that claimed over 10,000 lives and devastated much of the country. The suffering of Sierra Leone's 4.5 million people further intensified as food stocks were looted, highways cut and provision of even the most basic social services disrupted. International aid was cut immediately after the coup and United Nations sanctions imposed in October. Nigeria led a West African coalition pressuring the junta to quit, and heavy bombing and fierce fighting between Nigerian and AFRC forces in and around the capital, Freetown, added to damage caused by looting and arson during the May coup. An October peace pact calls for disarmament and President Kabbah's return to office by April 1998, but it is hardly clear that the ill-disciplined new "People's Army" will abide by its provisions. Media repression has heightened amidst reports of army killings, torture and illegal detention, and political parties remain banned.

Sudan, where civil war was set to carry into its sixteenth bloody year as peace talks in Kenya collapsed in November and the hard-line Islamist regime battled rebel forces of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the south and east of the country. Severe human rights abuses by various contestants to power persisted, and government forces raided for slaves in the country's south. Genocidal scorched earth attacks were

conducted against Nuba people in southwestern Sudan, and the deep divisions between the country's Arab Muslim north and black African animist and Christian south seemed as wide as ever. In November, the U.S. imposed stiff new economic sanctions against the Khartoum regime, adding to those already in place since Sudan was designated a sponsor of international terrorism.

AUTOCRATS' MOCK ELECTIONS

In several countries, long-serving autocrats merely tolerated electoral exercises so thoroughly devalued by manipulation that they could in no way represent a genuine test of their peoples' will. These quasi-democratic presidential systems block genuine voice and participation and have produced few tangible benefits for their citizens. Regime control over state media and profligate use of state resources to promote incumbents' candidacies were often accompanied by blatant repression of the political opposition and free expression. Such elections occurred in:

Cameroon, where President Paul Biya was declared winner of another five-year term in an opposition-boycotted October election further devalued by intimidation, manipulation and fraud at all stages of the electoral process. The ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) won a similar victory in May legislative polls. Biya's authoritarian rule was bolstered by assaults on opposition politicians, continuing harassment and censorship of the independent media and other widespread human rights abuses. Opposition demands for creation of an independent election commission were dismissed by the Biya regime, which also abruptly canceled an internationally-backed non-governmental project to train over 2,000 parliamentary election observers. The Cameroon League for People's Rights said that the presidential vote "did not honor the principles of impartiality, equality and transparency that would enable one to accord [it] the slightest bit of credit."

Kenya, where President Daniel arap Moi was re-elected president and his ruling African National Union (KANU) party won a parliamentary majority in December voting that capped a year of deadly political and ethnic violence, manipulation and the KANU's blatant use of state resources and media that left a fractious opposition facing five years of renewed authoritarian rule. Kenya's multiparty system is today little more than window dressing for Moi's repressive rule. Attacks and intimidation against oppositionists took place throughout the year, and students and other activists occasionally responded in kind. Ethnic violence wracked the Kenyan coast as unidentified attackers sought to drive away migrants from other parts of the country. Dissatisfaction with the Moi regime was heightened by an economic slowdown exacerbated by a sharp drop in tourism and the August suspension of \$220 million in International Monetary Fund assistance after the government failed to implement pledges to tackle endemic corruption.

Mauritania, where almost the entire opposition boycotted President Maouya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya's election to another six-year term in December polls conducted in the absence of an independent election commission. State control of broadcasts and harassment of independent print media and the incumbent's use of state resources to promote his candidacy tilted the electoral playing field. Press censorship and reports

of security force abuses continue. Mauritania's basic political divisions run deeply along racial and ethnic lines. Discrimination against the country's black African minority and de facto slavery affecting tens of thousands of people persist.

Morocco conducted legislative and local elections that permit only partial emergence from authoritarian rule. King Hassan II's vision of guided democracy will little diminish his decisive control over his country. Fewer human rights abuses were reported, although dozens of political prisoners are serving long prison terms and the government jailed activists for shorter periods during the year. The popularity of proscribed Islamist parties could be bolstered by social unrest fed by a bad harvests and a faltering economy. Morocco is widely considered a bulwark against the spread of Islamist influence in the Maghreb, and ties with both France and Spain have strengthened.

SOLDIERS SANS EPAULETS?

Army coup makers have increasingly sought the imprimatur of even fraudulent elections to legitimize their rule. The presidents of Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Gabon and Mauritania have never faced honest elections since seizing power as soldiers. In West Africa, Niger's coup leader turned president intensified repression and Nigeria's junta seemed set to claim the mantle of electoral legitimacy.

Niger's regression from its brief experiment in open multiparty democracy continued in 1997 with further diminution of civil liberties. Ibrahim Bare Maïnassara, leader of the January 1996 military coup and proclaimed winner of a fraudulent election five months later, tightened controls over political opposition and the independent media. Army mutinies in two provincial cities in June were easily subdued by loyal troops and soldiers have been appointed to key regional administrative positions. Simmering rebellions in the north and far east of the vast country flared during the year even as some peace pacts were announced. Despite his usurpation of democratic rule and deepening repression, Bare is receiving renewed international aid from France, the European Union and the United Nations.

Nigeria's military dictatorship won few believers for claims that its transition to constitutional civilian rule was on course to be capped by a presidential election in October 1998. Broad political repression continued through 1997. Opposition politicians, journalists and environmental activists remained constant targets of harassment, detention, torture and murder by state security services. Several oppositionists have been detained or charged in connection with a spate of unsolved bombings, despite no apparent evidence of their involvement. Speculation increased that General Sani Abacha, who seized power in a November 1993 palace coup and heads the ruling junta known as the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC), will himself stand for president under constitutional revisions allowing serving military officers to hold civil office. Economic stagnation, endemic corruption and a severe gasoline shortage in one of the world's largest oil producing countries is fanning increased popular discontent. The arrest of top Yoruba army officers after an alleged December coup attempt has exacerbated ethnic tensions. Nigeria's 100 million people are closer to serious internal conflict than at any time since the horrific Biafra civil war of 1967-70.

PROGRESS TENUOUS

The bleak vignettes above are only somewhat balanced by signs of tenuous progress in a few countries, where relatively open elections were conducted or peace plans aimed at democratic transitions advanced. Political competition and freedom of expression are still restricted in these countries, and their direction for the next year is uncertain.

Angola progressed fitfully towards peace, shaken by sporadic violence and the collapse of the Mobutu regime in neighboring Zaire. Angola sent troops to help oust Mobutu in May and in October intervened in the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) to aid the overthrow of democratically-elected president Lissouba. Angola's desire to have friendly governments on its frontiers is understandable—Zaire's Mobutu had long supported the rebel National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Yet its willingness to blatantly invade its neighbors to install such regimes is troubling. UNITA reportedly maintained about 30,000 troops in contravention of U.N. sponsored peace accords. A September agreement for revenue sharing from north-eastern diamond fields, which followed three weeks of fighting in the area in June long controlled by UNITA, may have removed a serious obstacle to peace.

Eritrea's new constitution was formally proclaimed in May and an appointed transitional national assembly established to prepare mid-1998 presidential and legislative elections, the country's first since it won independence from Ethiopia in 1991. The ruling Popular Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) appears to maintain broad support, but it is unclear that civil and political liberties guaranteed by the new constitution will be honored. Two key components for a free and fair election—pluralistic media and rights to political organization—are still lacking. President Isaias Afwerki has made clear his mistrust of multiparty democracy. Eritrea's near state of war with neighboring Sudan, highlighted by each country's support for rebels on each other's territory, could reinforce PFDJ's existing authoritarian tendencies.

Liberian rebel leader Charles Taylor achieved at the ballot box the crushing triumph his troops could never win in battle. In elections that saw a 90 percent turnout among 700,000 registered voters, Taylor gained over three quarters of all votes in polls supervised by West African peacekeepers and deemed free and fair by international observers. Sworn in as president on August 2, Taylor faces huge challenges of ethnic reconciliation and economic reconstruction. His country is bankrupt and devastated. Various factions for now quiescent could resume fighting if they believe they are not gaining sufficiently from the peace, or if Taylor's record as authoritarian warlord informs his behavior more than his new role of sworn defender of Liberia's democratic constitution. Six years of civil conflict that took an estimated 150,000 lives and forced nearly half of all 2.8 million Liberians to flee their homes.

Uganda's steady economic growth continued in 1997, benefiting from both pragmatic open market policies and the largesse of donors who hold the country and its president, Yoweri Museveni, as a model for a new generation of African development and leadership. Rebel activity and serious human rights abuses on the country's northern and western frontiers continued, however, and scarce resources were diverted to greater

military spending. The government launched an anti-corruption campaign amidst increasing complaints of graft and other official malfeasance, which critics contend is inherent in the "non-party democracy" under which Uganda held its first elections in 15 years in 1996. Uganda today is safer and more stable and has a stronger economy than at any time since the mid-1960s. However, it is not clear whether Uganda's progress is being institutionalized to the point that future leaders less skillful than Museveni may carry the country's 22 million people forward to greater peace and prosperity.

Western *Sahara* began preparations for a proposed United Nations-supervised December 1998 referendum on its future, which was agreed in September after talks between the Moroccan government and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (Polisario). Moroccan obstruction has continually blocked efforts by the United Nations Mission for a Referendum in Western Sahara (Minurso) to conduct a referendum on nationhood or integration into Morocco for the territory since a 1991 peace pact ended 15 years of bloody guerrilla war. The new agreement provides a timetable for release of political detainees and prisoners of war and the return of tens of thousands of Sahrawi refugees from Algeria. However, the main point of contention—who is entitled to Sahrawi citizenship and will be allowed to vote in the referendum—is as yet unresolved and could upset the entire plan.

PROGRESS IMPERILED

Democratic transitions in several countries were threatened by military and political unrest, intolerance of dissent and manipulation of legal institutions for partisan gain. Early warning signs of such slippage appeared in Madagascar and Namibia, but are more serious elsewhere, including:

Central Africa Republic, where army unrest and political infighting continued to destabilize the elected government as a United Nations-authorized African peacekeeping force, the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB), sought to impose order on the country's capital, Bangui. The MISAB peacekeeping mission to oversee agreements between army mutineers and President Ange-Félix Patasse's government includes troops from Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon and Senegal. MISAB forces became embroiled in street battles against the rebels in June that killed over 100 people and are accused of numerous human rights violations including murders of several civilians.

Mali, whose President, Alpha Oumar Konare, and ruling Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA) party were returned for renewed five-year terms in poorly administered and sometimes chaotic polls largely boycotted by opposition parties and marked by very low voter turnout. International observers saw incompetence rather than fraud in the process, but the results sparked strong opposition protests. Harsh measures against demonstrators, detention of opposition leaders and pressure on the independent media damaged President Konare's credibility and raised questions regarding the stability of Mali's transition to an open society—especially worrying in a country held by many observers as one of the most successful examples of African democratization.

Zambia, which suffered an abortive and nearly bloodless October coup against a government whose leaders' increasingly authoritarian tendencies were only tenuously checked by a combination of a strongly independent but threatened print media, partially autonomous courts and international donor pressure. Relations among the main political parties remain tense. An apparent August assassination attempt against former president Kenneth Kaunda, still leader of the United National Independence Party (UNIP), remains unresolved. The detention of Kaunda and arrest and alleged torture of Zambia Democratic Congress (ZDC) president Dean Mung'omba and others among the at least 84 people detained after the botched coup in October, and the government's imposition of sweeping emergency powers, has been denounced by civil liberties groups.

DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

Economic reforms have brought strong growth in many African countries. In several, notably Benin, Botswana, Mauritius and Namibia, these have combined with political liberalization to help consolidate democratic change. Importantly, each of these countries possesses a reasonably vibrant free media and independent judiciary, providing crucial components of transparency and accountability to their political systems. Yet, democratic institutions and civil society still need to be strengthened by protecting individual liberties and promoting the rule of law.

South Africa is the most hopeful example of such efforts. Democratic consolidation continued in 1997 as institutions that protect and promote basic liberties took firmer hold under the new constitution signed into law by President Nelson Mandela in December 1996. A strongly-independent judiciary does not hesitate to dispute the government, and freedom of expression and association are honored. Yet the viability of these democratic structures in a society sharply divided by ethnicity and class and facing rampant crime and signs of increased corruption is cause for long-term worry. Political violence, mainly centered in the Zulu areas of Natal Province claimed hundreds of lives. Political stability after 80-year old President Mandela retires at the conclusion of his five year term in 1999 and the country's first fully post-apartheid national elections will be a serious test. The country also continued to face the ugly reality of its recent past, grappling with a universal question of how to balance demands for justice and requirements for reconciliation. Killings by government agents of numerous anti-apartheid activists were admitted in sometimes ghastly detail by perpetrators seeking amnesty from the official Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

DEMOCRACY AS "SURVIVAL"

For four decades of modern independence, Africa's broad development has been stymied as much by poor governance, incompetent management, repression and endemic corruption as lack of resources. One-party patronage states have enriched a small elite but clearly failed the vast majority of Africans. Africans across the continent, especially as more people gain access to uncensored information and a better understanding of their basic rights, are demanding reforms that allow broad popular participation in governmental decision making. It is a call the rest of the world should strongly endorse and promote by tying economic assistance and political support to policies seen to build long-term peace and prosperity. The late Nigerian political scientist Claude

Ake put it well in his book, *Democracy and Development in Africa*: "Africans are seeking democracy as a matter of survival," he wrote. "They believe there are no alternatives to this quest, that they have nothing to lose and a great deal to gain."

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The Middle East: Liberal Economies & Illiberal Politics

Stephen J. King

While Algeria resisted a savage onslaught by a totalitarian movement flying under the banner of Islamic fundamentalism, Iran chose a new president, Mohammed Khatemi, who gave the appearance of wanting to soften the rule of the mullahcracy that, since the Khomeinic revolution of 1979, has turned the ancient Persian empire into a chamber of medieval horrors. Could it be that the two big countries on the peripheries of the crescent of Arab-Islam were showing that there is no anti-liberal fatality in this region? Few observers, knowing the political history of the Middle East, would risk more than an equivocal answer. Thousands of people were killed in a resurgence of Islamic terrorism toward the end of the year in Algeria, after the government had announced not without reason that the worst was over, and Algerians braced themselves for a violent month of Ramadan, which this year fell in January. The signs of liberalization promised in Iran by the new president were few and superficial.

Meanwhile, the properly Arab countries of the region showed few signs of giving way to an illiberal temptation. After winning rigged elections in 1996, Egypt's regime repressed opponents on the fundamentalist right who struck back with a renewed campaign of terror which, highlighted by a massacre at Luxor, has crippled the country's multi-billion dollar tourist industry. Syria and Iraq are states run by gunmen. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, despite superficial gestures toward liberal norms, are still run along autocratic lines.

Clifford Geertz once described the world of Arab-Islam, the vast crescent that stretches from Casablanca to Tehran, as the marriage of Smithian economics and Hobbesian politics. The insight is profound, but misleading. There is a sense of free-wheeling, unrestricted commerce in the region, which is often called the bazaar economy. And the politics are certainly violent. But it has never been demonstrated that the self-correcting market mechanisms that Adam Smith described as they emerged in 18th Century England will be allowed to flourish in Arab-Islam; rather, powerful clans and individuals are adapting to the rules of international commerce in the age of global markets, while jealously guarding the entry points. Meanwhile the monopoly of power that is prescribed in the Hobbesian vision of the state, to prevent the war of all against all applies in some, but not all, countries of the region. Thus the underlying questions that Geertz put ten years ago is as actual as ever: will the economies of the region evolve toward something Smith would recognize as viable in market terms, and will this aid, or have no effect whatsoever, on the emergence of a political order based on contracts and rights rather than violence?

It is undeniable that all the regimes of the region have attempted at least some

degree of economic liberalization, if only because the elite controlling access to the economic opportunities beyond the ordinary commerce of the bazaar understand this is necessary for admission to the world economy and in order to stay on good terms with the IMF and other international financial institutions, which is necessary to maintain lines of credit.

Neoclassical theory has been embodied in structural adjustment programs sponsored by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Structural adjustment seeks to promote economic growth by relying more on market mechanisms and eliminating government waste. IMF stabilization and World Bank structural adjustment programs prescribe conservative fiscal and monetary policy, including devaluation of unrealistic currencies, trade liberalization, some form of privatization, deregulation, a general move toward increased reliance on market forces, and further integration into the world economy. The recent economic reforms in the Middle East and North Africa are more credible in some countries than in others, but reform efforts can be found in the socialist republics (e.g., Algeria, Egypt, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen), Arab Monarchies (e.g., Jordan and Morocco) and Islamic republics (Iran and Sudan).

EGYPT

With the removal of land-tenure regulations that had been in place for nearly half a century, Egypt sent a clear signal that it was trying to move away from the statist model. A case can be made that the Mubarak government is moving toward a free market system, but it is by no means clear yet how many Egyptians will have free access to it. At any rate, the reform efforts were spurred less by a Smithian revelation on the part of the Egyptian political elite than by the wreckage of the economy and the bottomless debt crisis. On the eve of the Gulf war, in the late 1980s, growth turned negative and the country had amassed international debts of 50 billion U.S. dollars. The level of unemployment had doubled in the past decade, reaching close to 30 percent of the adult male population, and the quality of government services in health, transportation, and education had declined. Islamic extremists exploited the deteriorating social situation.

Egypt has been slow to privatize the state dominated manufacturing sector. Private investment in general remains weak, particularly in labor intensive areas. Three factors inhibit the reform process. First, President Hosni Mubarek's regime relies on the support of those who stand to lose from economic competition: organized labor and managers in state-owned enterprises, government bureaucrats, and holders of import licenses. These vested interests tend to block the adoption and implementation of liberal economic policies.

Second, Egypt's highly centralized political system dominated by Mubarek's party, the National Democratic Party (NDP), Mubarek and his closest advisors make most of the key decisions in Egypt. The Egyptian leadership tends to be cautious and have moved very slowly on reform since structural adjustment began in 1991.

Third, revenue from what are called "economic rents" permit Egypt to continue with business as usual. Egypt receives oil rent from oil export revenues and remittances from workers in the Gulf and Iraq. Strategic rents are available to the largest Arab nation from the United States, the EEC, and through these the IMF and the World Bank. Rents lessen some of the pressure to reform, while increasing the incentives to

keep things the way they are.

A cabinet reshuffle in 1996 gave the Economy Ministry to Youssef Boutros-Ghali a brother of the former U.N. Secretary General. Mr. Boutros-Ghali had been the government's representative to the international financial institutions, where he showed a clear commitment to marked reforms and economic liberalization.

An agricultural rent liberalization law took effect on September 30, 1997. The law terminates tenancy contracts, which date from the Nasser era and are based on strict rent control and perpetual leases. Landlords are now able to negotiate rents at market rates. Rent is typically one-quarter of market value. However, many of the tenant farmers have difficulty paying rent and clearly can not afford to pay market prices. A large number of tenant households, many of whom have worked the land for over 40 years, will be driven off, presumably adding pressure to urban centers, notably Cairo and Alexandria.

Tenants and activists held rallies and demonstrations to protest against liberalization. Mass rallies took place in several towns. There were dozens of arrests and police sealing off villages to pre-empt trouble. In one confrontation between authorities and farmers, three demonstrators were killed and 51 jailed. The government blamed the Muslim Brotherhood for the trouble, even though the Brotherhood supports the rights of landowners and views the Nasserist land reforms as counter to Islamic law. The government set aside some loans to enable tenants to buy the land they farm. Compared to the scale of the change involved, the land-tenure reform went into effect with far less trouble than expected, but it remains to be seen how well the government will manage the dislocations that will follow.

But whether the tenure reform leads to more economic opportunity or more social unrest, the point is that the ruling National Democratic Party dominates the 454-seat People's Assembly, the Shura Council, local governments, the mass media, labor, the large public sector, the licensing of new political parties, newspapers, and private organizations to such an extent that the practical political rights of citizens are very limited. In 1993 President Mubarek was elected unopposed to a third three year term. A November 1996 election of the People's Assembly yielded 317 seats for the NDP in voting marred by irregularities. Violent incidents at polling centers led to several deaths among supporters of competing candidates. Political parties based on religion are not permitted, even though the Muslim Brotherhood, which has officially denounced the use of violence, is acknowledged as the largest opposition political force.

As Security forces and terrorist groups remain locked in a cycle of violence, civil liberties are abused in countless ways. According to U.S. State Department reports, the security forces mistreat and torture prisoners, hold detainees in prolonged pretrial detention, and commit extra-judicial killings. They undertake mass arrests. Military courts restrict defendants rights. Freedom of assembly and association are restricted. Militant Islamic groups continue their attacks on police, Coptic Christians, and tourists. In June, Egyptian terrorists attempted to assassinate President Mubarek in Ethiopia.

The struggle between Islamists and the government complicates the transition to market arrangements. The Muslim Brotherhood actually favors many aspects of economic liberalization. However, the regime has not displayed any propensity to loosen authoritarian controls as it introduces market reforms. Opposition to government policy is repressed rather than debated.

IRAN

Although the Khomeini revolution benefited, in gaining widespread support, from the fact that the Pahlavi regime had imposed statist, autarkic economic policies on the influential Iranian commercial class, and although Islamic fundamentalism was, from a theological point of view, well-disposed toward the free market economics, the regime of the Islamic Republic quickly found that it could not allow competition from an entrepreneurial class any more than from a statist bureaucracy. Either group, in effect, created spaces of activity that challenged the regime's aim at total control of all aspects of social (and indeed private) life. The bazaari, in which the theocrats had found allies against the Shah, were forced to conform along with everyone else. Between the need to control Iranian society and the requirements of the long, humanly devastating war with Iraq, the Islamic Republic found that it had to exert control over the economy even more stringently than the Shah's regime ever had. Excessive tariffs, price controls, and over-valued exchange rates insulated firms from foreign competition but also blunted the Persians legendary flair in all matters commercial. The GNP in the 1990s actually was between three and four times as great as it had been in the last years of the Shah's regime and the growth rate was about 4 percent, and if personal income had dropped since the mid-80s it was due less to statist policies than to the despair over the strict state control over personal life.

President Rafsanjani, who had been a close associate of the Ayatollah Khomeini, had promised economic liberalization, but did little to change tight controls. The new president, Mohammed Khatemi, who took office in August 1997, is expected to pursue moderate economic and possibly political reforms. All candidates for the 270 member Majlis-e-Shura-e Islami must be recommended by recognized political groups and approved by an Islamic screening committee. All legislation recommended by the Majlis must be approved by the 12 member Council of Guardians, six of whom are appointed by the religious leader, Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei. The council of ministers is headed by the president, who acts as chief executive. Political parties play a limited role in parliament. Most candidates are independent.

Khatemi brings hope for improvements in political rights. He is known as a moderate and is expected to favor more tolerant social legislation. The executive will begin to restrict the revolutionary organs of government. Militant extremist groups and the clergy, well represented in the Majlis, will challenge changes in many areas, although Khatemi has the support of the majority of the population.

The new president is expected to make a push for reform in the formation of political parties with the support of centrist and moderate left-wing groups. However, the next Majlis elections are not due until 2000, so there is no immediate impetus for action. In economic policy, liberalization will likely remain gradual. The government prefers a mixed economy with particular attention to welfare provision. There is still a commitment to liberalize trade, move toward conservative monetary policy, and remove state controls and subsidies. In these areas, no one expects this regime to move any faster than the previous one.

The government's human rights record remains poor, without any significant improvements in the past year. State Department reports indicate systematic abuses including extra-judicial killings and summary executions; disappearances; widespread use of torture; harsh prison conditions; and restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and movement.

MOROCCO

The Moroccan monarchy, headed by King Hassan II, has conceded very little power as it undertakes economic liberalization. Observers view Morocco as relatively successful at implementing difficult reforms. They have even done well in the particularly difficult area of privatization. Richards and Waterbury give four reasons for the credibility of Moroccan economic reform: (1) The government has used others to this end, crafting its reforms in close consultation with international agencies. (2) The King has provided crucial leadership and visibly supported the key technocrats, who, moreover enjoyed considerable longevity in their posts. (3) The beneficiaries of reform were already key supporters of the regime. (4) The regime has avoided any backtracking on reform.

Initially, economic reform produced growth with GDP expanding and jobs being created in the early years. However, Moroccan government officials forecast a contraction in GDP of 2.5 percent in 1997. In other negative developments, reform has been accompanied by rising unemployment, around 16 percent officially for 1997. An additional concern is the nature of privatization. Far too frequently, the transfer of state assets from the public sector to the private sector has meant a transfer to the royal family's personal financial holding company, the *Omnium Nord-Africain*. Thus, state divestiture from public assets has entailed a direct and visible increase in the wealth of the royal family. Morocco, known for a concentration of wealth in the hands of a small number of powerful families linked to the regime, has become an even more inequitable society. Reform appears to be serving a private oligarchy of elite families.

Political authority continues to rest with the King. The King dominates the appointment of the cabinet, and has the power to dissolve parliament and rule by decree. A 1996 referendum created a second legislative chamber. Elections for the new lower chamber will be held in November 1997.

Morocco is known for a diverse range of political parties and a relatively wide-open press with many ideological voices permitted to speak out. However, criticism of the monarchy is not allowed. The King encourages pluralism as long as no party concentrates power enough to threaten the monarchy. The November 1997 elections yielded a cabinet of opposition politicians participating in government alongside palace appointees. Still, the core of the policy process in a developing country, economic policy, will remain in the hands of King Hassan, his closest advisors, and consultants from the World Bank. The judiciary remains vulnerable to corruption and penetration by the Ministry of the Interior. A welter of police and paramilitary organizations continue to commit human rights abuses.

Morocco's human rights record continues to be poor with several reported extra judicial killings and mistreatment of prisoners. At a time when the regime boasts of economic and political liberalization, democracy remains a facade, an economic oligarchy increases its power, and the police and security forces continue to keep the population in check.

ALGERIA

The brutality of Algeria's Islamic fundamentalist insurrection increasingly recognized as ordinary, albeit unspeakably cruel, criminality contrasted with tangible evolutions on the economic and political fronts. Even as the state seemed unable to put an end to the violence which broke out in the late 1980s and gathered force in 1993-94,

it completed the cycle of elections that restored the nation's representative institutions. The country's economic performance was strong enough for the IMF to remove the stringent rules it applied in 1995. Unemployment and underemployment remained intolerably high, however, and the persistent climate of insecurity rendered privatization and reinvestment, notably by foreign capital, problematic, though for the first time in years significant foreign investments, notably by American and Korean investors, were made. Under the sickening headlines referring to massacres of villagers, Algeria seemed to be the country most able to make real changes in its political and economic regime, or at least, the most determined to try.

The efforts began in the mid-1980s, when then-president Chadli Benjedid attempted to move toward political pluralism and economic liberalism, after two and a half decades of single-party rule. The post-independence regime had been committed to state led growth: rapid industrialization fueled by the country's oil and natural gas resources. Benjedid sought to liberalize the economy. In order to combat resistance to economic liberalization, his government undertook rapid political liberalization and democratization, which was aborted in 1992 when the military dissolved parliament to prevent an electoral victory by the FIS (Islamic Salvation Front). Thus, attempts at economic liberalization and political liberalization came roughly at the same time in Algeria.

Chadli Benjedid's economic opening began in 1980. This followed the nationalist/socialist economic experiment of Houari Boumediene, which entailed massive state intervention in all sectors of the economy. Benjedid had to fight against members of the FLN, army, and bureaucracy in order to implement market-oriented policies. In 1988 riots erupted, partially in opposition to the reforms already implemented. For the first time the army fired on the Algerian population. Neither the army, nor the FLN could control the population easily. Islamist groups began to be regarded as representatives of the people. Benjedid used the riots to put market reformers in power and accelerate the pace of market transition.

Benjedid also called for rapid political liberalization to legitimize market-oriented policies. In one year, 1988-89, the Algerian political system was fundamentally transformed from a single-party authoritarian state to a multiparty, pluralistic nation. This opened the way for the FIS to enter the political fray. The FIS established itself by providing social services and appealing to the disaffected young in urban areas. Had the military not intervened before the second round of voting in 1992, the FIS would have formed the first truly democratically elected Islamic government.

To be sure, the FIS had fixed the voter rolls in the many municipalities over which it had gained control in 1990 local elections. Less than half eligible Algerians were able to take part in the notorious cancelled election of December 1992. Moreover, it had made it quite clear the election would be the last.

Violence by FIS activists already had become chronic. Following several months during which the government, headed by a provisional High State Council, arrested hundreds of FIS activists, the movement's armed wing, the AIS, began the systematic campaign of terror that was taken to revolting extremes by its offshoot, which it has officially disavowed, the GIA.

This said, it is probably the case that state security forces have been responsible for numerous serious human rights abuses. Extra-judicial killings and incidents of torture have occurred. In recent months the security forces have been accused of stand-

ing idly by as civilians, including women and children, have been killed by terrorists. The military appears to be divided between a faction advocating eradication at any costs, and a faction, including current President Liamine Zeroual, seeking compromise with moderate Islamists.

The past year has brought some positive changes. There is some hope that moderate Islamists in parliament and local government will ease the violent conflict. A new bicameral legislature and local polls permit the participation of Islamist parties. A new coalition government includes 14 opposition deputies. However, the military has undertaken a new offensive and human rights concerns continue to rise.

TUNISIA

Tunisia is one of the clearest cases of a government combining a Smithian way of getting rich with a Hobbesian way of governing. Tunisia has made substantial progress towards establishing a market economy. From the time President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali took power, the country has accelerated economic liberalization, and with considerable success. Sixty percent of Tunisians are in the middle class and the illiteracy rate for men and women is low. With the help of good rainfall, growth in 1996 reached six percent. The World Bank and the IMF have worked closely with the Tunisian government and consider the country one of its best pupils.

Tunisia has all of the elements in place for a transition to democracy. It is a middle income country, with a favorable class structure. The population is educated. Relative to the other Maghribi countries, the post-independence regime of ex-president Habib Bourguiba (1956-1987) achieved much in social legislation: the rights of women, mass education, family planning. Bourguiba professed a desire to tutor the population toward liberal democracy with political rights and civil liberties. Thus, from the point of view of political culture, civil society, and wealth, Tunisia has been prepared for democratization for a long time. While Bourguiba never ultimately, "gave the country democracy," Ben Ali ousted the aging ruler, promising a new era of political liberalization. In addition to all of these factors the international community, to which Tunisia is closely linked, should have been an influence toward democratization.

However, Ben Ali's new era has been one of rapid economic liberalization and authoritarian rule. The suffocating political environment is evident in the areas of political rights, human rights, and civil liberties. The policing of the population is shared by the police and the paramilitary. Both forces are under the control of the Minister of Interior and the President. The security forces continue to be responsible for serious abuses of power.

In terms of civil liberties the government has demonstrated a pattern of intolerance of public criticism, and continues to stifle freedoms of speech, press, and association. Because of government pressure, newspapers, did not carry press releases of the leading human rights group. Various governmental controls are used to discourage newspapers and magazines from publishing undesirable materials. The government seized foreign newspapers containing articles it considered objectionable, and it restricted ownership of satellite dishes and access to the internet. Security forces also monitor the activities of government critics and at times harass them, their relatives, and their associates.

Political rights have become more restricted since Ben Ali's first few years in power. A single political party continues to dominate the Republic. President Ali and

his Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD) controls the government, including the legislature and the judiciary. The President appoints the Prime Minister, Cabinet, and 23 governors. The largest opposition party, Al-Nahada, an Islamist party, is illegal. So is the communist party. Association with either leads to prison terms. There is a general suppression of political dissent as the government builds a facade democracy. In the last parliamentary elections the RCD won every seat. Nineteen seats were still granted to four opposition parties. However, these parties are largely viewed as coopted and carry little popular support. By law, the presidency is limited to two seven year terms. However as the end of the second term approaches, there is fear that Ben Ali will anoint himself president for life. There is no indication that Tunisians have the capacity to change their government in the current political system.

In the past year, the government's human rights record has not improved, and it continued to commit serious abuses. Members of the security forces reportedly tortured and beat prisoners and detainees. The government generally has not responded effectively to allegations of human rights abuses. This is a government totally immersed in an effort to control and police its population while taking decisive measures to implement a "free" market.

CONCLUSION

In recent years economic liberalization has accelerated in the Middle East and North Africa, but political trends have moved towards increasing or continuing authoritarianism and growing social controls through the police and security apparatus. Why has the expected political liberalization not occurred?

Political culture is a tempting explanation when one witnesses democratization occurring with economic reform in Latin America and parts of Africa. This is probably part of the answer. Perhaps Islam serves as a higher, although not impossible, hurdle to democracy than Christianity or other religions. Islamic traditions unify religion and state to a relatively high degree. The sharia, Islamic law, can serve as the constitution for many Islamist groups. Patriarchal and authoritarian family and social life feed into patterns of political behavior.

However, we know that political culture changes over time and there are also democratic traditions in Islam, depending on interpretation. Also, there are clearly some citizens and political leaders in all countries of the region pressing for democratic transition. With Islamist groups serving as the largest opposition force in virtually every country in the region (and also the bravest in confronting brutal authoritarian regimes), political evolution in the region is moving toward a more Islamic state. Democracy and Islam will form a synthesis that the current Western based literature on democracy may be incapable of addressing.

Some of the countries of the region have raised in the GDP in recent years. Economic growth is an important, but not sufficient factor for democratization. In some cases marketization has meant the concentration of power in economic hands and a less beneficial class structure for democratic rule, no large middle class. Power formerly concentrated in the hands of state agents becomes concentrated in the hands of an economic elite. There are few resources for the development of civil society and the vulnerable come under the control of powerful patrons.

Economic reform through the structural adjustment programs of recent years have only been partially implemented. Except for the case of Morocco, all the countries

surveyed have been reluctant to privatize public assets. Many attempt to stall while claiming full efforts at economic liberalization in order to maintain access to capital from the international financial institutions. Complete economic liberalization might have had a greater impact on democratization. There is also the issue of time. A longer time frame of an economy dominated by the market may be needed to gauge the impact of these types of economic policies for political liberalization. However, one should not discount the trends already apparent since economic liberalization began, and in some places this happened nearly 30 years ago.

The pro-democratic bias of the international arena is suspect. The clear bias is toward market economies. The IMF and the World Bank impose conditions on shifting toward market oriented policies, not conditions requiring greater democratization, political rights, and civil liberties in order to attain loans. The success of the basically authoritarian countries of East Asia has led to the influence of a development model that combines authoritarian rule with a commitment to a market economy and trade liberalization.

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Europe: One, Two, or Three?

Charles Gati

For a generation or more, the Western world identified "Europe" with its western half alone. Geography and history were supplanted by geopolitics, as the countries of Eastern and Central Europe were assigned to the Soviet Bloc, a political entity that existed somewhere not quite in Russia, but not in "Europe" either. Even now, almost ten years after the end of the cold war and the collapse of Communism both official and private meetings on transatlantic relations often include participants exclusively from North America and Western Europe. The perception of "Europe" as Western Europe remains widespread, even as it is becoming obsolete.

Obsolete, as NATO has decided to expand to include Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, and the European Union (EU) is set to discuss conditions of membership for ten countries including these three. Obsolete, too, is the old debate about whether the EU should widen or deepen. As new candidates prepare themselves for membership around 2002 or thereafter, the processes of widening are underway; the question is not whether it will happen but when and who in Central and Eastern Europe will be admitted in the first tranche. Similarly, as the EU proceeds toward implementation of the Maastricht Treaty and thus the adoption of a common currency, deepening is also taking place; the question that remains is who in Western Europe will meet the strict criteria when the new currency is issued. In short, the construction of one Europe, free and perhaps one day undivided not only militarily but politically and economically as well, has begun. Very, very slowly, history is being made: The momentum toward integration and unity is stronger than ever if not yet irresistible. What is missing, it seems, is Euro-optimism: confidence in Western Europe that what was possible for one half of Europe after World War II is possible for the other half after the cold war.

The United States championed the European movement in the late 1940s and 1950s, and it is perhaps not surprising that it should now be championing the eastward expansion of an integrated Europe. The principal instrument of this policy is NATO, in which Washington maintains the preponderant influence. In 1993, in the early months of the Clinton administration, it was clear the West Europeans were reluctant to embrace their eastern neighbors; the primary issue then was the so-called deepening of the EU, which was essentially a strategy for the maintenance of Western Europe's highly regulated and protected economies and the welfare states that they sustained. Nor, to be sure, did the Europeans show much interest in the enlargement of NATO. West Germany was preoccupied with rebuilding what used to be East Germany. The French flirted with the idea of rejoining NATO's military structure, but opposed en-

largement. The British government, despite former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's advocacy of enlargement, expressed no interest. Indeed, only a few politicians on either side of the Atlantic, such as German Defense Minister Volker Ruhe or Senator Richard Lugar, actively promoted the idea.

Since January 1994, when President Clinton stated that the question was not whether but when and how NATO would accept new members from Central and Eastern Europe, the U.S. has convinced its allies of the utility of enlargement; tempered Moscow's opposition; and insisted on a step-by-step approach that was reflected in NATO's mid-1997 decision to accept only three new members (Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic) for the time being. Although the primary objective as stated was to enhance these countries' military security, the decision to enlarge had much to do with a desire to ensure these countries' political stability as well. The very fact that undemocratic Slovakia was left out of the first tranche despite early plans to include it indicates that NATO has less interest in strictly military objectives than in the political objective of enlarging the Western community of pluralist, democratic nations. However, this was in keeping with NATO's historic experience as a political and military institution.

Political policy implies politics, of course, and the reasons for the specific decision to bring in three new nations, leaving out two (Slovenia and Romania) whose qualifications were not much inferior, if at all, to those of the successful candidates, were to be found in the political opposition to enlargement. In the U.S. in particular, there were worries about the costs, in treasure no less than in lost military effectiveness, of dilution. Thus, to assure public support for enlargement, NATO chose to open the door to a few applicants without closing the door to others in the future. The decision was political substantively as well: only those countries whose democratic credentials were beyond dispute were invited to join. By doing so, NATO affirmed a controversial position initially opposed by the Clinton administration: that some countries in Central Europe, partly because of their historical experience, had better "democratic genes" than others, notably the Balkan states and most of the former Soviet Union. NATO thus assumed its colors as an alliance of democracies more overtly than at any time since the institution closed the door to the Franco regime in Spain in the 1960s. The decision to invite the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland thus reflected a civilizational choice as well, for of the 27 post-Communist states these three were closest to Western values both historically and in terms of their present practice. The neo-Wilsonian idea the Clinton administration had explicitly embraced in 1993 that all countries in the former Soviet bloc, irrespective of their past, were "emerging democracies" and must be considered ready to embrace Western ways, was unceremoniously shelved.

If political realism dictated NATO's limited enlargement and if prospects for its further enlargement are hardly imminent, what can be said of some of the other integrating mechanisms aimed at bringing together Europe, West and East?

With the admission of Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia and Estonia into the EU scheduled for 2003 at the earliest, the members of the club seem, to many observers, less than enthusiastic about its enlargement. The record belies this view. The West Europeans have been properly mindful of placing intolerable pressures on their trans-national institutions, but they have never considered them immutable. On the contrary, European institutions have reached out to the east, in some cases ahead

of NATO.

The Council of Europe, which came into being in 1949 to promote the rule of law and human rights in Europe, has 40 members of whom 16 are from the former Soviet bloc. Four other states (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Bosnia) have acquired guest status, because they have not met the Council's requirements. Although the organization takes itself seriously (its legislators are elected in the member states) some question not only its effectiveness but its standards for admission, wondering what qualifies such countries as Croatia and Albania as members belonging to an institution dedicated to democracy and the rule of law. By contrast, the Council's Secretary General Daniel Tarschys notes, probably correctly, that some of these countries can be better influenced from within the Council than from without.

The OSCE, an organization that includes the U.S. and Canada, has a broad mandate which it has used to monitor human rights and democratic procedures in several countries of the former Soviet bloc. Like the Council of Europe, OSCE lacks the capacity to enforce its recommendations, but its presence in times of elections, such as in Bosnia, and its subsequent reports are widely disseminated in Europe. Its reputation for fairness has made OSCE a useful if less than effective instrument for negotiating an end to the wars in Chechnya and in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), based in London, was founded in 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Financed largely by the United States and the European Union, it has spent over \$11 billion to promote private-sector development in the former Soviet Union and in Central and Eastern Europe. To the extent that privatization of some sort has been widespread throughout the post-Communist world, especially in Central Europe, EBRD deserves considerable credit. Its support for financial institutions and infrastructure projects, in particular, has contributed to a more stable financial environment, Russia included. With two dozen regional offices and a dozen economic sector teams operating throughout the region, EBRD has also supported projects in transportation, energy and power generation, manufacturing, and environmental clean-up.

Admittedly, the European Union has moved slowly to admit new members from the east; it took four years after the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe to endorse even the principle of expansion. And four years after the Copenhagen summit in 1993, no specific timetable has been set. While the leaders of Germany and France keep stating that by the year 2000 EU will have opened its ranks to a few new members, the organization has yet to announce its precise intentions. As quoted by Joel Blocker of RFE/RL, EU Commissioner Hans van den Broek has candidly conceded that, joining the EU is more complicated than joining NATO or the Council of Europe. We have a very complex set of criteria: Can (the Eastern nations) compete with EU businesses? Have they adopted the (3,000) regulations that constitute the whole body of EU legislation, which is essential to the functioning of a single market? The answer to these two questions is no. They do not yet meet those criteria

As things stand, the EU will begin accession talks in 1998 with some or all of the ten candidates whose applications are under consideration. Of the ten (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, and Slovakia), preliminary assessments by the EU bureaucracy suggest that five (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Estonia) will be included in the first tranche. If they are invited to enter the European Union between 2002 and 2005, the second

tranche will almost certainly have to wait another five years or more. Given the needs and interests of the applicants and given the misleading promises of entry in 2000 by Chancellor Helmut Kohl and President Jacques Chirac, the process of EU enlargement is excruciatingly slow.

There are many reasons for the slow pace of EU enlargement. The Union, to begin with, is unprepared for the task; and the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1989 came as a surprise. When it happened, Western Europe was in a period of economic stagnation. In most countries unemployment was, as it still is, very high. There are many influential interest groups, such as French farmers, opposed to EU's enlargement, fearing competition from new members. Germany, the EU's engine, has as its priority the economic and political integration of the former East Germany. And unlike NATO, the European Union lacks political leadership. Chancellor Kohl of Germany, no doubt responding to his own political circumstances that include the priority of integrating East and West Germany, appears to swing back and forth between strong advocacy of and equally strong opposition to a faster pace of EU enlargement.

In the final analysis, however, nothing matters more than the existing gap between economic, and to a far lesser extent political, realities in the European Union versus those in Central and Eastern Europe. Clearly, the view that the post-Communist states are not yet prepared for EU membership is far more than a simple rationalization for the slow pace of enlargement.

While comparisons with communist-era (i.e., 1989 and earlier) production levels are largely meaningless, due to the unreliability of communist statistics and lack of objective criteria for measuring the value of the goods produced, the consensus among Western economists is that in most of the countries of the ex-Soviet bloc, output is still below 1989 levels.

Other indicators are somewhat more encouraging. The economies of Central and Eastern Europe are now growing, at an average rate of about 1.7 percent. The privatization of the small and medium-sized firms is all but complete (although some of that should be called pseudo-privatization: the transfer, on favorable terms, of state property to the various governments' political allies and cronies). Prices have been liberalized. The currencies of most countries are stable. The availability of goods, from fashionable clothing to the latest computer models, bears comparison with Western Europe. On the negative side, unemployment is a big problem, as is inflation. The gap between the enterprising business class and industrial workers or for that matter teachers on fixed income has never been wider. In most cases, budget deficits are far greater than in Western Europe. In addition, while the Central European countries have successfully reoriented their trade from the vast Soviet market to the West, some of their industrial and agricultural sectors are still unable to compete in the global marketplace. What they need is a measure of protection; what the European Union expects is free competition.

The EU must not only move cautiously under the circumstances, it must also be selective. While it has accommodated substantial differences among its present members, ranging from Germany to Greece, most of the economic indicators in Central and Eastern Europe suggest that even the best-positioned countries in the region, such as the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, do not match the level of development and performance of the EU's weakest members. Even these leaders of the post-Communist world are, economically speaking, on Europe's periphery, significantly

underperforming their western neighbors. For this reason, their integration into the Union, if it is to be genuine and mutually advantageous, must be selective and gradual, reflecting the candidates' qualifications.

When it comes to political compatibility, the three leaders as well as Slovenia and Estonia have already demonstrated their readiness to join the Union. Having held free and competitive elections, these countries have also managed to transfer power peacefully from one party or coalition to another. In contrast to most post-Soviet states, including Russia, the five leading candidates for EU membership have reserved important tasks to the legislative branch of their governments. The Polish Sejm, for example, is a formidable institution. In some cases, notably in Hungary, constitutional courts have overruled their countries' governments and parliaments and prevailed. While, as in Western Europe, the main television channels are under state control, there are many commercial networks now, and the printed press is free and critical of corrupt politicians.

The contrasts between the leaders, and the laggards, and the losers in the post-Communist world of 27 states are very sharp indeed. Romania, Slovakia, and Bulgaria are among the laggards; the countries of the former Yugoslavia, such as Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia, respect democracy in words only. Although, in the past Greece was part of the EU while under the rule of a military junta it is unreasonable to expect that new members embrace political pluralism as practiced in Western Europe. By that political standard, at least five countries in the region already qualify.

Many Western observers seem to judge progress partly or mainly by what they see: new shopping malls, new business centers, newly available goods of every kind, and new paint to make the cities more inviting to tourists. Other Western observers seem to judge progress by reporting positive economic trends compared to the previous quarter or the previous year. These trends are indeed very encouraging in many countries, such as Slovenia, Hungary or Poland, but they tell only part of the story. They do not reveal, for example, that large majorities have yet to benefit from the region's emerging free-market economies. Moreover, in most respect the gap has not narrowed since 1989 between the economies of the two halves of Europe. One calculation suggests a pervasive lag of about 40 to 50 percent between the countries of Western and Central Europe, about the same as it was at the turn of the century. For despite impressive recent gains in Central Europe, Western Europe keeps moving ahead as well.

None of this is to suggest that European integration is a mirage. Far from it. The process is slower than expected, but it is advancing. The postwar political order of Europe the (Yalta system) has come to an end and the former Soviet satellites are independent. However, the division of Europe is real even if it is no longer the iron curtain that separates two blocs; the dividing line is now drawn by financial balance sheets. Sadly, the legacy of four decades of Communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe is such that quick solutions are hard to come by. A recent study notes that compared to such relatively developed countries as Argentina or South Korea, even the leading Central European states are behind in risk-taking and initiative, managerial skills, handling complex organization problems, and the like while they are ahead in formal education, for example. Generally well-educated but poorly trained, discouraged from taking chances, the people of the post-Communist world were and, to an extent, still are unprepared for the new environment of free markets. As the *Econo-*

mist put it recently, all East European countries suffered under dictatorship and central planning; but some suffered more than others. How easily they can re-integrate into the world economy depends above all, it seems, on how widely and how long they were separated from the democratic capitalist world during their four decades of one-party rule.

In the next five years, "Europe" as it was defined during the cold war (i.e., Western Europe) is going to grow larger. In 1999, NATO will expand, and in 2002 or soon thereafter the European Union will also. This is more than what anyone could reasonably expect before the collapse of Communism, but it is less than what the optimists of 1989-90 foresaw. In any case, Western Europe may not have risen to the challenge of widening its ranks as promptly as the post-Communist countries would like. And the post-Communist countries have not recovered as promptly as the Western Europeans would have liked. In time, however, as differences among the three parts of Europe narrow and the new members of NATO and the EU prove their credentials, integration will pick up speed. As the number of favorite cousins increase and the number of distant relatives decline, the political and economic maps of Europe will reflect geography rather than geopolitics.

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The United States: Rights Versus Relativism

Jacob Heilbrunn

INTRODUCTION

When Chinese leader Jiang Zemin made an official state visit to the United States in late October, he was careful to stop at patriotic sites such as the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia and colonial Williamsburg. The symbolism of the leader of one of the most repressive regimes in the world visiting American shrines to liberty was striking. As Jiang's trek to Philadelphia showed, dictators may trample on freedom, but they do feel obliged to pay lipservice to it. This is in itself a peculiarly American accomplishment; the "We the People" at the beginning of the Constitution was a bold declaration of the principle of popular sovereignty. It was a decisive break with British constitutional practice; to this day the British people are subjects, not citizens.

Indeed, since the liberal revolutions of the late 18th century, governments have been increasingly wary of dispensing with the belief that they embody popular sovereignty, even when they are completely anti-democratic. The legal historian Henry Sumner Maine, no friend of democracy, observed in his classic *Popular Government* (1885), that "Russia and Turkey are the only European states which completely reject the theory that governments hold their power by delegation from the community." The totalitarian movements of the 20th century claimed to be founded in mass legitimacy. And so, Jiang never said that China does not enjoy freedom; he simply claimed, as have a number of other Asian leaders, that China enjoys a higher kind of liberty, one free from the corruption and malversation and licentiousness of the West. In Jiang's own words, "the theory of relativity worked out by Mr. Einstein which is the domain of natural science, I believe can also be applied to the political field"—overlooking the fact that Einstein himself championed democracy and human rights.

Since the end of the cold war, China has emerged as the main, but also the most controversial, foreign policy challenge to the U.S. The dispute over China is illustrative of the broader debate that is taking place in the United States over its role in promoting freedom at home and abroad. In the perpetual tug-of-war between isolationists and internationalists, how you view the abroad depends on how you view freedom at home.

It used to be that the left condemned the U.S. for intervening abroad when it should be tending to domestic woes. But now numerous complaints about the U.S. are coming from the right. A chorus of conservative critics has emerged to denounce the U.S. for its waywardness at home and for arrogating to itself the right to intervene in other nations. Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, for instance, Harvard professor Samuel Huntington declared that "the belief that non-Western peoples should adopt Western values,

institutions, and culture is, if taken seriously, immoral in its implications." The message is clear: The United States, which is faltering at home, has no business meddling in the affairs of other nations, let alone attempting to export its model of democracy. Seldom, however, has defeatism been declared at a moment of greater triumph for the U.S. Far from being on the ropes, the U.S. has never enjoyed a more favorable position in its history. From the banks of the Rhine to the inner-Korean border, American troops are maintaining the peace. NATO is poised to expand into Eastern Europe. In Asia, the U.S. has strengthened its defense ties with Japan. At home, the situation looks even more promising. While the vaunted Asian economies are in a state of collapse, the U.S. has rarely been in better shape. Crime, inflation, and unemployment are down. Tax revenues are up. The budget deficit is on the verge of being eliminated.

The question, then, that Americans are confronting is not whether they are prosperous and free. It is how they are handling their liberties. A democratic regime provides its citizens with the opportunity to develop their innate capacities. The debates that surround the future of the U.S. do not center on whether the country is lapsing into tyranny, but on the ability of Americans to meet the demands of freedom.

Americans are not accustomed to thinking of liberty as potentially excessive. This is the question that has been at the core of the dispute over minority versus majority rights. Pornography, obscenity, sex, religion, education drugs have triggered heated debates in Congress, in the schools and in the media. For conservatives such as Gertrude Himmelfarb the emergence of a culture of rights movement in the 1960s was a bad thing: According to Himmelfarb, "It was once only revolutionaries and social rebels who denounced the 'bourgeois' family as authoritarian, ridiculed 'middle-class' notions of sexual normality and morality, declared all social conventions to be incompatible with individuality, and condemned all authorities—the state, the law, the Church, parents and elders—as agents of coercion. Today these opinions are the common coin of most liberals. Inevitably the elevation of the idea of liberty has led to the debasement of the idea of authority." But a look at developments over the past year suggests a more optimistic conclusion. While individual rights have at times spiraled out of control, no country offers its citizens more liberty coupled with responsibility than the U.S.

THE DOMESTIC ARENA

Abortion remained one of the most contentious areas of individual rights in 1997. The specific procedure that attracted controversy was "intact dilation and extraction," or partial-birth abortion. In April 1996, President Clinton vetoed the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act. But when Senator Tom Daschle proposed a compromise on the issue in June, a new debate began over abortion.

Abortion was not the only area in which science, individual rights, and societal concerns collided. Genetics enjoyed a banner year. After the successful cloning in Scotland of the sheep Dolly, President Clinton ordered a federal ban on any federal support for human cloning (none was being carried out) and requested from the National Bioethics Advisory Commission a report on the ethics of human cloning. A number of bills proposing the banning of cloning were introduced in the House of Representatives and Senate. The question that the Dolly case raised was whether sexual procreation would be necessary in the future.

But Dolly was only the most conspicuous case of the relentless advances that have

been taking place in the biological sciences over the past decades. The problem that ethicists and government officials and scientists are grappling with is the extent to which human nature can be manipulated by science. Take the issue of genetic information. The Department of Health and Human Services is grappling with the amount of medical data that insurance companies should be allowed to obtain. Francis S. Collins, the director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, has stated that "except in a few states, the [genetic privacy] laws focus narrowly on genetic tests rather than more broadly on genetic information generated by family history, physical examination or the medical record. Meaningful protection requires that insurers be prohibited from using all information about genes, gene products or inherited characteristics to deny or limit health insurance coverage."

How far are human actions biologically determined? Is free will the motor of human existence? The fight over sociobiology is not over. It has just begun. But one can hope that in the struggle over defining ethics, the memories of eugenics attempts in the earlier part of the twentieth century will not be forgotten when a bogus attempt to remake man on the basis of arbitrary racial categories led to the worst horrors in history. The reasonable conclusion would seem to be that while man is guided by a genetic code, he is not hostage to it. He retains the capacity to make independent judgments; what distinguishes him from animals is precisely his capacity to recognize and master impulse and caprice. The spotlight that genetics captured in 1997, however, marked the start of a prolonged national debate over genetics. As scientific advances continue to roar ahead, genetics will be one of the most vexing questions about freedom that the U.S. confronts.

Another area in which technological progress provoked controversy was the Internet. In election year 1994, President Clinton signed the Communications Decency Act (CDA). It banned "indecent" electronic communication that minors might view. Despite First Amendment challenges, the Justice Department defended the bill in *Reno vs. ACLU*. But in 1997, the Clinton administration took a slightly modified stance in *ApolloMedia vs. Reno*. ApolloMedia challenged the provision making it a felony to relay "indecent" material "with intent to annoy...another person." The Clinton administration seeks to make a distinction between obscenity and annoyance, even though the law's language is sweeping.

A parallel initiative by the Clinton administration was the "hate crimes" bill. Together with Senators Arlen Specter, Edward Kennedy and Ron Wyden, president Clinton sought in 1997 to expand punishment for hate crimes. Anyone who attacked minorities or gays would come under special censure. The problem is that it is difficult to separate hate crimes from normal crimes. Is it a worse crime to assail someone verbally as well as attacking them physically? The whole concept of hate crimes would seem to be a boondoggle for lawyers who could drum up business on the shaky basis of verbal profanities. In the attempt to protect freedoms, the Clinton administration ended up working to stifle them.

One case that drew nation-wide attention and resulted in a protest march in New York against the police was the battering of 30-year-old Haitian immigrant Abner Louima. His was certainly a case where individual rights were flagrantly violated. Louima, who had been arrested for disorderly conduct outside a nightclub, was attacked by officers inside a Brooklyn police station; he was sodomized with a toilet-plunger handle. But this was simply old-fashioned police brutality mixed with racial

contempt. It was no cause for a special hate crimes bill, nor for condemning the New York city police out-of-hand.

The problem with hate is exemplified by demagogues such as Louis Farrakhan. In the past year, Farrakhan began to make inroads among liberals and conservatives in his campaign to win respectability. Television pundit Robert Novak and supply-side guru Jude Wanniski both publicly supported Farrakhan as a visionary leader. And in April, Philadelphia mayor Edward Rendell invited Farrakhan to a "racial unity" rally. Farrakhan ranted about a "half-slave and half-free" U.S. in Gray's Ferry, an Irish Catholic neighborhood where a gang of white men had attacked two black men and a black woman, while some 500 blacks marched and shouted "white trash." Interviewed by Tim Russert on April 13 on "Meet the Press," Farrakhan stated that, "I believe that, for the small numbers of Jewish people in the United States, they exercise a tremendous amount of influence in the affairs of the nation." Farrakhan should not be banned from speaking, but the support he earned from conservatives such as Robert Novak and Jude Wanniski was appalling.

In an effort to assuage sensitivities over America's historical racial injustices, President Clinton appointed a national commission, headed by historian John Hope Franklin, to examine the racial problem and offer recommendations. The commission has gone nowhere. It seems to have devoted itself to collecting testimony from various individuals and organizations about racial disputes. It is doubtful that it will arrive at any surprising or original conclusions. Franklin stated that he didn't even see much point in inviting opponents of affirmative action to testify before the committee.

On the affirmative action front, however, much changed. In California, a businessman and university regent named Ward Connerly spearheaded Proposition 209, which aimed at eliminating racial preferences. Proposition 209 was approved by 4.7 million Californians, but Judge Thelton Henderson had issued an injunction to block it. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, however, overturned that ruling: "A system which permits one judge to block with the stroke of a pen what 4,376,180 state residents voted to enact as law tests the integrity of our constitutional democracy," wrote Judge Diarmuid F. O'Scannlain. The Supreme Court declined to hear challenges to Proposition 209. Indeed, the Supreme Court's entire approach to affirmative action has fundamentally changed. In the Piscataway school board case, in which a white teacher sued because she had been laid off in favor of a black teacher, a federal appeals court ruled that the white teacher had been the victim of discrimination. Civil rights groups offered the white teacher \$433,000 to get her to drop her suit before bringing it to the Supreme Court.

In California, affirmative action is no longer practiced in the state university system. Similarly, the University of Texas law school has moved away from racial preferences in the wake of the 1996 U.S. fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruling known as the Hopwood decision that bars any considerations of race in admissions policy. Texas has adopted a new policy that focuses less on race than on academic strength and economic background. The university has declared that to identify "academically qualified candidates from underserved regions of the state and socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds," any applicants must submit an essay about "personal challenges or disadvantages faced in their lifetime." Texas law professor Lino Graglia briefly triggered an uproar when he observed that black students simply did not appear to perform as well as other minorities because academic performance was less-

emphasized in black communities. The Clinton administration, however, continued to back affirmative action. It pushed the nomination of Bill Lann Lee as assistant attorney general for Civil Rights. Lee, in a fiercely contested nomination, was defeated by Republican senators such as Orrin Hatch.

Bill Clinton became the first sitting president to address a gay-rights organization when he spoke at the first annual dinner of the Human Rights Campaign Fund (HRC). According to columnists Ben Wattenberg and Daniel Wattenberg, "amid all the historical positioning and appropriation of the moral capital of the black civil-rights struggle, very little was said—either by Mr. Clinton or HRC leaders—about the actual discrimination and harassment faced by gay Americans today." The legislative aim of the HRC is passage of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. This bill would make it illegal for private employers to discriminate against gays and lesbians. The debate over the act centers on whether it would simply result in a senseless explosion in litigation.

Another bone of contention was the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), which was passed by Congress to overturn a Supreme Court ruling. In the summer, however, the Supreme Court struck down the bill. The *Christian Science Monitor* declared that the Court had "lobbed a figurative bomb into the middle of this nation's already-hot debate over religious rights." The RFRA stated that "Government shall not substantially burden a person's exercise of religion even if the burden results from a rule of general applicability." But the Court decided that the sweeping language of the bill violated the doctrine of separation of powers. Justice Kennedy wrote that the bill would end up "displacing laws and prohibiting official actions of almost every description and regardless of subject matter." The problem with the bill was that it elevated individual rights at the expense of society; prisoners could claim that drug use was part of their religion, and so on. Wilfred M. McClay, writing in the October 1997 *Commentary*, declared that RFRA "played directly into our pernicious tendency to emphasize the autonomous, unencumbered, and unhistorical self as the building block of social and political reality."

Far more alarming than the RFRA, however, was the GOP's attempt to begin impeaching liberal judges. In March, House majority leader Tom DeLay explained to the *Washington Times* that "articles of impeachment are being written right now" against a Texas judge. According to DeLay, "as part of our conservative efforts against judicial activism, we are going after judges. Congress has given up its responsibility...." William Kristol, Pat Buchanan and Senator Orrin Hatch jumped on the bandwagon to impeach liberal judges. But the Constitution states that Congress can remove a federal judge only for "treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors." The notion that judges can be removed because they are liberal is not just absurd. It is unconstitutional.

GOP musings on impeachment extended beyond liberal judges. The fundraising practices of President Clinton and Vice-President Al Gore and the allegations against former Housing Secretary Henry Cisneros became a volatile issue. In that context, the independent special prosecutor act remains a subject of controversy. Republican and Democratic positions on the act flip-flopped. Whereas Republicans used to charge that the act was unconstitutional during the Reagan years, they came to embrace it as a weapon against the Clinton administration. Now it was liberals who decried the dangers of the act. According to *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis, the pros-

ecution of Henry Cisneros showed that "an independent counsel has only one main subject to justify his existence, and the temptation to charge and overcharge must be great. It takes someone of great discipline not to prosecute." And so, Attorney General Janet Reno resisted calls for a special prosecutor, while Fred Thompson in the Senate and Dan Burton in the House attempted to expose the machinations at work in the election. Thompson alleged that a Chinese cabal had tried to buy the election. Although he failed to present evidence that would have supported this conclusion, enough shady characters surfaced during the various investigations to cast an unseemly light on both political parties. A particularly flamboyant instance was the Lebanese businessman Roger Tamraz who openly bragged to the Senate about his attempts to buy influence among American politicians. Attempts at campaign finance reform went nowhere. Conservative Republicans such as Mitch McConnell of Kentucky maintained that campaign finance reform was a free speech issue: conservatives should be free to spend as much money as they wished airing their views. Liberals, McConnell argued, were out to quash conservatives by denying them the ability to propound conservative doctrines.

Still, if conservatives were in a lather about the perfidies of Clinton and Gore, the release of a new book entitled *Abuse of Power: The new Nixon Tapes*, edited by Stanley Kutler, provided a reminder of the depths to which the U.S. had sunk in the early 1970s. President Nixon, for instance, is quoted as urging his subordinates to raid the Brookings Institution: "I want it implemented....Goddamnit, get in and get those files. Blow the safe and get it." The tone is one of thugs plotting to rub out enemies rather than one of high-ranking politicians and presidential aides. Watergate and Nixon's resignation ushered in a new era of openness in American government.

But exactly how open? This was the topic of a new report released in March 1997 by the Commission on Protecting and Reducing Government Secrecy, headed by New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. In his chairman's foreword, Moynihan called for an end to what he called the terrible torment of secrecy plaguing government institutions. Moynihan argued that secrecy was in many ways inimical to the workings of a democratic government. The U.S. could become its own worst enemy: "make no mistake, however. It [secrecy] is a parallel regulatory regime with a far greater potential for damage if it malfunctions. This can take the form of espionage when, unknown to us, information presumed to be secret becomes known to adversaries." In Moynihan's view, "a culture of openness can, and ought to, evolve within the Federal Government." A first step would be to declassify many of the historical documents at the Central Intelligence Agency.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

As the allegations of Chinese attempts to influence the presidential election and the report on government secrecy suggest, an intimate link exists between foreign and domestic affairs. As a nation founded on the belief that it was unique, the U.S. has always viewed itself as an exemplar for the rest of the world. No country has done more to promote freedom than the U.S. In Europe, the U.S. successfully managed to hold elections in Bosnia and to push through NATO expansion. Russia does not represent, at the moment, a military threat to the U.S.

But at the very moment of American success, a number of doubting voices have surfaced to decry intervention abroad. Apart from Samuel Huntington, James

Schlesinger, the former Secretary of Defense, has lambasted American interventionism. "The upshot," wrote Schlesinger in the fall 1997 *National Interest*, "is that the United States has successfully established itself as a nigh-on universal international nag." Robert Kaplan, writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, has criticized the U.S. for proceeding with a Holocaust-driven approach to foreign policy and attacked the missionary approach to spreading democracy in a much-noted essay in *The Atlantic*. Henry Kissinger, like James Schlesinger and other conservatives, admires the "Asian values" espoused by China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and China. The defense of "Asian values" by leading conservatives is, in fact, one of the most troubling developments that has taken place in U.S. foreign policy debates. Here is a case where individual rights are being scanted in favor of the order preserved by the state.

A backlash, however, developed among both conservatives and liberals to the pro-China line enunciated by Kissinger and the Clinton administration. A small coalition of conservative Christian and Jewish social activists sought in 1997 to focus attention in particular on the suppression of religious liberties in China. Apart from occasional, isolated condemnations of forced abortions in China, no serious attention had been devoted to the suppression of such liberties by the American government, by conservative groups, or by liberal human rights organizations. Neither of the two major political parties had made an issue of Chinese religious persecution, and the press had devoted scant attention to the subject.

The chief movers behind the new coalition to pressure China on religious liberties were Michael Horowitz of the Hudson Institute, Nina Shea of Freedom House, Gary Bauer of the Family Research Council and Jim Jacobson, president of Christian Solidarity International-USA. The strategy developed by these figures was to push for a "Freedom From Religious Persecution Act," modeled on the Jackson-Vanik amendment that was designed to penalize the Soviet Union for human rights violations. The bill would have established an Office of Religious Persecution Monitoring in the White House, to be headed by a Senate-confirmed director. The bill was not passed in 1997. But the emergence of this new coalition, coupled with heightened attention to Chinese human rights violations, suggest that the issue is not going to go away.

The Clinton administration has declared the "enlargement" of democracies to be its main foreign policy goal. To some extent, it sought to achieve it. Apart from NATO enlargement, the administration pushed for fast-track authority in negotiating with South America, but was rebuffed by recalcitrant Democrats. Electoral considerations prevailed as Congressman Richard Gephardt, an economic nationalist from Missouri, sought to deal a blow to the presidential aspirations of Vice-President Al Gore, a staunch internationalist. The U.S., alone among the countries that made up the Gulf War coalition, faced down Saddam Hussein over his continued development of germ warfare capability. And it is the U.S. that has presided over the Arab-Israeli peace process as a mediator. The U.S., as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright put it, remains the "indispensable nation."

But the record of the Clinton administration in supporting freedom has been mixed. President Clinton moved away from his explicit support from democracy and freedom in a number of areas. He maintained a studious silence about authoritarianism in Kazakhstan and has placed business concerns above human rights in dealing with China and Indonesia. The administration, for instance, even opposed a proposal by Repre-

sentative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen to bolster American embassy staffers responsible for tracking human rights violations. President Clinton has pushed for engagement with China, but has shown no human rights progress. The Chinese leadership has amply demonstrated its contempt for U.S. human rights concerns by locking up every last dissident in the country. Torture, beatings, executions and the selling of body parts remain routine in China. But where China is concerned, the business of America, the Clinton administration has seemed to imply, is business.

Perhaps even more disquieting than President Clinton's refusal to push for human rights is the intellectual cover that many conservative intellectuals have begun to provide him. In 1991, in his book on democratization *The Third Wave*, Samuel Huntington noted that "other nations may fundamentally change their political systems and continue their existence as nations. The United States does not have that option. Hence Americans have a special interest in the development of a global environment congenial to democracy." No longer. A measure of the change that has taken place in the political climate can be gauged by Huntington's most recent essay in the 75th anniversary of *Foreign Affairs*: "instead of formulating unrealistic schemes for grand endeavors abroad," says Huntington, "foreign policy elites might well devote their energies to designing plans for lowering American involvement in the world...."

One intellectual who never succumbed to a fashionable fatalism about the decline of liberal democracy was Isaiah Berlin. Berlin died in November at the age of 88. His death was a profound loss for democracy. A lifelong champion of pluralism, Berlin distinguished between negative and positive liberty. Negative liberty allowed men to make mistakes; positive liberty dragooned them into battalions to work for the good of the state. Berlin knew that absolute liberty could not be reconciled with absolute equality: "If you choose one value," he said, "you must sacrifice another." As Berlin observed in an essay on Franklin Roosevelt, he provided a sane alternative to the extremes of fascism and communism being peddled even in the United States in the 1930s. Berlin believed in compromise, in avoiding absolutes. The next time Jiang Zemin visits the U.S. mouthing his platitudes about the superiority of Asian values to American values, Americans could do worse than to recall Berlin's warnings about positive liberty. In America, individual rights may sometimes get out of hand, but they are surely preferable to no rights at all.

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Latin America & the Caribbean: Civil Society Gets Mugged

Martin Edwin Andersen

INTRODUCTION

Brazil's President Fernando Henrique Cardoso described it as "my government's most delicate moment." Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo called it the worst day of his presidency. For Argentine President Carlos Menem, it likely cost him any chance he thought he might have for reelection to an unprecedented third consecutive term. Were the leaders of Latin America's three largest nations faced with natural disasters? Economic depression? Massive unemployment? Guerrilla violence? No. In each case, "it" referred to issues of law enforcement and the administration of justice. And the trio were not alone.

Public safety and access to effective justice—the right of citizens to be secure in their homes, at work and at play—proved in 1997 to be two of the most important barometers of the health or ill-health, of democracies throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Public corruption issues also served as important indicators of governments' commitment to the general welfare, as well as useful measures of involvement by ordinary citizens in providing their own solutions in the face of extreme official indifference or denial.

In Panama the acquittal of a politically well-connected suspect accused of murdering an American soldier seriously damaged relations between that country and the United States; the issue is emblematic of the questions about the current status of a democracy restored in 1989 at the point of U.S. bayonets. In Brazil worries about public safety produced a sharp rise in the demand for armored cars; in Venezuela every Monday Caracas newspapers carry headlines about a dozen or more killings committed over the previous weekend; in Medellín, Colombia, psychology students working on internships gather on weekends at city cemeteries because that is where the community spends its leisure time, as the resting places are filled with mourners of the freshly murdered.

As violent ideological conflict ebbs in most of the region street crime has seemed to surge. The absence of explicitly political violence has not brought with it the sense of order that was common during the years of dictatorship. Then the military, under the pretext of repressing communist-inspired subversion, maintained a tight lid on most Latin American nations; its curfews, martial law, and illegal searches effectively suppressed both criminal elements and their deeds. Ironically, now that the military establishments have become, in many countries, directly involved in the fight against ordinary criminality, they seem less able to maintain order and, indeed, are often part of the problem, becoming vulnerable to corruption by criminal elements just as the police establishments were (and still are).

Military influence in internal security in many countries, which has received a strong boost from U.S. anti-narcotics policies, continued to deform law enforcement and the administration of justice throughout the region, as it did during the 1960s and 1970s, when society's enemies were cast in ideological terms. U.S. rhetoric about the "war" against inter-

national crime, particularly against the drug mafias, not only gave birth to military intervention in internal security—so at odds with the American experience itself—but tended to reinforce the separation of the forces of order from the citizen support they needed to effectively and lawfully combat criminal organizations whose size, sophistication and armament often rivals their own. The search for appropriate strategies to fight crime—national efforts that neither inflate nor underestimate the threat of mafias and international syndicates—both united and disconcerted citizens from the Rio Grande to Tierra del Fuego.

Throughout the region, in new and emerging democracies, and those countries undergoing transformation to market economies, narcotics-related violence and public corruption dominated the pages of newspapers and magazines. Even in countries where criminal violence has not reached alarming proportions, the perception of insecurity fanned by often sensationalized news coverage has brought with it questions about the efficacy of state efforts to provide for public safety. The fears have had corrosive social effects; rich neighborhoods in Venezuela, for example, now pay huge sums to private security agencies for personal protection, while investments in public law enforcement—needed to protect society as a whole—are increasingly viewed as irrelevant. As international financial institutions focus on the rebuilding of "social capital"—the network of personal relationships and associations that make neighborhoods viable places to work and raise a family—as a means of fighting poverty, scores of urban centers are being "decapitalized" by the growth of street crime and gang violence.

As the prospects of armed insurgencies overthrowing governments become a fading memory in many countries, crime and official wrongdoing take on greater political significance. The much-commented proliferation of illegal drug enterprises continued to be an important part of the trend, as was the financial bonanza gained by corrupt officials charged with privatizing mammoth state industries. Official wrongdoing and the illegal narcotics trade can—as the case of Mexico illustrates—create a particularly noxious threat to the rule of law; the entrenched public corruption that allows a system to keep operating can be easily transformed into deadly narco-corruption. The role of the press in covering crime stories and exposing official corruption meant that journalists became exposed to new forms of intimidation and harm. In the guise of helping to restore order, the armed forces in several countries—most notably in Mexico—began to assume domestic roles they never attained in the past. Police forces, supposedly the front line of defense against the onslaught of criminal elements, are often part of the problem. Courts continue to be slow, inefficient and corrupt—in some countries exhibiting behavior more akin to mafias than the purveyors of justice—and among their victims are tens of thousands of people who wait months or even years for their cases to be brought to trial, and who sometimes spend more time in jail awaiting their day in court than that prescribed by the maximum sentence allowed for their alleged crime. Prisons throughout the hemisphere are hellholes.

Of nine Latin American governments rated in 1997 by Transparency International, a respected non-governmental watchdog agency, only one government—Brazil—improved its standing on its Corruption Perception Index. "Let's not mince words," declared World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn, "we need to deal with the cancer of corruption."

THE POUCE: BAD AND "BLUE"

As public safety and public corruption have emerged as key issues in search for consolidation of regional democratization and respect for human rights, the role of law enforcement has become a key measure of social forces contending throughout the nations of the region.

In 1997, police issues took a front seat in the debate about what kind of society citizens wanted for their countries. This trend was evident in Latin America's three largest countries—Argentina, Brazil and Mexico.

Ironically, in Argentina, where the once coup-prone military has been transformed into a voluntary professional organization under civilian control, in large part because of a national internal security law passed in the 1980s which forbids military involvement in domestic law enforcement and intelligence tasks, provincial and local police departments continue to operate largely outside the control of elected authorities.

In Brazil, the Cardoso administration's "most delicate moment" came as tens of thousands of police throughout the country went on strike, an unseemingly tableau in which the forces of order publicly challenged the integrity and authority of Brazil's state political leaders. In a country whose police forces have a reputation for corruption and violence, including death squad activity, extortion kidnapping and narcotics trafficking, suddenly police union officials found themselves the target of death threats and attempts at bribery. Striking patrolmen traded gunfire with non-striking peers, resulting in at least one fatality. The protests led to clashes with federal troops who were called out—tanks and all—to keep order, as if they were dealing with rural landless peasants, or student demonstrators. They also signalled a sea change in the thinking of many police officers, tired of the top-down military structure ruling their forces, and the special privileges accruing to senior officers. When raises were given only to senior officers in the state of Minas Gerais, for example, the beat cops went on strike. "They thought that if the officers were satisfied, they could rely on hierarchy and military discipline to force the troops to accept whatever the government gave," a detectives union president told the *New York Times*. "They want to treat us if we're just machines or cattle."

In Mexico, Zedillo's worst day—overshadowing the 1994 peso crisis—came in February when it was revealed the military officer he had placed in charge of national anti-narcotics efforts, army Gen. Jose de Jesus Gutierrez Rebollo, was in the pay of the drug cartels. Just weeks before, Gutierrez Rebollo had been the object of lavish praise by U.S. anti-drug czar Gen. Barry McCaffrey; a consistent theme of U.S. anti-drug policy in the region in both the Bush and Clinton administrations has been to push for military involvement in the "war" against narcotics. (The American general's penchant for absurd attribution of merit to his uniformed Latin peers was still much in evidence when, several months later, he claimed that the Mexican army had done as much to combat narcotics trafficking as any other organization *in the world*.)

For the U.S., the immediate fallout of the Gutierrez Rebollo affair was to reevaluate the safety of scores of undercover agents working in Mexico, as well as their relations with an even larger number of Mexican agents working with them. It also shattered an illusion shared by Washington policymakers, particularly in the Pentagon, and Mexican authorities, that the military was above the corruption that plagues the country's police and government agencies. By mid-year, more than three dozen military officers, including several high-ranking officials, were arrested in connection with drug investigations.

By 1997 the armed forces had taken control of public security in 19 states. Putting military officers at the head of Mexico's anti-drug and public security forces contributed to grave human rights problems, particularly in rural areas. Since an army general headed anti-crime efforts in Mexico City, police there have made hundreds of arbitrary arrests in which suspicious-looking people have been detained without being charged. (In May, a retired general was appointed by the federal government as chief of a provincial newspa-

per in San Luis Potosi and Zacatecas.) Even within the U.S. government the militarization policy has its critics. Drug Enforcement Agency officials report that in its wake cooperation with Mexican counterparts has foundered—perhaps not surprisingly given the fact many of the military officers chosen for law enforcement positions are drawn from the hermetic intelligence community.

Critics of Mexico's civilian law enforcement agencies point to their notorious reputation for thuggery and illegal enrichment, with extra-legal activities running from kidnaping and shaking down motorists for bribes, to murder. With no tradition of public accountability, poor training, and low wages, the Mexican police - and law enforcement agencies generally - have only the weakest resistance to corruption. The long dominance of single-party rule inculcated habits in the police of service to a corrupt political class rather than to the state, let alone the public. The deployment of thousands of soldiers from military police units into dangerous neighborhoods to replace civilian officers who receive training at army bases only served to further demoralize the police, at a time when violent crime is rising at an alarming rate. At the same time, military officers are asked to take on law and order tasks for which they are not trained, nor held accountable.

In January 1997, an Argentine photojournalist was murdered by Buenos Aires provincial police linked to one of President Menem's most powerful financial backers, a man whose own relatives jokingly refer to him as "Mafia Daddy." The grisly assassination proved to be a catalyst for public discontent with eight years of public corruption and political thuggery in the Peronist government. Since taking office in 1989 Menem has been the toast of both the Bush and Clinton administrations for his free-market policies and unconditional support for Washington's foreign policy initiatives, including a willingness to send military "peacekeepers" to troubled spots around the globe. The Menem administration has also been careful to curry favor with U.S. officials by assuring lucrative business opportunities for former diplomats and intelligence agents, relatives of American politicians and political party fundraisers alike.

Menem's ascendancy, however, also carried with it a dark side U.S. policymakers have been unwilling to confront, even as Argentine society spoke resoundingly in October elections by delivering a stinging rebuke to the president's political friends and allies. In 1987, the Argentine judiciary was ranked in public opinion surveys as the country's most respected political institution. Under Menem its standing plummeted to record lows—the victim of constant political manipulation and involvement in corrupt practices. The military chiefs responsible for mass murder during a badly-misnamed dirty "war" against leftist guerrillas and other opponents were released from prison, and dozens of brutal veterans of the illegal counter-insurgency campaign—many Nazi sympathizers, or people with criminal records—were restored into the security services. A deal to privatize the state airline, with more than \$70 million dollars in unexplained "associated costs," became a symbol of the massive illegal shift of resources to Menem's political circle as a result of the sale of state enterprises.

In 1994 a bomb attack against the AMIA Jewish cultural center in Buenos Aires left 86 people dead. (The Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires had been destroyed in a 1992 terrorist attack, which killed 29). For three years the investigation languished, with Argentine officials seemingly more interested in making political points against the alleged instigator—Iran—than in trying to investigate possible local connections to the outrage. Nor could much be expected in the way of assistance from state intelligence services that Menem, who in 1989 reportedly received millions of dollars in campaign funds from Libya, had larded with

assorted neo-Nazis and thugs.

The murder of photographer Jose Luis Cabezas brought increasing scrutiny of the illegal activities of the Buenos Aires provincial police—a force long known for its brutality, corruption and ties to the drug underworld. According to one U.S. diplomat stationed at the time in Buenos Aires, more than two decades ago—in 1976, the year the military overthrew an elected civilian government and promised to restore "order"—members of the force were responsible for most of the violent crimes occurring that year in the province. Despite efforts by Buenos Aires Gov. Eduardo Duhalde, a Peronist party frontrunner to succeed Menem, to put distance between himself and the force he once described as the "world's finest", his initial reaction to reports of police involvement in the killing proved prophetic—"there goes my life"—as his party's ticket went down to defeat. In the wake of the opposition's overwhelming victory around Argentina, the AMIA investigation received a needed breakthrough—the discovery of the payment of \$2.5 million to the family of one of the police force's highest ranking officers just a week before the bombing. Speculation in Argentina is divided as to whether the case will ever be finally solved—the betting from informed quarters is that those law enforcement officials implicated in the bombing themselves know too much about other official wrongdoing—involving politicians and police—to be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. At the end of 1997, Duhalde was forced to fire more than 250 high-ranking police officers and began, in his eighth year at the head of the province, a top-down restructuring of the force. Duhalde also planned a March visit to New York City, in a very public effort to learn from Mayor Rudy Guiliani how to achieve an effective police response to urban crime. Meanwhile, a parade of U.S. police consultants visited Argentina to preach the benefits of *mano dura*—a hard line against crime. It is a message that—when received by members of an angry and demoralized force already known for a high rate of extra-judicial killings—may carry with it the seeds of future tragedies

COPS ARE HUMAN TOO

During the Cold War, police institutions throughout the region found themselves subordinated to the military. As the hemisphere was divided mostly between iron-fisted dictatorships and weak democracies, little thought was given to creating civilian law enforcement institutions that were truly community based, and whose crime-fighting mission was carried out in accordance with the rule of law. Instead, the police were mere appendages of a national security establishment whose primary goal was the suppression of internal enemies. Frequently the head of the national police was an army general. The military intervention in internal security proved a virtual guarantee that the armed forces would continue to be politicized, and rank-and-file police officers—relegated to second-class status within their own forces—would remain demoralized. Military tutelage also advanced armed forces political designs. When militaries moved to overthrow civilian governments, they needed first to ensure that they would not be opposed by their law enforcement brethren.

The situation of the 1990s requires a wholesale rethinking of security policy, particularly in terms of law enforcement. Military models are wholly inappropriate for law enforcement and, despite U.S. policy initiatives to the contrary, there is no evidence that Latin militaries are any less susceptible to corruption than civilian police—the issue is merely one of proximity and opportunity. News coverage about the state of public protection offered by law enforcement needs to be balanced by an understanding about the conditions in which police work in most of Latin America and the Caribbean. Many officers have only rudimentary knowledge of the rights of citizens and of the law, and have little training in

self-defense or the protection of others. Low salaries and brutal working conditions are part of the equation, as is the ignorance on the part of many sworn officers—the people society calls on to protect it—about their own labor and legal rights.

In Mexico City, police officers face waits of up to more than a decade to receive social welfare benefits. In Argentina, a Buenos Aires provincial police officer who spent an unusual three days in a workshop on domestic violence offered by team of social workers, later told one of them. "You know, ma'am, this is the first time in almost 20 years on the force anyone has asked me what I think, much less what I feel."

These are hard truths, and they often fall on deaf ears. Rio de Janeiro's state police are well-known for their brutality and corruption. In late August Chief Helio Luz admitted officers had sold weapons to narcotics gangs that control many of the city's hillside slums. However, he was fired by Governor Marcello Alencar after he spoke sympathetically about the situation of the police, who at the time were protesting over wages and working conditions. Until civil society is willing to shoulder the burden, including the financial costs, of reforming law enforcement institutions, it can expect to receive a service commensurate with its meager investment.

MILITARY THREATS: NEW WINESKINS, OLD WOLVES

The threat of overt military takeovers of government—once a common event throughout much of the hemisphere—continued to fade in 1997. In September, coups actually became illegal in Latin America and the Caribbean, as Venezuela became the 21st country to ratify the Washington Protocol, an amendment to the charter of the Organization of American States that allows the exclusion of any country where a constitutional government is removed by force. In some respects, however, the banning of coups might prove as ineffective as legislating morality.

The weakness of civilian institutions could be seen in the continuing role played by regional militaries in internal security; a phenomenon that tended to politicize the military, demoralize and delay more effective responses from civilian law enforcement, and reinforce impunity by forces claiming to represent the law. In 1997, there were armed forces which remained outside effective civilian control (Peru and Colombia), which were used to supplant civilian law enforcement (Mexico), and which suppressed labor actions by police (Brazil).

The anti-narcotics campaign has provided regional militaries with new ways of justifying their existence, by emphasizing new roles and missions which give them continued entree into internal security—a role wisely forbidden to the American armed forces in the United States by the Posse Comitatus Act. Another concern is continued efforts to involve regional militaries in "civic action"—which often puts armies in competition with elected officials, and private enterprise, for scarce resources with which to carry out public works.

In 1997 concern over potentially politicizing effects of military civic action received a stunning ratification by the actions of Paraguayan strongman presidential candidate Gen. Lino Oviedo, who as head of the army led an abortive coup attempt in 1996. According to U.S. officials, President Juan Carlos Wasmosy moved against Oviedo in an attempt to limit the influence of the drug-tainted military in his government. The coup-plotting general, who frequently throws costume balls and attends dressed as Julius Caesar and Al Capone, is now the presidential candidate of Wasmosy's own party. His stump speeches consist of a litany listing the public works constructed—particularly schools and roads—by the armed forces while under his command.

Civilian control of regional militaries continues to be an issue, particularly in those countries that do not have—as do Argentina, El Salvador and, in 1997, Guatemala—internal security laws which prohibit the use of the armed forces in domestic law enforcement. An important instrument of civilian control is Congress, where elected representatives can help the executive shape and inform defense policy, and can exercise real influence through the budgetary process. Unfortunately, in one case, that of Colombia, the civilian expertise that might make a difference in military conduct in the field—in this case, in fighting a serious guerrilla insurgency whose very size makes it a national emergency—does not exist.

The effective control of national territory by the Colombian government is estimated at between 35 to 60 percent. At the same time, the legitimate suppression of urban and rural guerrilla forces is the object of continuing questioning by local and international human rights groups, who point to broad security force involvement, if not leadership, in death squad activities. One major problem is that Colombia's armed forces number about 120,000, and only about 30 percent of these are in the field. The rest of the conscript-heavy army are either undergoing basic training or guarding bases and public facilities or assigned to logistics. In the immense, difficult terrain the armed forces' effective presence in many areas is virtually nil. Added to the problems in the field is the serious lack of civilian oversight capacity, particularly outside the executive. In Congress, only a pair of legislators have reputations as experts in military affairs. It is a difficult task to exercise civilian control over forces at war in the best of circumstances; the lack of civilian expertise makes such efforts impossible.

THE PRESS MAKES ITS MARK

Throughout Latin America and the Caribbean the press has become a protagonist in the fight against corruption and public wrongdoing, and at the same time is the primary filter through which public opinion is formed regarding street crime and violence. In many countries, investigative journalism's new roles and significance has put it on a collision course with authoritarian democracies such as Peru, Argentina and Mexico, whose own agencies for protecting the public interest have tenuous independence, lack financial resources and a commitment to the general welfare, and are beset by corruption. And even reporting on street crime and public reaction to it can cause friction, with governments acting as if members of the Fourth Estate form part of a Fifth Column of calumny. In Argentina, for example, in December the Menem government and the federal police blamed the press for creating a "psychosis" among a population alarmed at a perceived increase in public insecurity; yet the government's own statistics confirmed the accuracy of the press reporting—violent crime *was* up.

The new social and political context in which journalists work today—reporting on crime and public corruption—is fraught with both professional and personal hazard. Despite the end of insurgencies and military regimes in most countries of the region, crimes against journalists continue. In the first ten months of 1997, 11 journalists were killed, one in Argentina, four in Colombia, three in Mexico, two in Guatemala and one in El Salvador. In Mexico, where death threats and assaults against journalists are common, it is estimated that 20 percent of the attacks are the work of the security forces, while another 17 percent are attributable to serving or former government officials. Reporters covering police issues are at particular risk. "The exercise of journalism," noted Luis Gabriel Cano, the outgoing head of the Inter-American Press Association, whose brother Guillermo was murdered a decade earlier for his crusade against Colombia's drug cartels, "remains an exceedingly

dangerous profession in Latin America."

Denunciations of wrongdoing frequently lead to the highest levels of government and industry. Journalists such as Horatio Verbitsky and Eduardo Valle Espinosa have made their reputations, and established benchmarks for public behavior, by hardhitting exposes of official wrongdoing. Verbitsky's name is virtually synonymous with the anti-corruption battles in Menem's Argentina; "El Buho," Valle Espinosa's chillingly prescient denunciation in 1994 of Mexico's "narco-democracy," which led to his self-exile in the United States that same year, was borne out daily in 1997 by revelations of drug kingpin ties to former top officials of President Raul Salinas de Gortari's government and—even now—to senior members of the military and police. The weak performance of the courts and police has caused public opinion to look to journalists and their work as an alternate venue for "justice," a trend that, while understandable, can carry a disturbing underlying assumption—that the mere fact of a published denunciation is itself proof of guilt. However, the simple denunciation of wrongdoing cannot long substitute for effective action by the legal system, which means state action.

The interpretation of crime phenomena by the press has also become a two-edged sword for policymakers and the public. The return to democratic rule throughout the region has meant journalists can report on an endless number of topics extensively; dictatorships frequently were able to suppress the unwelcome news of social turmoil, such as crime, through censorship. However, the "cronica roja"—gripping blood-soaked true crime tales—carried by many newspapers and magazines can and do transform individual crimes into misleading characterizations about the threats faced and the efficacy of the forces of order in meeting those threats. A collection of anecdotes is not data; to portray them as such can cause the public to lose confidence in the state to maintain the rule of law and, in the worst cases, foment a type of hysteria one of whose by-products is often a lynch-mob mentality.

One of the primary challenges facing journalists today is to create a new genre of reporting, in which crime news is placed within an accurate framework. The effort must include the development of accurate and insightful information about the work of police forces themselves—creating a public literature similar to that developed throughout the 1980s and early 1990s on the region's once-impenetrable armed forces. Effective civilian oversight of police institutions will continue to be impossible while their internal workings remain a mystery.

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Press Freedom: Restrictions Increase "Lawfully," With Slightly Less Violence

**Leonard R. Sussman
and Kristen Guida**

Worldwide, journalists were subjected to less violence in 1997 than in previous years. This was small comfort for the families of 41 journalists murdered in 19 countries. In many countries, the press was restricted with growing subtlety and uncertainty, and misuse of the rule of law.

A year ago in Liberia warring factions burned down broadcasting stations and newspaper offices. As a result, radio and press reporters censored themselves to avoid the wrath of rampaging militia. Though factional violence against journalists and their institutions diminished notably in 1997, uncertainty remained. As Charles Taylor's new government warned the media against making derogatory remarks about the government the minister of information promised more stringent legal guidelines to "deal with the press" in 1998. Meanwhile, as one journalist told us, "fear is with us."

In 92 of the 186 countries surveyed, the conditions under which journalists operate changed, for better or for worse. The split was nearly even: In 49 countries, press freedom declined; in 43 it increased. Significant improvement was noted in eight countries: The press in the Dominican Republic, Hungary, the Philippines and Sao Tome & Principe moved from partly free to free. Albania, Central African Republic, and Zambia rose to partly free from not free.

Significant declines in press freedom occurred in seven countries. Brazil's media moved from free to partly free, while Congo-Brazzaville, Djibouti, Kenya, Lebanon, Qatar and Zimbabwe went from partly free to not free.

The murders of two journalists in Brazil heightened tensions between politicians and journalists who cover political corruption. The legislature moved to rein in the press with a bill that would allow unlimited financial awards in libel suits. If enacted, the law would hold individual journalists liable for fines of up to \$900,000.

In Jordan, media criticism of government policies met, at least temporarily with broad legal bans on press content. Amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law widened the content bans of the earlier law to include prohibitions on publishing government documents and news about the security services in all forms of published information. The amendments increase the capital requirements for licensing of daily and weekly publications, and provide for suspension, closure, and extremely high fines for publications which violate the law. At least 13 weekly papers have been suspended under the amendments, and the government has barred the entry of several foreign Arab publications for alleged violation of the law.

Thirty-six countries improved, and another 42 declined within the categories assigned to them for 1996. Press freedom in 94 of 186 countries was unchanged.

This survey examines the degree to which print and broadcast journalism is independent of government. Political and economic pressures on the content of news media are assessed, along with distortions resulting from commercial controls. The year-round study employs some 20 criteria to place each country in one of the three categories.

Of the world's population, 1,165 million (20 percent) in 67 countries (36 percent of the nations) reside in free-press areas; 2,196 million (38 percent) in 54 countries (29 percent) have access to partly free news media; and 2,471 million (42 percent) of the people live in 65 countries (35 percent) where the press is not free.

The regional division is diverse. The most restrictive area is the Middle East. One country has a free press (Israel), two are partly free (Jordan and Kuwait), and 11 are not free. In Africa, seven countries are in the free category (Benin, Botswana, Mali, Mauritius, Namibia, Sao Tome and Principe and South Africa), 17 partly free and 30 not free. Among the Asian nations, five have a free press (Japan, South Korea, Papua New Guinea, Philippines and Taiwan), 12 are partly free, and 19 not free. In Europe, East and West, there are 27 free-press countries, five partly free, and four not free. Latin America and the Caribbean have 17 free-press nations, 15 partly free, and one (Cuba) not free. Oceania lists eight free and three partly free; and North America has two free-press countries (Canada and the United States).

The year was less murderous for journalists. Forty-one were killed because of their reporting, five fewer than in 1996. Another 35 were kidnapped or disappeared (47 the previous year). Some 310 were arrested (372 in 1996), and 207 beaten, assaulted or tortured (297 in 1996). Another 147 suffered various forms of harassment (214 in 1996).

While, for journalists, violence or fresh memories of it persists in three-quarters of the countries, in many places the imminent threat ironically is the use or misuse of the rule of law to restrict news media. A Freedom House study in 1997 found that in 43 countries some 33 different kinds of laws were drafted to threaten, regulate, or at worst confiscate or ban news media. There were five broad categories of laws: security laws, insult laws, laws enforcing "responsible journalism," economy-protection laws, and desperation laws.

The common factor among these laws is the exploitation of democratic rhetoric to weaken the free flow of information under the guise of protecting the public from the news media. Even the most democratic states weigh new legislation to protect privacy or fight pornography. Parliament in the United Kingdom has threatened for years to restrict journalists for invading the privacy of individuals. The threat surfaced again in 1997 when some blamed press photographers for the tragic death of Princess Diana. The United States Supreme Court last year struck down congressional legislation to restrict pornography on the Internet.

In most other countries in the Freedom House study the laws being drafted or enacted are far more restrictive. Often, they are ambiguously worded. Security laws, for example, would prosecute the press for violating national security, "state interests," public order or even public values—all difficult to define. Such language enables the regime to target a journalist for whatever some official finds objectionable. A bill in Cameroon would ban newspapers which "attack the public order" or which violate vague standards of good behavior and values.

Increasingly popular legislation which can cost a journalist years in prison is the

PRESS FREEDOM VIOLATIONS —1997 (and cumulative figures since 1982)

Violations	# of Violations 1997	Total 1982-97
A. Killed	41 [19]*	809
B. Kidnapped, Disappeared, Abducted	35 [11]	377
C. Arrested/Detained	310[61]	3747
D. Expelled	22[13]	443

A. Algeria 1; Argentina 1; Brazil 2; Cambodia 2; Colombia 5; El Salvador 1; Guatemala 3; India 7; Indonesia2; Iran 1; Mexico4; Namibia 1; Pakistan 2; Peru 3; Philippines 1; Russia 1; Rwanda 1; Sierra Leone 1; Ukraine 2.

B. Algeria 2; Argentina 2; Colombia 4; Kenya 1; Mexico 6; Nigeria 2; Pakistan 1; Peru 1; Russia 11; Tajikistan 4; Ukraine 1.

C. Afghanistan 1; Albania 3; Algeria 3; Argentina 1; Azerbaijan 2; Belarus 26; Bosnia 3; Cambodia 4; Cameroon 6; China 4; Congo, Dem. Rep. 10; Cuba 27; Egypt 2; Eritrea 1; Ethiopia 7; Gambia 1; Ghana 1; Guatemala 1; Guinea 3; Haiti 1; India 5; Indonesia 2; Iran 3; Israel 2; Jordan 3; Kenya 5; Kyrgyzstan 1; Lebanon 1; Liberia 6; Maldives 1; Mali 15; Mauritius 1; Morocco 1; Nepal 1; Niger 4; Nigeria 55; Pakistan 1; Palest. Auth. 2; Peru 4; Poland 3; Russia 3; Rwanda 1; Serbia 3; Sierra Leone 34; Somalia 1; South Africa 1; South Korea 1; Sri Lanka 1; Sudan 4; Tajikistan 1; Tanzania 3; Togo 3; Tonga 1; Tunisia 1; Turkey 15; Uganda2; Ukraine 1; Vietnam 1; Yemen 3; Zambia6; Zimbabwe 1.

D. Belarus 2; Bahrain1; Cambodia 1; Congo, Dem. Rep. 8; Gambia 1; Guinea 1; Indonesia 1; Kenya 1; Micronesia 1; Panama 1; Peru 1; Rwanda 1; Zambia 2.

Violations	# of Violations 1997	Total 1987-97
E. Charged, Sentenced, Fined	165 [52]	805
F. Beaten, Assaulted, Tortured	207 [41]	1629
G. Wounded in Attack	28 [1]	382
H. Threatened	42 [18]	730
I. Robbery, Confiscation of Materials or Credentials	35 [23]	730
J. Barred from Entry or Travel	46 [17]	452
K. Harassed	152 [45]	1403
L. Publication or Program Shut Down	30 [14]	682
M. Publication or Program Banned, Censored or Suspended	131[47]	886
N. Home Bombed, Burned, Raided or Occupied	19 [11]	124
O. Publication or Program Bombed, Burned, Raided or Occupied	59 [26]	341
Total Violations	914 [106]	

* [] indicates the number of countries in which said violations occurred

—Compiled by Kristen Guida, research assistant

insult law. It penalizes reporters for insulting or violating the privacy of officials. Almost any criticism of a president or other government official can be termed insulting and draw a penalty. In 13 Latin American countries and many other nations around the world insult laws are on the books. In some places, journalists may be charged with "defamation" of the government, a charge similar to criminal sedition. Thus, exposing illegal actions of an official may result in a charge against the journalist rather than the corrupt official. In most Islamic countries it is a serious offense to criticize the rulers or Islam. In Croatia, Parliament approved a seditious libel law which initiates legal proceedings for offending or slandering the president, parliament speaker, prime minister, or judges. Government provides such self-protection rather than face reactions from the public to news reports of controversial official acts.

Western Europeans in the Council of Europe have struggled for several years to devise a legislative formula which would prod journalists to act "responsibly." The insistence on responsible journalism appears, at first, to be innocuous. When news people themselves seriously examine press responsibility they can improve their craft. When such a discussion is sparked by governments, however, "responsible" takes on a threatening double meaning. Government then becomes the definer of responsibility, and the enforcer as well. The 20-year history of Freedom House's press survey is testament to the subtle and not-so-subtle acts of government on every continent to ensure that domestic and visiting journalists be responsible. Non-compliance often carries serious penalties for the journalist.

Some new press-law drafts insist that reportage be based on "truth." Whose definition of truth? Usually, the information ministry's. Colombia last year gave a regulatory commission broad authority to take television news programs off the air to protect the nation's "honor" and to ensure that news be "truthful and impartial." The constitutionality of the measure is questionable, but meanwhile it clouds the airwaves. Several countries last year—Bulgaria, Colombia, India, and the Palestinian Authority—considered enforcing the right of reply. This "right," defended as the assurance of journalistic fairness, is regarded by many journalists as a wedge for imposing coverage or commentary on independent news media. The U.S. Supreme Court has firmly rejected the right of reply as a violation of the First Amendment's protection of the press; specifically, the right of the editor to choose what shall go into a newspaper or a broadcast.

Economic-protection laws may have contributed significantly to the sharp downturn in the financial and monetary stability of Asian nations in 1997. For years, many Asian governments have passed laws to preclude the reporting of financial and governmental corruption. Insufficiently collateralized loans to families and cronies of officials went unreported, under penalty of harsh reprisal for the journalist. No matter how well the "Asian economic miracle" was hyped, a free market system without transparency was headed for an ultimate fall.

Then there are desperation laws (our term). They do not provide a rational excuse. They threaten news media broadly, just for existing somewhat independent of government. Such laws close the gap between government ownership and government control of news media. Mere discussion of such legislation is perceived by journalists as a threat of physical or professional mayhem. The extensive violence targeting journalists in the past decade provides ample justification for the fear of the Liberian journalist as his country's information minister mulls stringent press-freedom restric-

tions to be floated as government guidelines.

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Changes 1996 to 1997

	One Category to Another		Within Categories		Unchanged #	
	Impr.	Dec.	Impr.	Dec.		
Africa	3	4	7	16	24	54
Asia	1	0	8	10	17	36
Europe	2	0	11	7	16	36
Lat. Am/Carib	1	1	5	6	20	33
Middle East	0	2	2	1	9	14
North Amer.	0	0	1	0	1	2
Oceania	0	0	2	2	7	11
Total	7	7	36	42	94	186
%	4%	4%	20%	23%	49%	100%

Introduction to Country and Related Territory Reports

The *Survey* team at Freedom House wrote reports on 191 countries and 16 related territories.

Each report begins with brief political, economic, and social data. This information is arranged under the following headings: **polity, economy, political rights, civil liberties, status, population, purchasing power parities (PPP), life expectancy, and ethnic groups**. There is also a brief explanation of **ratings changes and trends** since the last yearbook. When actual events changed the rating or trend, a succinct explanation follows. Readers interested in understanding the derivation of the ratings in this *Survey* should consult the chapter on methodology.

More detailed information follows in an **overview** and in an essay on the **political rights and civil liberties** of each country.

Under **polity**, there is an encapsulated description of the dominant centers of freely chosen or unelected political power in each country. Most of the descriptions are self-explanatory, such as Communist one-party for China or parliamentary democracy for Ireland. Such non-parliamentary democracies as the United States of America are designated presidential-legislative democracies. European democratic countries with constitutional monarchs are designated parliamentary democracies, because the elected body is the locus of most real political power. Only countries with powerful monarchs (e.g. the Sultan of Brunei) warrant a reference to the monarchy in the brief description of the polity. Dominant-party polities are systems in which the ruling party (or front) dominates government, but allows other parties to organize or compete short of taking control of government. There are other types of polities listed as well. Among them are various military and military-influenced or -dominated regimes, transitional systems, and several unique polities, such as Iran's clergy-dominated parliamentary system. Countries with genuine federalism have the word "federal" in the polity description.

The reports label the **economy** of each country. Non-industrial economies are called traditional or pre-industrial. Developed market economies and Third World economies with a modern market sector have the designation capitalist. Mixed capitalist countries combine private enterprise with substantial government involvement in the economy for social welfare purposes. Capitalist-statist economies have both large market sectors and government-owned productive enterprises, due either to elitist economic policies or state dependence on key natural resource industries. Mixed capitalist-statist economies have the characteristics of capitalist-statist economies plus major social welfare programs. Statist systems have the goal of placing the entire economy under direct or indirect government control. Mixed statist economies are primarily government-controlled, but also have significant private enterprise. Developing Third World economies with a government-directed modern sector belong in the statist category. Economies in transition between statist and capitalist forms may have the word "transitional" in the economy description.

Each country report mentions in which category of **political rights** and **civil liberties** Freedom House classified the country. Category 1 is the most free and category 7 is the least free in each case. **Status** refers to the designations free, partly free, and not free,"which Freedom House uses as an overall summary of the general state of freedom in the country.

The ratings of countries and territories that are different from those of the previous year are marked with an asterisk (*). The reasons for the change precede the "Overview" of the country or territory.

Each entry includes a **population** figure that is sometimes the best approximation available. For all cases in which the information is available, the *Survey* provides **life expectancy** statistics.

Freedom House obtained the **Purchasing Power Parities (PPP)** from the U.N. Development Program. These figures show per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in terms of international dollars. The PPP statistic adjusts GDP to account for real buying power. For some countries, especially for newly independent countries, tiny island states, and those with statist economies, these statistics were unavailable.

The *Survey* provides a listing of countries' **ethnic groups**, because this information may help the reader understand issues, such as minority rights, which the *Survey* takes into account.

Each country summary has an **overview** that describes such matters as the most important events of 1996 and current political issues. Finally, the country reports contain a section on **political rights** and **civil liberties**. This section summarizes each country's degree of respect for the rights and liberties that Freedom House uses to evaluate freedom in the world. These summaries include instances of human rights violations by both governmental and nongovernmental entities.

Reports on related territories follow the country summaries. In most cases, these reports are comparatively brief and contain fewer categories of information than one finds in the country summaries.

Beginning in 1995-96, we are including reports only for 15 related territories rated "Partly Free" and "Not Free," and for the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico, which has a civil liberties situation of particular concern. However, ratings are provided for all 59 related territories.

Afghanistan

Polity: Competing war-lords, traditional rulers, and local councils
Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 7
Status: Not Free

Economy: Mixed-statist

Population: na

PPP: na

Life Expectancy: na

Ethnic Groups: Pashtun (38 percent), Tajik (25 percent), Hazara (19 percent), Uzbek (6 percent)

Capital: Kabul



Overview:

Fighting in 1997 between the Taliban, the ultra-conservative movement that has imposed its fundamentalist Islamic rule on two-thirds of Afghanistan, and an alliance of northern opposition forces displaced tens of thousands of civilians and created severe food shortages. By year's end the war front reflected a de facto partition along ethnic lines, with the Taliban firmly in control of the Pashtun-dominated south but unable to wrest the far north from the local Uzbek, Tajik, Hazara and Turcoman communities.

Following a 19th century Anglo-Russian contest for domination, in 1921 Britain recognized Afghanistan as an independent monarchy. King Zahir Shah ruled from 1933 until being deposed in a 1973 coup. Since 1978, when a Communist coup set out to transform this highly traditional society, Afghanistan has been in continuous civil conflict. The Soviet Union invaded in December 1979 to install a rival Communist faction and began a ten-year occupation, facing fierce resistance from *mujahideen* guerrilla forces.

After overthrowing the Communist government in April 1992, the ethnic-based mujahideen militias turned against each other. The main ethnic divide is between the rural-based Pashtuns, who form a near majority and have ruled for most of the past 250 years, and the large Tajik minority. Initially the key protagonists were Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Pashtun-based *Hizb-i-Islami* (Islamic Party) and the Tajik-dominated *Jamiat-i-Islami* (Islamic Association), headed by Burhanuddin Rabbani.

In mid-1994 the Pashtun-based Taliban, a new militia organized around theology students disgusted with the fighting, rape and banditry plaguing the country, began a conquest from the southern city of Kandahar, capturing Kabul in September 1996 and ousting a Rabbani-led nominal government. Taliban clerics, headed by former mujahideen fighter Mullah Mohammed Omar, severely restricted womens' rights and imposed harsh social restrictions in the cities, basing themselves on centuries-old village traditions and their interpretation of the *Shari'a* (Islamic law). In mid-October Ahmad Shah Masood, the military commander of the ousted government, formed an anti-Taliban Northern Alliance with Uzbek warlord Rashid Dostum.

In late May 1997 the Taliban captured five key northern provinces after Abdul Malik Pahlawan and several other commanders under Dostum defected. After the Taliban refused to share power, northern troops forced the Islamic militia to retreat just four days after it had entered the regional capital of Mazar-i-Sharif. In September-October, the Taliban made a second, unsuccessful effort to seize Mazar-i-Sharif.

In November, Dostum alleged that Pahlawan's forces had killed up to 2,000 Taliban POWs. Later in the month Dostum's troops routed his Uzbek rival Pahlawan's forces. A Taliban blockade left more than a million civilians in danger of starvation.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: There are no democratic processes at any level in Afghanistan. The Taliban control some 70 percent of the territory. The remainder is held by three main militias comprising the Northern Alliance: Tajik-based forces under Masood; Uzbek-based forces under Dostum's National Islamic Front faction; and a small Hazara Shiite-based militia in central Afghanistan.

Under the Taliban the central government barely functions. Hundreds of decrees regulate nearly all aspects of social affairs. Appointed local *shura* (councils) also rule by decree. Ad hoc tribunals of clerics enforce the Taliban's interpretation of Shari'a in proceedings that lack due process rights. The tribunals hand down harsh punishments including public execution of murderers and allegedly corrupt local officials, stoning to death of adulterers, and amputation for thieves.

All factions were responsible for indiscriminate artillery, rocket and air attacks on civilian areas that killed more than 25,000 people in Kabul between the fall of the Communist government in 1992 and the Taliban's capture of the capital in 1996. In 1997 civilian casualties, though perhaps fewer in number, continued north of the capital.

In May 1997 the United Nations reported that since the Taliban took power, fighting had internally displaced nearly a quarter of a million people, including tens of thousands of ethnic minorities forcibly relocated by the Taliban on suspicion of loyalty to Masood. In July, as the front lines approached Kabul, Amnesty International reported that the Taliban had detained as many as 2,000 Tajik and Hazara men in appalling conditions at the Pul-e-Charkhi prison near the capital.

Taliban decrees banning women from working except in hospitals, clinics and other exceptional circumstances have created widespread hardship and sharply curtailed many female-based relief services. In July the Taliban decreed that aid to women should be offered only through male relatives, which could force the suspension of special food-for-work programs that help some 35,000 war widows in Kabul. The Taliban say they will review restrictions on work, as well as a ban on women and girls attending school and universities, when the security situation improves. The clerics justify other restrictions on women as necessary to prevent licentious behavior. These include requiring women to wear the *burqa*, a one-piece garment covering the entire body, and restrictions on talking with unrelated men and leaving their homes unless accompanied by a close male relative. Religious police subject women violating Taliban dress codes to flogging and humiliation.

Freedoms of speech, press and association are sharply restricted throughout the country. Rival movements run their own broadcast facilities, including the Taliban-controlled Radio Voice of Shari'a, and publish newspapers. Several nongovernmental organizations operate, but members face detention and other harassment.

The Taliban also prohibit leisure activities and force men to grow beards and pray in neighborhood mosques five times each day. As Taliban casualties mounted from its northern campaign, the militia reportedly forcibly recruited children as young as 12.

Outside areas of Taliban control, the rule of law is non-existent. Justice is admin-

istered arbitrarily according to Shari'a and traditional customs. Rival groups carry out torture and extrajudicial killings against opponents and suspected sympathizers.

The Hazara Shiite minority has faced particularly harsh treatment by the Taliban and other factions. Amnesty International reported that retreating Taliban soldiers massacred about 70 Hazara civilians in the northern village of Qezelabad on September 14. Sikhs and Hindus are often randomly attacked, and almost all have fled the country. There are 2.4 million Afghan refugees in neighboring countries.

There is no known trade union activity. Internal movement is hampered by the continued fighting and by an estimated ten million live land mines.

↓ Albania

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Political Rights: 4
Civil Liberties: 4
Economy: Transitional
Status: Partly Free
Population: 3,282,000
PPP: \$2,788
Life Expectancy: 70.5

Ethnic Groups: Albanians (two main ethnic/linguistic groups: Ghegs, Tosks, 95 percent), Greeks (3 percent)

Capital: Tirana

Trend Arrow: Albania receives a downward trend arrow due to massive social unrest and the southern part of the country being run by gangs.



Overview:

In 1997, massive social unrest, triggered by the collapse of pyramid schemes and fanned by anti-government forces and armed criminal gangs in the south, brought down President Sali Berisha and the Democratic Party (PD) government of Alexander Meksi. New parliamentary elections saw the former Communist Socialist Party (PS) and its allies win two-thirds of the 155 seats.

Albania gained independence in 1912 after 450 years of Ottoman rule. Annexed by Italy in 1939, a one-party Communist regime was established in 1946 under World War II partisan Enver Hoxha, who died in office in 1985. In 1990, Ramiz Alia, Hoxha's successor as first secretary of the Albanian Party of Labor (Communist), was elected president as head of the PS. In 1992 elections to the 140-member parliament, Berisha's PD captured 97 seats and the PS, 38. Lawmakers elected Berisha president. The defeat of a government-backed constitution by referendum in November 1994 and the passage in 1995 of the so-called "genocide law" barring former high-ranking Communists from running for office until 2002 led to charges by the opposition that President Berisha and the PD were becoming more authoritarian.

The May 1996 parliamentary elections were marred by ballot-rigging, fraud, and intimidation against the opposition. The Central Election Commission announced that the PD had gained 95 of 115 directly elected seats and 67.8 percent of the votes.

In January 1997, anti-government riots broke out in Tirana as pyramid schemes that promised gullible savers interest rates of 50 percent a month began to collapse. Perhaps half of all Albanian families incurred losses. President Berisha and the gov-

ernment were targeted because several of the pyramid's creators had ties with the government and had generously sponsored the PD in the 1996 national and local elections. By February, heavily armed criminal gangs seized control of major towns in the south along with rebel Committees of Public Salvation.

As the insurrection escalated in March, the PD-dominated parliament re-elected Berisha to a second term. Parliament ordered a state of emergency, and Berisha blamed "armed communist rebels" for the violence. The dismissal of Prime Minister Meksi did not placate protesters or the 11-party opposition Forum for Democracy, grouped around the Socialists. President Berisha named Bashkim Fino, a Socialist economist, to head a 10-party interim government.

The political opposition coalesced around Fatos Nano, a leader of the Socialists who was freed from prison, where he had been serving a 12-year sentence imposed in 1993 for alleged corruption. Nano, who served briefly as prime minister in 1991, supported the Fino interim government. An Italian-led international peacekeeping force of 6,500 was deployed to protect aid workers and humanitarian efforts.

In mid-May, the opposition threatened to boycott the parliamentary elections scheduled for June after the pro-Berisha parliament adopted a new election law. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) indicated that free and fair elections and political stability were prerequisites for further financial aid. Under intense international pressure, President Berisha agreed to modify the election law to include greater proportional representation, and he withdrew the "genocide law" that would forbid prominent ex-communists like Nano from running. The interim government was allowed to appoint the 17 members of the Central Election Commission, and the government agreed that all parties should have access to state-run media.

The June election campaign was marred by violence, especially in the south, where PD candidates were often attacked. Candidates from parties too small to afford armed escorts were afraid to campaign. On June 23, the main parties—the PD, PS and the Social Democrats—signed a four-point agreement in Rome pledging free and fair elections, recognizing the need for a coalition government, and ensuring that the opposition would occupy key supervisory posts in parliament. Factional fighting continued through election day, which saw the Socialists and their allies win control of 119 of 155 seats, with the PD winning 24. In the days following the vote, several top government officials, including the interior minister in charge of the state of emergency, Tirana's chief of police, and the head of President Berisha's presidential guard fled the country. International observers called the vote "adequate and acceptable," and turnout was approximately 66 percent.

While announcing his intention to step down, President Berisha wrangled with the interim government over control of the armed forces and interior ministry. On July 24, with Italian peacekeepers withdrawing, President Berisha announced his resignation. As expected, the new parliament named Prime Minister Nano to lead the government and elected Rexhep Mejdani president. The new president urged the ministers—leaders from five left and center-left parties—to restructure democratic institutions. Prime Minister Nano said he was committed to privatization, social assistance, denationalization and decentralization of power.

On August 15, the new government announced it had retaken control of the southern port of Vlora, a hotbed of the rebellion, arrested a powerful criminal gang leader, Lefter Zani, and neutralized several other gangs. The new government also dismissed many

ambassadors and diplomats as well as 17 army generals and officers, replacing them with Communist-era officers ousted by Berisha five years earlier. Such actions, and the shooting inside the parliament of PD MP Azem Hajdari, a close Berisha ally, by PS MP Gafur Mazreku, prompted a PD boycott of parliament.

By mid-September, the new government faced demonstrations by angry creditors of VEFA, the largest Albanian money-lending company. During the campaign, Prime Minister Nano had promised the government would recoup losses suffered by citizens through the collapse of the pyramid schemes and close down the remaining pyramid operations. In addition, only a tiny fraction of weapons had been confiscated or turned in by citizens. It was reported that some 600,000 Kalashnikovs, thousands of machine guns and artillery pieces, and hundreds of tons of explosives and ammunition remained in private hands. There were signs of discontent among some PS grass-roots leaders who chafed that some ministerial portfolios and civil service appointments were given to small coalition parties.

On September 23, Prime Minister Nano told the annual meeting of the IMF and the World Bank in Hong Kong that his government was moving ahead on its program of economic stabilization and adjustment, including cutting the budget deficit and imposing a new VAT package on October 1. In addition to raising taxes, he said the budget deficit will be less than 16 percent of GDP in 1997 and 12 percent in 1998, and that there would be a reduction of up to 15 percent of government employees by 1998. He also reiterated his commitment to privatization.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Armed insurrection forced President Berisha to call new parliamentary elections in June that were won by the opposition Socialists and were called "adequate and acceptable" by international monitors.

Voters rejected a new constitution in 1994, which left in force the 1991 Law on Majority Constitutional Provisions. In late 1997, the new Socialist government established a multi-party 21-member Constitutional Commission and said a referendum on a new constitution would be held on March 8, 1998. It later said the date was flexible. The PD refused to take part in the commission, maintaining that a new constitution should be drafted by a popularly elected Constitutional Assembly.

There is a multi-party system and major parties include: the PS, PD, the Democratic Alliance, the Social Democrats, the Party of Human Rights, the Christian Democrats, the Democratic Party of the Right and the monarchist Legality Party. A "genocide law," which barred former high-ranking communists from running in the 1996 elections, was effectively scrapped by the new government. A screening commission, which vetted senior officials to bar high-ranking Communists, was slated to be dissolved; in June, its newly appointed director said that the commission is "an authority that significantly restricts human rights" and suggested the commission would be dissolved.

The media face financial constraints and legal barriers but in September parliament unanimously abrogated the 1993 press law which put restrictions on journalists. The Association of Publishers and independent newspapers cite high advertisement, customs and value-added taxes as seriously undermining the viability of most newspapers. During the state of emergency, the press faced censorship and an information blackout. The offices of the leading independent paper, *Koha Jone*, were destroyed

by fire and its publisher beaten. Even papers backed by the leading political parties were not published during the height of the violence. On August 21, Mujo Bupapaj, a journalist for *Rilindja Demokratike* (the official organ of the Democratic Party) was shot and seriously wounded. The Albanian Journalists' League also complained that nongovernmental newspapers faced distribution problems and confiscations by armed gunmen, particularly in the south.

Albanian Radio-Television (RTSh), a government agency, controls all electronic broadcasting and its structure and leadership was a major political issue. The PD demanded that the RTSh reserve one-third of the time of its information-news broadcasts for the government; one-third to those representing the majority in parliament and one third to the parliamentary opposition. The RTSh said it would guarantee equal conditions of expression both for the government coalition parties and the opposition with a proportional division of time. There are a few commercial radio and television stations. In August, broadcasts of Alba TV, a private station that began broadcasting in January, were interrupted for not meeting financial obligations to the government. The legal status of private stations remains unclear because there is no clear procedure for obtaining a broadcast license, which opens the door for arbitrary denial of licenses on political grounds.

In 1997, the government proposed changes in the judiciary. The Court of Appeal in Tirana was decentralized, ostensibly making overt political interference more difficult, although an MP from the Legality party expressed the concern that decentralization might be used for fresh political purging. A controversial measure changed the composition of the 13-member High Council of Justice to include the procurator general, the president, and the justice minister. Critics argued that the new composition increased the prerogatives of the executive over the judiciary.

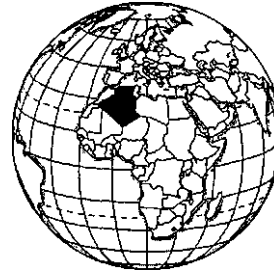
There are some restrictions on freedom of assembly, which was curtailed completely during the state of emergency. On several occasions, officials denied the opposition Democratic Party permission to hold rallies. On September 23, the police directorate of Tirana sued the PD and its leaders for organizing illegal gatherings. The head of the National Intelligence Service (Shik) acknowledged that renegade factions were engaged in illegal surveillance, but denied that DP offices were being bugged.

Religious activity is unrestricted in this predominantly Muslim country, with Orthodox and Catholic minorities. Muslim missionaries from fundamentalist states have been active in Albania. The Albanian Helsinki Human Rights Committee has sharply criticized the activities of some Arab educational foundations, alleging they are bribing poor parents and "brainwashing" their children with religious fervor. A special religious affairs office monitors proselytizing by Christian groups from abroad.

The Independent Confederation of Trade Unions of Albania (BSPSH) is an umbrella organization for a number of smaller unions. A federation with links to the Socialist Party, the Confederation of Unions, a successor to the "official" communist-era group, has few members. In September, unions voiced opposition to the VAT. Women's group, such as *Refleksione*, have reported high rates of violence against women. Cultural norms have impeded progress in education, business and property ownership.

Algeria

Polity: Civilian-military **Political Rights:** 6
Economy: Statist **Civil Liberties:** 6
Population: 29,006,000 **Status:** Not Free
PPP: \$5,422
Life Expectancy: 67.8
Ethnic Groups: Arabs (75 percent), Berbers (25 percent)
Capital: Algiers



Overview: Africa's second-largest country was for a sixth year wracked by an internecine conflict marked by ghastly acts of violence against the civilian population. Islamist radical groups are the principal perpetrators of grisly massacres of men, women and children. Some human rights groups report that security forces are responsible for thousands of disappearances, torture and other excesses against alleged militants and their suspected supporters.

June parliamentary and October municipal and regional elections, which were conducted under heavy security produced victories for the government backed National Democratic Rally party in seriously flawed polls that excluded the main Islamic opposition groups and elicited large protests from legal opposition parties. While a series of elections are returning the structures of representative government, hard-line factions among both the Islamist opposition and military seem unable to achieve genuine compromise. In July, Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) leaders Abassi Madani and Abdelkader Hachani were released from six years in military prison. FIS's September call for a cease fire is unlikely to be heeded by extremist Armed Islamic Group (GIA) or other radical armed elements.

More than 80,000 people have died since the strife began in 1991. In January 1992 Algeria's army canceled the second round of democratic parliamentary elections in which the FIS had achieved a commanding lead. FIS's avowed aim to install theocratic rule under *Shari'a* law would have ended many constitutional protections. But severe economic and social problems, including corruption, housing shortages and unemployment had increased anti-government sentiment and convinced Algeria's voters to vote for change. Thousands of FIS supporters were detained under a state of emergency following the voiding of the 1992 polls, and the FIS's campaign of terror began in the second half of the year.

Security force members and government officials are among the terrorists' favorite targets, but all of civil society—and increasingly all the civilian population—is under threat. Unveiled women, Christians, foreigners and all people not fully committed to an Islamist state are marked for execution. Nearly one hundred journalists have been killed by Islamist assassins. Many murders are committed in a calculatedly cruel manner to maximize their terroristic impact. Government security forces have responded brutally as well. Extrajudicial killings have been reported. Thousands of militants have been killed in armed clashes. Many suspected militants or supporters are detained without trial, and there had been reports of torture. Elections have returned at least the formal institutions of democracy to Algeria, but the society's deep polarization and economic distress offer slim hope for an early end to the violence.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Algeria achieved independence in 1962 after a seven-year liberation struggle convinced France to abandon its 130 years of colonial rule. The National Liberation Front (FLN) ruled as a one-party regime until the political system was reformed, notably to permit political parties in 1989. A November 1995 presidential election victory gave retired General Lamine Zeroual limited legitimacy in a vote restricted to regime-approved candidates but which drew a 75 percent turnout. A new constitution approved in a 1996 referendum expanded presidential powers and banned Islamic-based parties. Zeroual has pursued a ruthless campaign to crush armed Islamist groups but has sought compromise with moderate Islamic leaders. The regime possesses almost unlimited power under the declared emergency and an anti-terrorist decree. Parliamentary and local elections in 1997 were criticized by opposition parties but restored Algeria's institutional framework.

The civil war has drastically curtailed freedom of expression. More than sixty journalists have been murdered by Islamist terrorists. Employees of state broadcast media are particular targets, and many journalists simply not supportive of Islamist rule have been killed. All war reports must be passed by government censors. Threats of arrests and closures, added to Islamist murders, have prompted extensive self-censorship by Algeria's media. Journalists daring to report openly are in effect under sentence of death. About 500 have fled the country.

Both Islamist terror and government strictures constrain public debate. Public assemblies other than those backing the government are rarely permitted, although legal opposition parties technically need no permission to hold meetings. Nongovernmental organizations must be licensed. The Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights has offered harsh public criticism of human rights abuses. An official government human rights monitoring body, the National Observatory of Human Rights (ONDH) has also made limited reports that make no mention of security force excesses. The International Committee of the Red Cross has no access to thousands of suspected Islamists convicted of crimes or held on suspicion of fundamentalist activity. Members of the Berber minority, who predominate in the northeastern Kabylie region, are also targeted by extreme fundamentalists because of their more relaxed interpretations of Islamic practice. Constitutionally-guaranteed religious freedom is under threat by the fundamentalists; the GIA has publicly declared Christians, Jews and polytheists to be targets.

The *Shari'a*-based 1984 family code, other laws and many traditional practices discriminate against women. Trade union rights are protected and nearly two-thirds of the labor force is unionized. An FIS-allied union has been banned, but strikes and other union activity are legal. The country's top labor leader, Abdelhak Benhamouda, head of the one-million strong umbrella Algerian General Workers Union (UGTA) was shot dead in January by Islamist gunmen, one of several hundred trade unionists murdered by Islamists since 1994.

Algeria's economy is still strongly-dominated by state enterprises, especially in the petroleum sector, which earns most of the country's export income. Privatization efforts have been hindered by the ongoing war, but significant new foreign investment in oil-field exploration and production has been announced. Extractive industries produce few local jobs, however, and very high unemployment remains a serious problem.

Andorra

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Capitalist

Population: 66,000

PPP: na

Life Expectancy: na

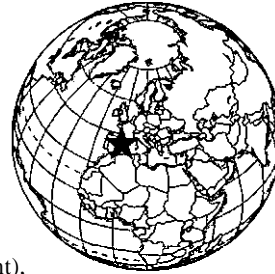
Ethnic Groups: Spanish (61 percent), Andorran (30 percent), French (6 percent)

Capital: Andorra la Vella

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Overview:

Andorra became a sovereign parliamentary democracy and a member of the United Nations in 1993. Since 1278, its six parishes, under the joint control of France and the bishop of Urgel in Spain, had existed as an unwritten democracy without official borders. The General Council (parliament) has functioned in various legislative and executive capacities under the supervision of co-princes since 1868.

In 1990, the Council of Europe recommended that the principality adopt a modern constitution in order to attain full integration into the European Union. French President Francois Mitterrand and Bishop Joan Martí i Alanís agreed to grant full sovereignty to Andorra. Under the constitution, these co-princes continue as heads of state, but they are represented locally by officials known as *veguers*. The head of government retains executive power.

Andorran politics are dominated by five major parties. Four of them governed in coalition until February, when the *Unio Liberal* party won 18 of 28 General Council seats. Eighty-two percent of the country's eligible 10,837 voters cast ballots.

Andorra has no national currency. French francs and Spanish pesetas circulate instead. The country's duty-free status attracts large numbers of tourists, although EU limits on duty-free allowances curtailed this source of revenue in 1997.

Under pressure from the EU, the government is continuing its efforts to modernize and liberalize the economy. In February, the Council of Europe instructed Andorra and the European Commission to enlarge their 1990 cooperation agreement, which was largely limited to trade issues. The new agreement is to include environmental, communications, information, cultural, training, youth, transport, and social issues. Increasing debt and falling revenues from tourism have led Prime Minister Marc Forné Molne to vow to streamline Andorra's relations with the EU and to open the country to more foreign investment.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Andorrans can change their government democratically. The *Sindic* (President), *subsindic*, and members of the General Council are elected in general elections held every four years. The new constitution mandates that half of its representatives be elected by parish, and half selected from nationwide lists.

The country's independent judiciary is based on the French and Spanish civil codes. Citizens enjoy the right to due process, the presumption of innocence, and the right to

legal counsel — including free counsel for the indigent.

The constitution proclaims respect for the promotion of liberty, equality, justice, tolerance, and defense of human rights and human dignity. Torture and the death penalty are outlawed. There have been no documented cases of police brutality.

The constitution prohibits discrimination based on birth, race, sex, origin, religion, disability, opinion, language or any other "personal or social condition." Many rights and privileges, however, are granted only to Andorran citizens. Citizenship is attained through lineage, marriage, birth, or after 30 years of living and working in the country. Dual citizenship is prohibited, and immigrant workers are not entitled to social benefits. Non-citizens are allowed to own 33 percent of the shares of a company.

Freedom of assembly, association, and religion is guaranteed. The 1993 constitution legalizes trade unions for the first time, but no labor unions currently exist.

The constitution guarantees freedom of expression, communication, and information, but allows for laws regulating the right of reply, correction, and professional confidentiality. The domestic press consists of two daily and several weekly newspapers. There are two radio stations, one state-owned and the other privately owned, and six television stations and several radio stations can be received from France and Spain.

The Roman Catholic Church is guaranteed the "preservation of the relations of special cooperation with the State in accordance with the Andorran tradition." The Church, however, is not subsidized by the government. The practice of other religions is respected, but subject to limitations "in the interests of public safety, order, health or morals, or for the protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of others."

There are no restrictions on domestic or foreign travel, emigration, or repatriation. Andorra has a tradition of providing asylum for refugees, although it has no formal asylum policy. Requests are considered on an individual basis.

Women were granted full suffrage in 1970. There are no legal barriers to their political participation, but social conservatism limits their involvement in politics.

Angola

Polity: Presidential-legislative
Economy: Statist
Population: 11,469,000
PPP: \$1,600
Life Expectancy: 47.2
Ethnic Groups: Ovimbundu (37 percent), Kimbundu (25 percent), Bakongo (13 percent), others
Capital: Luanda

Political Rights: 6
Civil Liberties: 6
Status: Not Free



Overview:

Angola's fitful progress toward peace was marked by outbreaks of political violence. One source of instability was removed with the collapse of the Mobutu regime in neighboring Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), which had supported the rebel National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Angola sent troops to help oust Mobutu in May. In October Angolan forces intervened in the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) to aid in the overthrow of democratically elected president Pascal Lissouba. The 1994 United Nations sponsored peace pact has not yet been fully implemented, and UNITA reportedly maintains about 30,000 men under arms in contravention to the 1994 Lusaka peace accords.

UNITA is under heavy international pressure to comply with its promises.. At the end of October, the U.N. Security Council reimposed sanctions against UNITA in hopes of enforcing its compliance with the peace plan. In August the U.S. renewed its sanctions against the rebel forces, with little effect as their supplies of weapons are assured by diamond mining profits. A coalition Government of Unity and National Reconciliation installed in April that includes UNITA survives but is dominated by the rival Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). A September agreement for revenue sharing from diamond fields controlled by UNITA may have removed a serious obstacle to peace, after three weeks of fighting in the area. An end to violence would draw investment to exploit Angola's ample mineral resources. The country is revived after nearly four decades of war. Rural agricultural areas are riddled with landmines and plagued by banditry.

A fourteen-year bush war ended, five centuries of Portuguese presence in Africa and brought independence to Angola on November 11, 1975. Fifteen more years of fighting followed as Angola's ethnic-based rivals, armed by East and West and with Cuban and South African involvement on opposing sides fought for control of the country. Massive covert American aid bolstered UNITA's fortunes, but produced no clear victor. Only after the Cold War's end did the United Nations become deeply involved in the Angola peace process, with mixed results. U.N.-supervised elections in September 1992 failed to end the long-running war. International observers described the voting as generally free and fair despite many irregularities. MPLA leader Jose Eduardo dos Santos nearly won a majority in the first round of voting. UNITA leader and presidential candidate Savimbi rejected the results and resumed the war in October 1992.

As many as a half million people died in combat and from starvation and disease before the latest tenuous peace accord was reached in 1994. Serious human rights violations by both rebel and government forces continue. Sporadic violence by secessionist guerrilla groups continued through 1997 in the oil-rich, undeveloped northern enclave of Cabinda. Several attempts at negotiation produced offers of limited revenue sharing by the central government. It is unlikely any government in Luanda would allow independence to an area whose oil exports bring about \$700 million per year to the national treasury, and no more than limited Cabindan autonomy will likely be granted. Continuing uncertainty hinders economic reconstruction throughout the country.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Angolans freely elected their own representatives for the first time in 1992 presidential and legislative elections. UNITA's relapse into civil war precluded the second round run-off required when neither presidential candidate won an outright majority, but President dos Santos took office nonetheless. The MPLA dominates the 220-member national assembly. In April the coalition Government of Unity and National Reconciliation was formed with UNITA participation.

New elections are provisionally set for 2000, but is not certain that the Angolan people will yet be free to change their government through the ballot box. The political process has been subsumed by the military contest between the MPLA and UNITA. Until the basic issue of war and peace is resolved, broader popular participation, especially from the rural areas where the vast majority of Angolans live, will be problematical.

There is limited freedom of information in areas controlled by the government or UNITA. The January 1995 murder of independent journalist Ricardo de Mello in the capital, Luanda, and the October 1996 killing of Antonio Casmiro, a journalist with the state-owned television service in Cabinda, remain unsolved. Journalists have been threatened and harassed and practice self-censorship in the few newspapers that publish regularly. Formal censorship is exercised by a government committee. Some critical independent newsletters are distributed in Luanda, but the government keeps tight reign on its own daily newspaper and the broadcast media, while UNITA operates its own highly partisan radio. Freedom of association is constitutionally guaranteed, but often not respected in practice.

Decades of guerrilla war have left land mines throughout the countryside and many weapons in the hands of bandits. Serious human rights abuses by both government security forces and UNITA were reported, including torture and extrajudicial executions. Reimposing civil authority will be difficult even if there is a genuine peace. In some areas, local courts operate regarding civil matters and petty crime, but an overall lack of training and infrastructure inhibit judicial proceedings. The judiciary is not independent. Many prisoners were detained for long periods, awaiting trial in life threatening conditions.

Societal discrimination against women is widespread, particularly in rural areas, even in the face of legal protections. Religious freedom is generally respected. Constitutional guarantees protect labor rights, although implementing legislation and administrative procedures are lacking. Some independent unions are functioning. All organized labor activities are in Angola's cities, and the vast majority of rural agricul-

tural workers remain outside the modern economic sector.

Corruption and black marketing are widespread, and even the official per capita income of \$320 grossly overestimates most people's incomes. Most export income from oil and diamonds goes to a few elites and military spending. The state is still deeply involved in the country's limited economic activity and genuine development, as well as liberalization, must await a durable peace.

Antigua and Barbuda

Polity: Dominant party
Economy: Capitalist-statist
Population: 100,000
PPP: \$8,977
Life Expectancy: 74.0
Ethnic Groups: Black (89 percent), other (11 percent)
Capital: St. John's

Political Rights: 4
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Partly Free



Overview:

Cash-strapped Antigua and Barbuda's booming off-shore banking and sports-betting industries, and its position as a discrete haven for organized crime and drug cartel money laundering operations, were in 1997 joined by another stealth industry—cyber-casinos—whose proceeds offer criminal organizations and the ruling Bird family yet another shadowy opportunity to profit.

Antigua and Barbuda is a member of the British Commonwealth. The British monarchy is represented by a governor-general. The islands gained independence in 1981. Under the 1981 constitution, the political system is a parliamentary democracy, with a bicameral parliament consisting of a 17-member House of Representatives elected for five years, and an appointed Senate. In the House there are 16 seats for Antigua and one for Barbuda. Eleven senators are appointed by the prime minister, four by the parliamentary opposition leader, one by the Barbuda Council and one by the governor-general.

Antigua and Barbuda has been dominated by the Bird family and the Antigua Labour Party (ALP) for decades. Rule has been based more on power and the abuse of authority than on law. The constitution has been consistently disregarded, and the Bird tenure has been marked by corruption scandals. A commission headed by prominent jurist Louis Blom-Cooper concluded in 1990 that the country faced "being engulfed in corruption."

In 1994 Vere Bird, the patriarch of the most prominent family, stepped down as prime minister in favor of his son Lester. In the run-up to the 1994 election three opposition parties united to form the United Progressive Party (UPP). Labor activist Baldwin Spencer became UPP leader, and Tim Hector, editor of the outspoken weekly *Outlet*, deputy leader. The UPP campaigned on a social-democratic platform emphasizing rule of law and good governance.

In the election the ALP won 11 of 17 parliamentary seats, down from 15 in 1989. The UPP won five, up from one in 1989. The Barbuda People's Movement (BPM)

retained the Barbuda seat, giving the opposition a total of six seats. Despite unfair campaign conditions, the UPP opted to accept the outcome because it believed that political momentum was now on its side.

After taking office as prime minister, Lester Bird promised cleaner, more efficient government, but his administration continued to be dogged by scandals. In 1995 Bird's brother, Ivor, was convicted of smuggling cocaine into the country, but was let off with a fine.

With the nation facing a huge per capita foreign debt, Bird imposed a structural adjustment program in 1995. Tax hikes and fiscal tightening sparked labor strikes and demonstrations. In late summer Hurricane Luis struck the islands. While Bird looked for international aid, the UPP claimed the storm had set development back a decade. In September 1996 Bird sacked Finance Minister Molwyn Joseph on the pretext that he helped a friend evade customs duties on an imported car.

In March 1997, a U.S. State Department report on narcotics and money-laundering took aim at the 57 banks that have opened up on the islands in the last 10 years: "inadequate regulation and vetting led to a surge in questionable banking operations—a number with alleged links to Russian criminal elements." Antigua was also the site of the first Internet banking collapse when, in August 1997, two Russians closed a bank based on the island and fled after bilking customers in the U.S. and elsewhere out of millions of dollars.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Constitutionally, citizens are able to change their government by democratic means. The 1994 elections, however, were neither free nor fair because the balloting system did not guarantee a secret vote; the ruling party dominated the broadcast media and excluded the opposition; the voter registration system was deficient; the voter registry was inflated by possibly up to 30 percent with names of people who had died or left the country; and the electoral law allowed the ruling party to abuse power of incumbency with impunity.

Political parties, labor unions and civic organizations are free to organize. There is an Industrial Court to mediate labor disputes, but public sector unions tend to be under the sway of the ruling party. Demonstrators are occasionally subject to harassment by the police, who are politically tied to the ruling party. Freedom of religion is respected.

The judiciary is nominally independent but weak, and subject to political manipulation by the ruling party; it has been nearly powerless to address corruption in the executive branch. In 1997, legislation was passed which allows for the issuance of an Internet casino license that—like those of offshore banks—promise minimum regulation, maximum discretion and no taxes. There is an intra-island court of appeals for Antigua and five other former British colonies in the Lesser Antilles. Basic police reporting statistics are confidential.

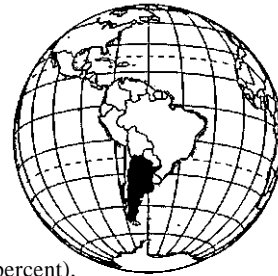
The ALP government and the Bird family control the country's television, cable and radio outlets. During the 1994 elections, the opposition was allowed to purchase broadcast time only to announce its campaign events. The government barred the UPP from the broadcast media through a strict interpretation of the country's archaic electoral law, which prohibits broadcast of any item "for the purpose of promoting or procuring the election of any candidate or of any political party." Meanwhile, the ALP

rode roughshod over the law with a concerted political campaign thinly disguised as news about the government.

The government, the ruling party and the Bird family also control four newspapers, including *Antigua Today*, an expensively produced weekly established in 1993 as an election vehicle for Lester Bird. The opposition counts solely on the *Daily Observer*, a small but vocal 12-page publication, and the weekly *Outlet*, which the government is continually trying to throttle by means of intimidation and libel suits. In 1997 a lawsuit by the *Daily Observer* against the government was still pending, concerning the latter's refusal to allow the newspaper to open a radio station.

Argentina

Polity: Federal presidential-legislative democracy
Politic Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 3
Economy: Capitalist
Status: Free
Population: 34,684,000
PPP: \$8,937
Life Expectancy: 72.4
Ethnic Groups: European (mostly Spanish and Italian, 85 percent), mestizo, Indian, Arab
Capital: Buenos Aires



Overview:

The results of the October Congressional elections crushed President Carlos Menem's hopes for a third term and shifted political momentum away from his Peronist party, which has ruled for the last eight years, and towards an opposition coalition that made their campaign a crusade against unemployment, corruption and a lack of public safety. Scandals involving police, military, judiciary and government corruption, and severe threats to freedom of the press belie Menem's claim he closed a dark chapter in Argentina's past when, in 1990, he pardoned former military leaders who committed massive atrocities during a 1976-1983 campaign against leftists and other dissidents.

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 authoritarian rule in 1955 led to a series of right-wing military dictatorships and left-wing and nationalist violence. Argentina returned to elected civilian rule in 1983 after seven years of vicious repression of suspected leftist guerrillas and other dissidents.

As amended in 1994, the 1853 constitution provides for a president elected for four years with the option of re-election to one term. Presidential candidates must win 45 percent of the vote to avoid a runoff. The legislature consists of a 257-member Chamber of Deputies elected for six years, with half the seats renewable every three years, and a 72-member Senate nominated by elected provincial legislatures for nine-year terms, with one-third of the seats renewable every three years. Two senators are directly elected in the newly-autonomous Buenos Aires federal district.

Provincial governor Menem, running on an orthodox Peronist platform of nationalism and state intervention in the economy, won a six-year presidential term in 1989, amidst hyperinflation and food riots, which were suppressed with minimal violence

by civilian law enforcement agencies. Once inaugurated, Menem discarded statist Peronist traditions by implementing, mostly by decree, an economic liberalization program. Corruption, he pledged, would be considered "high treason to the Fatherland."

In 1993, Menem made a deal with Raul Alfonsin, his predecessor and head of the center-left Radical party, for a series of constitutional amendments. These included an end to the prohibition on presidential election—Menem's main goal—a four-year presidential term, and measures to limit the inordinate power of the presidency.

In 1995, as Latin America struggled with the "tequila effect" of the Mexican peso devaluation, Menem effectively convinced voters, still frightened by the specter of economic instability, that the choice was him "or chaos." The Peronists also won a narrow majority in both houses of Congress.

Continued social unrest over near-record unemployment rates—some 16.1 percent—and the growth and deepening of poverty, led to several violent protests in the provinces. A one-day general strike in August shut down much of the country, particularly in provinces where unemployment has reached almost 40 percent as state-owned industries have been privatized. The work stoppage caused Menem to postpone plans to make employment regulations more flexible.

Corruption and unemployment were at the head of voter concerns when, on October 27, 1997, they handed Menem's Peronists their first nationwide defeat in a decade. An Alliance composed of the Radicals and the center-left Front for a Country in Solidarity won nearly 46 percent of the vote compared to 36 for Menem's party.

In December, Buenos Aires provincial governor Eduardo Duhalde placed a civilian inventor at the head of the Buenos Aires provincial police, a force known for its brutality and gangsterism. More than 350 senior police officials were fired in the shakeup, a prelude to a complete restructuring of the force.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens can change their government through elections. Constitutional guarantees regarding freedom of religion and the right to organize political parties, civic organizations and labor unions are generally respected. However, Menem's authoritarian ways and manipulation of the judiciary, which a decade ago was Argentina's most respected public institution, has resulted in the undermining of the country's separation of powers and the rule of law. Under Menem, legislative authority has been circumvented by the use of more "necessity and urgency" decrees than all other previous regimes, civilian and military, combined. In 1990, Menem pushed a bill through the Peronist-controlled Senate that allowed him to stack the Supreme Court with an additional four members and to fill the judiciary with politically-loyal judges.

Menem has used the Supreme Court to uphold decrees removing the comptroller general and other officials mandated to probe government wrongdoing. Overall, the judicial system is politicized, inefficient, and riddled with the corruption endemic to all branches of government.

Upon taking office in 1989, Menem reincorporated into the security services dozens of military, intelligence and police officials with far-right views and criminal records, while branding his political opponents as "delinquents" and "terrorists." In 1990 he pardoned military officers convicted for human rights violations committed during a so-called "dirty war," in which the guerrilla threat was vastly exaggerated in

order to justify a 1976 coup. At the same time, human rights groups have been subject to anonymous threats and various forms of intimidation.

No one event has crystallized popular anxiety about what Argentines call "juridical insecurity" as the January 25, 1997 murder of investigative journalist Jose Luis Cabezas, who was probing corruption in the Buenos Aires Provincial Police, a force immersed in murder-for-hire, drug trafficking and auto theft. Cabezas was abducted, shot to death, and his car set afire with him in it—an execution reminiscent of the military-controlled death squads of the 1970s. The security chief of a well-known businessman with extensive ties to Menem's inner circle and, allegedly, organized crime, is accused of instigating the crime.

Newspapers and magazines are privately owned and vocal, and reflect a wide variety of viewpoints. Television and radio are both public and private. Menem's verbal assaults on the media culminated in September, in an apparent invitation to thugs to attack journalists. He retracted his statement only after *The New York Times* published an editorial suggesting his attitude was contributing the climate of violence faced by journalists and it appeared that a visit the following month by President Clinton could be marred by the controversy.

There have been nearly 900 reported aggressive actions against journalists, including beatings, kidnappings and telephone death threats, during Menem's rule. Libel suit campaigns and cuts in government advertising have also been used to try to reign in press scrutiny and criticism. International pressure has kept the government from passing a series of restrictive press laws.

Dozens of allegedly extrajudicial executions by police were reported during the year. Arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment by police, a frequent occurrence, are rarely punished in civil courts due to intimidation of witnesses and judges. Criminal court judges are frequent targets of anonymous threats.

The investigation of a 1994 car bombing of a Jewish organization, in which more than 80 people died, has languished in part due to sloppy police work at the crime scene and—as was becoming increasingly clear at the end of 1997 following the arrest of a Buenos Aires provincial police chief accused of participating in the attack—complicity by members of the security forces with terrorists. The 1996 resignation of the Justice Minister after it was disclosed in the press that he had a neo-Nazi past sparked additional concern for Nazi and other ultra-right infiltration of all branches of government.

The Catholic majority enjoys freedom of religious expression. The 250,000-strong Jewish community is a frequent target of anti-Semitic vandalism. Neo-Nazi organizations and other anti-Semitic groups remain active.

Labor is dominated by Peronist unions. Union influence, however, has diminished because of corruption scandals, internal divisions and restrictions on public sector strikes decreed by Menem to pave the way for his privatization program.

In 1997, 40,000 Native Americans in the province of Jujuy received titles to state-owned land.

Armenia

Polity: Dominant party
Economy: Mixed-statist (transitional)
Population: 3,768,000
PPP: \$1,737
Life Expectancy: 70.8
Ethnic Groups: Armenian (93 percent), Azeri (3 percent)
Capital: Yerevan



Overview:

In March 1997, President Levon Ter Petrosian named Robert Kocharian, formerly the popularly elected president of the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, prime minister in an effort to ameliorate the tense political situation resulting from unfair parliamentary elections in 1995 and a disputed presidential vote in 1996 that led to anti-government demonstrations and attacks on prominent opposition leaders.

This landlocked predominantly Christian Transcaucasus republic was ruled at various times by Macedonians, Romans, Persians, Mongols and others. Prior to their defeat in World War I, Ottoman Turks controlled a western region, and between 1894 and 1915, engaged in systematic genocide. The Russian region came under Communist control and was designated a Soviet Socialist republic in 1922, western Armenia having been returned to Turkey. Armenia officially declared independence from the Soviet Union on September 23, 1991. About a month later, Ter-Petrosian, a former human rights activists, was elected president.

Before the 1995 parliamentary elections, nine parties, including the largest opposition group, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF-Dashnak), and other parties were excluded, ensuring the dominance of President Petrosian's ruling Armenian National Movement (ANM) coalition. In the proportional voting, the ANM-led Republican bloc won 43.90 percent of the vote and 20 seats. The Shamiram party, created just two months earlier and led by wives of government officials, won 17.35 percent, or 8 seats. The Communist Party came in third with 12.44 percent (6 seats), while the National Democratic Union, among the president's severest critics, and the National Self-Determination Association, led by former Soviet-era political prisoner Paruir Hairikian, won 3 seats each. In the majoritarian races, run-off and repeat elections were held on July 29. All but 10 of the legislature's 190 seats were filled, with the president's Republican bloc controlling two-thirds of the seats. About 25 percent of the ballots were declared invalid. The opposition charged that it was denied equal access to the state-run electronic media, in violation of the electoral laws. After the vote, the president reappointed Hrant Bagratian as prime minister. Some 68 percent of voters approved the government-backed constitution, which provides for a weak legislature and a strong presidency. The president can dissolve parliament, appoint and dismiss the prime minister, appoint all judges and members of the Constitutional Court, and declare martial law.

In 1996 the presidential election, former Prime Minister Vazgen Manukian, President Ter-Petrosian's chief opponent, ran on a pro-market, anti-corruption platform that called for social safety nets, tax reform, and overhauling the privatization pro-

gram. He also promised to return the country to parliamentary rule, criticizing the presidential system as endowing the executive branch with too much power and subject to no formal accountability by the weakened parliament or impotent judiciary. The state-appointed Central and Regional Election Commissions, with some 160 of 240 Ter-Petrosian loyalists, announced that the president won 51 percent of the vote to Manukian's 42 percent, thus clearing the 50 percent hurdle needed to avoid a run-off. The results sparked three days of protests by over 100,000 demonstrators in front of parliament in Yerevan. The OSCE, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and other Western observers urged the government to investigate a series of irregularities.

In January 1997, the justice ministry again refused to register the Dashnak opposition party, arguing that the presence of many foreigners in the party was a violation of Armenian law.

In naming popular Robert Kocharian prime minister, President Ter-Petrosian hoped to further fragment an already strained opposition that united under the umbrella Union of National Accord (*Dishink*) in 1996 to back the presidential candidacy of Vazgen Manukian, head of the National Democratic Union. Failing to spark a campaign of civil disobedience, Manukian criticized the new prime minister for "abandoning his people." Dashnak leaders avoided criticizing the prime minister, who had earlier pledged to pursue economic reform, democratization, and clean up corruption.

On September 20, a meeting of Dashnak representatives with the parliamentary speaker and foreign minister focused on the re-legalization of the party, its possible contribution to the Karabakh conflict, and domestic political stability.

The ruling ANM is split between close associates of President Ter-Petrosian and former officials who favor concessions to the opposition. In his address to the party's July congress, President Ter-Petrosian said the ANM was capable of "uniting the political organizations of a right-wing, liberal bent and must do this to avoid revolutionary disturbances in the republic," in effect ruling out dialogue.

Armenia's remarkable economic growth in 1996 slowed in 1997. The biggest macro-economic problems were sizable external trade imbalances, which resulted from weak export performance and large budget deficits. An estimated 70 percent of the economy operates in the "black" (underground) with little or no external control of revenues or ethical business practices. Widespread corruption and shady business dealings by government insiders was also a problem.

International mediation efforts over Nagorno-Karabakh continued, and a 1994 cease-fire held. On October 1, NDU leader Manukian criticized President Ter-Petrosian for endorsing a phased resolution to the nine-year conflict which envisions postponing a decision on Karabakh's future status until after the withdrawal of Armenian forces from Azeri territory and the repatriation of displaced persons.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Democracy has been seriously undermined as both the 1995 parliamentary elections and the 1996 presidential vote were fraught with irregularities and charges of fraud. In 1995, the government banned nine parties, including the ARF-Dashnak. After the presidential elections, opposition leaders were detained and several were beaten. Some party headquarters were temporarily shut down.

While nominally a multi-party system, only about one percent of Armenians be-

long to political parties, which are usually based on small groupings around one personality. In May, former Prime Minister Bagratian launched Azatutian (Freedom), a pro-market party. Others, like the Shamiram (Women's) Party, are government creations. With parliamentary elections due in 1999, the opposition has charged that the government was preparing a law which would introduce a purely majority voting system, thus limiting the rights of political parties.

While the criminal code has largely been carried over from the Soviet era, the new constitution enshrined the presumption of innocence and gives people the right not to incriminate themselves or testify against their spouses or close relatives. The trial of 31 prominent figures from ARF-Dashnak accused of treason and attempting to overthrow the government (the so-called Dro case) in 1994 continued in the Supreme Court. The trial has been marked by several serious inconsistencies and persistent violations of the defendants' rights to due process. In August, leading intellectuals, scholars, and journalists from pro-government and state-run media appealed to President Ter-Petrosian to pardon Hrant Markarian, a key figure in the Dro case serving a five-year prison term. In April, the Supreme Court turned down a complaint by Dashnak activist Vahan Oganessian, who has been under arrest for treason since July 1995, against the Central Election Commission for refusing to register his candidacy. The Armenian Council to Protect Political Prisoners called the decision "illegal" and charged that the judiciary is merely an appendage of executive authorities. Corruption and bribery of judges, particularly in cases involving business crimes, is rampant. In April, Amnesty International reported receiving persistent reports of ill-treatment of detainees. In September a senior Armenian law enforcement officer reported that 14 inmates died in Armenia's prisons because of harsh conditions.

Freedom of the press has been substantially curtailed by the government. All print, radio and television media must register with the ministry of justice. Papers routinely permit government censors to review material, and self-censorship is common to avoid suspension. There are over 120 television and radio stations registered. There are two state-owned TV channels and a number of private cable broadcasters. There are also two independent radio stations in Yerevan, High FM and Lasto radio. There are scores of private newspapers claiming to be independent or openly affiliated with political parties. In July, the justice ministry registered the *Shabat* weekly and *Nor Azarmyak* magazine. Five independent news agencies exist, the largest being Noyan Tappan. In June, reporters and the director of the agency were detained and pressured to reveal the sources for an unsigned article of Karabakh. Under article 25 of the Law on Press and Other Media journalists are not obliged to reveal sources except in cases when the information is needed for legal proceedings. On March 7, two unknown assailants beat editor-in-chief Mikael Hayrapetian of *Erevenian Ozer* and demanded he stop publishing the paper. The press also faces severe economic hardships due to taxes, the cost of newsprint, flexible libel law as well as distribution.

Freedom of religion in this overwhelmingly Christian country is generally respected, though the government has periodically launched campaigns against Protestant sects. In September, parliament proposed an amendment to the law on religious organizations raising from 50 to 200 the number of members a religious organization must have to be registered by authorities. It also obliges all religious organizations wishing to register to submit a complete list of believers. Parliament said tightening the law would enable authorities to detect "malignant sects." Freedom of assembly

was temporarily suspended in the wake of post-election demonstrations by the opposition, but several rallies were permitted in Yerevan in 1997.

Nearly all trade unions were established during the Soviet era. Under the 1992 law on employment, workers are guaranteed the right to form unions, while a January 1993 presidential decree entitles workers to strike, as does the new constitution. There are several, small independent unions. Employers are prohibited by law from discriminating against women. The law is frequently violated in practice, and women face obstacles to advancement. In June 1997, the Armenian Council of Women said that 89 percent of women polled said their socio-economic position has deteriorated in the last year, and that privation and abuse are endemic in rural areas. Unemployment among women is several times that of men.

Australia

Polity: Federal parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 18,342,000
PPP: \$19,285
Life Expectancy: 78.1
Ethnic Groups: European (95 percent), Asian (4 percent), Aboriginal (1 percent)
Capital: Canberra

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Overview:

In 1997 Australian Prime Minister John Howard's conservative coalition faced divisive issues, ranging from immigration to Aboriginal land rights, that have sharpened debate over race relations and national identity.

The British claimed Australia in 1770. In January 1901 six states formed the Commonwealth of Australia, adding the Northern Territory and capital city of Canberra as territorial units in 1911. The Queen of England is the nominal head of state in this parliamentary democracy. The directly elected bicameral parliament consists of a 76-member Senate, drawing 12 members from each state plus two each from the capital and the Northern Territory, and a 148-member House of Representatives.

Since World War II political power has alternated between the center-left Labor party and the center-right coalition of the Liberal Party and the smaller, rural-based National Party. Under Prime Minister Bob Hawke (1983-91) the Labor government began cutting tariffs and deregulating financial markets to hone the country's competitiveness. In December 1991, during a deep recession, then-Treasurer Paul Keating unseated Hawke.

Keating led Labor to re-election in 1993. The premier continued liberalizing the economy, emphasized Australia's multiracial identity, and stressed the importance of expanding trade and cultural ties with Asia. The economy emerged from the 1991-92 recession with four straight years of solid growth. Yet a decade of restructuring had taken its toll on ordinary Australians, who increasingly viewed Keating as indifferent to their plight. At the March 2, 1996 elections the Liberal/National coalition won 94

seats (76 and 18, respectively) against 49 for Labor; minor parties took five seats.

In 1997 independent MP Pauline Hanson's inflammatory statements against Asian immigration heightened racial tensions but won support from blue collar workers. Adding to the debate, an official report released in May detailed a government practice of forcibly removing Aboriginal children from their families until the early 1970s. The Howard government already faced competing claims to state-held land pitting farmers and mining interests against Aboriginal groups. On December 7 the Senate rejected government-backed legislation that would curb Aboriginal rights to claim native title to land.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Australians can change their government democratically. In the fall voters elected representatives to a February 1998 constitutional convention expected to debate whether Australia should become a republic. The judiciary is independent, although according to the official Law Reform Commission women face discrimination in the legal system. Fundamental freedoms are respected in practice.

Australia's major human rights issue is the treatment of its indigenous population of approximately 230,000 Aborigines and 28,000 Torres Straits Islanders. Aborigines face arbitrary arrests and systemic discrimination and mistreatment by police; are incarcerated at a higher rate than whites, often because they cannot afford a fine or are denied bail for minor offenses; and die in custody at far higher rates than whites. A June Amnesty International report, examining trends in custodial deaths since a Royal Commission initiated special remedies in 1992, noted that ill-treatment, a systemic lack of care, and inadequate investigations into deaths characterize the penal system. Gaps in health indicators between the indigenous and white populations are among the highest for developed countries. Aborigines also face societal discrimination and inferior educational opportunities. The government is generally responsive to these concerns and has taken positive measures including establishing a national Aboriginal health program.

A landmark 1992 High Court ruling formally recognized that from a legal standpoint, Aborigines inhabited Australia prior to the British arrival. Native title could thus still be valid where Aboriginal groups maintained a connection to the land. The 1993 Native Title Act required the government to compensate groups with valid claims to state land, but left unclear the status of pastoral land (state land leased to farmers and miners). In December 1996 the High Court ruled that native title can co-exist with pastoral leases, though pastoral rights would take precedence over native title claims. Nevertheless, farmers and mining companies, fearing they will have to consult Aboriginal leaders over land use, have pressured the government to give stronger legal protection to pastoral leases.

Most asylum seekers are kept in detention until their applications have been decided, a legal process that can take several years. Domestic violence is common.

Australian trade unions are independent and vigorous. The controversial 1994 Industrial Relations Reform Act encourages the use of workplace contracts linked to productivity rather than industry-wide collective bargaining. Legislation that took effect in 1997 restricts the right to strike to the periods when contracts are being negotiated, abolishes closed shops, and limits redress for unfair dismissal.

Austria

Polity: Federal parliamentary democracy
Economy: Mixed capitalist
Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free

Population: 8,077,000

PPP: \$19,115

Life Expectancy: 76.3

Ethnic Groups: German (99 percent), Slovene, Croat

Capital: Vienna



Overview:

The nationalist Freedom Party and its anti-semitic leader, Jorg Haider, continued to gain political influence and popularity.

The party made regional gains at the expense of the ruling coalition. In August, an opinion poll rated it more highly than the ruling Christian Democratic Austrian People's Party (OVP). Fifty-four percent of respondents expressed support for the Freedom Party's participation in the government. The party, which not only opposes immigration, but also supports an incremental deportation of foreign workers, is now the largest far-right party in Europe.

The OVP and the Social Democratic Party have governed the country in coalition for eleven years. In January, Victor Klima replaced Franz Vranitzky—after Helmut Kohl, Europe's longest-serving head of government—as chancellor.

Political debate during the year was dominated by two issues: the country's record unemployment levels and NATO membership, which would necessitate the abandonment of its long-standing neutrality policy. In March, in response to the unemployment crisis and pressure from the Freedom Party, the government tightened immigration laws and launched an Austrians-first employment policy.

Debate over political and economic integration in Europe was high on the political agenda. In September, the Freedom Party won permission under the country's Volksbegehren, or public consultation process, to petition for a popular referendum on the planned introduction of Europe's single currency to Austria. Opinion polls indicated that seven percent of Austrians thought that the single currency would bring benefits, while 42 percent thought that it would affect them adversely.

The Republic of Austria was established in 1918 after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and reborn in 1945, seven years after its annexation by Nazi Germany. Occupation by the Western allies and the Soviet Union ended in 1955 under the Austrian State Treaty, which guaranteed Austrian neutrality and restored national sovereignty.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Austrians can change their government democratically. The country's provinces possess considerable latitude in local administration and can check federal power by electing members of the upper house of parliament. Voting is compulsory in some provinces. The independent judiciary is headed by a Supreme Court and includes both constitutional and administrative courts.

A 1955 treaty prohibits Nazis from exercising freedom of assembly or association. Nazi organizations are illegal, but Nazis are welcomed in the Freedom Party. In 1992, public denial of the Holocaust and justification of approval of Nazi crimes against humanity were outlawed. In general, Austrian police enforce these anti-Nazi statutes more enthusiastically when extremists attract international attention.

Austrian media are free. Legal restrictions of press freedom on public morality or national security grounds are rarely invoked. The Austrian Broadcasting Company, which controls radio and television, is state-owned, but protected from political interference by a broadcasting law.

Women hold approximately ten percent of Federal Assembly seats and approximately 20 percent of provincial seats. They are prohibited by law from working at night in most occupations. Nurses, taxi drivers and a few other occupations are exempted from this ban. Women generally earn 20 percent less than men and are not allowed to serve in the military. In an effort to ease the rising costs of state pensions, the government called in August for the retirement age of childless women to be raised from 60 to 65. Leftist parties strongly criticized the proposal. Also in August, the Green Party claimed that 70 percent of the country's mentally handicapped women had been sterilized. In response, the government agreed to draft new legislation to provide greater protection of women's rights.

Under the informal *proporz* system, many state and private sector appointments in Austria—including those of senior teachers in state schools—are made on the basis of affiliation with the two main political parties. In May, the practice came under increased criticism and scrutiny after the death of Gerhard Praschak, a leading banker. In his suicide note, Praschak stated that he and his bank had been under pressure to find a top position at the bank for a former minister in Vranitzky's cabinet.

Trade unions retain an important independent voice in Austria's political, social, and economic life. Fifty-two percent of workers are organized in 14 national unions, all of which belong to the Austrian Trade Union Federation and which are managed by supporters of the country's traditional political parties. In May, the Freedom Party, which has been excluded from representation in top union positions, announced plans to form a new union. Although not explicitly guaranteed in the constitution or national legislation, the right to strike is universally recognized.

Azerbaijan

Polity: Dominant party
Economy: Statist
 transitional

Population: 7,409,000

PPP: \$1,670

Life Expectancy: 71.1

Ethnic Groups: Azeri (82 percent), Russian (7 percent),
 Armenian (5 percent)

Capital: Baku

Ratings Change: Azerbaijan's civil liberties rating changed from 5 to 4 because of an expanding civil sector.

Political Rights: 6
Civil Liberties: 4*
Status: Partly Free



Overview:

Improving relations with the United States, negotiations over the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh and keeping a lid on domestic political opposition were key issues for President Haidar Aliyev, the Soviet-era politburo member who has built a personality cult since assuming power of this oil-rich Caspian nation in 1993.

Persia and the Ottoman Empire competed for Azeri territory in the sixteenth century, with the former gaining control in 1603. The northern sector, ceded to Russia in the early nineteenth century, joined Armenia and Georgia in a short-lived Transcaucasia Federation after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. It proclaimed its independence the following year, but was subdued by the Red Army in 1920. In 1922 it entered the Soviet Union as part of the Transcaucasian Soviet Federal Republic, becoming a separate Soviet Socialist republic in 1936.

Azerbaijan declared independence from the Soviet Union following a referendum in 1991. Hard-line Communist Ayaz Mutabilov was elected president. The Supreme Soviet, elected in 1990 in fraud-marred elections, was dominated by Communists, with the anti-Communist, nationalist Azerbaijan Popular Front (AzPF) under Abulfaz Elchibey holding some 40 seats. After months of turmoil, the Supreme Soviet created a National Council, a fifty-seat legislature half of whose members were picked by the president, half by the opposition. In June 1992, Elchibey was elected president, but, after battlefield setbacks in the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh and Russian support of a military renegade sparked violent instability, Elchibey was ousted and replaced by Aliyev, who was elected president in October 1993 in a vote boycotted by the AzPF and declared "undemocratic" by Western observers.

The country's first post-Soviet parliamentary elections, in November 1995, were not "free and fair," as five leading opposition parties and some 600 independent candidates were barred from participating. A new constitution, passed by referendum, strengthened the already wide-reaching power of the president. Aliyev's Yeni Azerbaijan (New Azerbaijan) won a total of 78 percent of the votes cast to take 18 of the 25 seats reserved for political parties; the AzPF, although "banned," won 2 seats. The ruling party won most seats in the second-round. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) said the balloting was "not free and fair," while the Council of Europe said the vote was marred by "irregularities and clear cases of fraud."

President Aliyev's July-August working visit to Washington marked a shift in U.S.-Azeri relations. Under a clause in the Freedom Support Act, Congress barred most U.S. aid and official contacts with Azerbaijan until it took "demonstrable steps" to cease hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh and lifted its blockade of land-locked Armenia. But the country's tremendous oil wealth and strategic location, as well as a cease-fire in Nagorno-Karabakh, led to a reassessment of U.S. policy. While in the U.S., President Aliyev signed a bilateral investment treaty and separate oil development agreements worth \$10 billion with Amoco, Exxon, Chevron and Mobil. On October 1, the State Department reiterated its view that a prohibition of direct U.S. economic aid to Azerbaijan should be relaxed. On October 8, Azerbaijan agreed to an OSCE plan for a "phased-in" approach to Nagorno-Karabakh which envisaged Armenia's return of occupied Azeri territory, the lifting of the blockade of Armenia and the return of refugees before a final decision on the enclave's status.

Though President Aliyev's power was not challenged, local leaders objected to corruption and privilege among the ruling elite, the usurpation of party power and violations of party rules and programs. None of the criticism, however, was directed at the president. The pro-government Democratic Party of Independence of Azerbaijan split, with several members going over to the opposition. In May, a Consultative Council was established composed of several pro-government parties working to support Aliyev in his bid for re-election in 1998.

Seven opposition parties, including the AzPF and Musavat, formed the Democratic Congress, electing former-President Elchibey, leader of the AzPF, as chairman. Isa Gambarov, head of Musavat, was elected co-chairman, in anticipation of the 1998 presidential and municipal elections. Local AzPF activists faced intimidation and harassment, opposition newspapers were censored and the state-owned media aired only anti-opposition, pro-government views. In late October, Elchibey was allowed to return to Baku from the Nakicheva region where he fled in 1992.

The state oil company, SOCAR, continued to sign agreements with Western companies to develop new-found deposits. The first oil from the Chirag field began to flow in late October. Pipeline routes remained contentious, with Russia pressing for a new Chechen route to counter plans for new routes through Georgia. Early Caspian oil will flow to Russia via a Baku-Grozny-Novorosysk pipeline. Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan moved to resolve a dispute over dividing Caspian Sea oil and gas. In February, the government announced a new privatization program to sell off the country's predominantly state-owned enterprises and industries. The voucher-based privatization plan will create a secondary market for the trade and exchange of the share certificates of targeted firms. The plan seeks to privatize 70 percent of the country's firms. Graft and high-level corruption are pervasive, with average Azeris not sharing in the oil wealth.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Azerbaijan's citizens live under a dictatorship. The new constitution gives the president control over the government, legislature and judiciary, powers he said give him the means to "prevent provocation from our external and internal enemies."

Some 43 political parties, though legal, face restrictions, harassment and arbitrary decisions by the state election commission, and opposition members face arbitrary detention, police intimidation, and other forms of repression. In February, the national

security ministry announced security forces had arrested "dozens" of conspirators allegedly planning a coup. Later that month, officials announced that several defendants, all members of the Islamic Party, pleaded guilty to charges of spying for Iranian intelligence during a closed trial. In March, the Supreme Court sentenced seven defendants of the Lezhgin separatist group Sadval to terms ranging from two to 15 years on charges of treason, espionage, and crimes against the state. Eleven members of the former elite OPON security force were sentenced to prison terms for an alleged 1995 coup attempt. On March 26, Russian security forces extradited former Azeri Prime Minister Surat Huseynov to Azerbaijan to face treason charges for leading an armed uprising in 1995.

While a 1992 media law and the 1995 constitution enshrine the principles of press freedom, in reality the media are not free. State-run television and radio ignore the opposition's views, deny access to opposition political figures and focus on positive reporting of the president and government. Economic obstacles include a value-added-tax levied on independent newspapers in the beginning of 1997. Early in the year, the government printing house refused to print several successive issues of the weekly newspaper *Jumhuriyet* published by the AzPF. In September, the weekly *Forum* was told by the minister of information that its second issue would not be published because it propagated opposition views. Of three Azeri-language TV stations, only one—ANS—is private, and it only broadcasts four- to six-hours a day. In September, President Aliyev issued a decree prohibiting military censorship of the media, imposed in 1993. (Political censorship was imposed in late 1994).

Freedom of assembly and association have been curtailed, and several rallies and opposition conferences were broken up by police in 1997.

Most Azeris are Shiite Muslims. There are significant Russian and Jewish minorities who can worship freely. There have been reports of continued persecution of the small Kurdish minority and the Lezhgin people.

The judiciary is not independent and is structured like the old Soviet system. The president appoints judges and has substantial influence over the judicial branch. Bribery and corruption are common.

The biggest labor organization is the post-Communist Azerbaijan Labor Federation, which depends on government support. The largest independent union is the oil workers' union, which represents about 85,000 workers, about 80 percent of workers in that industry. Cultural traditions and the Karabakh war have led to discrimination and violence against women, but in Baku and cosmopolitan areas women can be found in universities, in business and government.

Bahamas

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 280,000

PPP: \$15,875

Life Expectancy: 72.9

Ethnic Groups: Black (85 percent), European (15 percent)

Capital: Nassau

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Overview:

In 1997 voters gave Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham's good government Free National Movement (FNM) a resounding vote of confidence in national elections. The race proved to be the last for corruption-tainted independence leader Lynden Pindling, who had taken his Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) to six straight election victories before a stunning 1992 defeat.

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas, a 700-island nation in the Caribbean, is a member of the British Commonwealth. It was granted independence in 1973. The British monarchy is represented by a governor-general.

Under the 1973 constitution, a bicameral parliament consists of a 49-member House of Assembly directly elected for five years; and a 16-member Senate with nine members appointed by the prime minister, four by the leader of the parliament opposition and three by the governor-general. The prime minister is the leader of the party that commands a majority in the House.

After 25 years in office, Pindling's PLP was ousted by Ingraham and the FNM in the 1992 elections. The PLP had been dogged by years of allegations of corruption and high official involvement in narcotics trafficking. Ingraham, a lawyer and former cabinet official, was expelled by the PLP in 1986 for his outspoken attacks on corruption. He became leader of the FNM in 1990.

Ingraham vowed to bring honesty, efficiency and accountability to government. Pindling, at the time the Western hemisphere's longest-serving head of government, relied on his image as the father of the nation's independence.

But many voters were born after independence and many workers had been left unemployed as a result of a protracted economic downturn. The PLP and the FNM are both centrist parties, but the FNM is more oriented toward free enterprise and a philosophy of limited government.

With 90 percent of the electorate voting, the FNM won 32 seats in the House of Assembly, to the PLP's 17. Pindling held his own seat and became the official opposition leader.

Upon taking office, Ingraham appointed a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the Pindling government. In 1995 the commission detailed widespread mismanagement and malpractice in the national telephone and airline companies.

In March 1997, in a campaign that focused on jobs and crime, Ingraham claimed credit for revitalizing the economy by attracting foreign investment. Voters handed

the FNM a lopsided 34-6 majority in parliament and rebuked Pindling and the PLP for a second time. The number of seats had been reduced by nine, to 40, in keeping with a 1992 FNM campaign promise. In April Pindling resigned as opposition leader and was replaced by Perry Christie, who had served in the PLP cabinet until he denounced government corruption in the wake of a drug probe. Five of the 34 FNM parliamentarians are newcomers, further evidence of a generational shift in Bahamian politics.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens can change their government democratically. Unlike previous balloting, the 1992 vote was relatively free of irregularities and fraud. In 1992 indelible ink was used for the first time to identify people who had voted.

Constitutional guarantees regarding the right to organize political parties, civic organizations and labor unions are generally respected, as is the free exercise of religion. Labor, business and professional organizations are generally free. Unions have the right to strike and collective bargaining is prevalent.

Violent crime is a growing concern. In February FNM campaign manager and Housing Minister Charles Virgill was murdered, and Ingraham campaigned on a pledge of a big pay raise and better equipment for police and the defense force. NGOs have documented the increase in recent years of violent crime and police brutality. Rights groups also criticize the "subhuman conditions" and overcrowding in the nation's prisons. The Fox Hill prison remains filled to more than twice its intended capacity. In 1996 Ingraham reinstated the death penalty for murder.

Between 25,000 to 40,000 Haitians reside illegally in the Bahamas. Tight citizenship laws and a strict work permit system leave Haitians with few rights. The influx has created social tension because of the strain on government services.

Full freedom of expression is constrained by strict libel laws. Unlike its predecessor, the Ingraham government has not made use of these laws against independent newspapers. It has amended media laws to allow for private ownership of broadcasting outlets. For the first time, two newspaper companies have been awarded licenses to operate private radio stations; many applications to start cable television stations are pending.

The judicial system is headed by a Supreme Court and a Court of Appeal, with the right of appeal under certain circumstances to the Privy Council in London. There are local courts, and on the outer islands the local commissioners have magisterial powers. Despite anti-drug legislation and a 1987 agreement with the United States to suppress the drug trade, there is evidence of drug-related corruption and money-laundering, although less than during the Pindling years. In late 1995 the government introduced anti-money laundering legislation.

Bahrain

Polity: Traditional monarchy

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 590,000

PPP: \$15,321

Life Expectancy: 72.0

Ethnic Groups: Bahraini (63 percent), Asian (13 percent), other Arab (10 percent), Iranian (8 percent)

Capital: Manama

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free



Overview:

Violent civil unrest continued in 1997 as the government cracked down on Shi'ite Muslim-led dissidents campaigning for restoration of Bahrain's National Assembly. Opposition forces have faced arrest, torture, and other abuses by security forces since popular uprisings began in December 1994.

An archipelago of 35 islands located between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain has been ruled by the Al Khalifa family since 1782. The country became a British protectorate in 1861, and remained one until 1971, when British forces withdrew after years of Arab nationalist disturbances. The emir retained a virtual monopoly on power until the adoption of a constitution, which provided for a partially elected National Assembly, in 1973. Describing Bahrain's new legislative body as "obstructionist," the emir ordered the dissolution of the National Assembly in 1975.

With the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the accompanying spread of Islamic fundamentalism, resentment among Bahrain's majority Shi'ite population against their Sunni rulers intensified. The government faced an opposition which had grown to include not only leftist and secular elements, but religious fundamentalists as well. Religious and secular opposition activists were arrested and exiled in large numbers in the 1980s and 1990s.

The emir, Sheik 'Isa ibn Salman Al Khalifa, assumed power in 1961, and rules along with his brother, Prime Minister Khalifa ibn Salman Al Khalifa, and his son, crown prince Hamad ibn 'Isa Al Khalifa. In 1993, the emir responded to international calls for political liberalization by appointing a Consultative Council of 30 prominent business and religious leaders. The Council has met several times but has little legislative power.

On December 5, 1994, Shi'ite cleric Sheikh 'Ali Salman and several Sunni former members of parliament who had urged 20,000 Bahrainis to sign a petition calling for the reinstatement of parliament and the release of political detainees were arrested. These arrests sparked fierce protests and street clashes which marked the beginning of the current conflict. To date, over 40 people have been killed in the violence. According to Human Rights Watch, the Bahraini government has detained thousands of people, sentenced hundreds to jail terms, and expelled some 500 citizens and their families. The government, meanwhile, has rejected all criticism of its human rights record, dismissing the political unrest as Iranian-sponsored "terrorism."

In March, the State Security Court sentenced 74 members of the Iranian-backed

Hizbollah-Bahrain to prison terms of three to fifteen years. Eighty-one members of the group went on trial (27 of them in absentia) on charges of conspiring against the government, "conniving with a foreign state," and attempting to overthrow the regime by force. Amnesty International denounced the trials as "manifestly unfair," citing reports that some of the defendants were tortured in incommunicado detention to extract confessions, and the fact that the accused are denied the right to appeal to a higher court.

Bahraini opposition groups reported several incidents of repression by security forces against Shi'ites. In January, anti-riot police attacked worshippers outside the Ra's al-Rumman mosque in Manama after Friday prayers. Some 2,000 people attending the sermon were faced with tear gas and rubber bullets after several of them shouted political slogans. In July, security forces besieged a Shi'ite village near Manama, arresting about 100 people and beating numerous others.

Asian expatriates, who comprise nearly a third of the country's population, continued to be targets of violence by disaffected Bahrainis in 1997. With unemployment close to 40 percent and demands for political reform unanswered by the government, Bahraini villagers blame the Asians for taking scarce jobs. Two Bangladeshis and four Indians were killed in two separate incidents of arson in July.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Bahrainis cannot change their government democratically. Political parties are prohibited, and all opposition leaders are currently imprisoned or exiled. The emir rules by decree and appoints all government officials, including the 15-member cabinet, the urban municipal councils, and the rural *mukhtars* (local councils). The only political recourse for citizens is to submit petitions to the government and to appeal to the emir and officials at *majlises*, or regularly scheduled audiences. The majority Shi'a Muslims face discrimination in employment and social services, and are generally barred from joining the army and police.

The Interior Ministry maintains informal control over most activities through pervasive informant networks. Agents can search homes without warrants and have used this power widely against Shi'ite communities since the beginning of civil unrest in 1994.

The 1974 State Security Act permits the government to detain individuals accused of "anti-government activity," which may include participation in peaceful demonstrations and membership in outlawed organizations, for up to three years without trial. Ordinary trials feature due process safeguards, but defendants tried in security courts do not enjoy these guarantees. Under anti-violence laws passed in 1996, any person found to have committed a crime linked to anti-government protests may automatically be brought before the State Security Court without the possibility of appeal.

Freedom of speech and of the press are sharply restricted. Privately owned newspapers refrain from criticizing the regime, while radio and television are government-owned and offer only official views. In July, a journalist with the German Press Agency was expelled for "discrediting the royal family."

Women face fewer restrictions in Bahrain than in other Islamic countries, but wage and job discrimination are pervasive. Bahraini women do not have the right to vote. Islamic *Shari'a* courts rule on matters of divorce and inheritance, occasionally reject-

ing divorce requests. Women have begun to take part in protests as a result of the government's response to dissent, calling for political reform through petition-signing. They have since been pressured to apologize or lose their jobs.

Islam is the state religion, but Christians, Hindus, Jews, and others are generally permitted to worship freely. The 1963 Bahraini Citizenship Act denies full citizenship to some 3,000-5,000 Persian-origin Shi'as, or *bidoon* (those without). Bidoon are restricted in business activities, and have difficulty obtaining passports and government loans.

No independent labor unions exist. Workers do not have the right to bargain collectively. The government has instead created Joint Labor-management Consultative Committees (JCC) composed of worker and employer representatives. Foreign laborers and non-industrial workers are underrepresented in the country's 16 JCCs. The 1974 Security Law restricts strikes deemed damaging to worker-employer relations or the national interest, and few strikes occur.

Bangladesh

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 119,823,000

PPP: \$1,331

Life Expectancy: 56.4

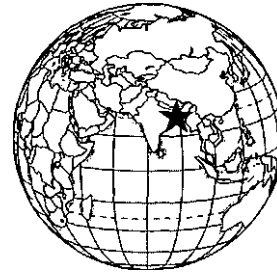
Ethnic Groups: Bengali (98 percent), Bihari (1 percent), various tribal groups (1 percent)

Capital: Dhaka

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Overview:

In 1997 the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party's (BNP) confrontational political tactics—used by the ruling Awami League before it took office a year earlier—made normal parliamentary workings impossible.

Bangladesh won independence in December 1971 after a nine-month war with the occupying West Pakistani army. Following fifteen years of often turbulent military rule, the country's democratic transition began with the resignation of General H.M. Ershad, who had seized power in a 1982 coup, in December 1990 after weeks of pro-democracy demonstrations.

The February 1991 elections brought the centrist BNP to power under Khaleda Zia. A September national referendum transformed the powerful presidency into a largely ceremonial head of state in a parliamentary system.

In March 1994 the opposition Awami League began boycotting parliament to protest alleged official corruption and a rigged by-election, beginning two years of agitational politics, nationwide general strikes and partisan violence. The opposition boycotted the hugely flawed February 1996 elections, which the BNP won handily, but forced Zia's resignation in March. The outgoing parliament passed an amendment requiring a caretaker government to conduct all future parliamentary elections.

At the June 12, 1996 elections, held with a 73 percent turnout, the Awami League won 146 of the 300 contested parliamentary seats (30 are reserved for women); the BNP, 113; Ershad's Jatiya party, 33; smaller parties, independents, and vacant, eight. The Awami League's Sheikh Hasina Wajed formed a government backed by the Jatiya party.

In March 1997 the BNP began staging major strikes and parliamentary walkouts to protest alleged harassment of its workers, a proposed treaty giving India transit rights through Bangladesh, and in July, a new 2.5 percent import tax. But in reality the Awami League and BNP differed little on domestic policy. Many disputes reflected the animosity between Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of independence leader Sheikh Mujibar Rahman, and Zia, the widow of a former military ruler allegedly complicitous in Sheikh Mujib's 1975 assassination.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Bangladeshi citizens can change their government democratically. The June 1996 elections, the freest in the country's history despite some violence and irregularities, set a constitutional precedent for voting to be held under a caretaker government. However, institutions are weak, and parliamentary boycotts by both major parties while in opposition have rendered a normal legislative process impossible.

Political demonstrations are often marred by partisan killings and other violence and by clashes between parties and police. Party thugs disrupt opponents' gatherings and enforce strikes. In the summer the government restricted rallies in Dhaka but police generally only enforced this against the BNP. Student wings of political parties are embroiled in violent campus conflicts.

The judiciary is independent, but lower-level courts are plagued by severe backlogs, lengthy periods of pre-trial detention, and corruption. In practice, poor people have limited recourse through the courts. The rule of law is weak, and civil liberties violations are widespread.

Successive governments have used the 1974 Special Powers Act, which allows authorities to detain suspects without charge for up to 120 days, against political opponents. Since the advent of democracy this has most often been done prior to, and following, political protests. Human rights advocates have sharply criticized the practice of "safe custody," whereby judges imprison female victims of rape, kidnapping and trafficking, allegedly for their protection. Some women have been incarcerated in "safe custody" for up to four years. Police torture, rape and other abuse of suspects and prisoners is routine, widespread, and rarely punished.

On December 2 the government signed a peace accord to end an insurgency in the southeastern Chittagong Hill Tracts, where since 1973 the Shanti Bahini rebel group has fought for greater autonomy for Chakmas and other indigenous Buddhist hill tribes, and the expulsion of Bangla-speaking Muslim settlers. The accord calls for any autonomous Regional Council.

The print media is diverse and outspoken but under pressure. Police and party enforcers have attacked newspaper offices and beaten and arrested journalists. Islamic fundamentalists also harass journalists. Most publications are heavily dependent on the government for advertising revenue, and in practice advertising apportionment and allocation of subsidized newsprint are politically slanted. Broadcast media are state-owned, and coverage favors the party in power, although these media also carry

the BBC and CNN. In January the government agreed to equal coverage of the ruling party and opposition in radio and television broadcasts of parliament.

Women face discrimination in health care, education, and employment opportunities, and legislation such as the 1995 Women Repression Law is weakly enforced. Violence against women, often dowry-related, is common and sometimes severe. In rural areas religious leaders arbitrarily impose floggings and other punishment on women accused of moral offenses.

Organized networks, operating with the complicity of local authorities, have trafficked thousands of women and children to Pakistan and other countries for prostitution and other forced labor. Child prostitution is also a problem within Bangladesh.

Islam is the official religion. Hindus, Christians and other minorities can worship freely but face societal discrimination. Garos and other tribal minorities say the authorities displace them for development projects. All but 21,000 of the 250,000 Rohingya refugees who fled from Burma in 1991-92 to escape forced labor and other abuses have been repatriated, but in 1996 and 1997 more than 10,000 new Rohingya refugees entered Bangladesh. In August Human Rights Watch/Asia reported that the Bangladeshi army pushed back 200-400 asylum seekers in June and forcibly repatriated 400 refugees in July.

In garment factories and other low-wage industries anti-union harassment and discrimination are prevalent. Union formation is hampered by a 30 percent employee approval requirement and restrictions on organizing by unregistered unions. Workers suspected of union activities can be legally transferred or fired. In 1997 the government recognized the nonpartisan Bangladesh Independent Garment Workers Union after it met the registration requirements. However, many other unions are heavily politicized and do little for their members. Unions are largely prohibited in the two export processing zones. Factory-owners' adherence to a 1995 Memorandum of Understanding has sharply reduced the number of children under 14 working in garment factories. Nevertheless, children commonly work as domestic help, vendors, porters, brick-breakers, and in other tasks.

Barbados

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Capitalist

Population: 263,000

PPP: \$11,051

Life Expectancy: 75.9

Ethnic Groups: Black (80 percent),

European (4 percent), mixed (16 percent)

Capital: Bridgetown

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Overview:

Prime Minister Owen Arthur's government appears to be successfully leading Barbados' already-diversified economy, including tourism, office insurance, and banking concerns, into the global market, without the fears common to some of its island neighbors.

A member of the British Commonwealth, Barbados achieved independence in 1966. The British monarchy is represented by a governor-general. The government is a parliamentary democracy with a bicameral legislature and a party system based on universal adult suffrage. The Senate is comprised of 21 members, all appointed by the governor-general; 12 on the advice of the prime minister, two on advice of the leader of the opposition, and the remaining seven at the discretion of the governor-general. A 28-member House of Assembly is elected for a five-year term. Executive authority is vested in the prime minister, who is the leader of the political party commanding a majority in the House.

Since independence, power has alternated between two centrist parties, the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) under Errol Barrow, and the Barbados Labor Party (BLP) under Tom Adams. Adams led the BLP from 1976 until his death in 1985. Adams was succeeded by Bernard St. John, but the BLP was defeated. This returned Barrow to power in 1986. Barrow died in 1987 and was succeeded by Erskine Sandiford, who led the DLP to victory in the 1991 elections.

Under Sandiford, Barbados suffered a prolonged economic recession as revenues from sugar and tourism declined. By 1994, the economy appeared to be improving, but unemployment was still at nearly 25 percent. Sandiford's popularity suffered, and he was increasingly criticized for his authoritarian style of government. He lost a no-confidence vote in parliament when nine BLP legislators were joined by four DLP backbenchers and one independent legislator who had quit the DLP, to elect David Thompson, the young finance minister, to replace him.

In the 1994 election campaign, Owen Arthur, the economist elected in 1993 to head the BLP, promised to build "a modern, technologically dynamic economy," create jobs and restore investor confidence. The BLP won 19 seats, the DLP eight and the New Democratic Party (NDP), a disaffected offshoot of the DLP formed in 1989, one.

Voter participation dipped to 60 percent, down from 62 percent in 1991 and 76 percent in 1986. According to one local analyst, the trend reflected "a growing disenchantment with voting, particularly among the youth where the scourge of unemployment is greatest."

In his first year, Arthur seemed able to combine a technocratic approach to revitalizing the economy with savvy politics. He appointed a number of promising young cabinet officials. By mid-1995, unemployment was down to 20.5 percent, the lowest level since 1990. It has remained at about that level since then.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens can change their government through democratic elections. Constitutional guarantees regarding freedom of religion and the right to organize political parties, labor unions and civic organizations are respected.

Apart from the parties holding parliamentary seats, other political organizations abound, including the small left-wing Workers' Party of Barbados. There are two major labor unions and various smaller ones that are politically active. Women make up roughly half of the workforce. Human rights organizations operate freely.

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 are privately owned, and there are two major dailies.

Private and government radio stations operate. The single television station, operated by the government-owned Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), presents a wide range of political viewpoints. The highlight of the 1994 election campaign was the first ever televised debate between the major candidates.

The judicial system is independent and includes a Supreme Court that encompasses a High Court and a Court of Appeal. Lower court officials are appointed on the advice of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission. The government provides free legal aid to the indigent.

The high crime rate, fueled by an increase in drug abuse and trafficking, has given rise to human rights concerns. The police are alleged to use excessive force during arrests and interrogation. A counternarcotics agreement signed between the United States and Barbados in late 1996 will provide funding for the Barbados police force, the coast guard, customs and other ministries, for a broad array of programs to combat drug-related crimes. A significant upswing in drug arrests is largely attributed to increased police activity and better and more cooperative law enforcement intelligence work. Barbados recently entered into an updated extradition treaty with the U.S., as well as, in May 1997, a maritime law enforcement agreement.

In 1992 the Court of Appeals outlawed the practice of public flogging of criminals. Also in 1992, a Domestic Violence law was passed to give police and judges greater powers to protect women.

↓ Belarus

Polity: Presidential-dictatorship

Economy: Statist transitional

Population: 10,297,000

PPP: \$4,713

Life Expectancy: 69.2

Ethnic Groups: Belarusian (78 percent), Russian (13 percent), Polish (4 percent), Ukrainian (2 percent), Jewish (1 percent)

Capital: Minsk

Trend Arrow: Belarus receives a downward trend arrow due to an upsurge of repression against political opponents, the media and civilians.

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free



Overview:

In 1997, the detention of Russian journalists undermined an earlier union treaty between Belarus and Russia. Throughout the year, the regime of President Alyaksandr Lukashenka intimidated the opposition, forcibly broke up demonstrations, arrested protesters and muzzled the press, bringing condemnations from the West and Russia.

Belarus was part of the tenth-century Kievan realm. After a lengthy period of Lithuanian rule, it merged with Poland in the sixteenth century. It became part of the Russian Empire after Poland was partitioned in the eighteenth century, and a constituent republic of the USSR in 1922. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the reformist leader Stanislaw Shushkevich became head of state.

A pro-Russian parliament ousted Shushkevich in 1994 and the newly-created post of president was won by Lukashenka, a charismatic populist, former state farm director and chairman of parliament's anti-corruption committee. After his election, Lukashenka gradually reintroduced censorship, banned independent trade unions, reimposed the use of Soviet-era textbooks and national symbols, ignored the Supreme Court when it overturned his decrees, limited the rights of candidates in the 1995 parliamentary elections and sought reintegration with Russia.

In 1996, President Lukashenka cracked down on opposition protests, forcing two key leaders of the Popular Front, a democratic nationalist party, to seek asylum in the West. He extended his term and amended the country's constitution by means of a referendum to give the president the right to annul decisions of local councils, set election dates, call parliamentary sessions, and dissolve parliament. Under the revised constitution, the president appoints judges, five of the 11 Constitutional Court members and the chief justice and Central Election Commission officials. Parliament was restructured into a bicameral legislature consisting of a house of representatives with 110 deputies and a senate, with the president appointing one-third of the senators.

A key issue in 1997 was the union treaty with Russia which envisaged political and economic integration. The treaty was opposed by Russian liberals, among them First Deputy Prime Ministers Anatoly Chubais and Boris Nemtsov.

In May, Yeltsin and Lukashenka signed a Union Charter, a watered-down version of the original draft which removed a clause committing the countries to move toward a single federative state. The treaty was ratified by Russia's Federation Council and Belarus's Council of the Republic on June 10.

On July 26, Belarus authorities detained Pavel Sheremet, a reporter for Russia's ORT television, his driver and cameraman, charging them with illegally crossing the border from Lithuania. The next day, Belarus security agents raided ORT's Minsk offices and confiscated Sheremet's passport. President Yeltsin threatened to revise the Union Charter if the three were not released. On October 2, Moscow publicly rebuked Lukashenka when officials forced a last-minute cancellation of his scheduled trip to Russia by refusing permission for the president's airplane to land. On October 8, Sheremet was released from detention in Grodno, but was not permitted to leave the country until his trial.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Belarus citizens cannot change their government democratically, and President Lukashenka has instituted de facto presidential rule.

Although legal, opposition parties face harassment and restrictions such as lack of access to state-run media and bans on literature and publications. Limits have been arbitrarily placed on freedoms of speech and assembly. A March 7 presidential decree curtailed peaceful demonstrations. Demonstrators faced detentions, exorbitant fines and unfair trials. On March 20, a district court in Minsk fined former parliamentary speaker Mechislav Hrib 20 million Belarusian rubles for taking part in an unauthorized protest on March 15. Former interior minister Yuriy Zakharenko was fined two million Belarusian rubles, and former special commander Brig. Col. Vladimir Borodach was sentenced to 10 days in jail. On March 23, 10,000 anti-government demonstrators in Minsk were attacked by police. The U.S. Embassy's first secretary, Serzh Alexandrov, was one of 70 arrested and was subsequently asked to leave the country.

On April 2, 200 people were detained after police broke up a demonstration to protest the union treaty with Russia. Over 60 detainees were fined or sentenced to administrative arrest. Throughout the year, the Belarusian Helsinki Committee provided reports of beatings, detentions, and abuses directed at opposition activists and protesters. On September 15, Yuriy Belenky, a deputy chairman of the Popular Front, was arrested and later released after he claimed parliamentary immunity. Two activists were fined after taking part in an October 12 demonstration at which President Lukashenka was burned in effigy.

There are several NGOs, but they cannot operate freely. In March, 11 public organizations, including the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, the Lew Sapaha Foundation of Democratic Reform, the Legislative Initiative Foundation, the Belarusian Pen Center and the Belarusian North Atlantic Assembly signed a Council of Human Rights Convention. On September 16, police seized the property of the Soros Foundation in Minsk, after a year of harassment that included barring the executive director from returning to Belarus and a \$3 million fine for alleged currency exchange violations. Harassment of NGOs includes dubious tax audits and outrageous rent hikes. On September 25, the Belarus League for Human Rights was evicted from its premises.

Freedom of the press is strictly curtailed. The media law facilitates government closure or suspension of publications, and the press faces censorship. The country's one independent radio station, Radio 101.2, was closed by authorities in 1996. In 1997, the Belarusian Service of Polish Radio provided 101.2 staffers with air time for news and other programming. Non-state print media are severely hampered by state control over printing and distribution to the extent that some have resorted to printing in Lithuania. State Television and Radio uncritically support the president. Journalists, especially TV reporters, have been attacked by police while covering demonstrations. Several employees of Russia's ORT and NTV television stations were detained or expelled under strict regulations for foreign media. The result of overt government repression has been self-censorship, with independent media avoiding subjects such as Chernobyl, human rights issues and the social and economic crisis.

Even though 80 percent of the country consists of ethnic Belarusian, Belarusian-language education is being dismantled, and Russian was restored as an official language in 1995. Freedom of religion is guaranteed by law and usually respected in practice. Catholics (with strong links to Poland) and Jews have complained of government foot-dragging in returning church property and synagogues.

The judiciary is not independent and remains a remnant of the Soviet era subject to extensive executive influence.

In 1995, the president banned the activity of the independent Free Trade Union of Belarus, which led to a transport workers strike. Several strike leaders were arrested and sentenced to brief terms of forced labor. Women's organizations have been established to document discrimination and abuses. There are no legal restrictions on the participation of women in politics and government, though social barriers to women in the public arena exist.

Belgium

Polity: Federal parliamentary democracy **Political Rights:** 1
Civil Liberties: 2

Economy: Capitalist **Status:** Free

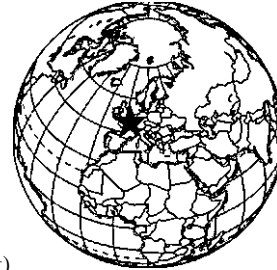
Population: 10,176,000

PPP: \$19,985

Life Expectancy: 76.8

Ethnic Groups: Fleming (55 percent), Walloon (33 percent) mixed and others, including Moroccan, Turkish and other immigrant groups (12 percent)

Capital: Brussels



Overview:

Public confidence in Belgium's government, judiciary, and police forces remained low in the wake of ongoing criminal and political scandals. The narrow scope and slow pace of expected reforms increased doubts that the country's center-left government would survive until the elections scheduled for 1999. While the government of Prime Minister Jean-Luc Dehaene focused on Belgium's economic recovery and preparations for the country's participation in the European Union's single currency, the public and opposition parties demanded stronger responses to charges of corruption and incompetence.

Political debate centered on three major issues. First, confidence in the government was further eroded when former top officials in the scandal-ridden Francophone Socialist Party (PS), the second most powerful party in the four-party coalition government, were arrested for accepting party kickbacks from a French aviation firm. Second, major police and judicial reforms promised after the discovery of a pedophile ring failed to materialize. Following investigations into the handling of the pedophile cases, a commission of inquiry found in April that the "malfunctioning of the Belgian penal system today poses serious problems that threaten to undermine the state of law." Third, a Justice Ministry report in October found that international organized criminals — including Chinese triads, Columbian drug cartels, Italian mafia and Russian and Turkish gangs — were thriving in the country. The gangs' activities, the report stated, include drug running, money laundering, and other economic crimes.

Modern Belgium dates from 1830, when the territory broke away from the Netherlands and formed a constitutional monarchy. Today, the largely ceremonial monarchy symbolizes the weakness of Belgian unity. Ethnic and linguistic antagonism during the 1960s prompted a series of constitutional amendments, in 1970-71 and 1993, that devolved power to regional councils at the expense of the central government in Brussels. A 1993 amendment formally transformed the country into a federation of Flanders, Wallonia, and bilingual Brussels, with the German-speaking area accorded cultural autonomy. Also in 1993, parliament adopted an amendment establishing three directly-elected regional assemblies with primary responsibility for housing, transportation, public works, education, culture and the environment. The weak central government continues to oversee foreign policy, defense, justice, monetary policy, taxation and the management of the budget deficit.

Political parties are split along linguistic lines, with both Walloon and Flemish

parties ranging across the political spectrum. The dominance of the three major groupings — Social Democrats, Christian Democrats, and Liberals — has declined with the emergence of numerous small ethnic parties and special interest groups.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Belgians can change their government democratically. Non-voters are subject to fines. Political parties generally organize along ethnic lines, with different factions of the leading parties subscribing to a common platform for general elections.

Each ethnic group has autonomy in its region, but constitutional disputes arise when members of one group elected to office in another territory refuse to take competency tests in the dominant language of that region.

The country's judiciary is independent, but continued to come under strong attack due to the country's ongoing political and criminal scandals.

While freedom of speech and the press is guaranteed, Belgian law prohibits some forms of pornography and all incitements to violence. Libel laws have some minor restraining effects on the press, and restrictions on the right of civil servants to criticize the government may constitute a slight reduction of the right of civil speech. Autonomous public boards govern the state television and radio networks and ensure that public broadcasting is linguistically pluralistic. The state has permitted and licensed independent radio stations since 1985.

Belgians enjoy freedom of religion and association. Christian, Jewish and Muslim institutions are state-subsidized in this overwhelmingly Roman Catholic country, and other faiths are not restricted. Immigrants and linguistic minorities argue that linguistic zoning limits opportunity. Belgium has enacted measures to promote sexual equality, including the prohibition of sexual harassment. Legislation mandates that, in the next general parliamentary election, 33 percent of the candidates be women. Approximately 60 percent of the work force are members of labor unions, which have the right to strike — one which they frequently exercise — even in "essential" services.

Belize

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Capitalist
Population: 215,000

PPP: \$5,590

Life Expectancy: 74.0

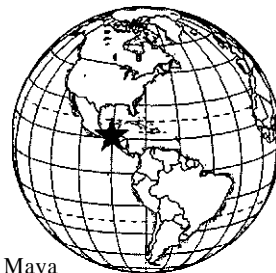
Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (44 percent), Creole (30 percent), Maya (11 percent), Garifuna (7 percent)

Capital: Belmopan

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Overview:

Prime Minister Manuel Esquivel's United Democratic Party (UDP) suffered a defeat in 1997, when an electorate weary of four years of economic hardship handed the opposition People's United Party (BUP) victories in municipal elections throughout the country.

Belize is a member of the British Commonwealth. The British monarchy is represented by a governor-general. Formerly British Honduras, the name was changed to Belize in 1973. Independence was granted in 1981.

Belize is a parliamentary democracy with a bicameral National Assembly. The 29-seat House of Representatives is elected for a five-year term. Members of the Senate are appointed: five by the governor-general on the advice of the prime minister; two by the leader of the parliamentary opposition; and one by the Belize Advisory Council.

The government changed hands three times since independence between the center-right UDP and the center-left BUP. In the 1993 elections the UDP and National Alliance for Belizean Rights (NABR) formed a coalition, winning 16 of the 29 seats in the House of Representatives. Suffrage is universal; women hold a number of appointed positions—including three of the nine Senate seats—but very few elected ones.

In January 1996 nine death row prisoners received a reprieve from the Privy Council in London, rekindling Belizean government resentment of British involvement in domestic matters. The Belize constitution affords death row convicts the right to such an appeal; the current government lacks the necessary majority to amend the constitution.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens can change their government democratically. There are no restrictions on the right to organize political parties. Civil society is well established, with a large number of nongovernmental organizations working in social, economic and environmental areas. There is freedom of religion and the government actively discourages racial and ethnic discrimination.

In general, the judiciary is independent and nondiscriminatory, and the rule of law is respected. However, judges and the director of public prosecutions must negotiate the renewal of their employment contracts, rendering them vulnerable to political influence. In addition, narcotics cases often go on for years while defendants are free on bail. One possible reason for this is the close link between government ministers and defense lawyers in such cases.

The Belize Human Rights Commission is independent and effective. Human rights concerns include the plight of migrant workers and refugees from neighboring Central American countries, and charges of labor abuses by Belizean employers. Most of the estimated 40,000 Spanish-speakers who have immigrated since the 1980s do not have legal status. Some have registered under an amnesty program implemented in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. However, reports continue of mistreatment of migrant workers.

Prison conditions do not meet minimum standards. The government opened a new facility in 1993 to alleviate overcrowding. However, this new prison, which houses death row inmates, provides in some cases one bed for six inmates, non-working toilets and inadequate protection from the weather.

The government of Belize does not recognize aboriginal land rights and has taken action that threatens the survival of the Maya Indian communities. More than half of the 21,000 Belize Maya live in the Toledo district, where they form nearly two thirds of the population. Despite their claim to be the original inhabitants of Belize, they have no secure title to their ancestral lands which have been targeted by foreign, mostly

Malaysian, investors. This land, for thousands of years, has provided Maya Indians food, medicinal plants, building materials and hunting grounds. In 1996 the Maya Indians organized demonstrations and took legal steps to block government negotiated logging contracts. They also opposed the paving of a major road to afford businesses access to the area. In 1997, the land claims continued to be fought out in the courts.

Belizeans have suffered from an increase in violent crime, much of it related to drug trafficking and gang conflict. In February 1996 the U.S. government added Belize to its list of major drug transit countries despite the anti-crime measures undertaken in 1995, including the adoption of a quick trial plan, and the country remained on the list in 1997. A stolen car treaty signed in 1996 was ratified by Belize in 1997, but had not entered into effect because of U.S. congressional inaction.

There are six privately owned newspapers, three of which are subsidized by major political parties. The press is free to publish a variety of political viewpoints, including those critical of the government, and there are Spanish-language media. Belize has a literacy rate of more than 90 percent. Radio and television are saturated with political advertising during elections. Fourteen private television stations operate, including four cable systems. There is an independent board to oversee operations of the government-owned outlets.

Labor unions are independent and well organized and have the right to strike, but the percentage of the workforce—which earns two to three times that of its neighbors—that is organized has declined to 11 percent. Disputes are adjudicated by official boards of inquiry, and businesses are penalized for failing to abide by the labor code.

Benin

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Economy: Statist-transitional
Population: 5,574,000
PPP: \$1,696
Life Expectancy: 54.2
Ethnic Groups: Aja, Barriba, Fon, Yoruba (99 percent)
Capital: Porto-Novo

Political Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Overview:

Benin boasted one of Africa's best human rights records as democratic institutions continued to take root six years after the country became a multiparty democracy. Former Marxist military dictator Mathieu Kerekou was returned to power in open March 1996 presidential elections and has accepted action by parliament and court verdicts that voided some of his decisions. However, a harsh press law was passed in March and corruption remains a severe problem that the Kerekou administration has publicly attacked. The pace of economic liberalization has slowed, despite international pressure to continue the broad privatization program instituted under former President Nicephore

Soglo, loser in the 1996 presidential contest.

Once the center of the ancient kingdom of Dahomey, the modern state of Benin became independent under that name in 1960 after 60 years of French rule. General Kerekou seized power in 1972, putting an end to a succession of coups and counter-coups. Kerekou changed the country's name to Benin in 1975, enforcing a one-party state under the Benin People's Revolutionary Party and pursuing Marxist-Leninist/nationalist economic policies. Benin's Marxist economy emulated the Soviets', with the same consequences; by 1989, the country was essentially bankrupt and the regime faced mounting internal unrest. Kerekou accepted a transition to multipartyism and his defeat in presidential elections by Soglo in March 1991. The country's human rights record has improved dramatically since. Civil society and free institutions are generally flourishing.

In March 1996 presidential polls, President Kerekou won a clear victory, after a vigorous campaign notable for its lack of violence. State-controlled radio and television broadcast continual appeals for peaceful campaigning as part of a broader civic education program that included many rallies, pamphleteering and street theater conducted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for months before the vote.

The new government is effectively a coalition of several ethnically-based parties, as is the legislative majority in the national assembly. Former President Soglo's Benin Renaissance party is the largest single parliamentary party with 20 seats, among 17 parties represented in the National Assembly, which has 89 seats.

Benin has historically been divided between northern and southern ethnic groups. These groups are the bases of the current political parties. The army remains dominated by northerners recruited by Kerekou during his first eighteen years in power. While still fragile, Benin's democracy is an important example of political and ethnic cooperation for all Africa, and particularly for the authoritarian regimes in neighboring Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria and Togo.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Benin's citizens have twice exercised their right to freely elect and change their leaders. The country's first genuine multi-party elections were in 1991. Legislative polls in March 1995 returned an opposition majority. While marred by some irregularities, the March 1996 presidential contest was broadly free and fair. The president is limited to two five-year terms; national assembly members may serve an unlimited number of four-year terms. There is universal adult suffrage, and voting is by secret ballot. Adrien Houngbedji, a long-time opposition leader once jailed and tortured under President Kerekou's military regime, is now his prime minister.

Freedom of expression guaranteed by the constitution is respected in practice. Most broadcast media are state-owned and operated, but they air opposition voices, as well as reports critical of the government. Independent radio and television stations began operating in 1997 under a liberalized broadcasting law, but steep license fees will likely keep community radio and television stations off the air. Independent and pluralistic print media include party-affiliated newspapers, which publish articles highly critical of both government and opposition leaders and policies. A threat to the independent media emerged in the form of a new libel law enacted in March, under which two journalists have already been prosecuted. Foreign periodicals are easily available.

Many NGOs are active without governmental interference. The Centre Afrika-

Obata, the League for the Defense of Human Rights in Benin and the Study and Research Group on Democracy and Economic and Social Development (Gerrdes) are among groups that research and report on human rights issues. Freedom of assembly and association are respected, with permits and registration requirements treated as routine formalities and often ignored. Religious freedom guaranteed by the constitution is respected.

The judiciary is independent, though lacking in staff and training. The constitutional court has ruled against both the president and the legislature on various matters. Prison conditions are harsh; severe overcrowding and lack of medical care and proper diet cause unnecessary deaths among prisoners. Up to three-quarters of inmates are pre-trial detainees.

Women's legal rights are often unenforced, particularly in rural areas and in family matters where traditional practices prevail. Women generally have fewer educational and employment opportunities. Only six of 84 national assembly members are women. A serious problem receiving increased attention from local and international NGOs is the trafficking of young children who are sold into domestic servitude in West and Central Africa's richer countries.

Strikes are legal and collective bargaining widely used in labor negotiations, and the right to organize and join unions is constitutionally guaranteed. Some of the several labor federations are affiliated to political parties.

Benin's formal economic sector remains small. About 80 percent of the work force is engaged in subsistence farming in rural areas. Increased cotton production has bolstered the economy, and there are hopes for new off-shore oil discoveries. While President Kerekou has shown no intention to revive his discredited Marxist economic policies, the pace of widely-unpopular economic liberalization has faltered. The anti-corruption Public Life Moralisation Unit, launched in December 1996, is part of a major initiative that included inviting former World Bank President Robert McNamara to Benin to advise on anti-graft measures.

Bhutan

Polity: Traditional monarchy
Economy: Pre-industrial
Population: 842,000
PPP: \$1,289
Life Expectancy: 51.5
Ethnic Groups: Ngalung, Sarchop, Nepalese, others
Capital: Thimphu

Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free



Overview:

Bhutan's political crisis continued in 1997 as the regime arrested monks and civilians and closed monasteries to curb alleged support for the pro-democracy movement, and continued to refuse repatriation for the nearly 100,000 Nepali-speaking Bhutanese refugees in Nepal.

Britain began guiding this Himalayan land's affairs in 1865, and installed the ruling

Wangchuk dynasty in 1907. Britain's role ended with a 1949 treaty that gave India control over Bhutan's foreign affairs. Since then, New Delhi has supported the Wangchuk family's continued rule as an absolute monarchy. In 1972 the current monarch, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, succeeded his father to the throne. The 150-member National Assembly meets irregularly and in practice has little independent power. Every three years village headmen choose 100 National Assembly members, while 10 seats go to religious groups and the king appoints 40 seats.

By the mid-1980s the government, dominated by the minority, Tibetan-descended Ngalong Drukpa ethnic group, increasingly viewed the Nepali-speaking community (also known as Southern Bhutanese) as a threat to its absolute power. The regime introduced cultural restrictions in 1987, and in 1988, after a census showed Southern Bhutanese to be in the majority in five districts in the south, authorities began applying a discriminatory 1985 Citizenship Act to arbitrarily strip thousands of Southern Bhutanese of their citizenship.

The Citizenship Act confirmed the primary basis for citizenship to be residence in Bhutan in 1958, the year the kingdom extended citizenship to most Southern Bhutanese. But to prove citizenship, Southern Bhutanese now had to show a land tax receipt for 1958, which had been of little importance when issued three decades earlier. The Act also tightened requirements for transmitting citizenship to persons born after 1958.

Pro-democracy demonstrations that swept the south in 1990 (accompanied by some arson and violence), coming in the wake of the collapse of Eastern European Communism and of the absolute monarchy in Nepal, made the regime fearful it would lose absolute power. Between 1990-92 soldiers systematically raped and beat Southern Bhutanese villagers, forcibly expelled tens of thousands to India and ultimately southeastern Nepal and arrested thousands more as "anti-nationals." Officials forced many refugees to sign "voluntary migration forms" forfeiting their land and property. Bhutan claims it acted to avoid being swamped by illegal immigrants, but according to the Nepalese government 97 percent of the refugees possess proper identity cards or an alternate documentation of Bhutanese citizenship, such as tax receipts or health certificates.

In June 1994 dissidents from the country's third major ethnic group, the Sarchop community in eastern Bhutan, launched the multi-ethnic Druk National Congress (DNC) in exile to press for democratic reforms. Acting apparently at Bhutan's behest, Indian authorities arrested DNC leader Rongthong Kuenley Dorji in New Delhi in April 1997 under an Indian immigration law, although courts have thus far blocked Thimpu's extradition request. The Kuenley affair foreshadowed a broader crackdown in eastern Bhutan that began in July over alleged Sarchop support for the pro-democracy movement, and increased after the DNC organized non-violent pro-democracy demonstrations in October. By year's end police had arbitrarily arrested and in some cases tortured more than 100 monks, children and others. In September authorities reportedly closed 13 learning centers of the Nyingma school of Buddhism, which is outside the official Drukpa Kagyu sect.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Bhutanese citizens lack the democratic means to change their government. The king wields absolute power, and policy making is centered around the king and a small group

of largely interrelated Ngalong elites. The National Assembly is often a forum for diatribes against the Southern Bhutanese, who hold a disproportionately small number of seats. Despite Assembly rules mandating twice-yearly regular meetings, since 1988 the body has met irregularly. Political parties are *de facto* prohibited and none exists.

The rule of law is nonexistent. Between 1990-92 the army and police committed grave human rights violations against Southern Bhutanese, including arbitrary arrests, beatings, rape, destruction of homes, and robbery. Few if any of those responsible have been punished, resulting in a continued climate of impunity. The Royal Bhutan Army maintains a considerable presence in the south and continues to arbitrarily search homes, harass residents, and threaten and intimidate police and local officials. State-organized "village volunteer groups," armed robber gangs, and Assamese and Bodo militants from the northeast Indian state of Assam are also responsible for rights abuses in southern Bhutan.

The rudimentary judiciary is not independent. The King appoints and can dismiss judges, most of whom have little legal training. Several detainees and prisoners have reportedly died in custody in recent years due to torture and poor conditions. While the number of political prisoners is difficult to verify, in August the United Front Democracy, an umbrella exile group, reported that authorities are holding 149 prisoners arrested since 1990 for pro-democracy activities. South Asia's best known political prisoner, Tek Nath Rizal, was sentenced in November 1993 to life imprisonment under a 1992 National Security Act legislated three years after his imprisonment. In the spring of 1997 Rizal staged a hunger strike in an unsuccessful attempt to open a dialogue with the king.

Freedom of speech is restricted, and criticism of the king is not permitted, except indirectly during National Assembly discussions. The state-owned weekly *Kuensel*, Bhutan's only regular publication, is government-controlled and mainly offers pro-regime propaganda. Satellite dishes are banned. There is no freedom of association for political purposes, although some business and civic organizations are permitted.

The sixth Five Year Plan (1987-92) introduced a program of "One Nation, One People," that promoted *Driglam Namzha*, the national dress and customs of the ruling Ngalongs. A 1989 royal decree made *Driglam Namzha* mandatory for all Bhutanese, although enforcement is sporadic. The government also banned the Nepali language as a subject of instruction in schools.

Southern Bhutanese are required to obtain official "No Objection Certificates" to enter schools, take government jobs and sell farm products. In practice NOCs are frequently denied. Since 1990 the government has reduced social services in southern Bhutan. Anecdotal data from Bhutanese refugees with relatives in Bhutan suggest that large numbers of Southern Bhutanese children have no local schools to attend. For example, by one account there had been 19 schools in Chirang district prior to the 1990 demonstrations, while now only four remain open, largely serving the Ngalong community.

The Drukpa Kagyu sect of Mahayana Buddhism is the official state religion. Buddhist *lamas* (priests) wield fairly strong political influence. Many Southern Bhutanese are Hindus; due to persecution they lack the means to worship freely. Independent trade unions and strikes are not permitted. Villagers are often forced to contribute "voluntary" labor.

Bolivia

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 7,623,000
PPP: \$2,598
Life Expectancy: 60.1

Political Rights: 1*
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Free



Ethnic Groups: Quechua (30 percent), Aymara (25 percent), other Indian (15 percent), mestizo and other Indian (25-30 percent), European (5 percent)

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

Ratings Change: Bolivia's political rights rating changed from 2 to 1 due to a free and fair presidential election in June.

Overview: In 1997 Hugo Banzer Suarez, a former dictator who accepted defeat in a past democratic election in which he had won the largest share of the vote, was returned to power through democratic means.

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

As a result of recent reforms, Bolivian presidential terms run five years, and Congress consists of a 130-member House of Representatives and a 27-member Senate. The principal parties are Banzer's conservative National Democratic Action (ADN), its governing coalition partner, the social-democratic Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR), and the center-right National Revolutionary Movement (MNR). Banzer finished first in elections in 1985, but a parliamentary coalition instead selected octogenarian former President Victor Paz Estenssoro, the founder of the MNR. In 1989 the MIR's Jaime Paz Zamora, who had run third in the polls, became president through an alliance with the ADN.

In 1993, the MIR-ADN candidate was retired general Banzer, who came in second to the MNR's Gonzalo Sanchez de Losada, a planning minister in Paz Estenssoro's 1985-1989 administration. Victor Hugo Cardenas, an Aymara Indian, became vice president, the first indigenous person in Latin America to hold such a high office. Sanchez de Losada oversaw the massive privatization of Bolivia's state-owned enterprises and, under U.S. pressure, stepped up coca eradication. These measures were assailed by labor unions and coca growers. A series of labor strikes and mass protests in early 1995 were followed by the imposition by Sanchez de Losada of a six-month state of siege.

Throughout 1996, the government privatization program brought regular street protests. As Sanchez de Losada's term ended, a government otherwise hailed for initiatives such as improved access to the courts, efforts to reform a corrupt, inefficient judiciary and broad decentralization, was mired in increasingly bitter labor disputes.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens can change their government through elections. In 1997, Congressional elections were held under new legislation whereby more than half of the top vote getters represent a single constituency. The June 1 national elections were free and fair.

The constitution guarantees free expression, freedom of religion and the right to organize political parties, civic groups and labor unions. Unions have the right to strike. The languages of the indigenous population are officially recognized, but the 40 percent Spanish-speaking minority still dominates the political process. More than 520 indigenous communities have been granted legal recognition under the 1994 popular participation law, which guarantees respect for the integrity of native peoples.

In 1995, labor rights and many civil liberties were suspended during the six-month state of siege. Often violent labor unrest continued in 1996 and culminated in December 20, 1996 clashes between miners and police at a foreign-owned gold mine in Amayapampa, Potosi. Nine civilians and one senior police official were killed.

In early 1997, on the eve of a Congressional investigation into the events at Potosi, the president of the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights (APDH) was kidnapped and beaten by plainclothes police after having cast doubt on the Interior Ministry's version of the massacre. The abduction resulted in the sacking of the national chief of police and the arrest of eight officers, including two captains. A report by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission later established that the nine civilians killed were not violent protesters.

Bolivia is the world's second largest producer of cocaine, after Peru. Evidence abounds that drug money has been used to finance political campaigns and buy the assistance of government officials, including police and military personnel. Private security forces operate with relative impunity in the coca-growing regions.

A U.S.-sponsored coca-eradication program has angered peasant unions representing Bolivia's 50,000 coca farmers. Critics say that Law 1008, "The Law to Regulate Coca and Controlled Substances," passed in 1988 is excessively harsh and restricts suspects' constitutional rights and violates international norms and standards of due process. Government forces, particularly the troops of the Mobile Rural Patrol Unit (UMOPAR), continue to commit serious human rights abuses, including murder, arbitrary detentions and the suppression of peaceful demonstrations, during coca eradication efforts in the tropical lowland region of Chapare.

The judiciary, headed by the Supreme Court, remains the weakest branch of government. Like Bolivia's mayoral, customs and revenue offices, it is rife with corruption and manipulated by drug traffickers.

Government-sponsored as well as independent human rights organizations exist, and their reports show a continued rise in reports of police brutality, including torture. Activists and their families are subject to intimidation. Prison conditions are poor, and nearly three-quarters of prisoners remain without formal sentence.

The press, radio and television are mostly private. Journalists covering corruption stories are occasionally subject to verbal intimidation by government officials, arbitrary detention by police and violent attacks. In July 1997, a Santa Cruz court sentenced an investigative journalist to two and a half years in prison for his exposes on alleged white collar crime, an action that moved jurisdiction from press courts established by law to common courts.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy (transitional) **Political Rights:** 5
Civil Liberties: 5
Status: Partly Free

Economy: Mixed-statist (severely war-damaged)

Population: 3,588,000

PPP: na

Life Expectancy: na

Ethnic Groups: Pre-war—Slavic Muslim (44 percent), Serb (33 percent), Croat (17 percent)

Capital: Sarajevo



Overview:

In 1997, two years after the U.S.-brokered Dayton Agreement ended four years of war, Bosnia-Herzegovina consisted of two largely autonomous entities, the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska. Nationalist political parties ethnically cleansed areas. The 8,500 troops of the international stabilization force (SFOR) managed to keep the warring parties and their armies under supervision. However, the provisions of Dayton, which included the creation of joint Bosnian institutions, the repatriation of some 2 million displaced refugees and the exclusion from political life of suspected war criminals, remained largely unimplemented.

The national government elected in September 1996 functioned sporadically, with Serbs boycotting the collective presidency. Joint institutions involving the Serbs as well as the Muslims and Croats did not function. The Muslim-Croat Federation was continued to be plagued by internal mistrust, exemplified by the violent ethnic partition of Mostar by Croat authorities. Muslims, Serbs and Croats prevented (often violently) refugees from returning home, and only a few managed to go back to areas controlled by another ethnic group. In September 1997 the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) monitored local elections. Refugees were allowed to cast ballots for governments in their home areas, but in many cases—Srebrenica, Foca, Drvar, and others—duly elected local councils were denied power by the ruling ethnic authorities. In October, ten alleged Bosnian Croat war criminals surrendered to the international tribunal in the Hague. But, 51 of 57 accused Bosnian Serbs remained at large, including hard-line nationalist Radovan Karadzic, whose ruling Serb Democratic Party (SDS) was locked in a bitter dispute with the less extremist Republika Srpska President Biljana Plavsic over control of parliament following November 17 elections.

The international community, most notably Carlos Westendorp, the U.N.'s high international representative in Bosnia, expressed frustration with widespread corruption in the Muslim-Croat Federation, including diverting some \$30 million in aid and customs revenues to intelligence services and exclusively Muslim institutions. In December, Westendorp said: "The political-administrative map reflects the situation which existed at the end of the war and forms a favorable climate for the inter-ethnic conflict situation in which the war originated."

Bosnia-Herzegovina became one of six constituent republics of Yugoslavia in 1945. A 1992 referendum, boycotted by Serbs, favored secession. President Alija Izetbegovic declared independence on March 3. Serbian forces then initiated attacks and, by year's end, controlled over 70 percent of the country. Ethnic cleansing" had killed or displaced hundreds of thousands of Muslim, Croat and Serb civilians. The European Union-UN Vance-Owen plan calling for partition of Bosnia into ten autonomous provinces was widely criticized and never implemented. Over 20,000 UN peacekeepers failed to stop the fighting.

In 1994, a U.S.-brokered cease-fire between Bosnian Croats and Muslims led to a Muslim-Croat Federation. In 1995, Croatia recaptured West Slavonia and Krajina from Yugoslavia (Serbia). NATO launched air strikes on Bosnian Serb forces after a mortar attack on Sarajevo. Serb control was reduced from 70 to 50 percent of Bosnian territory, and Serb leaders agreed to a cease-fire. On 21 November, the presidents of Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia initialed the Dayton Accords, which were formally ratified in December. Key provisions included a united Sarajevo; internationally supervised elections; a constitution calling for loose federative state with semi-autonomous Muslim-Croatian (51 percent) and a Serb (49 percent) entities, a rotating presidency and the assignment of posts by nationality; UN-supervised disarmament; and the introduction of IFOR troops. Indicted war criminals, including Bosnian Serb President Karadzic and Gen. Ratko Mladic, would be barred from public office.

In September 1996, over 27,000 candidates and 47 parties registered for the national elections. Voters from the Muslim-Croat Federation and Republika Srpska approved a national government consisting of a collective presidency (one Muslim, one Croat, one Serb), and a House Representatives of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

As expected, Izetbegovic, Krajisnik and Zubak were elected to the three-member presidency; Izetbegovic, who received the most votes, became chairman of the presidency. Ethnic nationalists won most of the national assembly seats, and the Presidency of Republika Srpska went to Biljana Plavsic of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS), then a Karadzic ally.

The OSCE certified the elections as free and fair" despite objections from the SDA and some international NGOs that the preconditions set out in the Dayton accords were not met.

Key developments in 1997 included the ineffectiveness of the new national government, local elections in September and the rift between Republika Srpska President Plavsic and her predecessor, Karadzic, which included battles over control of the army, police and media. While a national government was constituted in January, disagreements along ethnic lines over procedures, the cabinet and power-sharing paralyzed central authorities. In June, Bosnia's parliament did manage to pass its first law, a "quick start package" to create a central bank, common currency, customs union and common external tariffs. By year's end, provisions had not been implemented, forcing Western governments in December to threaten to impose deadlines for laws dealing with privatization, citizenship, property rights, a common national flag, passport and car registration regulations.

Oft-postponed local elections were held on September 15 after threatened boycotts by Serbs and Croats were defused. By December it became clear that current authorities were refusing to yield authority throughout Bosnia. In Velika Kladusa, Muslim SDA authorities obstructed local council sessions, and local authorities re-

fused to accept the winners in Breko, Srebrenica Mostar and Drvar.

Tensions between Plavsic, based in Banja Luka, and Karadzic loyalists in Pale escalated. In early July, President Plavsic dissolved the SDS-dominated Serb parliament, accusing police of organizing criminal black market activities and usurping her authority. The president pledged to honor the Dayton agreement. In response, the SDS ousted her from the party. Splits developed in the police and army, and a struggle developed over control of the media.

New parliamentary elections were called for November 22 and 23. Amid charges of irregularities and fraud, the hard-line SDS won 24 of the 83 seats, down from 45 it held previously. Plavsic's newly formed Serbian People's League (SNS) won 15 seats, and a small party allied to the SNS took 2 seats. Muslim and Croatian parties captured 18 seats, and the Socialists took 9. At the first session of the new parliament on December 27, hard-liners rejected Plavsic's nominee for prime minister, Mladen Ivancic, an economics professor. They also barred direct television and radio coverage of the session and did not broadcast President Plavsic's speech. By year's end the stalemate had not been resolved.

In other key issues, a final decision of the disputed, strategically vital town of Breko was delayed for a year, allowing it to remain under Serb occupation.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Bosnia and its constituent entities can change their government democratically under a constitution provided in the Dayton Agreement. But the September 1996 elections failed to meet key preconditions such as freedom of movement and a free media. Political parties are allowed to organize; some 47 participated in the voting. Opposition parties complained of harassment by the three ethnic ruling parties. The September 1997 local elections included irregularities, particularly in voter registration lists, and voters—including refugees casting ballots for where they used to live—could not endow their representatives with de facto power as sitting authorities refused to implement election results. Hard-liners charged irregularities in the November elections for the parliament of Republika Srpska.

Radio-Television (RTV) of Bosnia-Herzegovina is controlled by the SDA and promotes party politics. The director of Croatian RTV Mostar is staunchly anti-Muslim and opposes reunification. In Republika Srpska, SFOR troops seized control of transmitters used by the Serbian RTV network, which controlled local television studios and radio stations, all of which used Serbian RTV newscasts and followed a pro-Serbian political agenda. SFOR cited RTV's political propaganda and distortions, anti-NATO broadcasts which compared SFOR to Nazis, and suggested that the war crimes tribunal in the Hague was anti-Serb. The fragmented information system allows national parties of the different entities to obstruct the free flow of information and propagate their nationalistic platforms. There are three putatively independent dailies in Sarajevo, though *Dnevni Avaz* is controlled by the SDA. In February, the offices of the independent Sarajevo magazine *Dani* were attacked. In December, President Izetbegovic lashed out at the independent press, attacking *Dani* as well as the magazines *Svijet* and *Slobodna Bosna*. He called the publications "traitors" and said they "spread information contrary to the interests of Bosnia-Herzegovina." He added that they were "financed by foreign sources." The following day, the religious leader of the Muslim community called for people to mobilize against media outlets that attack

"Muslim values."

Freedom of movement across entity boundaries remains restricted, and refugees who have attempted to return to previous homes have been attacked. In February, Croat police were responsible for shooting Muslims in the Croat-held part of Mostar. Croats evicted some 100 Muslims from their homes, hours after firing on 200 Muslims visiting a cemetery. Repatriation remains an unresolved major issue. Cultural segregation is being enforced in other ways. The Education Ministry ordered that students in the Muslim-Croat Federation must declare themselves according to ethnicity and be segregated, even in the same school building, with Muslim and Croat students given different lectures and curricula.

Muslims, Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs practice their religions in areas they control. Mosques, churches and cemeteries were intentionally targeted in war zones.

The rupture of the federal state led to the fragmenting of a functioning national judiciary, which has yet to be rebuilt. Croats and Serbs have established local court systems in areas they control. In December, Bosnian authorities arrested 19 persons suspected in carrying out terrorist attacks, armed robbery and murders. The government has also vowed to move against Islamic fundamentalists from other nations who have settled in Bosnia and have carried on campaigns against Croats and other non-Muslims.

Trade unions exist, but their functions have been limited by economic and social dislocation. Women bore a terrible burden during the war, victimized by rape, poverty and dislocation, particularly in rural areas. The Bosnian government guarantees equal rights for women in education and employment.

Botswana

Polity: Parliamentary democracy and traditional chiefs

Economy: Capitalist

Population: 1,531,000

PPP: \$5,367

Life Expectancy: 52.3

Ethnic Groups: Tswana and Baswana (95 percent), Kalanga, Kgagaladi, European

Capital: Gaborone

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Overview:

Botswana's people overwhelmingly approved an October referendum to constitutionally mandate an independent election commission and lower the voting age to eighteen. A proposal to limit the president to two five year terms was withdrawn at the last moment by the president's office. Demands for direct presidential elections were rejected by the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), and the country's leader will continue to be appointed by the majority party in the National Assembly, whose current term expires in October 1998. A vigorous campaign by media and human rights groups pressured the government to at least temporarily shelve a proposed media council which opponents argued could suppress free expression. Instances of police brutality continued to mar a generally good human rights record, as did efforts to forcibly relocate indigenous Baswana, or N/oakwe ("red people"), from traditional lands, to make way for game parks and cattle ranching.

Botswana is notable as Africa's oldest continuous multi-party democracy. Elected governments have ruled the country for 31 years since it gained independence from Britain in 1966. Botswana has served as an example of democratic stability during decades of strife in southern Africa. However, it is today building up its armed forces with attack jets and heavy tanks. The purchases, which consume scarce resources sorely needed for development, may be connected to riparian-related territorial disputes with neighboring Namibia.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Botswana's citizens choose their government through open legislative elections that international observers consider free and fair. The national assembly elects the president to serve a concurrent term. Election conduct has improved markedly, and the creation of a new Independent Election Commission in 1996 may allay accusations that the BDP—in power since independence—has manipulated the electoral process. The opposition Botswana National Front (BNF) won 13 of 35 seats contested in October 1994 national assembly elections, indicating a more open system is taking root. Botswana's human rights record is one of Africa's best. While a strong bill of rights is respected by the government, a number of potentially repressive laws regarding sedition, and detention without trial (under the National Security Act) are still in force. These statutes have rarely been invoked, but remain on the books as a threat to

freedom of expression and political activity. Another law, which bars "uttering words with intent to bring into ridicule the president of Botswana," is being used to prosecute a man who said President Ketumile Masire "sometimes changes into a Zombie." The independent Botswana Human Right Centre has expressed fears that the charges might create a precedent to restrict free expression.

Political discussion is unobstructed, although the opposition or government critics have little access to the Government-controlled broadcast media that is crucial to reaching rural areas. Free and vigorous print media circulate in cities and towns. In May, the government's introduction of a draft Mass Media Communications Draft Bill sparked local and international protest. The bill proposed a broadcasting board, a state newspaper registration system, accreditation procedures and a legislated press council. Each would be appointed and controlled by the Ministry of Information, which is under the authority of the President's Office. After meeting with local and regional media groups, the government has for now deferred the legislation.

Trials are generally held in public, and the government provides a public defender in the most serious cases. Most minor crimes and disputes are handled through traditional community courts, the quality of which can vary tremendously and whose decisions can be appealed to civil courts.

Widespread discrimination and abuse of the country's indigenous Baswara, or N/oakwe ("red people"), generally known as "Bushmen," is receiving increasing attention. Government relocation schemes reportedly include forcible evictions of Baswara from their traditional lands. Only a few thousand still live traditional nomadic lives in the central Kalahari desert. About 45,000 others have been resettled in villages or work as farm laborers, often under difficult conditions. Baswara activists are demanding land rights and permission to hunt on traditional lands, many of which are now game preserves. Critics claim the Baswara are not informed of their rights under Botswana law or of compensation they are entitled to receive. In September, the human rights group "The First People of the Kalahari," reported that hundreds of Bushmen had been evicted from their lands in mid-1997 and moved to arid villages outside the Central Kalahari Game Reserve in a renewed wave of forced relocations.

Married women must receive their husbands' permission to receive a bank loan, and women face discrimination in employment and education, especially in rural areas. Less than one tenth of National Assembly members are women, and there are only two women in the cabinet. Non-governmental groups have protested against official inaction in instances of domestic violence asserting in July that assault against women by their partners is "occurring in staggering numbers... and a recurring theme is failure of police to investigate and bring criminal charges as justice requires."

Independent unions are permitted, but workers' rights to strike and to bargain for wages are restricted and concentration of economic power has hindered labor organizing. Reports of official corruption persist, but there is a general trend to more openness in governance. A 1996 law requires the president, members of the cabinet and parliamentarians to declare their assets.

Brazil

Polity: Federal presidential-legislative democracy

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 160,523,000

PPP: \$5,362

Life Expectancy: 66.4

Ethnic Groups: European (53 percent), black mixed (46 percent), Indian (less than 1 percent)

Capital: Brasilia

Ratings Change: Brazil's political rights rating changed from 2 to 3 due to increased violence and governmental oppression of the Indian population.

Political Rights: 3*

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Overview:

After gaining independence from Portugal in 1822, Brazil retained a monarchical system until a republic was established in 1889. Democratic rule has been interrupted by long periods of authoritarian rule, most recently under military regimes from 1964 to 1985.

Elected civilian rule was reestablished in 1985, and a new constitution was implemented in 1988. It provides for a president elected for four years, a bicameral Congress consisting of an 81-member Senate elected for eight years and a 503-member Chamber of Deputies elected for four years.

Civilian rule has been marked by corruption scandals, one of which led to the impeachment by Congress of President Fernando Collor de Mello (1989-92). Collor resigned and was replaced by a weak, ineffectual government led by his vice president, Itamar Franco.

In early 1994, Luis Ignacio "Lula" de Silva, the leader of the leftist Workers' Party (PT) was the front-runner in a field of eight presidential candidates. Cardoso, Franco's finance minister and a market-oriented centrist, forged a three-party, center-right coalition around his own Social Democratic Party (PSDB). As his anti-inflation plan went into effect in July, bringing the rate from 50 percent to two percent in a few months, Cardoso, backed by big media and big business, jumped into the lead. In October 1994 Cardoso won the presidency with 54 percent of the vote, against 27 percent for Lula. The Senate was divided among 11 parties and the Chamber of Deputies among 18. Cardoso's coalition did not have a majority in either house.

Cardoso spent 1995 cajoling and horse-trading for the congressional votes needed to carry out his economic liberalization program. In the fall his government was rocked by a bribery and phone-tapping scandal. There were a number of high-level resignations. In April 1996, Cardoso indicated that he favored a constitutional amendment to drop the one-term limit, allowing him to run for re-election in 1998.

In 1996, land issues were high on the political agenda. In January Cardoso announced presidential decree 1775, which allows states, municipalities and non-Indians to challenge, at the federal level, proposed demarcation of Indian lands. Following the decree, miners and loggers increased their encroachments on Indian land. In another development, the Landless Workers Movement, representing landless peas-

ants, continued to occupy mostly fallow land in rural areas to pressure the government to settle rural families. The activism contributed to scores of violent conflicts between peasants and the military, police and private security forces, which act with virtual impunity.

Parliament remains dominated by the Executive Branch. Professional staff capabilities are not used by members of Congress. In 1997, Cardoso was able to secure Congressional approval for a constitutional amendment that allows him to stand for reelection. Concern has also been expressed about his use of "provisional measures" (decrees) in order to bypass Congress. Land seizures and rural violence continued. Strikes by police in several states led to clashes with army troops. Police violence, particularly against shantytown residents and rural protesters, became the focus of increasing concern.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens can change governments through elections. The 1994 elections were relatively free, but there were irregularities in northeastern states and in Rio de Janeiro. Candidate Cardoso appeared to benefit from government support.

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion and expression and the right to organize political and civic organizations. Cardoso is credited with initiating a sea-change in attitudes concerning international criticism on rights issues, from postures of aggressive nationalistic rejection to dialogue and openness. He created a ministerial rank secretariat charged with defending human rights. The crime of torture was upgraded from a misdemeanor to a serious crime punishable by up to 16 years in prison. He has also proposed making all rights violations federal crimes, thus moving their investigation from the jurisdiction of state civil and military police forces. In an attempt to roll back the current climate of police impunity, Cardoso has pledged to put federal judges in charge of cases involving allegations of military police brutality, taking them out of the jurisdiction of military tribunals.

However, a national breakdown in police discipline—in 1997 there were police strikes and demonstrations in almost half of Brazil's 27 states—and escalating criminal violence—fueled by a burgeoning drug trade and increasing ties to Italian and other foreign criminal organizations—have created a climate of lawlessness and insecurity. Human rights, particularly those of socially marginalized groups, are violated with impunity on a massive scale.

Brazil's police are among the world's most violent and corrupt. Grossly underpaid in the lower ranks their work conditions are poor. Extrajudicial killings are unusually disguised as shootouts with dangerous criminals. Torture is routine, particularly against poor, criminal suspects, and is practiced by the federal police as well as the state civil and military police. Military policemen in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro have been caught on videotape attacking people on the street, extorting money and opening fire on—and killing—motorists during routine operations. In Rio de Janeiro, state civil police sold weapons to drug-trafficking gangs that control many of the city's hillside shantytowns. In many cities "death squads," often composed of off-duty state police, terrorize shantytown dwellers and intimidate human rights activists attempting to investigate abuses. Opinion polls in Sao Paulo showed 42 percent of those interviewed had either experienced police violence or had a relative who had, and fully 70 percent of city residents were terrified of the military police.

Upon assuming office in May 1995, Rio de Janeiro's security chief, Nilton Cerqueira, a retired army general, purged hundreds of corrupt officers but also promoted a system of rewards and promotion for conspicuous bravery and the capture of suspected criminals "dead or alive." Human Rights Watch/Americas has scored this virtual bounty system and points to a more than six-fold increase in killings by the military police after the "Far West" rewards system was created.

The climate of lawlessness is reinforced by a weak judiciary. Brazil's Supreme Court is granted substantial autonomy by the constitution. However, the judicial system is overwhelmed (with only 7,000 judges for a population of more than 150 million), and vulnerable to the chronic corruption that undermines the entire political system. It has been virtually powerless in the face of organized crime.

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. Public distrust of the judiciary has resulted in poor citizens taking the law into their own hands, with hundreds of reported lynchings and mob executions.

Brazil has one of the most concentrated land distribution patterns in the world. Large landowners control nearly 60 percent of arable land, while the poorest 30 percent share less than two percent. In rural areas, violence caused by land disputes continues unabated. For several years innumerable invasions of "unproductive" land has been organized to rural activists to draw attention to the landless question. Peasants and land activists are killed by gunmen hired by local landowners, with the acquiescence of local authorities. In recent years, a disturbing trend has emerged in which fabricated criminal charges—ranging from "forming criminal gangs" to murder—have been used to harass and detain land reform activists. Thousands of workers are forced by ranchers in rural areas to work against their will, and have no recourse to courts.

Violence against Brazil's 250,000 Indians is surging. In Brasilia, an Amazonian Indian chief returning from a land rights protest was attacked and burnt alive by a group of middle-class youths, two of them sons of judges—as a lark, they readily confessed. The 1988 constitution guarantees indigenous peoples land rights covering some 11 percent of the country, and by law outsiders can only enter Indian reserves with permission. Decree 1775 has opened Indian land to greater pressure from predatory miners and loggers. A government decision to reduce and fragment the key Raposa-Serra do Sol area in Roraima state was seen as a pay off to special interests in Congress for their support for Cardoso's reelection gambit, despite its implications for Indian lands generally. Cardoso also slashed the budget of the agency responsible for demarcating Indian lands.

Violence against women and children is a common problem. Protective laws are rarely enforced. In 1991 the Supreme Court ruled that a man could no longer kill his wife and win acquittal on the ground of "legitimate defense of honor," but juries tend to ignore the ruling. Forced prostitution of children is widespread. Child labor is prevalent, and laws against it are rarely enforced. A recent UNICEF study reported that 53 percent of the 17.5 million children and young people forced to work in Latin America are in Brazil, and of these 1,000,000 are under 10 years old. A report from the state juvenile court in Rio de Janeiro claims that, on average, three street children are killed every day in Rio, many by police at the request of local merchants. In 1997, the civil code was changed to give wives the same legal power as their husbands.

Industrial labor unions are well-organized, politically connected and many are corrupt. The right to strike is recognized and there are special labor courts. Hundreds of strikes have taken place in recent years against attempts to privatize state industries.

The press is privately owned. The print media have played a central role in exposing official corruption.

Brunei

Polity: Traditional
monarchy

Economy: Capitalist-statist
Population: 304,000

PPP: \$30,447

Life Expectancy: 74.9

Ethnic Groups: Malay (64 percent), Chinese (20 percent),
others (15 percent)

Capital: Bandar Seri Begawan

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Overview:

In 1997, the year marking the sultan's third decade of absolute power, Brunei rode out the currency crisis that roiled regional economies.

Consisting of two non-contiguous enclaves on the northern coast of Borneo, Brunei became a British protectorate in 1888. The 1959 constitution provided for five advisory councils: the Privy Council, the Religious Council, the Council of Succession, the Council of Ministers, and a Legislative Council. In 1962 the leftist Brunei People's Party (PRB) won all ten elected seats in the 21-member Legislative Council; late in the year British troops crushed a PRB-backed rebellion seeking an independent state encompassing nearby British territories. The sultan assumed constitutionally-authorized emergency powers for a stipulated two-year period. These powers have since been renewed every two years, and elections have not been held since 1965. Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ascended the throne in October 1967, and in 1970 began ruling primarily through decree.

Brunei achieved independence in 1984. Currently only the Council of Ministers, stacked with the sultan's relatives, and an appointed Legislative Council convene. In 1985 the government recognized the moderate Brunei National Democratic Party (PKDB), followed a year later by the offshoot Brunei National Solidarity Party (PPKB). In 1988 the sultan dissolved the PKDB and detained two of its leaders for two years, reportedly after the party called for elections.

Oil exports have given Brunei a per capita GDP rivaling many Western countries. However, reserves are dwindling, and in 1989 the sultan imposed a fiscal austerity program and began measures to diversify the economy. Since 1991, the sultan has asserted local culture and the primacy of the monarchy as the defender of Islam through a conservative Malay Muslim Monarchy (MIB) ideology, apparently to ward off any incipient calls for democratization. In February 1995 the authorities permitted a PPKB general assembly which elected Abdul Latief Chuchu, one of the two ex-PKDB lead-

ers detained from 1988-90, as party president. Chuchu resigned that May under government pressure, and since then the PPKB has been inactive.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Brunei, a hereditary sultanate, lack the democratic means to change their government. The sultan serves as prime minister, rules by decree and, along with an inner circle of relatives, holds absolute power. Since 1970 the Legislative Council has been fully appointed and the constitution partially suspended. Limited means for citizens to express concerns do exist. Since 1992 village chiefs have been chosen for life terms through local elections in which all candidates must have a knowledge of Islam (although they may be non-Muslims) and cannot have past or current links with a political party. The chiefs communicate with the government through a village consultative council, although the sultan appoints the council's advisors. Citizens can also petition the sultan.

Police have broad powers of arrest without warrants, although in practice generally obtain a warrant from a magistrate. The Internal Security Act (ISA) allows authorities to detain suspects without trial for renewable two-year periods. The ISA has occasionally been used to detain political dissidents, and according to the government is being used to detain one or two leaders of the 1962 rebellion who refuse to renounce violence.

The judiciary is independent. A 1996 appellate-level decision formally established the courts' power to discharge and acquit a defendant even if not requested by a prosecutor. Defendants enjoy adequate procedural safeguards, and in civil cases there is a right of appeal to the Privy Council in London. The sole privately-owned newspaper practices self-censorship on political and religious issues. The state-owned Radio Television Brunei operates the only local broadcast media, and its services are uncritically pro-government. A cable network offers international programming.

Islam is the official religion, and non-Muslims face bans or restrictions on building or repairing places of worship; importing religious books or educational materials; and providing religious education in non-Muslim schools, while Islamic studies and MIB must be taught at all schools. Most ethnic Chinese were not granted citizenship at independence, and the rigorous Malay-language citizenship test makes naturalization difficult. Women face discrimination in divorce and inheritance matters, which are handled under the *Shari'a* (Islamic law), and in practice are excluded from the senior civil service. Muslim women are strongly encouraged to wear the *tudong*, a traditional head covering, although there is no sanction against those who do not. Foreign servants are occasionally beaten or otherwise treated poorly.

Three independent trade unions exist, all in the oil sector, but they cover just five percent of the sector's workforce and have little influence. The constitution neither explicitly recognizes nor denies the right to strike, and in practice strikes do not occur.

Bulgaria

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
Economy: Mixed statist transitional
Political Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Free

Population: 8,380,000

PPP: \$4,533 .

Life Expectancy: 71.1

Ethnic Groups: Bulgarian (86 percent), Turkish (9 percent), Roma (4 percent), Macedonian

Capital: Sofia

Trend Arrow: Bulgaria receives an upward trend arrow due to free and fair elections which led to a reform-minded government.



Overview:

Nineteen ninety-seven opened with mass demonstrations against the ruling Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). The opposition called for early parliamentary elections in the wake of the November 1996 election of President Petar Stoyanov of the opposition Union of Democratic Forces (UDF). Stoyanov's election precipitated the December 1996 resignation of Prime Minister Zhan Videnov, widely blamed for mismanaging the economy. On January 8, the BSP nominated Nikolai Dobrev, the hard-line interior minister, to form a government, triggering 30 days of unrest and a political stalemate.

Bulgaria was occupied by Ottoman Turks from 1396 to 1878. It did not achieve complete independence until 1908. Communists seized power in conjunction with the "liberation" of Bulgaria by the Soviet Red Army in 1944. From 1954-1989, the country was ruled by Communist Party leader Todor Zhivkov, who resigned after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989.

December 1994 parliamentary elections saw the former-Communist BSP win a clear majority with 125 seats; the fragmented UDF, 69; the Popular Union, 18; the Turkish-based Movement for Rights and Freedom (MRF), 15; and the pro-market Bulgarian Business Block, 13.

Thirteen candidates competed in the 1996 presidential vote. In the first round on October 29, Stoyanov and his running mate, Todor Kavaldzhiev, got 44 percent of the vote, with Marazov and Deputy Foreign Minister Irina Bokova getting 26.9 percent. In the November 3 run-off, Stoyanov won, 59.9 percent to 40 percent. Just prior to the October presidential vote, several leading BSP leaders asked for Videnov's resignation at a BSP plenary session. Some reformers in the BSP did not rule out splitting from the party and supporting early elections (parliamentary elections were not due until 1998). Videnov resigned on December 21.

On January 13, pressured by mounting street protests and the threat of strikes, the BSP tentatively agreed to early elections, but with an interim Socialist government. Under the constitution, Stoyanov was obliged to give the Socialists a mandate following the resignation of a previous Socialist prime minister. Ignoring the president's call for surrendering his mandate to stave off escalating civil strife, prime minister-designate Dobrev pledged to form a government. UDF leader Ivan Kostov opposed the move, saying dire economic conditions and the demands of international lending

institutions required a stable government with a clear mandate.

By early February, protests and public transport strikes paralyzed the country. On February 5, the BSP gave in to demonstrators and agreed to give up its mandate and called a parliamentary election for April 19. President Stoyanov named Stefan Sofianski, the popular mayor of Sofia, to serve as caretaker prime minister.

The elections in April, labeled free and fair by international observers, saw the UDF and its allied factions win 52 percent of the vote and 137 of 240 seats; the Socialists captured 58 seats; the Turkish-based MRF, 15; the Euroleft, 14; and the Bulgarian Business Bloc, 12. UDF leader Kostov became prime minister.

Under the UDF, rights and liberties began to improve. In May, the new parliament adopted a seven-point National Salvation Declaration outlining the government's priorities: carrying out reforms in line with IMF recommendations; making provision for the social cost of reform; fighting organized crime; opening secret police files on public figures; returning land to pre-Communist owners; and membership in NATO and the EU. In late June, parliament approved a tough budget and launched a currency board monetary system aimed at restoring stability and encouraging foreign investment. The value of the lev was fixed at 1,000 to the D-Mark and the central bank was banned from printing money not backed by an equivalent amount in foreign reserves. Some major industrial enterprises were put up for sale. The government also launched several assaults on racketeering groups, as well as corruption among other officials.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Bulgarians can change their government democratically. The 1997 parliamentary elections and 1996 presidential vote were free and fair. The constitution establishes a multiparty democracy, and there are over 160 parties, though many of them are inactive.

In July 1996, parliament passed a controversial law on electronic media, which was vetoed by then-president Zjelyu Zhelev and sent to the Constitutional Court for review in September. Parts of the law would have allowed the parliamentary majority to exercise absolute control over the state media and would enable it to restrict the operation of the private media. The law would be implemented by the National Radio and Television Council. In November 1996, the Constitutional Court invalidated 15 provisions of the law. A new media law has yet to be adopted. Articles on the penal code call for prison sentences for journalists guilty of libel, defamation or slander, and journalists continued to face harassment and intimidation. During the mass demonstrations in early 1997, journalists covering the protests were beaten by police. All print media are in private hands, there are three private national TV broadcasters, and more than 60 private radio stations. Bulgaria's severe economic crisis had a serious impact on newspapers. The two largest papers, *Trud* and *24 Chas* were bought by a large German publishing group, which now controls 70 to 80 percent of the daily market. Regional and local papers faced soaring newsprint and other costs coupled with the loss of circulation and advertising.

There is free public discussion, and no significant restrictions of freedoms of association and assembly. Freedom of worship is generally respected, although the government regulates churches and religious institutions through the Directorate of Religious Beliefs. A 1994 law on registration led to 39 mostly Protestant associations losing their status as "juridical entities," thus barring them from re-registration.

Under the constitution, the judiciary is guaranteed independence and equal status

with the legislature and executive branch. Judges and prosecutors have discriminated on the basis of ethnicity in criminal procedures involving Gypsies (Roma), and a serious backlog of cases has led to prolonged detention for many prisoners. In July, several articles were added to the penal code specifically to fight corruption and organized crime.

Bulgaria has two large labor union confederations, the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (KNSB), a successor to the Communist-era union, and Podkrepa, an independent federation founded in 1989. The Promyana Trade Union Association is a smaller group. Workers and unions were an active part of the anti-government protests in early 1997, and there were several strikes throughout the year, including stoppages by shipyard workers, miners and arms industry workers.

Women have the opportunity to participate in political and economic decision-making and women are well represented in administrative and managerial positions.

Burkina Faso

Polity: Dominant party **Political Rights:** 5

Economy: Mixed statist **Civil Liberties:** 4

Population: 10,623,000 **Status:** Partly Free

PPP: \$796

Life Expectancy: 46.4

Ethnic Groups: Mossi, Gurunsi, Senufo, Lobi, Bobo, Mande, Fulani

Capital: Ouagadougou



Overview:

President Blaise Compaoré and his ruling Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP) increased their dominance over Burkina Faso's political life with a sweeping victory in May legislative elections that opposition parties and independent observers said were marked by serious irregularities. State patronage boosted ruling party fortunes and the CDP took 101 of 111 national assembly seats. Opposition disunity and discriminatory electoral rules diminished the impact of the opposition's 31 percent vote total in terms of parliamentary representation, leaving those outside the CDP with little voice in policy debates. Harsh government reaction to student and labor strikes further polarized the political scene as President Compaoré made preparations for his 1998 re-election bid.

Allegations of corruption and Compaoré's lavish lifestyle in one of Africa's poorer countries have increased popular resentment of the CDP government. Its human rights record has been mixed. Security forces have enjoyed apparent impunity for even serious abuses, while a vibrant civil society and independent media have flourished, with only occasional government interference.

Burkina Faso suffered a succession of army coups after the country received independence from France in 1960. In 1987 Compaoré installed himself as president at gunpoint, putting an end to internecine strife within a junta that had seized power in 1983. Populist, charismatic President Thomas Sankara and thirteen of his closest associates were murdered. More Sankara supporters were executed two years later.

The Compaoré regime introduced multiparty structures in a new 1991 constitu-

tion. December 1991 presidential polls were marred by widespread violence and an opposition boycott. Only about 25 percent of registered voters cast ballots, and Compaoré was declared victor of the non-contest with a reported 85 percent of the vote. May 1992 legislative polls also drew a small turnout, despite opposition participation, and Compaoré's party took 79 of 107 seats in the Assembly of People's Deputies. Municipal elections in February 1995 were judged free and fair by international observers, but weak and divided opposition parties made a poor showing. However, decentralization has brought greater power to local councils.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

The right to freely elect their government through periodic multiparty elections, guaranteed Burkina Faso's people by the 1991 constitution, has not yet been realized in practice. Serious irregularities, considerable violence and an opposition boycott marked the 1991 presidential polls. Opposition parties contested the May 1997 legislative elections but complained of fraud and heavy use of state resources to promote the ruling party. President Compaoré effectively wields nearly all power with the ruling CDP, whose leadership is drawn from military juntas that ruled the country from 1983-91. Few of the roughly 60 other political parties have any meaningful influence. The Alliance for Democracy and Federation (ADF) party holds two parliamentary seats, and its leader, Herman Yaméogo, may run for president in 1998.

Media highly critical of the government are part of wide public debate. Several private radio stations, a private television station and numerous independent newspapers and magazines function with little governmental interference. An exception was the February assault on Moustapha Tambiano, owner of *Horizon-FM*, the country's first independent radio station, the banning of two of its talk shows in March, and its exclusion from a government subsidy scheme. The actions are warning that the widening of democratic space over the past several years is not fully consolidated, and may provoke self-censorship in other media outlets.

Freedom of assembly is constitutionally-protected and generally respected, with required permits usually issued as a matter of routine. The Burkinabé Movement for Human Rights and Peoples (MBDHP) and several other human rights-oriented groups are among many non-governmental organizations operating openly and freely. MBDHP reports have detailed allegations of abuses by security forces. Burkina Faso is a secular state and religious freedom is respected.

The Burkinabé judiciary is considered generally independent in matters of civil and criminal law but political cases are much more susceptible to government influence. A lack of resources and training also inhibits proper administration of justice. Police routinely ignore legal limits on detention, search and seizure and national security laws permit broad special powers of warrantless arrest and surveillance. Prison conditions are harsh, and overcrowding, poor diets and scant medial attention renders them life-threatening.

Legal and constitutional protections for women's rights are lacking. Customary law that discriminates against women is often evoked by traditional courts to resolve civil and family disputes, especially in rural areas. Women's educational and wage employment opportunities are very limited in the countryside and women hold few better-paying positions in the formal sector. Few women serve in parliament or senior government posts. Female genital mutilation is still common, despite its criminalization

and a government campaign against the practice.

Burkina Faso's labor unions are a strong force in society. Other than employees in essential services, workers enjoy a broad range of legal protections for labor rights, including the right to strike. Several labor confederations and independent unions bargain with employers and conduct various job actions. The government sought to crush a strike by health workers in June by dismissing strike leaders, but the threat of a general strike forced it to back down.

Economic growth may top five percent in 1998, unless harvests are seriously affected by poor rains. New mining investment and privatization of state firms is part of broader economic liberalization. Perceptions of widespread governmental corruption persist, however, and the effects of economic growth are yet to reach the lower economic strata of Burkinabe society.

Burma (Myanmar)

Polity: Military **Political Rights:** 7
Economy: Mixed statist **Civil Liberties:** 7
Population: 45,976,000 **Status:** Not Free
PPP: \$1,051
Life Expectancy: 58.4
Ethnic Groups: Burmese (68 percent), Karen (7 percent),
Shan (9 percent), Rakhine (4 percent), others
Capital: Rangoon



Overview:

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) admitted Burma in July 1997, even as the military regime's widespread repression continued and its financial mismanagement had the economy reeling. Along the mountainous eastern frontier, the army committed atrocities and forcibly relocated tens of thousands of civilians during campaigns against ethnic-based rebel groups.

Following the Japanese occupation in World War II, Burma achieved independence from the British in 1948. The army overthrew an elected government in 1962 amidst an economic crisis and threats from ethnic rebel groups.

During the next 26 years General Ne Win's military rule impoverished what had been one of Southeast Asia's richest countries. In September 1988 the army cracked down on massive, peaceful pro-democracy demonstrations that had swept Burma, killing an estimated 3,000 people. Army leaders General Saw Maung and Brigadier General Khin Nyunt created the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to rule the country.

At the first free elections in three decades in May 1990 the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) won 392 of the 485 parliamentary seats. The SLORC refused to cede power and jailed hundreds of NLD members. In 1992 the SLORC carried out superficial liberalizations, including replacing hardliner Saw Maung with General Than Shwe as prime minister and junta leader. But in 1993 the limits of the reforms became apparent as a sham constitutional convention drafted guidelines

granting the military 25 percent of seats in a future parliament, and formalizing its leading role in politics. The convention has met sporadically since then.

The SLORC released Aung San Suu Kyi, the NLD leader and the country's pre-eminent pro-democracy campaigner, in July 1995 after six years of house arrest. The generals have rejected the 1992 Nobel Laureate's calls for a dialogue on a democratic transition and have kept her under effective house arrest. In December students calling for increased civil liberties and an independent students' union held the largest protests since the 1988 demonstrations. The authorities dispersed the students, closed universities, and detained scores of people.

In March 1997 Buddhist monks attacked Muslim mosques and properties in Mandalay, Rangoon and a string of central Burmese towns. The authorities attributed the unrest to a sexual harassment incident in Mandalay. However, observers suggested that the SLORC instigated the tensions to deflect the Buddhist clergy's anger over tightened control over religious affairs and the continued imprisonment of monks arrested in 1988.

Soldiers detained more than 300 NLD supporters trying to attend a May party congress, but allowed 800 members to participate in the September event. On November 15 the SLORC reconstituted itself as the State Peace and Development Council in a move that consolidated the power of the top four generals and suggested a long-term role for the junta.

The ethnic minorities that comprise more than one-third of Burma's population have been fighting for autonomy from the Burman-dominated central government since the late 1940s. Since 1989 the SLORC has co-opted 15 ethnic rebel armies with cease-fire deals that allow them to maintain their weapons and territory. Many turned to drug trafficking and have helped make Burma the world's largest heroin exporter.

A mid-January 1997 meeting along the Thai border of around 12 ethnic minority groups, including four that have signed cease-fire deals, rejected the regime's continuing attempts to draft a new constitution. During a February-March offensive in Karen state and Tenasserim Division, the Burmese army overran the military headquarters of the Karen National Union (KNU), the largest active insurgent group, at Hitikapler near the Thai border. Soldiers looted, torched and shelled villages and raped women, driving some 20,000 refugees into Thailand. In the winter and spring the SLORC-backed Democratic Karen Buddhist Army and regular Burmese troops attacked Karen refugee camps inside Thailand.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Burma is effectively a garrison state ruled by one of the most repressive military regimes in the world. The junta controls the judiciary, and the rule of law is nonexistent. The SLORC has imprisoned or driven into exile most of its vocal opponents; severely restricted freedoms of speech, press, association and other fundamental rights; and used a tightly-controlled mass movement, the Union Solidarity Development Association, to monitor forced labor quotas, report on citizens and intimidate opponents.

The army is responsible for arbitrary beatings and killings of civilians; the use of civilians as porters and human minesweepers under brutal conditions, with soldiers sometimes killing weakened porters, or executing those who resist; summary executions of civilians who refuse to provide food or money to military units; arrests of civilians as alleged insurgents or insurgent sympathizers; and widespread incidents of

rape.

These gross violations of human rights are particularly prevalent during counterinsurgency operations against ethnic rebel groups, which have driven more than 100,000 mainly Karen, Karenni, Shan and Mon refugees into Thailand. Fighting has internally displaced thousands of others. The Burmese army forcibly relocates villagers as part of its military strategy. According to a Shan human rights group, in 1996 the army forcibly relocated more than 100,000 Shans from 600 villages. The army also committed extrajudicial executions, rape and other atrocities during military operations in 1996 that severely weakened the Karenni National Progressive Party army in Karenni state. Near the western border, ethnic Chin communities face forced labor and other abuses, and many Chin towns are under strict curfew.

Since 1994 the majority of the 250,000 Muslim Rohingya refugees, who fled to Bangladesh in 1991-92 to escape extrajudicial executions, rape, religious persecution and other abuses in northern Arakan state, have returned to Burma under a drawn-out repatriation program. Yet the Rohingyas have not received increased protection, and in 1996 and 1997 thousands sought asylum in Bangladesh to escape forced labor, portering, arbitrary taxation and land confiscation and other hardships.

The Rohingya refugee issue occurs in the context of the xenophobic regime's broader persecution of the Muslim minority. A July 1997 Human Rights Watch/Asia report noted that the 1982 Citizenship Act was designed to deny citizenship to the Rohingyas, making them ineligible for basic social, educational and health services. During the SLORC's 1997 anti-KNU offensive soldiers leveled mosques and targeted Muslims for forcible expulsion in Karen state.

Throughout the country the junta uses forced labor for building roads, railways and other public works and military facilities. The laborers toil under harsh conditions, receive no compensation, and often must pay for their transportation, bring their own food and tools, and rent bulldozers.

There are credible reports that the army uses civilian porters and forced labor while protecting the construction of a foreign-financed pipeline that will transport offshore natural gas across Burma's southern peninsula to Thailand. The army also uses forced labor for roads and a railway line that will cross the pipeline. Hundreds of villagers have reportedly been forcibly relocated to make way for the pipeline.

The 1975 State Protection Law (as amended in 1992) permits detention without trial for up to five years. In recent years the SLORC has sentenced dozens of pro-democracy activists to lengthy prison terms for such offenses as distributing pamphlets and distributing, viewing or smuggling out videotapes of Suu Kyi's public addresses. In January courts used a 1950 emergency act to imprison at least 34 people over their role in December student demonstrations in Rangoon. In December authorities sentenced seven NLD members to lengthy prison terms after the government prevented planned meetings from taking place.

Outdoor gatherings of five or more people are prohibited. Since September 1996 the SLORC has largely barred Suu Kyi's weekly speeches to supporters near her compound. Decree 5/96 of 1996 authorizes the Home Ministry to ban any organization violating the law against public gatherings or obstructing the state-controlled constitutional convention. The broadly drawn decree provides for jail terms of 5-to-25 years for aiding activities "which adversely effect the national interest." In 1996 the government subjected unauthorized possession of a computer with Internet access, or trans-

mission of political or economic materials via the Internet, to lengthy jail terms. Prison conditions are abysmal and torture of both political prisoners and common criminals is routine.

The Directorate of Defense Services Intelligence arbitrarily searches homes, intercepts mail, and monitors telephone conversations. Universities are closely monitored. According to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, the regime's new high-tech information warfare center in Rangoon can intercept telephone, fax, e-mail and radio communications, leading to the sentencing of four prominent dissidents in August.

Thousands of Burmese women and girls, many from ethnic minority groups, have been trafficked across the Thai border by criminal gangs to work in brothels. The army forcibly recruits children and routinely uses child porters.

The SLORC closely monitors monasteries and interferes in Buddhist religious affairs. Many of the 300 monks arrested during a violent October 1990 crackdown on monasteries remain in detention. Reports in 1997 suggested that 16 monks have died during imprisonment.

Trade unions, collective bargaining and strikes are illegal. The army imposes arbitrary agricultural taxes and other levies on peasants. Official corruption is pervasive.

Burundi

Polity: Civilian-military **Political Rights:** 7
Economy: Statist **Civil Liberties:** 7
Population: 5,943,000 **Status:** Not Free
PPP: \$698
Life Expectancy: 43.5
Ethnic Groups: Hutu (85 percent), Tutsi (14 percent),
Twa (pygmy) (1 percent)
Capital: Bujumbura



Overview: Massive human rights violations continued to wrack Burundi as extremists of both the majority Hutu and minority Tutsi ethnic groups sought to block tentative moves towards a negotiated settlement to the country's civil war, which has claimed nearly 200,000 lives since 1993. Retired army Major Pierre Buyoya, who seized power for the second time in July 1996, has directed a savage military campaign against Hutu guerrillas. He is also threatened by Tutsi chauvinists who believe they should never share power with the Hutu, who comprise about 85 percent of the country's seven million people. Most Hutus have been driven from the capital, Bujumbura, and as many as 400,000 have been forced from their homes in the countryside to relocation camps where abysmal conditions include disease and malnutrition. Economic sanctions imposed in July 1996 by Burundi's neighbors aimed at forcing the country's Tutsi-dominated military to restore at least a power-sharing arrangement with Burundi's Hutu majority have been partially enforced. Regional peace talks set for August failed to materialize, but a Paris meeting between representatives of Buyoya's regime and the main armed Hutu opposition party, National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD) in late Septem-

ber renewed hopes for serious negotiations.

Belgium granted Burundi independence in 1962 under a system that left political and military power in the hands of the country's 15 percent Tutsi minority. Paroxysms of ethnic killings both by and against the country's ethnic Hutu majority have repeatedly torn the country since. In 1987, Major Buyoya mounted his first coup, deposing the unpopular President Jean-Baptiste Bagaza. In June 1992, the Tutsi-dominated Unity for National Progress (Uprona) party agreed to multiparty elections which were held one year later. Winning over 60% of the vote, Melchior Ndadaye, leading the Burundi Front for Democracy (Frodebu) defeated Major Buyoya to become the country's first Hutu president, also leading his party to a large victory.

President Ndadaye and several other senior officials were murdered by Tutsi soldiers in October 1993, ending Burundi's democratic experiment and sparking the civil war. In April 1994, Ndadaye's successor, Cyprien Ntaryamira, a Hutu, was killed along with Rwanda President Juvenal Habyarimana, also a Hutu, when their plane was shot down while approaching Kigali airport. The event marked the start of the anti-Tutsi genocide in Rwanda, and provoked intensified killings in Burundi: Hutu politician Sylvestre Ntibantunganya served as Burundi's new president under a power-sharing arrangement among the main political parties in October 1994 until his ouster by Major Buyoya in July 1996.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

In June 1993, Burundi citizens freely elected their president and legislative representatives to five year terms by secret ballot in the country's first open multiparty elections. The murders of Presidents Ndadaye and Ntaryamira eventually led to the formation of the coalition government overthrown by Major Buyoya in July 1996. The national assembly, banned after the coup, was nominally restored by Buyoya's September 1996 decree that allowed resumption of political activities. Resuming parliament has made little practical difference and the country remains effectively under military rule.

There are widespread reports of murder, rape and torture by both government and rebel forces. The conflict between the Tutsi-controlled regime and Hutu guerrillas is complicated by serious rifts within both communities over whether peace talks should even begin. Tutsi rivalries have been marked by arrests and restrictions on various faction leaders. Hutu guerrilla forces loyal to CNDD have battled in the countryside against Hutu People's Liberation Party (Palipehutu) fighters, leaving hundreds dead in intra-ethnic political violence.

Few newspapers except the official government organ appear regularly in Burundi's capital, Bujumbura, and most are little more than extremist propaganda sheets. Restrictions of publications permitted by a 1992 press law is rarely enforced, but journalists practice extensive self-censorship for fear of reprisals. Radio broadcasts are far more effective at reaching people, especially in the countryside. The European Union has operated a radio station that offers non-partisan programming that promotes peace and ethnic tolerance. Crude propaganda and incitements to violence are heard on clandestine stations run by Hutu radicals that broadcast sporadically.

Religious practice is not restricted. Formation of political parties or associations is permitted, although political activists may be subject to official arrest or attacks by death squads of various factions. The Burundi Human Rights Association (ITEKA),

like other NGOs, has extreme difficulty in operating under highly militarized and dangerous conditions. The judicial system is widely distrusted by the Hutu majority because of Tutsi predominance among court officials, and constitutional guarantees regarding arrest and detention are widely disregarded. There are at least 6,500 people, nearly all Hutu, detained without trial. In July, six men were hanged, the first official executions in Burundi since 1981, after being convicted of ethnic killings in trials which observers termed grossly unfair. About 130 more people have received death sentences.

Burundian women are affected by legal and customary discrimination. Women find it very difficult to find credit and may be dispossessed by inheritance laws. Their educational opportunities are far fewer than those for males, especially in the countryside, and even with laws providing for equal pay for equal work few women advance in the formal sector. Violence against women is reported, but only anecdotal accounts of its prevalence are available.

Workers may form unions under constitutional guarantees, and the right to strike is protected by the labor code. The sole labor confederation, the Organization of Free Unions of Burundi, has been independent since the rise of multipartyism in 1992. Most union members are civil servants and have bargained collectively with the government.

Cambodia

Polity: Monarchy, constituent assembly, and Khmer Rouge occupation

Economy: Statist

Population: 10,861,000

PPP: \$1,084

Life Expectancy: 52.4

Ethnic Groups: Khmer (90 percent), Vietnamese (5 percent), Chinese (1 percent)

Capital: Phnom Penh

Ratings Change: Cambodia's political rights rating changed from 6 to 7 due to Hun Sen's further consolidation of power through a violent coup in July.

Political Rights: 7*

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free



Overview:

Cambodian co-premier Hun Sen's violent coup in July 1997 punctuated a steady erosion in freedom since internationally supervised elections in 1993 created a brief democratic opening. Prospects for a fair vote in the May 1998 elections appeared bleak.

After achieving independence from France in 1953, Cambodia was ruled in succession by King Norodom Sihanouk, the U.S.-backed Lon Nol regime in the early 1970s, and the Maoist Khmer Rouge between 1975-1979, which caused as many as two million deaths through executions, overwork and starvation. Vietnam invaded in December 1978 and installed the Communist Khmer People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP).

Years of fighting between the KPRP government and the allied armies of Sihanouk, the Khmer Rouge and former premier Son Sann ended with a 1991 peace accord. In

the United Nations (U.N.)-run National Assembly elections in May 1993, the royalist opposition United Front for an Independent, Neutral, and Free Cambodia (FUNCINPEC), headed by Prince Norodom Ranariddh, a Sihanouk son, won 58 seats; Prime Minister Hun Sen's governing Cambodian People's Party (CPP), the successor to the KPRP, 51; Son Sann's Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party (BLDP), ten; and Moulinaka, a FUNCINPEC offshoot, one.

Despite the apparent success of the vote, the CCP had maintained effective power through control of 80 percent of the army, most key ministries and the provincial authorities. A brief CPP-backed secession attempt in seven eastern provinces convinced FUNCINPEC to enter into a coalition government in September, with Prince Ranariddh and Hun Sen as co-premiers.

As an increasingly authoritarian government carried out political violence and legal and physical attacks on the press, the country's weak civic institutions faltered. In October 1994 FUNCINPEC sacked reformist Finance Minister Sam Rainsy, who subsequently formed the opposition Khmer Nation Party (KNP). Meanwhile, Hun Sen steadily outmaneuvered Ranariddh for control of the government. By 1996 power struggles had paralyzed the coalition, and led the two premiers to separately recruit defectors from the splintering Khmer Rouge.

In early 1997 FUNCINPEC, the KNP and a BLDP faction formed the National United Front, which threatened the CCP's prospects in the May 1998 elections. On March 30 a grenade attack, later linked to the CCP, on a rally led by Sam Rainsy in Phnom Penh killed 19 people and wounded scores of others.

Ranariddh reportedly had secured the defection of a breakaway Khmer Rouge faction immediately prior to the July 5-6 coup. Following the coup the CCP arrested hundreds of FUNCINPEC officials, activists and soldiers throughout the country, harassed others, and, according to the U.N., carried out at least 41 and perhaps as many as 60 summary executions of FUNCINPEC members and military officers. Hun Sen justified his power seizure on the pretext that FUNCINPEC had infiltrated Khmer Rouge troops and weapons into the capital. Some 30,000 Cambodians fled to Thailand to escape sporadic CCP-FUNCINPEC fighting in the north.

In August parliament installed foreign minister Ung Huot as first premier after pro-Hun Sen FUNCINPEC MPs nominated him in July in a process filled with irregularities. Meanwhile, remaining Khmer Rouge leaders made a desperate lunge for political legitimacy by sentencing Pol Pot to life imprisonment at a show trial on July 24 in their jungle stronghold.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: With the 1997 coup, Hun Sen has fully regained the total power he enjoyed before the 1993 elections. His CCP will likely try to use a victory against a decimated opposition in the May 1998 elections to legitimize its rule. At least 24 opposition MPs fled the country after the coup. Most remaining "opposition" MPs are either pro-Hun Sen or have been cowed into acquiescence. Sam Rainsy and some 15 other prominent exiles had returned by the end of the year, but Hun Sen warned that Prince Ranariddh would have to face trial if he returned.

Prior to the coup the judiciary was not independent, but a growing corps of newly-trained lawyers offered hope of boosting the institution's capacity; this now appears less likely. Due process rights fall short of international norms. In July Amnesty In-

ternational noted that convictions of FUNCINPEC members in summary trials, reportedly held in the provinces following the coup, might be used to disqualify candidates in future elections. Prisons are dangerously overcrowded and unsanitary, and inmates are frequently abused.

The Phnom Penh government has little authority in some provinces, and the rule of law is particularly weak in the countryside. Regular army soldiers and Khmer Rouge guerrillas carry out rape, extortion, banditry, and extrajudicial killings with impunity. The CCP is responsible for numerous assassinations since 1993.

According to *The New York Times*, within a week of the coup all but six of the country's 50 newspapers had shut down, though a few have since reopened, and many journalists had fled the country. Journalists are routinely harassed and threatened, and there have been no convictions in the cases of three journalists murdered since 1993. The 1995 press law permits the government to suspend publication of a newspaper for up to one month without a court order, and subjects the press to criminal statutes. In 1996 the government suspended authorization of new radio or television stations and of new newspapers.

The KNP's organizing efforts have been impaired by the murder of at least one party official in 1996, and by government attacks and restrictions on party offices. Following the coup the CCP looted FUNCINPEC offices, while indigenous pro-democracy and legal aid NGOs sharply curtailed their operations. Foreign journalists report that ordinary people are now generally afraid to speak openly.

The constitution refers only to the rights of the ethnic Khmer majority, complicating the legal status of the estimated 200-500,000 Vietnamese residents. The Khmer Rouge has massacred scores of Vietnamese villagers in recent years.

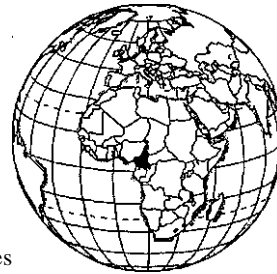
Traditional norms relegate women to an inferior status, and domestic violence is common. There are several thousand street children in Phnom Penh and child prostitution is increasing. In October 1996 the United States-based AFL-CIO cited Cambodia for child labor, forced labor, physical abuse of workers, denial of overtime wages, and poor working conditions. In January 1997 police twice broke up protests at garment factories, but allowed workers to demonstrate elsewhere for higher wages, recognition of new unions, and an end to workplace harassment.

Official corruption is widespread. Cambodia is becoming a regional center for money laundering, drug trafficking, illegal logging and mainland Chinese prostitution rings.

The Khmer Rouge rules its shrinking territory in a brutal manner, denying basic rights, banning Buddhist religious practices and confiscating private property. Dozens of civilians have been killed since the 1991 peace treaty by indiscriminate shelling by the army and the Khmer Rouge.

Cameroon

Polity: Dominant party **Political Rights:** 7
Economy: Capitalist **Civil Liberties:** 5
Population: 13,609,000 **Status:** Not Free
PPP: \$2,120
Life Expectancy: 55.1
Ethnic Groups: Adamawa, Bamileke, Beti, Dzem, Fulani,
Mandari, Shouwa, other—over 100 tribes and 24 languages
Capital: Yaounde



Overview:

In October, President Paul Biya won a second five-year term as Cameroon's president, in an election marked by intimidation, manipulation and fraud. An opposition boycott was largely successful. The ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) won legislative elections in May under similar conditions. There were credible reports of physical assaults on opposition politicians. Harassment and censorship of the independent media are common practices, and there are other widespread human rights abuses. Shrugging off complaints of vote-rigging in the May polls, Biya's campaign manager observed that, "We don't have angels running Cameroon."

Cameroon's population is made up of nearly 200 ethnic groups, and also divided between English and French speakers. It was a German colony from 1884 until 1916. After being seized in World War I and divided between French and British administration, distinct Anglophone and Francophone areas were reunited in an independent country in 1961. About a quarter of Cameroon's 13.5 million people are Anglophone, and this linguistic distinction is today the country's most potent political division. The uncertain delineation of the country's western frontier has for several years sparked clashes with Nigeria on the oil-rich Bokassi Peninsula.

After three decades of single-party rule, Cameroon opted for a multiparty system. The CPDM party won the largest number of parliamentary seats after a campaign in March 1992 that was boycotted by the main opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF). Presidential polls that returned Biya to office in October 1992 were even more clearly fraudulent, a pattern repeated in 1997.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Cameroon's citizens cannot change their government by democratic means. While officially a multi-party republic, the country is effectively ruled by a small clique around President Paul Biya. The 1992 and 1997 legislative and presidential elections were marked by serious irregularities and fraud, and cannot be taken to genuinely represent the will of the people. The legislative elections, conducted by the ruling CPDM-controlled Ministry of Territorial Administration, saw the ruling CPDM take 116 seats to the SDF's 43. Opposition demands for creation of an independent election commission were dismissed by the Biya regime, which also abruptly canceled an internationally-backed project by the non-governmental group Conscience Africaine to train over 2,000 election observers. Assessing the presidential contest, the Cameroon League for People's Rights (LCPD), a member of the Inter-African Human Rights League,

said that the vote "did not honor the principles of impartiality, equality and transparency that would enable one to accord them the slightest bit of credit."

Despite the trappings of representative government, nearly all power is held by President Biya and a small coterie of CPDM members mostly from the president's own Beti ethnic group. The National Assembly meets only two months each year, leaving the president to rule by decree and rendering the parliamentary opposition superfluous to the lawmaking process. Constitutional amendments adopted in December 1995 concentrated even more power in the presidency and only nominally strengthened a pliant judiciary. Presidential decree power and control over the judiciary offer Cameroonians little hope for fair treatment in their country's courts. The judiciary is part of the executive branch, and provincial and local administrators are appointed. Courts and local administration are often corrupt and subject to heavy political influence.

Absence of a free media also inhibits open political activity. The regime announced in July its intention to retain its tight monopoly on broadcasting, crucial in a largely rural country with low literacy. It continues to censor, suspend and shutter independent publications, which in any case have little impact outside the major cities and towns. Pre-publication censorship is permitted under a 1990 press law, and licensing was made more difficult under 1995 legislation, which expanded government seizure and banning powers "where there is conflict with the principles of public policy," and against publications that endanger "public order" or violate undefined "accepted standards of good behavior/values." Publications are regularly suspended and individual editions confiscated or released featuring blank spaces where censors ordered cuts. In June, the weekly newspaper, *Mutations*, was banned for three weeks. Publisher Nyadi Mani spent 1997 in prison on libel charges. Publication director Bosco Tchoubet of the private *La Revelation* newspaper was arrested in April. Several other journalists were detained or faced various charges stemming from their reporting, and the general repression of Cameroon media was detailed in a report by the London-based freedom of expression watchdog group Article 19 in February.

The country's northwest province, an opposition SDF stronghold, was under martial law for several months after unidentified attackers killed three gendarmes. Although intermittent arrests, attacks and intimidation of oppositionists and other activists engaged in advocacy and social work continued, numerous non-governmental organizations still operated. Among them are the Organization for Freedom of the Press in Cameroon, the National League for Human Rights, the Organization for Human Rights and Freedoms, the Human Rights Clinic and Education Center and the Association of Women against Violence. The official National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms has conducted investigations and seminars, but issued no public reports. Freedom of religion is generally respected, but most other civil liberties remain at risk. Indefinite pretrial detention under extremely harsh conditions is permitted after a warrant is issued or to "combat banditry."

Anglophone Cameroonians complain of discrimination amounting to disenfranchisement, and members of President Biya's Beti ethnic group often receive preference in employment. Indigenous pygmy people often work under conditions that approach slave labor. Credible reports of slavery in the country's northern areas have been received by Western NGOs, where powerful traditional chiefs known as *lamibe* run their own courts and prisons that are used against the regime's political oppo-

nents. One of the most notorious, Rey Bouba, reportedly maintains a private militia of over 300 men. Prison conditions there and in government prisons are reportedly life-threatening. Torture and other ill-treatment of detainees and convicts is reportedly common. Suspects are often held indefinitely and sometime incommunicado in defiance of legal requirements.

Wife-beating and other forms of violence against women is reportedly widespread. Many laws contain unequal provisions and penalties based on sex, and women are often denied inheritance and land ownership rights even where these are codified. In July, a new group, the Cameroon Women's Caucus, was formed to fight for greater female participation in government. Currently only ten of 180 members of the National Assembly, and two of 44 cabinet members are women. Female genital mutilation is also widely practiced, especially in the far north of the country.

The 1992 labor code permits trade union formation, but some provisions of the code have never been implemented and many government workers are not covered. The Confederation of Cameroonian Trade Unions (CCTU) is technically independent, but still influenced or intimidated by the ruling party. The Union of Free Trade Unions of Cameroon (USLC) was created by the regime in 1996 to further undermine union independence.

Graft and a lack of independent courts inhibit business development and deter new investment in Cameroon. The government has pledged efforts supported by the United Nations and the World Bank to reduce corruption, but an utter lack of transparency and accountability in governance will hinder any progress in this area.

Canada

Polity: Federal

parliamentary democracy

Economy: Capitalist

Population: 29,965,000

PPP: \$21,459

Life Expectancy: 79.0

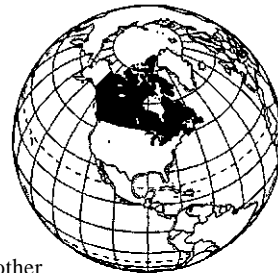
Ethnic Groups: British (40 percent), French (27 percent), other European (20 percent), Asian, aboriginal or native (Indian and Inuit) (1.5 percent), Caribbean black, others

Capital: Ottawa

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Overview:

Two years after Canada's divisive 1995 referendum on independence for Quebec, separatism for the province remained atop the country's political agenda. Amid slightly declining public support for independence, the province's Parti Quebecois vowed to seek another referendum on the issue. In the meantime, Prime Minister Jean Chretien's Liberal government, which was narrowly re-elected in June, continued to focus on economic policy.

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 theoretical right

to overrule the Canadian Parliament until 1982, when Canadians established complete control over their own constitution. The country is governed by a prime minister, his cabinet, and the parliament. The parliament includes an elected 301-member House of Commons and an appointed 104-member Senate. The British monarch remains nominal head of state, represented by a ceremonial governor-general appointed by the prime minister.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Canadians can change their government democratically. Due to 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 less than five years. In the 1993 elections, the government held three days of advance voting for people unable to vote on election day.

A federal law prohibiting the broadcasting of public opinion poll results two days prior to and during federal elections was upheld in 1995. A 1988 act to limit all forms of cigarette advertisement, however, was struck down as a violation of free speech. After passage in the House of Commons, a modified, less comprehensive bill was passed by the Senate in April, 1997.

The judiciary is independent. In October, the Supreme Court struck down parts of Quebec's referendum, which, in the court's view, unduly limited third-party spending to influence referenda voting. The court expressed support for limits in principle, however, by making clear that a more generous limit on spending would "result in a more acceptable balance" between "freedom of expression" and "equality of expression" in the political debate.

Other limitations on expression range from unevenly enforced "hate laws" and restrictions on pornography to rules on reporting. The media are generally free, although they exercise self-censorship in areas such as violence on television.

Civil liberties have been protected since 1982 by the federal Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but 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 English on signs. The provincial governments, with their own constitutions and legislative assemblies, exercise significant autonomy. Each has its own judicial system as well, with the right of appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Canada's criminal law is based on British common law and is uniform throughout the country. Its civil law is also based on the British system, except in Quebec, where it is based on the French civil code.

In 1996, parliament amended the constitution to outlaw discrimination based on "sexual orientation" by adding this term to a 1977 Human Rights Act list that includes age, sex, race, religion and disability. At the same time, women's rights issues have grown in prominence. In the June elections, the ruling Liberal Party met a self-imposed target of fielding female candidates in 25 percent of its parliamentary races.

Canada boasts a generous welfare system that supplements the largely open, competitive economy. Property rights for current occupants are generally strong, but increasing Indian land claims have led to litigation and strained relations between the government and Canadian Indians.

Trade unions and business associations enjoy high levels of membership and are free and well-organized.

Religious expression is free and diverse, but religious education has been the subject of controversy in recent years. Many provinces have state-supported religious school systems that do not represent all denominations.

Despite restrictions announced in 1994, the flow of immigrants into the country remains strong. In 1997, several hundred Czech gypsies flooded Canadian refugee centers after hearing reports of the country's generous welfare and asylum policies. Canada's opportunities for political asylum include refuge on the grounds of spousal abuse and sexual orientation.

Cape Verde

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy

Economy: Mixed statist

Population: 403,000

PPP: \$1,862

Life Expectancy: 65.3

Ethnic Groups: Creole (71 percent), black (28 percent), European (1 percent)

Capital: Praia

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Overview:

Multiparty democracy appears to have taken firm hold in this islands-nation of 400,000 people off the coast of West Africa. President Antonio Mascarenhas Monteiro, elected to a second five-year term in an unopposed February 1996 election marked by low voter turnout, is pursuing an austerity program which is unpopular but drawing stronger donor support for the impoverished country. The ruling Movement for Democracy (MPD) holds 50 of 72 seats in the country's parliament and supports the president's and Prime Minister Carlos Alberto Wahnnon de Carvalho Veiga's free market policies. Despite allegations of high-level corruption, opposition parties have not demonstrated real capacities to challenge the government.

The MPD was returned to power in December 1995 legislative elections, winning 59 percent of the vote in the country's second multiparty legislative elections since independence from Portugal in 1975. The MPD's renewed mandate followed its 1991 landslide victory in the first democratic elections after 16 years of Marxist, one-party rule by the African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde (PAICV). Cape Verde was the first former Portuguese colony in Africa to abandon Marxist political and economic systems. Increased exports and tourism are improving the economy, and tax incentives have attracted some foreign investment. Extensive plans for infrastructure improvements are being implemented to assist in private-sector development. Cape Verde has few exploitable natural resources and must rely heavily on food imports. Many citizens work abroad; their remittances, along with foreign aid, are an important source of national income. Cape Verde is actively involved in Portugal's efforts to build a Lusophone commonwealth and its leaders spend much time in seeking foreign assistance for their country, one of Africa's smallest and poorest.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Cape Verdeans have now twice changed their government by democratic means in open elections. The president and members of the National People's Assembly, including six representatives chosen by citizens living abroad, are elected through universal suffrage. Since the 1991 transition to multiparty democracy, elections have been free and fair. The formal powers of the presidency were greatly reduced by the 1992 constitution, leaving little more than authority to delay ratification of legislation, propose amendments and dissolve parliament after a vote of no confidence. Referenda are permitted in some circumstances but may not challenge civil liberties or the rights of opposition parties.

There are no known political prisoners in Cape Verde. Human rights groups including the National Commission of the Rights of Man and the Organization of Cape Verdean Women operate freely.

The judiciary is independent, comprised of a Supreme Court and regional courts that generally adjudicate criminal and civil cases fairly, though sometimes with long delays. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty and trials are public, with free legal counsel provided to indigents. Judges must lay charges within twenty-four hours of arrests. The police, until 1994 controlled by the military, are now a separate institution answerable to civilian authority.

The freedoms of peaceful assembly and association are guaranteed and respected. Workers are free to form and join independent unions without restriction. Union members possess the constitutional right to strike and the ability to affiliate with international organizations.

The vast majority of Cape Verdeans belongs to the Roman Catholic Church. The constitution requires the separation of church and state and religious rights are respected in practice.

Freedoms of expression and of the press are guaranteed and generally respected in practice. Newspapers and other publications may be established without authorization. National Assembly sessions, including sharp attacks by opposition members, are broadcast live via radio in their entirety. However, the most widely read newspapers, along with radio and television broadcasting, are state-controlled, and criticism of the government is restrained by self-censorship for fear of demotion or dismissal. Government officials have on occasion unsuccessfully sought to use libel charges to silence opposition newspapers.

Discrimination against women persists despite legal prohibitions against gender discrimination as well as provisions for social and economic equality. Especially in rural areas where illiteracy is high, many women do not know their rights, nor do they possess means to seek redress. Women do not receive equal pay for equal work, are excluded from traditionally male professions and, reportedly, suffer common but little-reported domestic violence. Child abuse is widespread, as is child labor. Local nongovernmental organizations, with international assistance, have mounted campaigns to promote women's civil and human rights along with awareness about child abuse.

Central African Republic

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist-statist

Political Rights: 3
Civil Liberties: 5
Status: Partly Free

Population: 3,274,000

PPP: \$1,130

Life Expectancy: 48.3

Ethnic Groups: Baya (34 percent), Banda (27 percent), Mandja (21 percent), Sara (10 percent)

Capital: Bangui



Overview:

Army unrest and political infighting continued to destabilize the Central African Republic's (CAR) elected government in 1997, as a United Nations-authorized African peacekeeping force, the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB), sought to impose order on the country's capital, Bangui. The country was badly shaken in 1996 by popularly-supported army mutinies suppressed only by French military intervention. The MISAB peacekeeping mission, intended to oversee agreements between army mutineers and the government of President Ange-Felix Patasse, includes troops from Burkina Faso, Chad, Gabon and Senegal. In June MISAB forces clashed in street battles with the rebels, leaving over 100 people dead. The MISAB was accused of human rights violations, including the murders of several civilians.

A national unity government, dominated by the ruling Central African People's Liberation Movement (MLPC) party, saw the resignations in May of several opposition politicians, who returned in mid-August. Facing a troubled economy and accusations of corruption and ethnic bias, President Patassé has been unable to maintain a popular base since his 1993 election victory. Recommendations of an August 1996 national conference that pledged military reforms and governmental reforms are yet to be implemented and could serve as a continuing grievance for soldiers and civilian dissidents alike. The efforts of MISAB negotiator and former Malian military leader Amani Toumani Touré, who shepherded his own country's transition to multi-party democracy, have for now helped keep the simmering crisis from exploding into all-out ethnic war.

After a period of harsh colonial exploitation, the Central African Republic gained independence from France in 1960. It is a sparsely-populated country whose 3.3 million people are spread over an area the size of Texas. In 1967, Colonel Jean-Bedel Bokassa seized power and with himself upon the throne imposed an increasingly bizarre personal dictatorship on the renamed Central African Empire. French support waned only after Bokassa began murdering schoolchildren and French troops ousted him in 1979. His French-installed successor lost favor in the metropole and was deposed by General André Kolingba in 1981. Kolingba introduced a facade of civilian rule and eventually accepted a transition to multipartyism that led to democratic elections in 1993. The country's media, judiciary and civil service are still struggling to

achieve real independence, however, and civil society is weak.

France's interventions in the CAR are widely resented—in 1996, crowds burned the French cultural center. The French Socialist government elected in 1997 announced it would close one of its two major garrisons in CAR and withdraw many of the 1,859 French troops in the country, claiming it would keep a greater distance from internal African affairs.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

The CAR's people chose their government for the first time in 1993 elections, under the 1986 constitution. President Patasse's victory was not followed by success for his party in elections to the 85-seat national assembly. The MLPC party's weak mandate has created tensions and tenuous coalitions with smaller parties. The still shaky national unity government includes defeated 1993 presidential candidate Abel Goumba of the Patriotic front for Progress (FPP) under Prime Minister Michel Gbezera-Bria.

A revised constitution that promises judicial and legislative autonomy and safeguards the multiparty system was adopted by a national referendum in December 1994. The strength of the new institutions will be tested by parliamentary elections set for August 1998 and the following year's presidential contest. Ethnic divisions have diverted attention from economic and social issues and may provoke further armed intervention in the political process.

The state dominates broadcast media. Opposition activities are not adequately reported. The only licensed private radio stations are devoted to music and religion. Private print media have suffered little direct governmental interference, but several journalists have been sued for printing accusations of official malfeasance. At least a dozen newspapers publish, with varying regularity. The non-state print media are often highly partisan with no sound financial base. In a vast country with low literacy, it carries little impact beyond the capital.

Open public discussion is permitted but constitutionally-guaranteed freedom of assembly is not always honored by authorities. Public meetings must be registered 48 hours in advance. About two dozen political parties are officially registered, though many are inactive. Many non-governmental organizations, including human rights groups such as the Central African Human Rights League and the Movement for the Defense of Human Rights and Humanitarian Action operate without interference. Religious freedom is respected, although religious groups must register with the government and broad prohibitions against "fundamentalism" are widely considered to be aimed at Islamist tendencies and could provide scope for official restrictions on worship.

Judicial institutions suffer from lack of training, corruption and political interference that hinder their efficiency and impartiality. Legal strictures regarding searches and detention are often ignored. Police brutality is also a serious problem and conditions for prisoners, including many long-term pre-trial detainees, are extremely difficult and in many instance, life-threatening. Robbery and other abuses by various military factions has become a serious problem in the capital.

Especially in rural areas, educational, employment and other economic opportunities for women are far less than those available to men. Constitutional guarantees for women's rights are usually not reflected in reality. Societal discrimination in many areas relegates women to status as second-class citizens. Female genital mutilation is

still practiced. Three of 85 parliamentarians are women.

The CAR's small formal economic sector has been hard hit by continuing unrest. Corruption and economic mismanagement have also stifled growth. The government is the largest single employer, and government employee trade unions have been especially active. The labor code protects the right of all workers to form or join unions of their choice. Five labor federations compete for union affiliates. A conciliation process is required before unions may call strikes. The government sets wage guidelines in consultation with employers and unions. However, unions have directly negotiated wage agreements with employers through collective bargaining.

Chad

Polity: Interim legislature (military-dominated) (transitional)
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 6,543,000
PPP: \$700
Life Expectancy: 47.0
Ethnic Groups: Arab, Bagirmi, Sara, Wadai, Zaghawa, Bideyat Gorane, 200 distinct groups
Capital: N'Djamena

Political Rights: 6
Civil Liberties: 5
Status: Not Free



Overview:

Chad's transition from military dictatorship towards representative government has been marred by serious human rights abuses. Armed resistance to the government has waned as President Idriss Deby has sought to build a broader national consensus among the country's diverse ethnic groups by forming a coalition government among parties that contested January-February legislative elections. Exploitation of oil deposits offers new wealth that may help raise the country from extreme poverty.

President Deby's legitimacy and popular confidence in the electoral process was seriously eroded by gross irregularities that marked his July 1996 victory in Chad's first multiparty election. Despite these problems, the election result was strongly endorsed by France, which maintains an 800 soldier garrison in Chad. Many groups denounced the fraudulent electoral process, noting the disqualification of several credible challengers, intimidation of opposition activists and manipulation of the vote count. Legislative elections in early 1997 were better run, but still marred by allegations of fraud. Peace pacts that have brought a relative calm to several areas of the countryside remain tenuous. Guerrilla conflicts continue in other parts of the vast countryside and are marked by brutality by both soldiers and rebels.

Since achieving its independence from France in 1960, Chad has been in a state of almost constant war. External interference and clan rivalries have exacerbated ethnic and religious differences. The country is roughly split between Nilotic and Bantu Christian farmers who inhabit the country's south and Arab and Saharan peoples who occupy arid deserts of the north.

Deby lifted the ban on political parties in 1993, convening a national conference

that included a broad array of civic and political groups, including his own Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS), which controlled the transitional parliament. Over 60 political parties are now registered. The current coalition government is dominated by the MPS, but also includes the Union for Renewal and Democracy, (URD) which won 29 seats, and the National Union for Renewal and Democracy, (UNDR) which won 15 seats. URD leader Wadal Abdelkader Kamougue was elected National Assembly president. In another gesture towards national reconciliation, Nassour Ouaidou was named prime minister, and another southerner was named minister of mines, energy and petroleum. Chad's 6.7 million people comprise over 200 ethnic groups but the country's army and political life are dominated members of two small groups—the Zaghawa and the Bideyat—from President Deby's northeastern region. The security forces are not subject to the rule of law and constitutional authority. It is not clear that the formality of President Deby's flawed transformation into an elected leader will change this, or whether the national assembly elected in 1997 will exercise real power.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Chad has never experienced a peaceful and orderly transfer of political power. President Idriss Deby took power by force, overthrowing Hissein Habre in December 1990. In June and July 1996, Chadians voted for the first time for their president in multiparty elections. It is impossible to ascertain if President Deby's 69 percent second round victory was credible. The ruling Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) took 65 of 125 National Assembly seats in legislative polls in January-February 1997. Intimidation and harassment by the National Security Agency (ANS) and other security agencies hinder opposition efforts to organize. State control of broadcast media allows little exposure for dissenting views, especially important in a vast country where most people can neither read nor afford to buy the few newspapers available.

Serious human rights abuses continued in 1997. Amnesty International reported widespread violence with impunity by Chadian security forces and denounced an officially backed anti-crime policy of summary executions of suspected thieves. Some of the worst violations are blamed on Deby's elite presidential guard, and tens of thousands of Chadians have fled their country to escape the violence. Peace pacts have been reached with several of the 20 or more armed factions mounting rebellions of varying intensities. Most important was a 1996 deal struck with one of the most significant southern rebel groups, the Patriotic and Democratic wing of the Armed Forces for the Federal Republic (FARF), which renounced the armed struggle and formed a political party, the Patriotic Front for Democracy. However, several such agreements have previously failed, and abuses by FARF factions, other rebel groups and the government in southern districts reportedly continue. Banditry adds to the pervasive insecurity. Chad's long and porous borders are virtually unpoliced, and trade in weapons is rife among nomadic Sahelian peoples.

Freedom of expression was generally respected in 1997, but the government controls all broadcasting and gives little coverage to the opposition. Newspapers critical of the government circulate freely in the capital N'Djamena but have scant impact among the largely rural and illiterate population. The judicial system remains weak. Security forces routinely ignore constitutional protections regarding search, seizure and detention. Prisons conditions are often life-threatening due to overcrowding, disease and malnutrition, and many inmates are uncharged detainees.

Despite harassment and occasionally physical intimidation, several human rights groups operate openly and publish findings critical of the government. Criticisms by international human rights have been dismissed by the government as "80 percent lies." Freedom of religion is generally respected in Chad, although religion remains one of the markers dividing the society. Women's rights are protected neither by traditional law or in the penal code. Female genital mutilation is commonplace. The literacy rate for women is very low, and few educational opportunities are available, especially in rural areas.

Workers' right to organize and to strike is generally respected, although very few Chadians participate in the formal economy and union membership is low. Hope for economic growth is rising with a \$4 billion project by the Exxon, Shell and Elf oil companies to build a 600 mile pipeline from southern Chad to a tanker port in neighboring Cameroon. However, lax enforcement of ecological safeguards and little monitoring of the project is raising serious concerns of environmental damage and human rights abuses.

Chile

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 14,470,000
PPP: \$9,129
Life Expectancy: 75.1
Ethnic Groups: Mestizo, Spanish, other European, Indian
Capital: Santiago

Political Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Overview: Although President Eduardo Frei failed to eliminate some of the most egregious features— such as nine appointed senators, four named by the military— of the 1980 constitution imposed by the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet, one of the most important impediments to reform, Pinochet's stewardship of the Chilean armed forces, is about to come to an end.

The Republic of Chile was founded after independence from Spain in 1818. Democratic rule predominated in this century until the 1973 overthrow of Salvador Allende by the military under Pinochet.

The 1980 constitution provided for a plebiscite in which voters could reject another presidential term for Pinochet. In 1988, 55 percent of voters said "no" to eight more years of military rule, and competitive presidential and legislative elections were scheduled for 1989.

In 1989 Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin, the candidate of the center-left Concertacion for Democracy, was elected president over two right-wing candidates, and the Concertacion won a majority in the Chamber of Deputies. But with eight senators appointed by the outgoing military government, it fell short of a Senate majority. Aylwin's broad-based, remarkably clean government was unsuccessful in its efforts to reform the constitution, stymied by a right-wing Senate bloc in its efforts to prevent

Pinochet and other military chiefs from remaining at their posts until 1997.

Frei, a businessman and son of a former president, was the Concertacion candidate in December 1993 elections, and won handily over right-wing candidate Arturo Alessandri. Frei promised to establish full civilian control over the military but, like Aylwin, did not have the votes in Congress.

The military defied a June 1995 Supreme Court ruling that General Manuel Contreras, Pinochet's secret police chief, be jailed for the 1976 murder of exiled opposition leader Orlando Letelier in Washington, D.C. Contreras was finally imprisoned, but not until Frei retreated from demanding full accountability for rights violations under military rule.

The Senate has 48 seats, including a "senator-for-life" position for Pinochet when he retires and nine designated senators mandated by the 1980 constitution— sinecures designed to maintain military influence on congress. The military's political and social influence is expected to be reduced with Pinochet's retirement in March 1998, though he plans to occupy the senate post. In October Frei selected the army chief of staff as Pinochet's replacement— from a list of names submitted by the 82-year-old general December 1997 elections for all 120 lower house and 20 senate seats maintained the relative balance of power between the government and the opposition.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens can change their government democratically. Democratic institutions are better established than in any other Latin American country except Costa Rica.

Faced with an implicit military challenge to his authority— the 1980 constitution did not allow the president to change armed forces commanders until 1997 nor reduce the military budget— Frei appears to be slowly gaining the upper hand, aided by a competent government performance and his own low-key style.

In 1990, a 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 deaths or forcible disappearance of 2,279 people between September 1973 and March 1990. However, in 1978, the Pinochet regime had issued an amnesty for all political crimes, and the Supreme Court, packed by Pinochet before leaving office, has blocked all government efforts to lift it.

The amnesty has not stopped civilian governments from investigating rights cases. Hundreds of cases involving incidents after 1978 have been brought to civilian courts, resulting in a handful of convictions. In late 1995, however, the aging Supreme Court (10 of its 17 members are 75 or older), possibly under pressure from the military, began dismissing dozens of cases with alacrity, and without the depth of investigation that previously occurred.

In December 1996 the government was embarrassed by the jailbreak of the top leadership of the Manuel Rodriguez Patriotic Front (FPMR), a leftist terrorist organization. Shifting to a hard-line stance toward terrorists in the aftermath of the incident, the government nonetheless resisted pressures to involve the military in domestic intelligence.

The death of a young conscript in March, attributed to brutal treatment in the barracks, brought to the fore the contentious issue of compulsory military service. In 1996 there were 190 cases of alleged ill-treatment, 12 deaths and as many as seven suicides. In 1997 military service was made voluntary.

Most laws limiting political expression and civil liberties were eliminated by constitutional reforms in 1989. Media freedom was almost fully restored. Scores of publications present all points of view, although some self-censorship regarding Chile's recent political history is practiced by journalists. Radio is both public and private. The national television network is state-run, but open to all political voices.

A 1993 indigenous rights law guaranteed that Indian lands could not be embargoed, sold, expropriated or taxed. New development projects, promoted by the government, threaten Mapuche lands in the south of Chile.

China

Polity: Communist one-party
Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 7
Economy: Mixed statist
Status: Not Free
Population: 1,213,026,000
PPP: \$2,604
Life Expectancy: 68.9
Ethnic Groups: Han Chinese (93 percent), Azhuang, Hui, Uyгур, Yi, Miao, Manchu, Tibetan, Mongolian, others
Capital: Beijing



Overview:

Following paramount leader Deng Xiaoping's death on February 19, 1997, President Jiang Zemin consolidated power by overseeing the smooth transfer of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty, sidelining rivals during a key party congress, and making a state visit to the United States. Due to his steadily declining health, Deng's death was long anticipated and not the cataclysmic event observers had earlier predicted when Jiang's leadership appeared shakier. But as the regime continues to severely repress fundamental freedoms, and enacts painful state enterprise reforms that threaten mass social dislocations while removing the ideological basis of its legitimacy, it has become increasingly dependent on sustained economic growth and appeals to nationalist impulses to maintain its absolute power.

Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Chairman Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949 following victory over the Nationalist Kuomintang. Mao's death in 1976 largely ended the brutal, mass ideological campaigns that had characterized his rule and resulted in millions of deaths. Deng Xiaoping emerged as paramount leader and in December 1978 began market reforms that included ending collectivized agriculture.

The bloody army crackdown in Tiananmen Square in June 1989, coming after weeks of student protests demanding democratic reforms and an end to runaway inflation, crushed hopes for a concomittant political liberalization. Hardliner Jiang Zemin, the Shanghai mayor and party boss, replaced the relatively moderate Zhao Ziyang as CCP secretary general.

After a period in which hardliners appeared to control policy decisions, Deng began 1992 with a highly-symbolic visit to two Special Economic Zones on the southern

coast that helped touch off an economic boom. In March 1993 the rubber-stamp National People's Congress (NPC) elected Jiang, Deng's handpicked successor as paramount leader, as state president. The NPC also re-elected premier Li Peng to a second five-year term, and named Qiao Shi, the CCP's former internal security chief, as its chairman.

As part of its broad crusade against pro-democracy activists, the regime sentenced Wei Jingsheng, China's most prominent democracy campaigner, and leading dissident Wang Dan to lengthy prison terms in 1995 and 1996, respectively. The U.S. State Department, in its human rights country assessment for 1996, concluded that because of the government's repression, "No dissidents were known to be active at the year's end." In November 1997 the government released Wei, ostensibly on medical grounds, and allowed him to fly to the U.S.

At the CCP's 15th Congress in September 1997 Jiang, 71, unexpectedly removed Qiao Shi and military stalwart General Liu Huaqing from the politburo standing committee, and pushed several other military figures out of politics. Jiang's call for the 118,000 industrial state owned enterprises (SOE) to begin selling shares and operate along commercial lines pointed to a fundamental dilemma: while more than half of the SOEs are lossmaking and subsidies put enormous strain on the country's insolvent banking system, they employ some 100 million workers (including nearly two thirds of the urban work force). Reform threatens tens of millions of jobs and could provoke widespread unrest, undermining the CCP's power.

Incidences of small scale but occasionally violent labor protests had already been increasing in the northeast industrial belt, as cutbacks in bank subsidies have left thousands of workers unpaid, and forced some factories into bankruptcy. In 1997 labor agitation involving thousands of workers broke out in at least four cities in southwest Sichuan province.

This comes as agricultural reforms and income inequalities have created 120 million surplus farm laborers, contributing to a "floating population" of 80-100 million migrants seeking work in urban areas. A September World Bank report concluded that while economic growth has averaged 8.2 percent since 1978, income inequalities continue to widen as government social policies favor urban areas and economic policies favor the booming coast, largely bypassing the rural interior.

In 1997 tensions continued in the vast northwestern Xinjiang "Autonomous Region," where the seven-million strong, Turkic-speaking Uighurs and other, smaller Muslim groups accuse Beijing of exploiting the region's rich mineral resources, controlling religious affairs, and altering the demographic balance by encouraging an influx of Han Chinese, who are rewarded with top jobs. While most dissent is peaceful, in recent years Uighur activists have clashed violently with police and are suspected in at least six assassinations. Authorities have responded by arresting thousands of activists. The *Far Eastern Economic Review* (FEER), quoting local sources, reported that on February 6 soldiers opened fire on demonstrators in the town of Yining, killing as many as 100 Uighurs and ethnic Chinese, and two days later authorities executed 31 Uighurs.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Chinese citizens cannot change their government democratically. The CCP holds absolute power, has imprisoned nearly all active dissidents, uses the judiciary as a tool of state con-

trol, and severely restricts freedoms of speech, press, association and religion.

In practice there is little separation between party and state. The National People's Congress (NPC), which under the 1982 constitution is nominally the highest organ of state authority, has little independent power even though its votes are often no longer unanimous. With the death of Deng, one of the last of a "second generation" of rulers who gained legitimacy through their key roles in the 1934 Long March and the Communists' later rise to power, policy making is almost completely controlled by a "third generation" of leaders headed by President Jiang Zemin.

Under the 1987 Village Committees Organic Law, more than 80 percent of the country's 900,000 village bodies are chosen through local elections. However, only pre-screened CCP candidates and some independents can compete. In many villages independents have won seats, but throughout the country balloting is characterized by irregularities and unfair procedures.

Judges are generally selected on the basis of party loyalty. Nearly half come from the armed forces and less than 20 percent have legal backgrounds. Suspects are routinely tortured to extract confessions. On January 1, 1997 new revisions to the Criminal Procedure Law (CPL) took effect that included granting a greater role to defense lawyers and increasing their access to defendants; limiting administrative detentions to 30 days; ending the presumption of guilt (although not establishing a presumption of innocence); and barring judges from ordering quick trials and executions for crimes that allegedly "seriously endanger public order." But accountability remains limited, and prospects for meaningful change in practice are dubious. Moreover, the revisions strengthen the role of party-controlled "adjudicative committees" in handling major cases and introduce new summary trial procedures in certain cases.

Despite the CPL revisions, authorities can still arbitrarily detain dissidents and ordinary criminals through several extrajudicial administrative procedures, contributing to a vast network of forced labor camps. Activist Harry Wu has identified 1,100 *laogai*, or "reform through labor," camps holding 6-8 million prisoners without trial in brutal conditions, many for political or religious views.

In March 1997 the NPC eliminated the category of "counterrevolutionary" crimes, under which courts have imprisoned thousands of dissidents, as part of revisions to the criminal code. But the revisions also expanded the category of "endangering state security," itself a sweeping, undefined term that, along with the crime of "leaking state secrets," was already being applied to a broad range of political and non-political activities instead of the former "counterrevolutionary" category. An analysis of the revised code by Human Rights Watch/Asia noted that it incorporates key elements of the 1993 State Security Law which can be used to punish Chinese groups and individuals for working with foreign organizations or individuals, expands the criminal concept of "state secrets," and creates a separate article aimed at pro-independence and autonomy movements in Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and Tibet (*A separate report on Tibet appears in the Related Territories section*).

In June FEER reported that a court in Liaoning province surprisingly overturned counterrevolutionary verdicts against four workers involved in the 1989 protests. But overall, the leadership has thus far rejected calls to reassess the official verdict of the 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations as a counterrevolutionary rebellion, making it nearly impossible for many dissidents to attend school or hold jobs.

Abuse of prisoners, particularly ordinary workers, is routine and widespread, and

authorities often encourage inmates to beat political prisoners. There are persistent reports of authorities selling organs of executed prisoners for transplant purposes.

Nearly 70 crimes are punishable by the death penalty, and in recent years there has been a chilling rise in the number of people executed during crackdowns on corruption and drug trafficking, often immediately following summary trials. In April 1996 Beijing launched the Strike Hard campaign, a crackdown on criminals (and pro-independence activists in Xinjiang province) that resulted in more than 150,000 arrests. Many of the subsequent executions (part of a total of 4,367 executions in 1996 confirmed by Amnesty International) were for non-violent offenses including "hooliganism," theft of farm animals or rice, and forging tax invoices.

Although in recent years there has been a proliferation of non-political talk radio shows and tabloid magazines, the CCP's propaganda department exercises tight control over political coverage and the media as a whole. At least a dozen journalists are in prison, some merely for meeting with Western counterparts. In May UNESCO presented a press freedom award *in absentia* to Gao Yu, imprisoned for six years in 1994 for reporting on official decision making.

Since early 1996 Jiang has orchestrated a "spiritual civilization" campaign, which in practice has further tightened control over the media and arts and indicates the regime's concern that economic reforms have introduced outside ideas and undermined the CCP's ideological basis. In 1996 the government ordered foreign wire services to disseminate business news in China through the official Xinhua news agency (although many analysts ascribed this equally to economic motives); announced regulations to control Internet access and content; closed dozens of Internet web sites; and placed small newspapers run by private organizations under CCP control. In January 1997 the CCP Central Committee ordered journalists to promote patriotism, socialism and collectivism in their reporting. In August the government barred foreigners from managing theaters or sponsoring performing troops, and further restricted artistic content. On December 30 the government announced tighter rules on internet use that covered using the internet to leak state secrets or for subversion.

Several thousand nongovernmental organizations (NGO) with strictly nonpolitical agendas, including the environment and women's rights, are tolerated but closely monitored. NGOs receiving foreign funding must get official approval. Freedom of assembly is limited, and non-political gatherings are sometimes arbitrarily shut down. Public protests are occasionally tolerated if devoid of political content.

The government tightly controls organized religious practice by forcing underground Catholic and Protestant churches to register with authorities and join one of two officially sanctioned "Patriotic" movements launched in the 1950s; monitoring religious membership, funding and activities; regulating the publication and distribution of religious books and other materials; and requiring students at state-approved seminaries to pass exams on political knowledge. In recent years scores of unofficial churches have been raided, closed or demolished, and hundreds of bishops, priests and ordinary worshippers have been detained for months and, in some cases, years. In Xinjiang authorities have used the pretext of quelling ethnic separatism to place sharp restrictions on construction of mosques and Islamic religious publishing and education, and have shut down hundreds of mosques and Koranic schools. Only five religions are officially recognized in China, with all others being *prima facie* illegal.

China's harsh family planning policy limits urban couples to one child. The policy

is zealously enforced by some local officials through sanctions and even forced abortion and sterilization. Couples adhering to the policy receive preferential education, food and medical benefits, while those failing to comply face a loss of benefits and fines. Failure to pay the fines sometimes results in seizure of livestock and other goods and destruction of homes. Due in part to abortions of female fetuses, the ratio of male to female births is reportedly 114:100; a normal ratio is roughly 105:100. Dissidents in Xinjiang say authorities often force Muslim women to have abortions and sterilizations after their first child.

Women face social and economic discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. In rural areas there are high incidences of women being abducted or otherwise sold into prostitution or marriage. In 1996 Human Rights Watch/Asia reported that thousands of children in Chinese orphanages died of often intentional starvation and medical neglect between 1988 and 1993.

Independent trade unions are illegal, and all unions must belong to the CCP-controlled All-China Federation of Trade Unions. Strikes are occasionally permitted, generally in foreign-owned factories, to protest dangerous conditions and low wages. Most prisoners are required to work, receiving little if any compensation.

The successes of both the Special Economic Zones in the south and the small-scale township and village enterprises in the countryside have helped remove millions of Chinese from dependence on the *danwei*, or state work unit. However for most urban dwellers the *danwei* controls everything from the right to change residence to permission to have a child. The system of residence permit has also been loosened to give workers more flexibility in filling jobs in developing areas.

↓ Colombia

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy (insurgencies)
Economy: Capitalist-statist
Population: 37,999,000
PPP: \$6,107
Life Expectancy: 70.1
Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (58 percent), European (20 percent), Mulatto (14 percent), Black, (4 percent), Indian (1 percent)
Capital: Bogota
Trend Arrow: Colombia receives a downward trend arrow due to increasing power of guerrilla groups and flawed elections in October.

Political Rights: 4
Civil Liberties: 4
Status: Partly Free



Overview: Dogged by continuing questions about his ties to the drug underworld, President Ernesto Samper found his government controlling a shrinking portion of the national territory, estimated between 35 and 60 percent. Left-wing guerrilla groups grew in size and military prowess and appeared on the verge of switching to a conventional war of positions, while right-wing paramilitaries supported by key military leaders took the lead

in illegal repression. A country once known for its devotion to its democratic traditions and institutional order appeared to inexorably drift towards a new reality: that of the "Bosnia of the Americas."

Following independence from Spain in 1819, and after a long period of federal government with what are now Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama, the Republic of Colombia was established in 1886. Politics have since been dominated by the Liberal and Conservative parties, whose leadership has largely been drawn from the traditional elite. Under Liberal President Cesar Gaviria (1990-1994) a new constitution was approved that limits presidents to a single four-year term and provides for an elected bicameral Congress, with a 102-member Senate and a 161-member Chamber of Representatives.

Modern Colombia has been marked by the corrupt machine politics of the Liberals and Conservatives; left-wing guerrilla insurgencies; right-wing paramilitary violence; the emergence of giant drug cartels and the gross violation of human rights.

In the 1994 legislative elections the Liberals retained a majority in both houses of Congress. Samper, a former economic development minister, won the Liberal presidential nomination. The Conservative candidate was Andres Pastrana, a former mayor of Bogota. Both candidates pledged to continue Gaviria's free-market reforms.

Samper won in a June 1994 runoff election, besting Pastrana by 1.8 percent by taking 50.4 percent. With strong U.S. encouragement, Samper presided over the dismantling of the Cali drug cartel, most of whose leaders were captured in 1995. The arrests, however, netted persuasive evidence that the cartel gave \$6 million to the president's campaign, with Samper's approval. In December 1995 a congressional commission dominated by Liberals cleared Samper of authorizing cartel campaign contributions. Opposition politicians and much of the media called it a whitewash.

In February 1996 the country's prosecutor general formally charged Samper with illegal enrichment, fraud, falsifying documents and cover up of his campaign financing. In June the House, dominated by Samper's Liberals, voted 111-43 to clear Samper on the grounds of insufficient evidence.

The murder of journalists and human rights workers, repeated humiliation of the military by leftist insurgents, a continued upswing in paramilitary violence linked to the military and army claims of the subversive intent of unarmed groups dominated much of the news from Colombia in 1997.

In October 1997, Samper's Liberals maintained a majority of state and local posts in regional elections, winning 19 of 32 governorships, compared to four for the Conservatives, and 412 city halls compared to 301 for the Conservatives. At least 53 candidates were killed in the months before the vote, most by the guerrillas, who urged a boycott of the election, but some by their paramilitary foes. Some 2,000 candidates withdrew under death threats, while more than 300 withdrew after being kidnapped. In August, a leading newsmagazine published a taped telephone conversation from the previous month in which Samper's communications minister spoke with the energy minister about the assignment of FM radio frequencies, with the former asking the latter for assurances that the president's friends would get 50 percent of the action.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens can change their government through elections. The 1991 constitution provides for broader participation in the system, including two reserved seats in the Congress for the

country's small Indian minority.

Political violence and a generalized belief that corruption renders elections meaningless have helped to limit voter participation. In 1997 senators were instructed to wear body armor, and 350,000 poll watchers at 55,000 voting stations around the country were given life insurance policies worth \$8,500 each.

Strong evidence suggests that the Cali cartel, through its lawyers, virtually dictated the 1993 penal code reform to Congress. It allows traffickers who turn themselves in as much as a two-thirds sentence reduction and the dismissal of any pending charges in which they do not plead. The justice system remains slow and compromised by corruption and extortion.

Constitutional rights regarding free expression and the freedom to organize political parties, civic groups and labor unions are severely restricted by political and drug-related violence and the government's inability to guarantee the security of its citizens. Political violence in Colombia continues to take more lives than in any other country in the hemisphere. According to the Colombian Commission of Jurists, ten political killings are committed every day, a person is tortured every 24 hours, someone "disappears" every two days, and one person dies every day in street fighting. A total of 26,664 people died violent deaths in 1996 according to judicial police statistics, and there were 110 massacres in which a total of 572 people died.

Assassinations by the military and security forces, once the major source of political violence, have subsided somewhat following efforts by civilian political authorities to curb official violence, including a constitutional court ruling that cases implicating military personnel in crimes of violence, extortion, kidnapping, murder and disappearance should be heard in civil rather than military courts. The void, however, was rapidly filled by right-wing paramilitary groups, including government-authorized 'security cooperatives,' known as *convivir*, which have some 12,000 members. The growth of paramilitary groups, Colombian law enforcement officials admit, is out of control, and the organizations frequently have become little more than hired thugs in the pay of drug traffickers. Left-wing guerrillas, some of whom also protect narcotics production facilities, drug traffickers themselves, and hundreds, perhaps thousands, of paid assassins all make their contribution. Perpetrators of political violence operate with a high degree of impunity.

Murders of trade union activists continued as Colombia remained the most dangerous country in the world for organized labor. The number of persons displaced by political violence increased by 180,000 in the first six months of 1997, and now totals more than a million. Journalists are frequently the victims of political and revenge violence.

Another category of killings is known as "social cleansing"—the elimination of drug addicts, street children and other marginal citizens by vigilante groups often linked to police. Conditions in the country's 168 prisons are dire, and packed with twice the number they were meant to hold. Indian groups report continued threats to their land from foreign oil interests.

Comoros

Polity: Dominant party

Economy: Capitalist

Population: 569,000

PPP: \$1,366

Life Expectancy: 56.1

Ethnic Groups: Majority of mixed African-Arab descent, East Indian minority

Capital: Moroni

Ratings Change: Comoros' political rights rating changed from 4 to 5 due to the Anjouan rebellion.

Political Rights: 5*

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Overview:

Little known other than for mercenary coups, the tiny Indian Ocean islands nation of the Federal Islamic Republic of the Comoros made world headlines as residents of Anjouan island rebelled after a year of rising tensions and demanded to be repossessed as a French colony. The separatists, protesting what they described as neglect and discrimination by the central government at Moroni on Grand Comore island, repelled a government attempt to quell the uprising in a brief battle in early September that left about 60 people dead, most of them government soldiers. Separatists on Moheli, the country's third major island, have also declared independence from Moroni. Mayotte Island, the fourth island of the Comoran archipelago, which voted to remain a French overseas territory in a 1974 referendum, today enjoys a far higher, French-subsidized standard of living. The military debacle on Anjouan sparked street protests in Moroni and opposition calls for the resignation of President Mohamed Taki. In September, President Taki dismissed his cabinet and declared a state of emergency. Both the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Arab League are seeking to mediate the dispute. A referendum on Anjouan that in late October reportedly returned an overwhelming vote for independence but has received no international recognition.

Seventeen coups or coup attempts have shaken the Comoros since its independence from France in 1975, including two mercenary invasions. In August 1996 France re-established its military presence on the isles at the invitation of President Taki, whose conservative Islamic beliefs are not universally shared by his fellow Comorians. Divisive clan and personal rivalries persist, as well as the deep divisions among the different islands.

An army coup shortly after independence overthrew the Comoros' first president, Ahmed Abdallah Abderrahman. Abdallah launched a successful counter-coup in 1978 with the help of French mercenary Bob Denard. Abdallah was returned unopposed in 1978 and 1984 one-party show elections, with Denard's backing as head of the army and presidential guard. In 1989, Abdallah was allegedly assassinated by his own troops on Denard's orders, but subsequent unrest drew French military intervention, and Denard was forced to flee.

In 1990, Supreme Court Justice Said Mohamed Djohara won a six-year term as president after succeeding Abdallah on an interim basis in the country's first contested elections. A September 1995 coup attempt by elements of the Comoros security forces aided by foreign mercenaries again led by Bob Denard was reversed by French sol-

diers. Nonetheless, President Djohar was effectively removed from office. He was flown to French-controlled Reunion Island and not allowed to resume office. Denard claims he acted in consultation with French security services, but now faces trial in France over the 1989 murder of President Abdallah.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Comorians exercised their constitutional right to change their government democratically in open elections for the first time in 1996. In March 1996, Mohamed Taki, leader of the National Union for Democracy (UNDC), won the Presidency in a second round run-off election with over 60 percent of the vote. The polls were reportedly the most honest and best-administered in Comoros' electoral history. A new constitution that increased the impact of Islamic law was adopted by an 85 percent vote in an October 1996 referendum. November 1996 parliamentary elections boycotted by the principal opposition party produced a strong ruling party victory, but also gave the conservative Islamic main opposition party several seats in the national assembly. However, there is little confidence that representative government has really taken hold after a history of election fraud and irregularities, repression, continual coup attempts, foreign interference and political infighting. Many constitutionally-mandated institutions so far exist only on paper.

Two main political coalitions now exist. The Rally for Democracy and Renewal is built around President Taki. Defeated presidential candidate Abbas Djoussouf heads an opposition alliance, the Front for National Reform. The secessionist movement on Anjouan is led by Abdullah Ibrahim, a 75-year-old Muslim teacher and Anjouan Peoples Movement leader. The central government had earlier banned as "subversive organizations" two political parties on Anjouan, the Organization for Anjouan Independence (OPIA) and the Movement for Anjouan Separation (MSA).

Freedom of expression and association are not guaranteed by the new constitution. Independent newspapers publishing in the capital, Moroni have been pressured by the government to restrict critical coverage and exercise self-censorship. The government controlled Radio Comoros is the only broadcaster permitted to operate since the country's sole independent station was shut down in October 1995. However, transmissions from Mayotte are easily received, and many people have satellite dishes and access to international broadcasting. Foreign newspapers and other publications are easily available. There have generally been few restrictions on free expression, save during numerous coup attempts, and the government banned demonstrations during the ongoing secession crisis. In September, students rioted in the capital, Moroni, after examinations were canceled.

The Comorian legal system combines Islamic law and remnants of the French legal code. President Taki has pressed for increased Islamic influence on legal and social matters, and Islam is the official state religion. Non-Muslims are permitted to practice but not proselytize. Taki's use of decree power has been strongly criticized by the Comoros' few independent newspapers. The judiciary is independent and headed by a Supreme Court. Most minor disputes are settled by village elders or a civilian court of first instance. Prison conditions are reportedly very harsh, with severe overcrowding compounded by an absence of proper sanitation, insufficient medical attention and poor diet.

Trade unions and strikes are permitted, but collective bargaining is weak in the

small formal sector. Women possess constitutional protections despite the influence of Islamic law, but in reality enjoy little political or economic power and have far fewer opportunities for education or employment in the small formal sector. Comorians are among the world's poorest people. Economic opportunity is very limited, and only about a tenth of its roughly 650,000 people are engaged in salaried work. Exports of vanilla and cloves and oil distilled from the ylang-ylang flower, once the mainstay of the islands' economy, have dropped precipitously. The government remains highly dependent on foreign aid.

Congo (Brazzaville)

Polity: Military **Political Rights:** 7*
Economy: Mixed statist **Civil Liberties:** 5*
Population: 2,528,000 **Status:** Not Free
PPP: \$2,410
Life Expectancy: 51.3

Ethnic Groups: Kongo (48 percent), Sangha (20 percent), Teke (17 percent), others

Capital: Brazzaville

Ratings Change: Congo (B)'s political rights and civil liberties ratings changed from 4/4 to 7/5 due to the overthrow of the elected government by military loyalists.



Overview:

The elected government of President Pascal Lissouba was overthrown in October by forces loyal to ex-military dictator Denis Sassou-Nguesso with backing from Angolan air, armor and infantry units that invaded the Congo. Sassou-Nguesso, who received only 17 percent of the vote in 1992 presidential elections, declared himself president, with clear political backing from France. His military campaign was reportedly aided by the French ELF oil company, which was losing its monopoly over Congo oil exports after President Lissouba awarded contracts to American companies. Simmering ethnic and political tensions and military unrest had erupted into full-scale war in June as fighting among rival militias and the national army raged across the capital Brazzaville and flared in other parts of the country. Ten thousand or more people were killed. Until mid-October, "Cobra" militia loyal to ex-president and general Denis Sassou-Nguesso battled Lissouba's "Zulu" fighters and the army for control of the capital, devastating large areas of the city and prompting a general evacuation of foreigners. The civil war is effectively between northern ethnic groups loyal to Sassou-Nguesso and southerners backing Lissouba. Angolan intervention assured Sassou-Nguesso's victory. Civil wars in neighboring Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) and nearby Angola have made large numbers of weapons and fighters available to all sides in the conflict. Beyond its immediate human suffering, the civil war will clearly leave long-term damage to relations among the country's diverse ethnic groups and gravely harm the country's economic development.

A 1970 coup established a Marxist state in Congo a decade after its independence from France. In 1979 General Sassou-Nguesso seized power and maintained one-party

rule as head of the Congolese Workers' Party (PCT) until domestic and international pressure forced his acceptance of a transition to multipartyism and open elections in 1992. Pascal Lissouba of the Pan-African Union for Social Democracy (Upads) party won a clear victory over Bernard Kolelas of the Congolese Party for Genuine Democracy and Development (MCDDI) in a second round presidential run-off that excluded Sassou-Nguesso, who had run third in the first round. Legislative elections produced no clear majority, and, after an anti-Lissouba coalition formed, the president dissolved the assembly and called fresh polls. New legislative polls in 1993 that produced a presidential majority were marred by numerous irregularities, and several parties boycotted the second round.

The disputed elections led to armed conflict, and in late 1993 Brazzaville suffered what was only a foretaste of far larger violence among ethnic-based militias that followed this year. A January 1994 peace accord brought power-sharing and decentralization, but plans for integration of various party militias into the national army failed. The government could not assert full control over both militias and the army, which has been dominated by loyalists of former president Sassou-Nguesso, who continued to build his private army in his home area in northern Congo.

Congo is rich in oil and forest resources, but most Congolese are impoverished. Government privatization plans and free market economic reforms have drawn strong international support and foreign investment. The civil war has set back economic progress and will strengthen French commercial and political dominance over the country.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

The Congolese people exercised their constitutional right to elect their president and National Assembly deputies to five year terms of office through competitive multiparty elections for the first time in 1992 and 1993, respectively. Local councils elect members of the less-powerful Senate to six year terms. President Lissouba's 1992 victory was widely considered free and fair, but 1993 legislative election results were disputed by the opposition. Their claims were largely rejected by an international panel, but Lissouba's unwillingness to create an independent election commission helped maintain mistrust of the electoral process. Presidential polls set for July 27 were postponed indefinitely, and it is not clear when elections will take place, especially given Sassou-Nguesso's humiliating defeat in 1992's open contest.

Freedom of expression has been severely limited by the civil war. A July 1996 law imposed registration requirements and severe penalties for slander and defamation that many journalists consider constraining. A 1995 law also provides stronger penalties for defamation of senior officials, requires media to "show loyalty to the government" and permits seizure of private printing works during emergencies. The government maintained a monopoly over electronic media, although before seizing power Sassou-Nguesso's militia operated a radio station. Broadcasts from neighboring countries are widely heard.

Freedom of assembly and association are constitutionally guaranteed, but Interior Ministry permission for public gatherings is occasionally denied. Religious freedom is respected in law and practice. Numerous non-governmental organizations operated freely before the civil war started, including human rights groups that have published highly critical reports on official practices and/or societal discrimination,

such as Congolese Human Rights Watch (Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme, or OCDH). In 1996, OCDH warned of "catastrophic" human rights violations, including unlawful executions, police torture and violence by private militias that have intensified in 1997.

A three tier formal court system from local courts through courts of appeal to the Supreme Court was generally considered politically independent. Scarce resources and understaffing create a backlog of cases and long periods of pre-trial detention in extremely harsh prison conditions. Outside the cities, traditional courts retain broad jurisdiction, especially in civil matters.

Extensive legal and societal discrimination against women continues despite constitutional protections. Limited access to education and employment opportunities, especially in the countryside, are de facto forms of societal discrimination, while civil codes regarding family and marriage formalize women's inferior status. Polygyny is permitted while polyandry is forbidden and adultery is legal for men but not for women. Violence against women is reportedly widespread but not formally reported. Discrimination against pygmy groups is also reported, and many pygmies are effectively held in lifetime servitude under customary ties to Bantu "patrons."

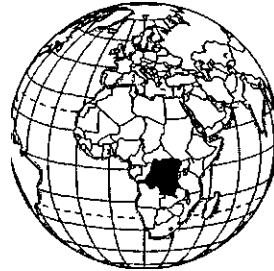
Workers' rights to join trade unions and to strike are legally protected and there are a half dozen labor confederations with various linkages to the government or political parties. Unions are legally required to accept non-binding arbitration before striking, but many strikes have gone forward without following this process.

A broad privatization program that drew increasing foreign investment and created local business opportunities over the past three years faltered in the civil war. Rebuilding of physical damage and investor confidence will be a post-war priority.

Congo (Kinshasa)

Polity: Presidential-military and interim legislative
Economy: Capitalist-statist
Population: 46,499,000
PPP: \$423
Life Expectancy: 52.2
Ethnic Groups: Bantu tribes (80 percent), over 200 other tribes
Capital: Kinshasa

Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 6
Status: Not Free



Overview: Renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo after rebel forces ended President Mobutu Sesse Seko's 32-year reign in May, the country began 1997 as Zaire. Mobutu's demise came after a stunningly rapid rebel advance sparked by a small rebellion in the northeastern part of the country in October 1996. Mobutu fled Kinshasa as rebel forces reached the city's outskirts. It was his penultimate defeat; he succumbed to a long battle with prostate cancer in Moroccan exile in September. Congolese authorities are seeking to recover from Switzerland and other countries an estimated \$10 billion that

Mobutu looted from his country during three decades of misrule.

Mobutu's ill-disciplined army offered scant resistance to the rebel advance, which was aided by Rwandan and Angolan troops, and supported by Uganda and Zambia. Mobutu sought the assistance of European mercenaries, apparently with French government facilitation, who reportedly preyed on local civilians more than they fought rebels. President Laurent Kabila, a long-time guerrilla fighter against the Mobutu regime, took office as head of the Alliance of Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL), dissolving parliament and assuming all executive powers. All political parties and public demonstrations were banned, and some oppositionists and journalists arrested and harassed. More serious were reports of massacres of thousands of Hutu refugees. Kabila has refused to cooperate with a United Nations human rights investigation and has forced the U.N. High Commission for Refugees to suspend operations in the still-troubled northeastern Congo, where ethnic fighting flared late in 1997. Kabila has promised presidential and legislative elections in April 1999 pending the approval of an as yet undrafted new constitution in a November 1998 national referendum. The new regime's willingness to allow genuine democratic change has so far not been demonstrated. It remains narrowly based, strongly influenced by Rwandan and Zairian Tutsi who helped launch the rebellion and by natives of the southeastern province of Katanga who dominate the new government.

As the Belgian Congo, the vast area of central Africa that is today the Democratic Republic of Congo was exploited with a brutality astonishing even for colonial times and left ill-prepared for independence when Belgium pulled out in 1960. The country became a cockpit for Cold War competition until the then-Colonel Joseph Desire Mobutu seized power in 1964. As a firm ally of the West, Mobutu was forgiven not only severe repression but also kleptocratic excesses which at his death left him one of the world's richest men and his countrymen among the world's poorest people.

Domestic demands for democracy and good governance forced the dictator to open the political process in 1990. Mobutu's Popular Revolutionary Movement (MPR), the sole legal party after 1965, the Sacred Union of the Radical Opposition and Allied Civil Society (USORAS—a 200-group coalition) joined scores of other groups in a national conference that in December 1992 established a High Council of the Republic (HCR) to oversee a democratic transition. Veteran oppositionist Etienne Tshisekedi Wa Mulumba served briefly as prime minister but was dismissed in 1993. Tshisekedi, head of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress party (UDPS) remains one of the country's most popular political leaders.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

The people of the Democratic Republic of Congo have never been permitted to choose or change their government through democratic and peaceful means. The transitional parliament has been dissolved and President Kabila rules by decree. There are no properly elected representatives in the entire country. Mobutu won successive unopposed presidential contests in 1970, 1977 and 1984 and three legislative polls added only window-dressing to his rule. Even if its commitment is sincere, the new regime will be hard pressed to meet its electoral timetable leading to general elections in April 1999. The country's communications have deteriorated gravely. Infrastructure and institutions to support a free and fair election are nearly entirely absent. More than 300 political parties registered since their 1990 legalization are now banned, although

many are in fact still operating and will likely join the political process if they are allowed.

Despite the overthrow of the Mobutu regime, serious human rights abuses reportedly continued, including extrajudicial executions, torture, beatings and arbitrary detention. While general discipline among the security forces has improved, killings by soldiers of the new government are reported, including the massacre of 123 peaceful marchers in the eastern town of Uvira in May. In October, New York-based Human Rights/Africa reported details of large-scale massacres of Rwandan Hutu refugees by government forces. Scores of thousands of Rwandan Hutu civilians, militia and soldiers who fled their homeland in 1994 remain unaccounted for.

Freedom of expression and assembly have been restricted by the new regime's decrees. There is extensive open debate and an energetic print media, but newspapers are little circulated outside the capital and a few other large cities. The state-controlled radio network reaches large numbers of people throughout the country, although church networks are increasingly important. Independent journalists are frequently threatened, sometimes prompting self-censorship. On September 8 Polydor Moboyayi Mubanga, director of the opposition daily *Le Phare*, was arrested. Also in September, soldiers seized copies of the opposition daily *Le Potential*.

Numerous non-governmental organizations are active, including several focused on human rights issues. Among the most active were the Zairian Association for the Defense of Human Rights (AZADHO), the Zairian League of Human Rights and the Voice of the Voiceless (VS V). These groups produced reports highly critical of both the overthrown Mobutu regime and the new AFDL government. Other church-based and grass-roots groups have undertaken civic-education projects. Freedom of religion is respected in practice, although religious groups must register with the government to be recognized.

Zaire's judiciary is only nominally independent, and the president may dismiss magistrates at will. Courts are grossly ineffective in protecting constitutional rights. Long periods of pre-trial detention in prisons where poor diet and lack of medical care can be life-threatening are common:

Women face de facto discrimination, especially in more traditional rural areas, despite an array of constitutional protections. Employment and educational opportunities are fewer for women than men, and equal pay is often not offered for equal work in the formal sector. Married women must receive their husband's permission to enter into many financial transactions.

The end of one-party rule in 1990 also led to realignments in the trade union movement. Previously, all unions had to affiliate with the National Union of Zairian Workers (UNTZA), which was part of the ruling MPR, despite constitutional guarantees of the right to form and join unions. Over 100 new independent unions have registered.

The country's formal economy ground nearly to a halt during the last years of Mobutu's rule. The mining sector is now drawing new foreign investors to exploit the country's immense mineral resources. However, the country's \$14 billion in international debt and interest arrears of over \$1.5 billion owed the International Monetary Fund will hinder development, and the new government's economic pronouncements thus far have not encouraged those hoping for quick opening of the country's economy.

Costa Rica

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy
Economy: Capitalist-statist

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free

Population: 3,574,000

PPP: \$5,919

Life Expectancy: 76.6

Ethnic Groups: Spanish, large mestizo minority

Capital: San Jose



Overview:

Costa Rica prepared for February 1, 1998 presidential elections with the political debate dominated by a still sluggish economy and deep public disenchantment with corruption. Both President Jose Maria Figueres' party and the principal opposition group are viewed as corrupt.

The Republic of Costa Rica achieved independence from Spain in 1821 and became a republic in 1848. Democratic government was instituted in 1899 and briefly interrupted in 1917 and 1948 when the country was torn by a short but brutal civil war. The 1949 Constitution, which bans the formation of a national army, has proved to be the most durable in Latin America.

Figueres' party, the social democratic National Liberation Party (PLN), has held power for 18 of the last 26 years. In the 1994 elections, Figueres defeated conservative congressman and entrepreneur Miguel Angel Rodriguez of the Social Christian Party (PUSC), the country's other principal political organization, by less than two percent of the vote.

Figueres, son of former President Jose "Pepe" Figueres, a national hero who led the fight to preserve democracy in the 1948 civil war, campaigned against the neoliberal economic policies of outgoing President Rafael A. Calderon, Jr., of the PUSC. Rodriguez proposed to deepen structural reforms.

The country's economic woes result in part from a vast reduction in levels of foreign aid and international lending from governments that were eager to keep communists at bay. In an attempt to gain the confidence of Costa Ricans beset by economic hardship, Figueres asked his entire cabinet to resign in July 1996.

Anti-corruption maverick PLN crusader Jose Miguel Corrales, a former congressman and soccer star, received the PLN nomination in the 1998 presidential contest. He is opposed by Rodriguez, again the PUSC's standardbearer.

Allegations implicating both major parties in drug-tainted campaign contributions have been made during recent elections. In March 1997, a well-known PLN congressman was arrested in Costa Rica and charged with cocaine possession with intent to traffic; he and another PLN official were later indicted in Miami Federal Court on similar charges. New campaign laws have been instituted to make party financing more transparent. But Costa Rica's heavily armed police appear unable to stem the increase in drug-related corruption and money laundering. In 1997 there were more than a dozen murders committed by assassins hired by criminal gangs involved in money laundering, drug trafficking, gambling and car theft.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Costa Ricans can change their government democratically. The political landscape is dominated by the PLN and the PSUC, but numerous other parties run in elections.

The constitution provides for three independent branches of government. The president and the 57-member legislative assembly are elected for four years and are prohibited from seeking a second term. The assembly has co-equal power, including the ability to override presidential vetos.

Constitutional guarantees regarding freedom of religion and the right to organize political parties and civic organizations are respected. In recent years, however, a reluctance to address restrictions on labor rights has been noticeable.

Solidarity, an employer-employee organization that private business uses as an instrument to prevent independent unions from organizing, remains strong and has generally been tolerated by successive governments. Solidarity remains entrenched in Costa Rica's free-trade zones, where labor abuses by multinational corporations are rife. Minimum wage and social security laws are often ignored and fines for non-compliance are minuscule. Women workers are often sexually harassed, made to work overtime without pay and fired when they become pregnant.

The judicial branch is independent, its members elected by the legislature. A Supreme Court with power to rule on the constitutionality of laws is in operation, as are four courts of appeal and a network of district courts. The members of the independent national election commission are elected by the Supreme Court.

The judicial system is marked by delays, creating volatile situations in overcrowded, violence-prone prisons. The problem is linked to budget cuts affecting the judiciary and to the nation's economic difficulties, which have led to a rise in violent crime and clashes in the countryside between squatters and landowners. The deportation of more than 40,000 Nicaraguans in 1997 is evidence of the continuing tension between Costa Ricans and the estimated 420,000 Nicaraguans living in the country, most without papers.

Numerous charges are still made of human rights violations by police. Independent Costa Rican human rights monitors report increases in allegations of arbitrary arrests and brutality. In October 1977, a deputy security minister resigned from his post following charges that he was involved in irregularities in foreign arms purchases.

An official ombudsman provides recourse for citizens or foreigners with human rights complaints. The ombudsman has the authority to issue recommendations for rectification, including sanctions against government bodies, for failure to respect rights.

The written press, radio and television are generally free. A number of independent dailies serve a society that is 90 percent literate. Television and radio stations are both public and commercial, with at least six private television stations providing an influential forum for public debate. Though the Supreme Court ruled in 1995 that a decades-old law requiring the licensing of journalists was unconstitutional, inordinately restrictive libel laws remain in place.

Côte D'Ivoire

Polity: Dominant Party **Political Rights:** 6
Economy: Capitalist **Civil Liberties:** 4*
Population: 14,733,000 **Status:** Not Free
PPP: \$1,668

Life Expectancy: 52.1

Ethnic Groups: Baule (23 percent), Bete (18 percent), Senoufou (15 percent), Malinke (11 percent), others

Capital: Yamoussoukro (official); Abidjan (de facto)

Ratings Change: Cote D'Ivoire's civil liberties changed from 5 to 4 due to movement toward free elections slated for 2000.



Overview:

President Henri Konan Bédié, whose legitimacy rests on an overwhelming but deeply flawed victory in the October 1995 election, faced mounting student-led domestic unrest, despite a rebounding economy. Bédié offered constitutional changes and electoral code revisions oppositionists described as positive but only partial steps towards free and fair presidential and legislative elections next slated for late 2000.

Côte d'Ivoire continued a three year economic recovery, bolstering its position as one of sub-Saharan Africa's most prosperous countries. However, neither personal security nor democratic rights appear to be a fruit of this prosperity. Several attacks on and arrests of students and journalists and other security force abuses were reported in 1997. Crime remained rampant in the capital, Abidjan, especially in sprawling shantytowns where two-thirds of the city's people reside. Student unrest, sparked by non-payment of grants and other grievances, led to demonstrations and violent confrontations in April. Several student leaders were jailed. The government reacted to a strike by state media workers for better pay and working conditions by dismissing or jailing several strikers. Côte d'Ivoire retains strong political, economic and military backing from France, its former colonial master and still its main trading partner. There is a French military garrison near Abidjan, whose advisors serve with many units of the 14,000 strong armed forces.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Ivoriens were unable to freely choose their government in 1995 presidential and legislative elections. President Bédié was declared president with 95 percent of the vote in a contest in which Alassane Ouattara, the most formidable opposition candidate, was barred from running. Ouattara's exclusion was also seen as an act of religious discrimination by many of the Ivorians who share his Muslim faith.

The November 1995 legislative elections were also marred by serious irregularities. Dubious voters' lists, bans on opposition demonstrations and harassment of oppositionists seriously reduced their credibility. The national assembly is now dominated by the ruling Democratic Party of the Ivory Coast-African Democratic Rally (PDCI-RDA), which holds 148 of the 175 National Assembly seats. In August, the government proposed electoral code revisions and constitutional modifications opposition leaders said would not create the fully independent election commission needed to ensure fair elections.

Over 40 political parties are officially registered in Côte d'Ivoire, but only a few are active. The principal opposition parties, the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) and the Rally for a Democratic Republic (RDR) are hampered by harassment by the government. Notable among several active human rights organizations is the Ivorian Human Rights League (LIDHO) and the Ivorian Women's Movement (MIFED). Muslims complain of bias in both governmental and private spheres, although there is no evidence of systematic or official discrimination.

State-owned newspapers offer reporting only slightly less biased than the unre-servedly pro-government state-run broadcasting. The private print media remained under threat of governmental repression but continued in their roles as watchdogs and advocates. "Insulting the president," "threatening public order" and "defaming or undermining the reputation of the state" are criminal offenses interpreted broadly by authorities to silence unwanted criticism. Reporters from a leading opposition newspaper, *La Voie*, were severely beaten by police on two occasions in February and April while trying to cover student protests.

Côte d'Ivoire does not have an independent judiciary. As political appointees without tenure, judges are highly susceptible to external interference. Legal provisions regarding search warrants, rules of evidence and pre-trial detention are often ignored. An August 1996 law denounced by human rights groups gave police sweeping new search powers. Special police anti-crime units reportedly follow an officially sanctioned shoot-to-kill policy in confrontations with suspected criminals. Traditional courts still prevail in many rural areas, especially in handling minor matters and family law. Very harsh prison conditions are reportedly ameliorated only for prisoners with money to buy special treatment. Many deaths from diseases aggravated by a poor diet and inadequate or non-existent medical attention are reported.

Prison conditions for women are especially hazardous and mirror prevailing societal discrimination, despite official encouragement for respect for constitutional rights. Equal pay for equal work is offered in the small formal 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 scarcer.

Union formation and membership are legally protected, but the government has sometimes taken harsh action against strikers. For three decades, the General Union of Workers of Côte d'Ivoire (UGTCI) was closely aligned to the sole legal party. The Federation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Côte d'Ivoire (FESCACI) represents several independent unions formed since 1991. Notification and conciliation requirements must be met before legal strikes. Collective bargaining agreements are often reached with the participation of government negotiators who influence wage settlements. Privatization of many of the Côte d'Ivoire's state-run corporations are attracting renewed foreign investment and helping to create more jobs. A major debt rescheduling program was signed in May and a new agreement with the International Monetary Fund followed. Both are expected to give the economy a further boost, although gross distortions in wealth distribution threatens both social stability and long term growth.

Croatia

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Political Rights: 4
Civil Liberties: 4
Economy: Mixed statist
Status: Partly Free
Population: 4,420,000
PPP: \$3,960
Life Expectancy: 71.3

Ethnic Groups: Pre-1995: Croat (77 percent), Serb (12 percent), Muslim (1 percent), Hungarian, Slovene, Czech, Albanian, Montenegrin, Ukrainian, others
Capital: Zagreb



Overview:

In 1997, President Franjo Tudjman was re-elected president, and the ruling Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) won victories in most municipal governments and the upper house of parliament, strengthening its grip on power. Voting in the United Nations-administered Serb enclave of Eastern Slavonia was marred by irregularities.

Other key issues were the reintegration of Eastern Slavonia, captured and ethnically cleansed by Serbs and administered by the UN Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES); Croatia's reluctance to turn over indicted war criminals to the Hague war crimes tribunal; and the government's failure to implement commitments made under the 1995 Dayton Accords, particularly in the matter of refugee repatriation.

Hungary ruled most of what is Croatia from the twelfth century until World War I. In 1918, it became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, renamed Yugoslavia in 1929. An independent state was proclaimed in 1941 by the pro-fascist *Ustasa* movement. In 1945, Croatia became part of the People's Republic of Yugoslavia under Communist leader Josip Broz (Tito). On June 25, 1991, Croatia and Slovenia declared independence. The Serb-dominated Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) backed by Serb militias seized parts of Croatia, ultimately controlling one-third of the country and establishing the Krajina Serbian Republic (RSK). In December 1991, all sides agreed to the deployment of UN peacekeepers (UNPROFOR). In 1993-94, Croatia supported the Croatian Defense Council (HVO) in Bosnia in a war with Muslims. But in March 1994, President Tudjman endorsed a Washington-engineered peace accord signed by Bosnia's Muslims and Croats, leading to the formation of a federated state in loose confederation with Croatia.

In 1995, Croat forces recaptured Western Slavonia and Krajina. After a September campaign by Bosnian Croat and Muslim forces recaptured 20 percent of the 70 percent of Bosnia under Serb control, a cease-fire took effect on October 12 as a prelude to November negotiations that resulted in the Dayton Accords.

In October 1995 elections to the 127-member House of Representatives (Zastupnicki Dom), the HDZ won 44.8 percent of the vote and 75 seats. The opposition Croatian Social-Liberal Party (HSLs) won 12 seats, and the Social Democratic Party of Croatia (SDP), 10. Running on a joint list, the Croatian Peasants Party (HS) won 10 seats; the Istrian Democratic Assembly (IDS), four; the Croatian Peoples Party (HNS), two; the

Christian Democratic Union (HKDU), one; and the Croatian Party of Slavonia and Baranja (SBHS), one. The far-right Croatian Rights Party (HSP), won 4 seats, and the Serbian National Party, one. International observers criticized the government for allowing 300,000 Bosnian Croats to vote.

In local, regional and parliamentary elections held April 13, 1997, the HDZ captured 41 seats in the 68-member Chamber of Districts (Upanski Dom). The HDZ retained control of most city councils, while the opposition held on to city councils in Split and Dubrovnik. In Zagreb, where President Tudjman defied the opposition-dominated council elected in October 1995 by repeatedly rejecting its mayoral candidates, the HDZ won 24 of 54 seats in the city council, with the HSLs and SDP taking 23 and the HSS, three. In May, two opposition defectors from the HSS gave the HDZ control of the capital, ending the two year stalemate. Acting Mayor Marina Matulovic-Dropulic, who had been accused of corruption by opposition newspapers, was confirmed as mayor by the HDZ. In Eastern Slavonia balloting was extended an extra day due to such irregularities as incomplete voter lists, closed or late-opening polling stations and confusion over registration. Croatian parties won in 15 municipalities in the region, while the independent Democratic Serb Party won absolute majorities in 10 municipalities. Some 56,240 Eastern Slavonia voters, largely Croats exiled from the region, voted in other parts of Croatia.

President Tudjman easily won presidential elections on June 15, defeating Zdravko Tomac of the Social Democrats 61 percent to 21 percent. Vlado Gotovac of the HSLs was third with 17.6 percent. Turnout was 57 percent. International monitors condemned the elections as seriously biased, with the OSCE concluding that the vote was "free but not fair" and "did not meet the minimum standards for democracies." Among the criticisms was that 10 percent of the electorate, including many ethnic Croats from Bosnia, lived outside Croatia. National television and radio networks, both tightly controlled by the HDZ, did not give opposition candidates access. The electoral commission, also in the hands of HDZ appointees, rejected all opposition complaints, including the HSLs's contention that its monitors were barred from several polling stations.

Throughout 1997, Croatia came under pressure from the U.S., the European Union and international financial institutions to turn over indicted war criminals to the international tribunal in the Hague. During a May visit, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright warned that Washington would block IMF and World Bank loans if Croatia failed to make progress in the extradition of war criminals, the peaceful reintegration of Serb refugees and full compliance with the Dayton agreement. In April, the government extradited Zlatko Aleksovski, accused of murdering Muslim civilians in Bosnia in 1993. In September, the U.S. asked the Council of Europe to suspend Croatia for continued human rights violations and failure to implement the Dayton accords. In 1996, the Council had delayed Croatia's admittance over such issues as press freedom and Dayton. The U.S. also warned that NATO-led peacekeepers in Bosnia would arrest Bosnian Croat war criminals if Zagreb did not cooperate.

In July, UNTAES began a phased withdrawal of its troops in East Slavonia. UNTAES and the government signed an agreement on the two-way return of displaced Croats and Serbs. By September, some 6,000 Serbs and 1,400 Croats had returned, a fraction of those displaced. On November 1, over 2,000 displaced persons visited cemeteries at 11 locations around Vukovar. Serbs were repeatedly obstructed from returning to the region.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens can change their government democratically, but the strong presidency and the emergence of the HDZ as an entrenched, dominant party contribute to an authoritarian political environment. Critical decisions are made by the National Security Council, whose sixteen members are presidential supporters.

Irregularities in the 1995 parliamentary elections included reports that voters were not always guaranteed "a secret ballot and "numerous ballots were filled in publicly," according to OSCE. Candidates in some districts were declared winners on the basis of incomplete results, and the opposition petitioned to nullify results in several districts. The 1997 presidential elections were "free but not fair," and there were numerous irregularities in April's local elections in Eastern Slavonia.

An October 1996 media law was designed in accordance with conditions set down by the Council of Europe for Croatia's membership. It protects journalists from revealing their sources and from prosecution in cases where they publish false information unintentionally. But provisions prescribing fines and imprisonment for reporters who insult top officials were retained. The government retains control of two of four dailies and the country's only news agency, HINA, and has a monopoly on printing through two newspaper publishing houses. Editors and staff of the satirical weekly *Feral Tribune* have faced libel suits, death threats and harassment. The three national television stations are part of the state-owned Croatian Radio and Television Enterprise (HRT). Five local television stations operate with varying degrees of independence. More than 50 local and independent radio stations operate throughout the country but with limited reception in any given region or city. In November, a group of 20 prominent radio and television journalists said in a statement that the state should end its control of HRT. In April, the independent Radio 101, whose brief shut down in 1996 led to mass demonstrations, was awarded two frequencies to improve reception.

Freedom of religion is nominally assured, but, during the period of Serb control of Krajina and Western Slavonia, Roman Catholic Croats were expelled or persecuted and churches destroyed. When the Croats returned, hundreds of thousands of Orthodox Serbs fled. Only about 150,000 Serbs remain from a pre-1991 population of 580,000, and many face intimidation and violence. Laws from Zagreb also threatened Italian schools and cultural institutions in Istria, home of 30,000 ethnic Italians. Roma (Gypsies), who make up 2 percent of the population, face discrimination also.

The judiciary is not wholly free from government interference. The power of judicial appointments and dismissals is firmly in the hands of an influential parliamentary committee dominated by a hard-line HDZ faction. In January, the HDZ-staffed state judicial committee fired Supreme Court head Krunoslav Olujic after a smear campaign. Olujic was an outspoken advocate of an independent judiciary. In February, Tudjman loyalist Milan Vukovic was confirmed to the post.

There are three national labor confederations: the Croatian Association of Trade Unions, the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Croatia and the Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia. There are numerous independent associations of blue-collar and white-collar members. In May, union, government and employer representatives signed an agreement establishing the Economic-Social Council (GSV), a tripartite body to deal with economic and social development policies. Women are guaranteed equal rights under the law, and women are involved in politics, government and business.

Cuba

Polity: Communist
one-party

Economy: Statist

Population: 11,007,000

PPP: \$3,000

Life Expectancy: 75.4

Ethnic Groups: Creole (51 percent), European (37 percent),
black (11 percent)

Capital: Havana

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free



Overview:

In 1997 Fidel Castro showed no signs of loosening his grip on power, as cycles of repression, following harsh economic reforms, continued unabated. The Communist Party retains its monopoly political role, and dissidents challenging official positions on politics, human rights and other issues face fabricated and unfair charges designed to stifle all dissent.

Cuba achieved independence from Spain in 1898 as a result of the Spanish-American War. The Republic of Cuba was established in 1902, but was under U.S. tutelage under the Platt Amendment until 1934. In 1959 Castro's July 26th Movement—named after an earlier, failed insurrection—overthrew the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, who had ruled for 18 of the previous 25 years.

Since then, Fidel Castro has dominated the Cuban political system, transforming it into a one-party police state. Communist structures were institutionalized by the 1976 constitution installed at the first congress of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC). The constitution provides for a National Assembly which, in theory, designates a Council of State which, in turn, appoints a Council of Ministers in consultation with its president, who serves as head of state and chief of government.

In reality, Castro is responsible for every appointment. 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, Castro controls every lever of power in Cuba. The PCC is the only authorized political party and controls all governmental entities from the national to the municipal level.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, which subsidized the Cuban economy, Castro has sought Western foreign investment. A U.S. embargo has been in effect for more than three decades. Most investment has come from Europe and Latin America, but it has not made up for the lost \$5 billion in annual Soviet subsidies. The government claims the economy has rebounded in the past three years, but the "special period" austerity program, involving drastic cutbacks in energy consumption and tight rationing of food and consumer items, remains in place.

The legalization of the dollar since 1993 has heightened social tensions, as the minority with access to dollars from abroad or through the tourist industry has emerged as a new moneyed class, and the desperation of the majority without has increased. State salaries have shrunk to four dollars or less a month.

The cycles of repression Castro has unleashed with increasing frequency against

opponents, meant to keep at bay social forces set into motion by his economic reforms, continued throughout 1997. Stepped up actions against peaceful dissidents preceded both the Fifth Congress of the PCC held in October, as well as elections the same month to the National Assembly of Popular Power. Two small bomb explosions at hotels in Havana on July 13 also provided a pretext for action against peaceful opposition groups, which Cuban authorities tried to link to terrorist activities.

Neither the Fifth Congress, where one-party rule was reaffirmed, nor the one-party national elections provided any surprises. Castro proudly pointed to the fact of a reported 95 percent turnout at the polls; critics noted that in his paranoid paradise non-participation could be construed as dissent—and many people were afraid of the consequences of being so identified.

During the year, the remains of Argentine-born Cuban revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara—eulogized by Castro as an enduring symbol of the socialist "New Man"—were repatriated from Bolivia. At the Communist Party congress, Castro alluded to his own mortality and went on to bequeath to the nation his own hand-picked, and uninspired, successor—his brother, Vice President Raul Castro.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Cubans cannot change their government through democratic means. All political and civic organization outside the PCC is illegal. Political dissent, spoken or written, is a punishable offense. A person can even go to jail for possession of a fax machine or a photocopier.

Cuba under Castro has one of the highest per capita rates of imprisonment for political offenses of any country in the world. There are over 600 political prisoners, most held in cells with common criminals, and half convicted on vague charges such as "disseminating enemy propaganda" or "dangerousness." Since 1991, the U.N. has voted annually to assign a special investigator on human rights to Cuba, but the Cuban government has refused to cooperate.

Although there has been a slight relaxation of strictures on cultural life, the educational system, the judicial system, labor unions, professional organizations and all media remain state-controlled. A small, courageous group of human rights activists and dissident journalists, together with a Catholic Church, whose activities are still greatly restricted, provide the only glimmer of an independent civil society.

Members of groups that exist apart from the state are labeled "counterrevolutionary criminals" and are subject to systematic repression, including arrests, beatings while in custody, confiscations and intimidation by uniformed or plainclothes state security. In July 1997 more than a dozen government critics belonging to a number of unofficial groups petitioned Cuban authorities with a document called the Declaration of the Cuban National Alliance. In it they asked the Council of State and the National Assembly to organize a national referendum to reform the constitution to permit free thought and association, pluralism and direct elections by secret ballot. Each were visited in their homes by state security agents and warned that they could face prison terms as long as 25 years.

A handful of independent journalists, particularly those associated with five small news agencies they established, have fallen victim to endless repression. In 1997 this included more than two dozen detentions, beatings by state agents, forced exile, confiscation of work products and materials, and government-organized "acts of repu-

diation" in which government supporters were verbally and sometimes physically assaulted. In June the director of an independent news agency was detained for six days by police demanding he reveal his source for reports on a dengue epidemic he said had caused dozens of deaths. In July a reporter was sentenced to 18 months in prison, after having been denied a lawyer, for contempt and defaming the national police.

In early June 1997, the government issued new rules regulating the activities of foreign correspondents. A Havana-based International Press Center was empowered to reprimand or withdraw the accreditation of journalists whom the government decides have not reported "objectively." Foreign news agencies must also hire local reporters only through government offices, limiting employment opportunities for independent journalists.

There is continued evidence of torture and killings in prison and in psychiatric institutions, where a number of dissidents arrested in recent years are held. Since 1990 the International Committee of the Red Cross has been denied access to prisoners. Local human rights activists say that more than 100 prisons and prison camps hold between 60,000 and 100,000 prisoners of all categories. In 1993 vandalism was decreed to be a form of sabotage, punishable by eight years in prison.

Freedom of movement, and to choose one's residence, education or job are severely restricted. Attempting to leave the island without permission is a punishable offense. Cuban authorities have failed to carry out an adequate investigation into the July 1994 sinking of a tugboat carrying at least 66 people, of whom only 31 survived, as it sought to flee Cuba. Several survivors alleged that the craft sank as it was being pursued and assaulted by three other vessels acting under official orders and that the fleeing boat was not allowed to surrender. The government denied any responsibility, claiming the tragedy was an accident caused by irresponsible actions by those on board. Citing what it calls compelling evidence, including eyewitness testimony, Amnesty International called the deaths an "extrajudicial execution." Those in Cuba commemorating the dead, or who have peacefully protested the sinking, have faced harassment and intimidation.

In 1991 Catholics and other believers were granted permission to join the Communist Party and the constitutional reference to official atheism was dropped the following year. Religious freedom has made small gains. In preparation for a visit by Pope John Paul II scheduled for January 1998, Catholic pastoral work and religious education activities have been increasing.

Cyprus (Greek)

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy
Economy: Capitalist
Population: Entire island: 735,000 Greeks: 602,000
PPP: \$13,071
Life Expectancy: 77.1
Ethnic Groups: Greek majority, Turkish minority, and small Maronite, Armenian, and Latin communities
Capital: Nicosia

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Overview: Reunification of the divided island remained at the center of Cypriot political life, even as President Glafcos Clerides' center-right coalition government made European Union (EU) membership its highest priority. In January, the Council of Europe recommended that the EU offer membership to Cyprus in order to produce "significant economic and political advantages for the two communities" and a "major factor of stability." In July, the European Commission announced that Cyprus had met the Commission's political and economic reform targets, thereby allowing EU accession talks to begin in 1998. After these positive signals, the government continued its fast-track process toward integration. Turkish and Turkish Cypriot leaders, however, voiced strong objections to Cypriot accession. They also objected vociferously to the Cypriot plan to deploy Russian-made anti-aircraft air defense missiles.

Efforts by the United Nations and the United States to settle the decades-old dispute over Cyprus have repeatedly stalled in the face of violence, land disputes, and unwillingness on the part of either side to agree on terms for formal talks. Leaders of both sides, however, met several times during the year and expressed cautious optimism in June, when the United States appointed a special envoy, Richard Holbrooke, to open new mediations.

Annexed to Britain in 1914, Cyprus gained independence in 1960 after a ten-year guerrilla campaign to demand 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. Five days later, Turkey invaded, seized control of 37 percent of the island and expelled 200,000 Greeks from the north. Currently, the entire Turkish Cypriot community resides in the north, and property claims arising from the division and population exchange remain unsettled.

A buffer zone called the "Green Line" has divided Cyprus since 1974. The capital, Nicosia, is the world's last divided city. The division of Cyprus has been a major point of contention in the long-standing rivalry between Greece and Turkey in the Aegean. Tensions and intermittent violence between the two populations have plagued the island since independence.

U.N. resolutions stipulate that Cyprus is a single country whose northern third is illegally occupied. In 1982, Turkish-controlled Cyprus made a unilateral declaration of independence that was condemned by the U.N. and that remains unrecognized by every country except Turkey. [See Turkish Cyprus under Related Territories.]

The peace in Cyprus remains fragile. Propaganda in schools and in the media has sustained hostility among Cypriot youth. Blatant economic disparity exists between the prosperous south and the stagnating north. Even before President Clerides launched a \$300 million-a-year rearmament program, Cyprus was among the most heavy-militarized countries in the world.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Greek Cypriots can change their government democratically. Suffrage is universal and compulsory, and elections are free and fair. An ethnically representative system designed to protect the interests of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots was established by the 1960 constitution.

The independent judiciary operates according to the British tradition, upholding the presumption of innocence and the right to due process. Trial before a judge is standard, although requests for trial by jury are regularly granted. The judiciary became a subject of controversy in October, when President Clerides appointed a non-judge to the country's 13-member Supreme Court. While the break with tradition was within the president's constitutional right, it prompted 34 of the country's 44 district judges to tender their resignations.

Freedom of speech is respected, and a vibrant independent press frequently criticizes authorities. Several private television and radio stations in the Greek Cypriot community compete effectively with government-controlled stations. In addition, the government also publishes a Cyprus Internet home page, which features information on efforts to resolve the island's protracted dispute and on current developments and policy statements by Cypriot leaders.

Freedom of assembly and association as well as the right to strike are respected.

Czech Republic

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
Economy: Mixed capitalist
Population: 10,331,000
PPP: \$9,201
Life Expectancy: 72.2
Ethnic Groups: Czech (94 percent), Slovak (3 percent), Roma (2 percent)
Capital: Prague

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Overview: Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus's center-right government formally resigned on November 30, after the Christian Democrats (KDU-CSL) and the Civic Democratic Alliance (ODA) said they would leave the coalition. Other key issues in 1997 were damage from severe summer floods and the republic's inclusion in the first-round of NATO expansion.

The Czech Republic emerged in 1993 after the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia, which had been created in 1918 after the Austro-Hungarian empire's col-

lapse. The Czechoslovak President, Vaclav Havel—a leading anti-communist dissident and renowned playwright—was elected Czech President in January 1993. Premier Klaus and his pro-market Civic Democratic Union (ODS) led a four-party coalition that had won control of the Czech parliament in 1992. In June 1996 parliamentary elections, the ODS and its coalition partners—the Christian Democratic Union and the Civic Democratic Alliance—won only 99 of 200 seats, with the opposition Czech Social Democrats (CSSD) led by Milos Zeman winning 61, quadrupling its 1992 returns. The unreconstructed Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM) won 22 seats; and the ultra-nationalist Republican Party, 18. There is one independent.

In 1997, a sluggish economy led to a sharp drop in Prime Minister Klaus' popularity. On June 10, he narrowly survived a parliamentary vote of confidence. Polls showed that 78 percent of people surveyed did not trust the government.

The ruling coalition remained fragile, and leading ODS activists spoke openly about the possibility of Prime Minister Klaus being removed as party leader. For its part, the CSSD was riven by infighting which first emerged in 1996 when several deputies voted with the government on the budget. At October's meeting of the CSSD's Central Executive Committee, party leader Zeman's choice for the party's election manager was defeated.

In July, the country was formally invited to join NATO, along with Poland and Hungary. The NATO command in Brussels expressed concern about the preparedness of the country's army and low level of public support for the stationing of NATO forces on Czech lands.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Czech citizens can change their government democratically under a multi-party system. Six major parties have seats in the parliament. The 1996 parliamentary elections were free and fair.

The media face few restrictions, there are scores of independent newspapers, an independent press agency, and private local and national television and radio stations. In October, Czech Television announced it would broadcast video recordings of parliamentary sessions.

The judiciary is independent, but the lack of experienced judges and court delays remain a problem. There are few reports of abuses by security forces and police, although Roma (Gypsy) have complained of police and judicial indifference to bias and hate crimes. Freedom of assembly is respected.

Freedom of religion is also respected. Issues about restitution for Church and Jewish property seized by the Communists remain unresolved.

The Roma minority faces discrimination and abuses. In October, President Havel acknowledged that "there is blatant racism in our society" against the Roma. In August, Prime Minister Klaus met with Roma leaders to address their concerns. In 1997, hundreds of Roma have sought political asylum in Britain and Canada. Illegal skinhead and neo-Nazi organizations have attacked Roma and non-white foreigners.

Most unionized workers belong to the Czech-Moravian Chamber of Trade Unions (CMKOS), which was established in 1990 and includes some 35 unions. About two-thirds of all workers are members of a union. In February, a five-day strike by Czech rail workers marked the most serious instance of labor unrest since 1989. Teachers went on strike, and doctors threatened labor action.

Women are guaranteed equal rights, and face no overt discrimination in employment, government service, and education.

Denmark

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1

Economy: Mixed capitalist

Status: Free

Population: 5,245,000

PPP: \$21,341

Life Expectancy: 75.2

Ethnic Groups: Overwhelmingly Danish, small German and immigrant groups

Capital: Copenhagen



Overview:

Denmark's fragile coalition government, which is led by the Social Democratic Party (SDP), concentrated largely on economic issues and on forging consensus on the divisive issue of European integration. Danish voters approved the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, after voting it down in 1992, but only after securing exemptions from its provisions for a common defense and currency, European Union (EU) citizenship, and police cooperation. Polls suggest growing support for the Amsterdam Treaty, which the Social Democrats endorsed in August. At year's end, however, the Supreme Court was scheduled to review a citizens' group's challenge to the constitutionality and legality of the country's EU membership.

Denmark continued to draw criticism for its permissive free speech laws, which are said to foster undue tolerance for indigenous and foreign neo-Nazi groups. In September, another major political and social issue attracted headlines when rival motorcycle gangs vowed to end their four-year violent feud. Analysts warned, however, that the end of the rivalry could free the gangs to escalate their drug-trafficking and other criminal activity.

Denmark is the oldest monarchy in Europe. Queen Margrethe II, whose reign began in 1972, appoints the premier and cabinet ministers in consultation with parliamentary leaders. The 1953 constitution established a unicameral parliament (Folketing), in which 135 of 179 members are elected in 17 mainland districts. Two representatives from each of the autonomous regions of the Faeroe Islands and Greenland are also elected. The remaining seats are allocated on a proportional basis to parties receiving over two percent of the vote. An extensive system of local representation includes both regional and local councils.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Danes can change their government democratically. Representatives are elected to the Folketing at least once every four years in a modified system of proportional representation. The independent judiciary includes approximately 100 local courts, two high courts, and a 15-member Supreme Court with judges appointed by the Queen, on recommendation from the government. Danes enjoy freedom of association and assem-

bly, and workers are free to organize and strike. The vast majority of wage earners belong to trade unions and their umbrella organization, the SDP-affiliated Danish Federation of Trade Unions.

Danish 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 by the state, but are tightly-regulated and have occasionally been prohibited from broadcasting. In 1995, the Danish national Socialist Movement was banned from opening a radio station, as its campaign for a "racially clean" country was considered illegal incitement to racial hatred, going beyond Denmark's high threshold of tolerance for speech.

While freedom of worship is guaranteed to all, more than 90 percent of the population belongs to the state-supported Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark. In May, the church became the first to approve a religious ceremony for same-sex marriages. In 1989, Denmark became the first country to allow same-sex civil marriages. Discrimination on the basis of race, language and sex is illegal, and the media have taken a strong role in educating the public about non-Nordic immigrants and refugees to prevent the rise of racism. Women constitute approximately 45 percent of the wage labor force and generally hold 20 to 30 percent of national legislative seats. The civil rights of homosexuals are protected.

Djibouti

Polity: Dominant party
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 589,000
PPP: \$1,270
Life Expectancy: 48.8
Ethnic Groups: Somali (60 percent), Afar (35 percent), Arab
Capital: Djibouti

Political Rights: 5
Civil Liberties: 6
Status: Not Free



Overview:

December legislative elections in this strategically-located Horn of Africa country returned the ruling Popular Rally for Progress party (RPP) party, now allied to a former Afar rebel faction to power, reinforcing the long dominance of a clan of the majority Issa ethnic group. Economic decline and tension over the succession to ailing octogenarian President Hassan Gouled Aptidon, whose term expires in April 1999, raised chances of conflict within the Issa community and of renewed armed opposition by minority Afar dissidents who complain of pervasive discrimination against their ethnic group.

What is now the modern state of Djibouti was known as the French Territory of the Afar and Issa, after the two largest ethnic groups, before receiving independence from France in 1977. President Gouled's Issa hold most real power. Afar rebels fought a three year guerrilla war against Issa dominance, but tribal conflict has receded since 1994, when the largest faction of the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD) agreed to end the insurgency in exchange for inclusion in the government and electoral reforms before the December 1997 legislative elections. About

3,500 French troops are garrisoned in Djibouti. French advisors and technicians effectively run much of the country, and France is highly influential in Djiboutian affairs.

After independence, President Gouled ruled for 15 years with French backing under a one-party system. A new constitution adopted by referendum in 1992 authorized four political parties. In 1993, Gouled was declared winner of a fourth six-year term in Djibouti's first contested presidential elections with 60 percent of the popular vote. Both the opposition and international observers considered the poll fraudulent. The election was boycotted by ethnic Afar-dominated FRUD, and nearly all the candidates were members of the Issa ethnic group. Today, Gouled's nephew and cabinet chief Ismail Omar Gelleh is widely considered the de facto head of government and his uncle's most likely successor in a closely controlled 1999 presidential election.

Djibouti's politics reflect the country's principal tribal division between the Issa and related Somalian groups, which comprise roughly half of the population and are concentrated in the south, and Afar people who are about 35 percent and occupy the northern and western regions. Somalis from Somalia and Yemeni Arabs comprise most of the remainder of the population. In November 1991 FRUD launched its rebellion with demands for an end to "tribal dictatorship" and installation of a democratic, multiparty system. Amnesty International reported gross human rights violations against Afars by government security forces, including rape, torture and extrajudicial executions during the three-year struggle. The countryside has been largely quiet since. However, several incidents have been reported along the Eritrean frontier, where 11 government soldiers were killed in a September guerrilla attack. The lack of any genuine political opening and the slow demobilization of combatants on both sides bodes ill for lasting peace.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Despite the advent of limited multiparty elections, Djiboutians have never been able to choose their government democratically. Political power remains concentrated in the hands of the Issa majority along traditional clan lines, and the trappings of representative government and formal administration have little relevance to the real distribution and exercise of power. The December legislative elections were marginally more credible than the plainly fraudulent 1992 polls, but easily reinstalled the RPP, which in alliance with the FRUD took all 65 seats in the National Assembly. The opposition Democratic Renewal Party (PRD), credited with 28 percent of the vote in 1992, was seriously weakened by the death in early 1997 of its leader, Mohamed Djama Elabe won no seats despite a strong showing in several areas and claimed electoral fraud. President Gouled has sought ethnic balance in government by appointing Afars as prime ministers. FRUD leaders joined the cabinet as part of the December 1994 peace pact.

In January, five politicians expelled from the ruling party were released after serving five months' imprisonment and paying heavy fines for "offending the head of state." One, former minister Moumin Bahdon Farah, has formed the unrecognized and thus officially illegal Group for Democracy and the Republic. Political activities are sharply constrained. Formation of four parties is permitted by the constitution, but the ruling party determines which are legal. Freedoms of assembly and association are also nominally protected under the constitution, but the government has effectively banned

political protest. The judiciary is not independent due to routine government interference. In October, a French lawyer seeking to defend Aref Mohamed Aref, an oppositionist attorney arrested on what are described as politically-motivated fraud charges, was denied entry to Djibouti.

Security forces commonly arrest dissidents without proper authority despite constitutional requirements that arrests may not occur without a decree presented by a judicial magistrate. The fate of three FRUD officials arrested in Ethiopia in September and handed to Djibouti authorities is unknown. Prison conditions are reportedly harsh, although delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross have been allowed access. Independent newspapers and other publications are allowed to circulate freely, but the government closely controls all electronic media, which is the main source of information for the largely rural and illiterate population. Despite a constitutional provision for freedom of speech, that right is severely curtailed. Islam is the official state religion, but freedom of worship is respected.

Women have few opportunities for education or in the formal economic sector. There are no women in the cabinet or parliament. Despite equality under civil law, women suffer serious discrimination under customary practices in inheritance and other property matters, divorce and the right to travel. Female genital mutilation is almost universal among Djibouti's women. Legislation forbidding such mutilation of young girls is not enforced.

The formal sector in the largely agricultural economy is small. Workers may legally join unions and strike, but the government routinely obstructs the free operation of unions. The Djibouti General Workers' Union and the Djibouti Labor Union have denounced the non-respect by the government of workers' union rights and brutality by the security forces. Wages are very low, with many workers earning less than 50 U.S. cents per hour. The country's economy is heavily dependent on French aid and the estimated \$50 million generated annually by France's military presence.

Dominica

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Capitalist

Population: 83,000

PPP: \$6,118

Life Expectancy: 72.0

Ethnic Groups: Black and mulatto with a minority Carib enclave

Capital: Roseau

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Overview:

Prime Minister Edison James, leader of the United Workers' Party (UWP), has emerged as a regional spokesperson in the row with the European Union over bananas, and his government has called a commission of inquiry into police conduct.

Dominica has been an independent republic within the British Commonwealth since 1978. Internally self-governing since 1967, Dominica is a parliamentary democracy headed by a prime minister and a House of Assembly with 21 members elected

to five year terms. Nine senators are appointed, five by the prime minister and four by the opposition leader. The president is elected by the House for a five-year term.

In 1993 Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of the Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) announced her intention to retire in 1995 after 15 years in power. External Affairs Minister Brian Alleyne defeated three other candidates in a vote of DFP delegates to become the new party leader.

In June 1995, the UWP won a narrow majority, 11 of 21 seats, in parliamentary elections. James, a former head of the Banana Grower's Association, became prime minister. The UWP victory marked a significant power shift from the traditional establishment to a new and younger business class.

The DFP and the Dominica Labor Party (DLP) won five seats each. The DFP's Alleyne and the DLP's Douglas reached an agreement to share the official opposition post by alternating each year. Alleyne assumed the post first. A High Court, however, ruled that one of the winning DFP candidates was not qualified to sit in parliament since he still held a public service position. The ruling reduced the DFP's representation in parliament to four seats. Special elections, held in 1996, resulted in an additional seat for the UWP, raising its share to 12 of 21 seats. Douglas became the opposition leader. In early 1996 Alleyne resigned as head of the DFP and was replaced by former diplomat Charles Savarin.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens are able to change their government through free and fair elections. There are no restrictions on political, civic or labor organizations. Several civic groups have emerged in recent years calling for more accountability and transparency in government.

There is an independent judiciary, and the rule of law is enhanced by the court's subordination to the inter-island Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court. But the judicial system is understaffed, which has led to a large backlog of cases. The only prison on Dominica is plagued by overcrowding and sanitation problems.

The Dominican Defense Force (DDF) was disbanded in 1981 after being implicated in attempts by supporters of former prime minister Patrick John to overthrow the government. John was convicted in 1986 for his involvement 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. The Dominica police, which in 1997 was the object of a commission of inquiry into corruption, is the only security force.

The press is free, varied and critical. Television and radio, both public and private, are open to a variety of views. Since 1990 television has been used as an effective campaign tool by all parties. The government respects academic freedom and labor rights.

Freedom of religion is recognized. However, the small Rastafarian community has charged that their religious rights are violated by a policy of cutting off the "dreadlocks" of those who are imprisoned, and that Rastafarian women are harassed by immigration officials who single them out for drug searches.

Since 1990, the 3,000 indigenous Carib Indians, many of who live on a 3,700-acre reserve on the northeast coast, have been represented in the House of Assembly by an elected Carib parliamentarian. In 1994 Hilary Frederick was elected chief of the Carib people for a five-year term, defeating Irvince Auguiste, the incumbent. A po-

liceman was charged with the murder of a young man during the ensuing celebration.

Inheritance laws do not fully recognize women's rights. When a husband dies without a will, the wife cannot inherit the property, though she may continue to inhabit the home. There are no laws mandating equal pay for equal work for private sector workers. In the June 1995 elections, two women won parliamentary seats. Government welfare officials have expressed concern over the growing number of cases of child abuse.

Workers have the right to organize, strike and bargain collectively. Though unions are independent of the government and laws prohibit anti-union discrimination by employers, less than 10 percent of the workforce are union members.

↑ Dominican Republic

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 8,089,000

PPP: \$3,933

Life Expectancy: 70.0

Ethnic Groups: Mestizo and Creole (73 percent), European (16 percent), black (11 percent)

Capital: Santo Domingo

Trend Arrow: Dominican Republic receives an upward trend arrow due to government intervention against corruption and human rights abuses.

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Overview:

President Leonel Fernandez carried out a delicate balancing act in his first year of office, moving against corruption and human rights abuses, but treading softly where the trail led to his one-time patron, former President Joaquin Balaguer.

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 the conservative Balaguer.

The constitution provides for a president and a Congress elected for four years. The Congress consists of a 120-member Chamber of Deputies and a 30-member Senate. Balaguer was reelected in 1970 and 1974, but was defeated in 1978 by Silvestre Antonio Guzman of the social-democratic Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD). The PRD was triumphant again in 1982 with the election of Salvador Jorge Blanco, but Balaguer, heading the right-wing Social Christian Reformist Party (PRSC), returned to power in 1986 and was re-elected in 1990 in a vote marred by fraud.

In the May 1994 election the main contenders were Balaguer, fellow-octogenarian Juan Bosch of the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD) and the PRD's Jose Francisco Pena Gomez. The Balaguer machine attacked front-runner Pena Gomez, who is

black, as a Haitian who secretly planned to unite the neighboring countries.

Balaguer was declared the winner by a few thousand votes in an election rife with fraud. Amid street protests and international pressure, Balaguer agreed to hold new presidential elections in 18 months. The legislative results stood. The PRD and allies took 57 seats in the Chamber and 15 in the Senate, the PRSC 50 and 14, and the PLD 13 and one.

When Congress convened, the PLD backed the PRSC's plan to lengthen Balaguer's shortened term from 18 months to two years, with elections in May 1996. In exchange, Balaguer made a PLD legislator president of the Chamber. The PRD protested, but tacitly conceded by announcing that Pena Gomez would again be its standard-bearer in 1996.

Although Vice President Jacinto Peynado won the PRSC primary, the PLD's lavish spending campaign lent credence to the view that the money was coming from Balaguer, who wanted to stop Pena Gomez and thus avoid any future corruption investigation. In promoting its candidate, Leonel Fernandez, a U.S.-trained lawyer, the PLD took a page from the race-baiting book of the PRSC.

On May 16, 1996, Pena Gomez won 45.9 percent of the vote; Fernandez 38.9 percent and Peynado 15.0 percent. Fernandez won 51.3 percent, and the presidency, in a May 16, 1996 runoff.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of the Dominican Republic can change their government through elections. Constitutional guarantees regarding free expression, freedom of religion and the right to organize political parties and civic groups are generally respected. However, the violent political campaigns, the frequent government-labor clashes, and the repressive measures taken by police and the military mean that free expression is somewhat circumscribed.

The judiciary, headed by a Supreme Court, is politicized and riddled with corruption. The courts offer little recourse to those without money or influence. Prisons, in which nine out of 10 inmates have not been convicted of a crime, are abysmal and violence is routine. Torture and arbitrary arrest lead the complaints against the security forces, which, like the rest of the judiciary, is militarized. In early 1997 President Fernandez ordered police to stop harassing the left-wing Revolutionary Force (FR), led by Narciso Isa Conde, which protested Fernandez's economic policies.

In September 1997 Fernandez moved to clean up the country's anti-narcotics forces and to restructure the Supreme Court in an effort to root out corruption and to reduce growing complaints of human rights abuses by the police. He led the effort in his role as chairman of the National Judicial Council (CNM), which oversees judicial appointments. In the past, responsibility for appointing judges was held by the senate, which tended to increase politicization and de-emphasize professional criteria. The Supreme Court will take over this role. Fernandez also created a department to prevent administrative corruption within the Attorney General's office. Gen. Juan Folch, head of the National Drug Directorate, was dismissed because of allegations the anti-narcotics squad routinely tortured suspects.

The moves by Fernandez came at a cost. Folch's main accuser, Guillermo Moreno, the federal district's chief prosecutor, an outspoken champion of human rights and clean government, was also fired. Moreno had played a key role in investigations of

rights abuse, including murder, and corruption scandals dating to Balaguer's rule.

Labor unions are well-organized. Although legally permitted to strike, they are often subject to government crackdowns. In 1997, several people were killed in a series of violent clashes, many of them growing out of demonstrations for better public works and services. Peasant unions are occasionally targeted by armed groups working for large landowners.

Haitians, including children, work in appalling conditions on state-run sugar plantations. In 1997 thousands of Haitians were subject to arbitrary expulsion from the country. A 1992 labor code recognizes sugar workers' right to organize, but reports of abuses continue.

The media are mostly private. Newspapers are independent and diverse but subject to government pressure through denial of advertising revenues and taxes on imported newsprint. Dozens of radio stations and at least six commercial television stations broadcast. In January 1997 the National Commission on Public Events and Radio Broadcasting shut down 15 radio commentary programs produced by five stations in Bonaio. The programs supported local protests against a mining project. The Commission also shut down dozens of programs with religious-magic content.

Ecuador

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy
Economy: Capitalist-statist

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

Population: 11,662,000

PPP: \$4,626

Life Expectancy: 69.3

Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (55 percent), Indian (25 percent), European (10 percent), black (10 percent)

Capital: Quito

Ratings Change: Ecuador's ratings changed from 2/4 to 3/3 due to the deposition of Bucaram and growing political involvement of indigenous people.



Overview:

In 1997, President Abdala Bucaram, a flamboyant populist known as "El Loco," was deposed after scarcely six months in office. Congress named its own leader, Fabian Alarcon, to succeed the popular, but erratic Bucaram, a former mayor of Guayaquil, the country's commercial center. Congress also threatened to oust the Supreme Court if it intervened by charging Alarcon with corruption. Nevertheless, civic groups, particularly Ecuador's increasingly assertive indigenous peoples, have successfully pushed Ecuador's venal and parochial political class toward a reform agenda unthinkable a few years ago.

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.

The constitution provides for a president elected for four years, with a runoff between two front runners if no candidate wins a majority in the first round. A 77-member unicameral National Chamber of Deputies is in place, with 65 members elected on a provincial basis every two years and 12 elected nationally every four years.

The 1992 presidential elections were won by Sixto Duran Ballen of the Republican Union Party, with 57 percent of the vote in runoff elections, but whose short coat-tails gave his party just 13 of 77 legislative seats. Duran Ballen's term was marked by general strikes against his economic austerity measures, indigenous protests against business-backed land reform and the impeachment of numerous cabinet ministers by an opposition-controlled congress. Duran Ballen's vice president was accused of corruption and fled the country, and Duran was suspected of corruption.

In 1996 elections, Abdala Bucaram Ortiz, a former flamboyant mayor of Guayaquil known as "El Loco," won 54 percent of the vote in runoff elections, carrying 20 of the Ecuador's 21 provinces. Once in office Bucaram, who previously fled the country twice under threat of corruption charges, jettisoned his previous economic populism for a stringent market-oriented austerity program. At the same time, the authoritarian flavor and frenetic corruption of his government sparked angry protests led by indigenous groups, labor unions, women's groups and others.

In February 1997, at the end of a highly-successful 48-hour general strike led by Indians and students, parliament, worried that it too might be shunted aside by popular protest, decided to act against Bucaram. Eschewing impeachment, Congress deposed Bucaram on grounds of "mental incapacity." For 54 hours, a stalemate ensued between congress' choice for president, Speaker Fabian Alarcon, and Bucaram's Vice President and constitutionally-mandated successor Rosalia Arteaga, whose claim was quietly supported by an army high command interested in exercising power through a civilian figurehead. The impasse was broken when the military reached an agreement with Alarcon.

In May 1997, Alarcon was strengthened by a referendum in which 65 percent of those voting approved of his nomination by congress to replace Bucaram, who the month before had been granted political asylum in Panama. The voters also approved a broad reform plan for the judiciary. In July Alarcon, accused of employing more than 1,000 "no-show" employees while speaker of the house, dismissed the Supreme Court, ostensibly to carry out the "depoliticization" of the justice system mandated by the referendum, but in effect removing the chief judge, who was pressing ahead to have the interim president investigated.

Alarcon seemed to overplay his hand, however, when he sought to avoid convoking a constituent assembly until after he is scheduled to leave office in August 1998. Alarcon's original, unsuccessful argument for finishing out Bucaram's four-year term, that a mere 18 months would not give him time to either reform the state or set government policy, was successfully brandished against his own timetable. Observers pointed out that what had been true in February was even more so in August, as his government spent much of its time trying to quell scandals. A two-day nationwide strike in early August by Indians and peasants, which left one person dead, convinced the president to convene the constituent assembly following nationwide elections to the body in December.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens can change their government through elections, although the events of 1997 led some observers to wonder whether Ecuador was retreating from the ballot box. Competition is vociferous, and violence usually mars election campaigns. Constitutional guarantees regarding freedom of expression, religion and the right to organize political parties are generally respected.

Ecuador has become virtually ungovernable due to near-constant gridlock among the executive, legislative and judicial branches, particularly through the use by congress of easy and sometimes frivolous votes of censure and impeachment in order to block executive initiatives.

Evidence suggests that drug traffickers have penetrated the political system through campaign financing, and sectors of the police and military through bribery. Ecuador is a shipment point for cocaine passing from neighboring Colombia to the U.S.

The judiciary, generally undermined by the corruption afflicting the entire political system, is headed by a Supreme Court that, until 1997, was appointed by the legislature and thus subject to political influence. In reforms approved by referendum in May 1997, power to appoint judges was given over to the Supreme Court, with Congress given a final chance to choose that 31-member body based on recommendations made by a special selection commission. Judges are believed to have taken money from drug traffickers, and a poll in June 1997 showed that nine out of ten Ecuadorians have no confidence in the judicial system.

Numerous human rights organizations exist despite occasional acts of intimidation. The military is responsible for a significant percentage of abuses, particularly when deployed in states of emergency. Abuses are committed with relative impunity because police and military personnel are tried in military courts. Indians are frequent victims of the military working with large landowners during land disputes.

Unions are well organized and have the right to strike, although the labor code limits public sector strikes. The media are mostly private and outspoken. The government controls radio frequencies.

Egypt

Polity: Dominant party (military-influenced) **Political Rights:** 6
Civil Liberties: 6

Economy: Mixed statist **Status:** Not Free

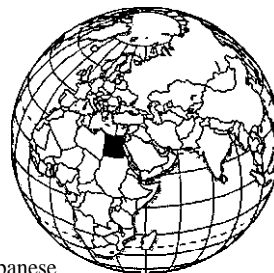
Population: 63,693,000

PPP: \$3,846

Life Expectancy: 64.3

Ethnic Groups: Eastern Hamitic (90 percent), Greek, Syro-Lebanese

Capital: Cairo



Overview: Nineteen ninety-seven saw the worst incidents of violence by militant Islamic groups since they took up arms against the government in 1992. A ceasefire declared by the jailed leaders of those groups in July went ignored by the government, which refuses to sanction any sort of dialogue with the armed rebels.

Amnesty International reported that within the first three months of 1997, 26 civilians were killed in three separate attacks, at least 22 of them Coptic Christians. Militants bombed a bus containing 33 German tourists in downtown Cairo in September, killing ten. In October, extremists used makeshift roadblocks to stop taxis in rural central Egypt, killing 11 passengers whom they identified as police officers. Sixty-two people, mostly foreign tourists, were killed at Luxor on November 17 by members of the extremist *al-Gama'at al-Islamiya* (Islamic Group). All six gunmen were killed hours later in an ensuing battle with police.

Opposition to an agricultural law set to take effect in October prompted a harsh crackdown by the government. Farmers and other opposition groups organized protests against Law 96 of 1992, which aims to regulate the relationship between land owners and tenant farmers. The law would lift rent control and facilitate the eviction of tenant farmers from agricultural land. According to Human Rights Watch, peaceful protests have been met with mass arrests, intimidation and harassment by security forces. The Land Center for Human Rights reported in August that 13 people had been killed and over 60 injured in the rural unrest. Detentions numbered in the hundreds.

Egypt was granted formal independence from Great Britain in 1922, though the latter continued to exercise gradually dwindling control until its surrender of the Suez Canal Zone in 1956. Colonel Gamel Abdel Nasser became head of state in 1954 after leading a coup which overthrew the monarchy and ruled until his death in 1970. A constitution adopted in 1971 under Nasser's successor, Anwar al-Sadat, grants full executive powers to the president, who is nominated by the 454-member People's Assembly and elected to a six-year term in a national referendum. Sadat was assassinated by Islamic militants in 1981 for making peace with Israel. Under his successor, Hosni Mubarak, the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) continues to dominate a tightly-controlled political system. In 1993 Mubarak won a third presidential term with 96.3 percent approval in a national referendum.

In the spring of 1992, the Islamic Group, which tapped into popular discontent with official corruption, high unemployment and widespread poverty, escalated its attacks on the police, Coptic Christians and tourists in a campaign to establish an Islamic republic by force. The authorities responded with crackdowns, and in early 1994 began arresting members of the non-violent Muslim Brotherhood, a fundamentalist movement dating from the 1920s which is technically outlawed but has been allowed to operate freely.

Hopes for an end to violence were raised during the last year and a half as the government's five-year crackdown seemed to have effectively neutralized Islamic activism. The leaders of the major extremist groups, along with thousands of their supporters, remain in jail. Over 70 prisoners have been executed since 1992 under special military courts set up to handle terrorist offenses. Popular support for the two major Islamist groups, Islamic Group and *al-Jihad* (Holy War), has diminished as their campaign has concentrated on violence against the government, rather than on alternative policies. Meanwhile, Egypt's economy, currently growing at a rate of five percent a year, has mitigated the discontent which fueled the spread of militant Islam.

But violence and fear continue. Many feel that by rebuffing Islamist calls for a ceasefire, the government not only missed an opportunity to promote peace, but invited retaliation. And even when the leaders of the major militant groups appear to be

rethinking their strategies, isolated gangs and splintering factions remain a viable threat. The two brothers accused of the September bus bombing did not belong to any Islamist group. They were among countless Islamist sympathizers who come from Cairo slums or rural backwaters where the effects of economic growth have not yet been felt. The Luxor attack occurred after repeated appeals by the Islamic Group's jailed leaders for a cessation of violence.

After a campaign marred by repression, the NDP won by a landslide in Local Popular Council elections held on April 7. Of 47,382 seats contested, 44 percent were guaranteed to the ruling party because their candidates ran unopposed. The Wafd party, which has aligned with a number of Islamic groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood, boycotted the elections, citing a lack of human and financial resources. The Muslim Brotherhood did not officially nominate any candidates, but allowed its members to run as independents. Monitoring groups reported threats against opposition candidates and their families, beatings and interrogations by state security forces, particularly in al-Daqahliyah, where seats were heavily contested by Labor and independent candidates.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Egyptians cannot change their government democratically. Parliamentary elections held in 1995 were characterized by widespread fraud and irregularities. Political violence killed 51 people and wounded more than 850. The Muslim Brotherhood could not compete because of a ban on religious-based parties. While its members can run as independents, in 1995 the authorities arrested several of the Muslim Brothers planning to contest the November elections. Just before the vote a military court sentenced 54 members to jail terms of up to five years for non-violent activities.

The militant Islamist battle against the secular government, now contained mainly in Assiut and al-Minya provinces, has resulted in over 1,200 deaths since 1992. Security forces have been accused of extrajudicial killings of militants during antiterrorist operations.

The Emergency Law has been in effect since Sadat's assassination in 1981 and was renewed for another three years in February by parliamentary approval of a presidential decree. Its provisions allow for detention of suspects without charge for up to 90 days. By some estimates, over 25,000 militants have been jailed or detained since 1992. In an intensified crackdown on extremists after Luxor, 42 suspected militants were arrested in late December.

International human rights groups regularly condemn abuse and torture of detainees by police, security personnel and prison guards, which are reportedly common practice used to extract information and confessions. Security forces often arrest and detain the wives and female relatives of Islamic activists as punishment for their husbands' activities or as incentive for the activists to turn themselves in.

The judiciary is influenced by the government in sensitive cases. Since 1992 Islamic Group and Muslim Brotherhood activists have been tried in military courts, where due process rights are severely curtailed. There is no appellate process for verdicts by military courts; instead, verdicts are subject to review by other military judges and confirmed by the President.

Press Law No. 93 of 1995 increased prison penalties and fines for libel and slander and provided for the detention of journalists for up to six months while being in-

investigated on such charges. In June, 1996, parliament passed a watered-down version of the law, reducing some of the prison sentences but maintaining the broad, vague language and heavy fines of the original.

Fifty books were confiscated in June by police for "contradicting public morals" and "mocking religion." Other books were confiscated throughout the year for similar reasons. The outspoken opposition weekly *Al-Shaab* was banned for two weeks in September. In 1997, one journalist was jailed and one expelled, and an issue of *Al-Hayat* was banned from circulation. The government barred all media from reporting the details of the September bus bombing incident.

The Interior Ministry sometimes denies approval for public demonstrations under the Emergency Law. The Ministry of Social Affairs has broad powers to merge and dissolve non-governmental organizations. The government refuses to license the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights and frequently harasses its members.

Women face discrimination in many legal and social matters. Foreign husbands and children of Egyptian women are barred from acquiring nationality, and women must have the permission of their husbands or fathers to travel abroad. A year-old ban on genital mutilation was overturned in June, then reinstated in December by the Supreme Court.

The government portrays itself as a staunch supporter of Islam, the state religion, while it cracks down on fundamentalist influences in academia, mosques and other institutions. In May, the government announced that it would take control of Egypt's estimated 60,000 mosques by the year 2000. The Imams of all newly appropriated mosques will be required to attend state-run religious indoctrination courses. The Minister of Education in October ordered female students who wear the *munaqabat*, a veil which covers the entire body, to adopt the standard school dress or be dismissed.

Islamic militants have murdered, kidnapped or raped scores of Coptic Christians in recent years and burned or vandalized Copt houses, shops, and churches. The government has seized Coptic church-owned land, closed some churches and frequently uses an 1856 Ottoman Empire-era law to deny permission to build or repair churches. Copts face discrimination in employment and education opportunities.

The 1976 law on labor unions sets numerous regulations on the formation and operation of unions and the conduct of elections. The government-backed Egyptian Trade Union Federation is the only legal labor union federation.

Child labor remains a serious problem. By law, children under 14 are not allowed to work, except in agriculture, where they may take seasonal jobs at 12 years old as long as they do not miss school. The law is routinely ignored, however; the Egyptian Center for Social Research finds that nearly one in ten children under 14 works. They comprise over seven percent of the total work force, and nearly all work in agriculture for wages no higher than \$1.50 per eight-hour day.

El Salvador

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy (military-influenced)
Political Rights: 2*
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Free

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 5,904,000

PPP: \$2,417

Life Expectancy: 69.3

Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (94 percent), with small Indian and European minorities

Capital: San Salvador

Ratings Change: El Salvador's political rights rating changed from 3 to 2 because of better voting conditions in March.



Overview:

Political rights improved significantly in 1997, as the left-wing *Frente Farabundo Marti para la Liberacion Nacional* (FMLN) nearly equaled the vote of the ruling *Alianza Republicana Nacionalista* (ARENA) in March congressional and municipal elections that were generally free and fair. Not only did ARENA accept the loss without threatening extra-legal action; the once-feared army remained neutral and the new National Civilian Police (PNC) enforced election laws in a professional manner. However, random killings, kidnappings and other crimes—particularly in rural areas—have reinforced the country's reputation as one of Latin America's most violent nations.

Independence from the Captaincy General of Guatemala was declared in 1841, and the Republic of El Salvador was established in 1859. Over a century of civil strife and military rule followed.

Elected civilian rule was established in 1984. The 1983 constitution provides for a president elected for a five-year term and an 84-member, unicameral National Assembly elected for three years. More than a decade of civil war (which left more than 70,000 dead) ended with the acceptance of United Nations-mediated peace accords in 1992 by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the conservative government of President Alfredo Cristiani.

The FMLN participated in the 1994 elections, backing former ally Ruben Zamora of the Democratic Convergence (CD) for president and running a slate of legislative candidates. The incumbent National Republican Alliance (ARENA) nominated San Salvador Mayor Armando Calderon Sol. The Christian Democrats (PDC) nominated Fidel Chavez Mena. The PDC had previously held power under President Jose Napoleon Duarte (1984-89).

ARENA, a well-oiled political machine, sounded populist themes and attacked the FMLN as Communists and terrorists. The FMLN-CD coalition offered a progressive platform and called for compliance with the peace accords.

In the March 1994 vote Calderon Sol won just under 50 percent, setting up a runoff against Zamora, who came in second with 25 percent. In the legislature ARENA won 39 seats, the FMLN 21, the PDC 18, the CD one, and the Unity Movement (MU), a small evangelical party, one. The right-wing National Conciliation Party (PCN) won four seats, giving ARENA an effective right-wing majority. In the runoff Calderon

Sol defeated Zamora, 68 percent to 32 percent.

In the March 16, 1997, elections ARENA won 28 congressional seats, 11 less than in 1994, to the FMLN's 27, with other parties splitting the difference. The FMLN also dramatically improved its municipal presence, winning two of the three largest cities (in coalition with other parties), six of 14 departmental capitals, and ten of the 19 municipalities in San Salvador department. At the same time, ARENA'S suffered significant reversals, reflected in its 35 percent of the vote, as compared to 45 percent in previous polls. ARENA's image suffered a serious setback when 500 people lost \$22.7 million in a financial scandal involving Finsenpro and an associated finance company controlled by party leader Roberto Mathes Hill, who was later jailed for his involvement in the affair. In an effort to control the damage, ARENA elected Cristiani, who still enjoys significant prestige as the president who brought the peace accords to fruition, as party leader.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens can change their government democratically. The 1997 elections were a marked improvement over those held in 1994. However, 250,000 fewer voters turned out this year than in the previous election, when 1.45 million people voted. Political parties have agreed to a set of electoral reforms needed to improve the process, such as updating the voter registry and reforming the registration process.

The constitution guarantees free expression, freedom of religion and the right to organize political parties, civic groups and labor unions. Although the 1992 peace accords have led to a significant reduction in human rights violations, political expression and civil liberties are still circumscribed by sporadic political violence, repressive police measures, a mounting crime wave and right-wing death squads, including "social cleansing" vigilante groups. The crime wave has been fed by the deportation of hundreds of Salvadorans with criminal records from the United States.

The judicial system remains ineffectual and corrupt. A climate of impunity is pervasive. A first step toward judicial reform came in 1994 with the naming by the new legislature of a more politically representative 15-member Supreme Court, which controls the entire Salvadoran judiciary. In late 1995, 14 judicial officials were removed and a number of judges placed under investigation. Poor training and a lack of sustained disciplinary action for judges continues to hurt the system. Corruption, a lack of professionalism and a painfully slow system of processing cases undermines public confidence in the justice system.

Although El Salvador is one of the few Latin American countries to restrict military involvement in internal security, the National Civilian Police, which incorporated some former FMLN guerrillas in its ranks, has yet to show it can curb the country's rampant crime while protecting human rights. In August 1996, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali warned of "increased signs" that the police were becoming "an instrument of authoritarianism that is not accountable to the public." In 1997 nearly 100 policemen were in prison on rights charges, reflecting a significant increase in police abuse. More than 170 PNC officers have been killed in the four years since the force was created.

Two amnesty laws have added to the sense of impunity. In 1992 the FMLN and the government agreed to the first of these, which covered most rights violations by both sides during the war. In 1993 the Cristiani government pushed a blanket am-

nesty through the legislature that protected the military against charges subsequently recommended by a U.N.-sponsored Truth Commission, which also omitted most of those involved in death squad activities.

Prisons are overcrowded, conditions are wretched and up to three-quarters of the prisoners are waiting to be charged and tried. Dozens of inmates have been killed during prison riots. In June 1996, inmates of the Santa Ana Prison, which was built for 350 but held 787, threatened to hold a "lottery of death" to alleviate overcrowding and appalling conditions. The protest was suspended after the government promised to ask the legislature to reduce sentences for non-violent crimes, to form a special commission and to build a new prison capable of holding 4,000 inmates.

The media are privately owned. Election campaigns feature televised interviews and debates among candidates from across the political spectrum. The FMLN's formerly clandestine Radio Venceremos operates from San Salvador and competes with nearly 70 other stations. Left-wing journalists and publications are occasionally targets of intimidation. On August 24, 1997 Lorena Saravia, a newsreader at RCS radio station in San Salvador was murdered; none of her valuables was taken.

Labor, peasant and university organizations are well-organized. The archaic labor code was reformed in 1994, but the new code lacks the approval of most unions because it significantly limits the rights to organize in areas including the export-processing zones known as maquiladoras. Unions that strike are subject to intimidation and violent police crackdowns. According to UNICEF, the number of working children between the ages of ten and 17 increased from 130,000 in 1995 to 311,000 in 1997.

Although the country is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, evangelical Protestantism has made substantial inroads.

Equatorial Guinea

Polity: Dominant party (military-dominated)
Economy: Capitalist-statist
Population: 431,000
PPP: \$1,673
Life Expectancy: 48.6
Ethnic Groups: Fang (75-80 percent), Bubi (15 percent), Puku, Seke and others (5-10 percent)
Capital: Malabo

Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 7
Status: Not Free



Overview:

Equatorial Guinea's leading oppositionist was sentenced to 101 years' imprisonment *in absentia* amidst a renewed crackdown on political dissent in one of Africa's smallest, poorest and most corrupt and despotic nations. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema M'basogo in February pledged new respect for human rights after admitting his regime had systematically violated them. In July, however, dozens of opposition activists were detained and tortured. In October, opposition leader Eloy Elo Mve disappeared from his home where he was under house arrest. Seventy other opposition lead-

ers were arrested at this time.

President Obiang, who seized power in 1979 by deposing and murdering his uncle, Francisco Macias Nguema, won another seven year presidential term in a February 1996 election that was neither free nor fair. Obiang has continued the severe repression that has made Equatorial Guinea one of the world's most closed and repressive societies since its 1968 independence following 190 years of Spanish rule. The country is ruled by a small clique of ethnic Fang people, particularly Esangui clansmen related to President Obiang. Revenue from oilfields that came on line in 1996 may help ease the economic despair of the country's 400,000 people, providing the funds are not squandered by endemic corruption which has helped block even modest development. Because of human rights violations and corruption, the country receives virtually no international aid.

Equatorial Guinea's first president Macias Nguema presided over a decade-long reign of terror until 1979. Tens of thousands of people were murdered and many more driven into exile. Few people lamented his overthrow and execution, but under Obiang repression continued. Obiang proclaimed a new "era of pluralism" in January 1992 under pressure from donor countries demanding democratic reforms. Political parties were legalized and multiparty elections announced. Three elections since have been mockeries of the democratic process. Opposition parties are continually harassed and intimidated. Unlawful arrests, beatings and torture are commonplace.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Equatorial Guinea's citizens are unable to change their government by peaceful and democratic means. Marred by official intimidation, a near-total boycott by the political opposition and very low voter turnout, the February 1996 presidential election was neither free nor fair. Opposition parties were widely believed to have won the September 1995 municipal elections, but the regime's official results, released eleven days after balloting, reported a large and quite unconvincing victory for the ruling Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea (PDGE). Intimidation and arrests of activists at voting centers, numerous electoral irregularities and the absence of international observers were cited as elements of widespread fraud.

President Obiang wields broad decree-making powers and effectively bars public participation in the policymaking process. The November 1991 constitution prohibits the impeachment of the head of state. Opposition parties, while legal, may not be organized on an ethnic, regional or provincial basis, although such is the obvious foundation of the ruling party. Each recognized party must pay a prohibitive deposit of CFA30,000,000 (approximately \$60,000). Opposition activists face harassment, arrest and torture, particularly outside the capital. In June the Progress Party (PP), whose exiled leader Severo Moto was sentenced to over a century in jail for an alleged coup conspiracy, was banned. In July security forces rounded up dozens of members of the Convergence for Social Democracy party (CPDS) and the Republican Democratic Force party (FDR) and other parties, who were reportedly tortured. The UN Special Rapporteur for Equatorial Guinea has offered details of numerous abuses.

The judiciary is not independent, and according to emigre sources the regime has summarily tried political opponents. There are persistent reports of torture by soldiers and police to extract confessions. Black Beach prison in Malabo, the capital, is described by survivors as hellish, and general conditions in prisons are extremely harsh

for all inmates.

Nearly all media are state-run and tightly-controlled. A few small independent newspapers appear irregularly, but exercise self-censorship. Opposition publications are not tolerated, despite constitutional guarantees. Underground pamphleteering appears to have provoked the regime's 1996 denunciation of "the tonnes of paper used in clandestine printing presses." In an act of brazen hypocrisy, the regime sponsored an August conference on the importance of an independent press to democracy in Africa.

Freedom of association, with partial exception for members of legalized political parties, is barred, as is freedom of assembly. Opposition demonstrations without prior authorization were banned in 1993. Any gathering of ten or more people for purposes the government deems political is illegal. There are no free trade unions. Freedom of movement is also restricted as citizens and residents must obtain permission for travel both within the country and abroad.

Traditional practices discriminate against women and few gain educational opportunities or participate in the formal economy or government. Constitutional and legal protections of equality for women are largely ignored. Violence against women is reportedly widespread. About 80 percent of the population is Roman Catholic, and freedom of religion is generally respected. However, President Obiang has warned the clergy not to involve itself in political affairs.

↓ Eritrea

Polity: One-party
(transitional)

Economy: Mixed statist
Population: 3,627,000

PPP: \$960

Life Expectancy: 50.1

Ethnic Groups: Afar, Arab, Beja, Bilin, Jabarti,
Kunama, Saho, Tigrawi

Capital: Asmara

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Overview:

Eritrea's new constitution was formally proclaimed in May and a transitional national assembly established to promulgate laws expected to lead to mid-1998 presidential and legislative elections, the country's first since it won independence from Ethiopia in 1991 after nearly three decades of war. The new constitution was drafted after extensive popular consultation, and the ruling Popular Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) appears to maintain broad support. However, President Isaias Afwerki often restates his mistrust of multiparty democracy. Political prisoners are reportedly held without trial, and no free media have been permitted. Eritrea's near state of war with neighboring Sudan, highlighted by each country's support for armed rebellion against the other, could reinforce the PFDJ's authoritarian tendencies. The PFDJ, created in February 1994 as a successor to the wartime Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF), dominates the country's political and economic life, and even open elections are not likely to change this.

Ethiopia was granted control over Eritrea in 1950 after nearly fifty years of Italian occupation. Eritrea's independence struggle began in 1962 as a nationalist and Marxist guerrilla war against the Ethiopian government of Emperor Haile Selassie. The war's ideological basis disappeared when a Marxist junta seized power in Ethiopia in 1974, and the EPLF's Marxist origins were discarded by the time it finally defeated Ethiopia's northern armies in 1991. Internationally recognized independence was achieved in May 1993 after a U.N.-supervised referendum produced a landslide vote for statehood.

The PFDJ's austere and single-minded commitment to rebuilding Eritrea has won it favorable comparisons to Africa's many corrupt regimes. The government seeks to balance senior governmental positions between the (roughly equal) Christian and Muslim population. Guerrilla attacks by the Eritrean Islamic Jihad, believed to be backed by Sudan's fundamentalist regime, have hit the country's western lowlands. Eritrea has broken diplomatic ties with Sudan, accusing it of plotting to assassinate President Afwerki, and openly supports the armed Sudanese opposition. A confrontation with Yemen over the potentially oil-rich Hamish islands in the Red Sea that flared into violence in 1996 is now under international arbitration.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Under Italian rule, as an Ethiopian province and as an independent state, Eritrea has never known democratic rule with free elections. The current 150-member transitional national assembly is comprised of the PFDJ's seventy-five central committee members, sixty members of the constituent assembly which drafted the constitution and 15 representatives of the Eritrean diaspora. Presidential and legislative elections under the new constitution are expected in 1998. The new charter authorizes independent political parties, but it is unclear if new parties will in fact be registered, and those based on ethnicity or religion are prohibited. The government's desire to reduce ethnic identification has extended to the naming of the country's regions on geographical rather than ethnic bases. The government's administrative competence should insure well-run elections, if not fair ones, particularly with regard to media access. However, the PFDJ's broad popularity will likely ensure its victory even in an open contest.

While open discussion in public fora is tolerated, spreading dissenting views is not. Government control over all broadcasting and pressures against the small independent print media have constrained public debate. Ruth Simon, a former Eritrean guerrilla fighter and correspondent for *Agence France-Presse*, was detained in April for allegedly misquoting President Afwerki regarding Eritrean incursions into Sudan. A Catholic-supported newspaper was closed in November 1995 after criticizing the government. A new press law adopted in June provides only qualified freedom of expression, subject to the government's interpretation of "the objective reality of Eritrea." Broadcast media will remain under state control, and external funding for independent print media is prohibited.

An independent judiciary was formed by decree in 1993 and is apparently operating without executive interference, although the ruling party's dominance over all areas of governance makes judicial independence questionable. Amnesty International reports that over 100 political prisoners remain in detention and that many received long prison sentences at secret trials. Lack of training and resources limit the courts' efficiency, and jurists have not been called on to take on difficult cases that might

challenge government policies.

Religious freedom is generally respected, although Islamist activities, believed to be sponsored either by Sudan or Iran, could lead to tensions among religious communities. The government has denounced what it describes as political activities by the Roman Catholic Church, and Jehovah's Witnesses who refused to serve in the armed forces or take a national oath of allegiance were stripped of their citizenship and their property was confiscated.

A small civil society sector is taking hold, although it is weakened by the absence of free media, and there are no independent domestic human rights groups. A new labor code guarantees workers' rights, but it is not clear that these will be respected in practice.

Women comprised at least a third of the EPLF fighters during the independence struggle, and the government has strongly supported improvements in the status of women. Equal educational opportunity, equal pay for equal work and penalties for domestic violence have been codified, yet traditional societal norms prevail for many women in a country that is largely rural and agricultural. Female genital mutilation is still widely practiced, even though it is discouraged by official education campaigns.

A broad privatization program and economic liberalization praised by the World Bank and IMF continued in 1997. A serious lack of infrastructure and the task of post-war reconstruction is complicated by severe environmental problems and demographic pressures, as hundreds of thousands of Eritreans made refugees by the long conflict return home.

Estonia

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy

Economy: Mixed Capitalist

Population: 1,470,000

PPP: \$4,294

Life Expectancy: 69.2

Ethnic Groups: Estonian (62 percent), Russian (30 percent), Ukrainian, German, others

Capital: Tallinn

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Overview:

In February, Prime Minister Tiit Vahi was replaced by Mart Siiman. The country's fourth government in less than two years remained essentially the same. The key issue during the year was the European Commission's recommendation that Estonia be invited to join the European Union (EU).

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, which forcibly incorporated Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into the Soviet Union. Under Soviet rule, over 100,000 Estonians were deported. Russian immigrants substantially

changed the country's ethnic composition; ethnic Estonians made up 88 percent of the population before Soviet rule and just over 61 percent in 1989. Estonia regained independence with the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Estonia's second post-independence election for the 101-member parliament, in March 1995, saw a shift to the left-of-center Coalition Party/Rural Union (KMU) over conservatives in the Pro Patria/Estonian National Independence coalition. The election results reflected popular dissatisfaction among the elderly and rural electorate, hardest hit by the Pro-Patria-led government's market reforms. In 1996, Prime Minister Vahi's coalition collapsed after Interior Minister Edgar Savisaar was implicated in the bugging of leading politicians. His Center Party, with 16 seats, left the ruling coalition, leading to Vahi's resignation, but parliament approved a new coalition government, again led by Vahi, in which the right-of-center Reform Party joined with the Coalition Party/Rural Union. The delicate left-right coalition commanded 55 seats, and held until February 1997, when the KMU asked the Reform Party and the Center Party to join a coalition government led by the KMU's Mart Siiman. President Meri approved the new government on March 16.

Prime Minister Siiman pledged his government's commitment to European integration, as well as the liberal free-market policy responsible for the country's economic success. In July, the European Commission recommended that six former Soviet bloc countries be invited to join, including Estonia. The invitation was based on continued economic reforms. Key problems were the position of Estonia's Russian minority, a large foreign trade deficit, uneven regional development and low GDP in comparison to the EU average.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Estonians can change their government democratically, although restrictive citizenship and alien laws disenfranchised some Estonians, particularly Russians. The 1995 parliamentary elections as well as 1996 local elections were free and fair. The president was re-elected by parliament in 1996 to a five-year term.

Political parties and groupings are allowed to organize freely, including several organizations representing the Russian minority. Several ethnic Russians serve in parliament. In January 1995, parliament adopted a new Citizenship Law, extending the minimum residency needed for naturalization from two to five years. The law allowed the government to waive the language requirement, but not the civic knowledge requirement for applicants who have had elementary or higher education in Estonian or who had performed valuable service to the country.

Of Estonia's population of just under 1.4 million, about 957,000 hold passports as Estonian citizens; just over 335,000 have no citizenship in any country, but have residence permits in Estonia. Over 100,000 are citizens of some other country, usually Russia. A January 1997 poll showed that two of three ethnic Russians ages 18-29 wanted to apply for Estonian citizenship and only 10 percent had acquired Russian citizenship, an easy procedure. Over 75 percent of young Russians said they regarded Estonia as their country compared to 27 percent of elderly Russians.

Estonians can freely express their views and there is a lively independent private press. Local television and radio are in private hands.

The judiciary is independent with no interference from other government branches. Under the constitution, judges cannot hold any other elected or appointed office.

Freedom of religion is guaranteed by law and honored in practice. The Russian minority and the Russian government have complained that the country's citizenship and alien laws discriminate against non-Estonians, but the OSCE has declared that it could not find a pattern of human rights abuses. Non-legislative steps to address Russian allegations of discrimination include a Human Rights Institute to monitor human rights and a round table, composed of members of parliament, the Union of Estonian Nationalities and the Russian-speaking population's Representative Assembly, which will work toward finding practical solutions to the problems of non-citizens.

The Central Organization of Estonian Trade Unions (EAKL) was created in 1990. A splinter group, the Organization of Employee Unions (TALO) was formed in 1993. There are approximately 30 unions in Estonia and about one-third of the labor force belongs to one of the two main labor federations. Collective bargaining is still in its infancy; workers have the right to freely organize and the right to strike.

By law and in practice, women have equal rights and opportunities in employment, education and public service.

Ethiopia

Polity: Dominant party **Political Rights:** 4
Economy: Statist **Civil Liberties:** 5
Population: 57,172,000 **Status:** Partly Free
PPP: \$427
Life Expectancy: 48.2
Ethnic Groups: Afar, Amhara, Harari, Oromo, Somali, Tigrean, others
Capital: Addis Ababa



Overview:

Ethiopia's transition toward liberal pluralistic democracy remained stalled in 1997. The ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government harassed political opponents and the independent media. The judiciary is very weak, and governmental corruption remains a serious problem despite graft charges brought against former deputy prime minister Temrat Layne. Trials of officials of the previous regime on human rights charges proceeded at a glacial pace, but about 1,200 of 1,800 individuals detained since 1991 have now been formally charged. The government's narrow ethnic base remains a divisive factor in Ethiopia's politics. It is still controlled by ethnic Tigrayans from the country's north whose guerrilla forces defeated the Marxist military regime in 1991. The EPRDF faces political opposition from the traditionally dominant Amhara people and low-intensity insurgencies by both Oromo and Somali peoples whose demands for self-rule go beyond the government's federalist decentralization. In June, Ethiopian forces crossed into Somalia to raid camps of the ethnic Somali *Al-Itihad Al-Muslim* (Islamic Union) militia after border incidents and several bombings in Ethiopian cities. The country's economic recovery may be threatened by a drought affecting several million people.

The EPRDF formed a transitional government after its 1991 victory over the 'Dergue' military junta headed by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, which itself had

overthrown Emperor Haile Sailaise in 1974. As many as 100,000 people were killed in efforts to quash ethnic rebellions during waves of political terror over seventeen years of Dergue rule. Extrajudicial executions, torture and detention without trial were widespread. Mengistu's downfall saw the decline of these practices, but the EPRDF's record in honoring fundamental freedoms was at best uneven.

The 1995 elections were conducted under a constitution adopted in December 1994 by a constituent assembly elected six months earlier. Most opposition parties boycotted the polls, and the EPRDF won 483 out of 548 seats in the Council of People's Representatives. Under the new constitutional arrangement, Meles Zenawi was elected Prime Minister by the new Council of People's Representatives. He retains much of the power he held as president of the 1991-95 transitional government. Prime Minister Meles' Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), which led the military drive that toppled the Mengistu regime, is the most important political grouping and at the heart of the EPRDF. A president with only symbolic powers was also appointed.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

The people of Ethiopia chose their government through a relatively open electoral process for the first time in May 1995 legislative elections. Most international observers judged the election as largely free and fair despite substantial government manipulation and inadequate protection of basic rights before the polls, including a crackdown on the independent media in the months before the vote. There are few signs that a more level electoral playing field will exist for the scheduled 2000 elections.

The December 1994 constitution provides significant decentralization, allowing regional autonomy and nominally even secession from the federation. The government has devolved some power to regional and local governments. However, as the EPRDF today controls all the elected regional councils directly or with coalition partners, there is little likelihood any region will soon exercise its right to secede.

Armed conflict and reports of human rights abuses come from several areas. The ethnic Somali and Islamist-leaning *Al-Ittihad Al-Islam* has claimed responsibility for assassinations and bombings in Ethiopian cities. Ethiopian forces retaliated in 1996 and again in June by launching incursions 50 kilometers into Somalia against *Al-Ittihad* base camps. The skirmishing is a continuation of the centuries-old conflict between the Somali clans who inhabit the Ogaden Desert and Ethiopian rulers who have long maintained at least nominal suzerainty over the area. Ethiopia repulsed a Somalian invasion aimed at annexing the territory in 1977.

Potentially far more dangerous is an armed rebellion by the banned Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia simmering across southern Ethiopia. Oromos comprise about 40 percent of Ethiopia's nearly 60 million people and are the country's largest ethnic group. Sporadic fighting in the countryside has produced numerous casualties and reports of human rights abuses. Many OLF supporters are imprisoned. Oromo grievances include long periods of governmental neglect of their region, which remains desperately poor even by Ethiopian standards, and migration of other ethnic groups onto traditional Oromo lands. Potential for unrest also remains high in the Afar areas of northeast Ethiopia.

Even non-violent activists have been intimidated or harassed by security officials or detained without charges, international rights groups report, and some have had their offices closed. Two opposition members of parliament fled the country in Sep-

tember. In May, the independent Ethiopian Human Rights Council said Assefa Maru, a leader of the organization and of the Ethiopian Teachers' Association, was shot dead by police in Addis Ababa as he walked home from his office in broad daylight. The government claimed he was an armed underground political leader, but other observers disagreed. The British Government suspended training assistance to the Ethiopian police after the murder. Many other instances of arrests and disappearance are reported. Ethiopia is one of only two African states which has not ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

Broadcast media are firmly under government control. Self-censorship for fear of harassment and intimidation is now widespread in the independent print media. In February, editor-in-chief of the *Ethio Times* newspaper, Kefle Mulat, was sentenced to six months in prison for "disseminating false information." In October, Editor-in-Chief Solomon Namara and Deputy Editor-in-Chief Tesfaye Deressa of the *Urji* newspaper were arrested by security agents at their Addis Ababa office. Very high bail is set for journalists awaiting trial, and severe fines have been imposed to effectively close publications. Some human rights groups such as the Ethiopian Human Rights Council are active, but the government has shut down numerous NGOs for failure to comply with new registration requirements.

Violence against women is reportedly common, and women face widespread social discrimination despite legal protections. Female genital mutilation is widely practiced, although prohibited by law. Women traditionally have few land or property rights and especially in rural areas are allowed few opportunities beyond agricultural labor. Trade unions are operating, but their freedom to bargain and to strike has not yet been fully tested. Religious freedom is generally respected. Privatization programs are proceeding. Record coffee exports and economic liberalization have boosted economic growth, but the country remains very poor with per capita gross national product estimated at \$120 per year, and of course far less for the majority of Ethiopians who are subsistence farmers.

↑ Fiji

Polity: Parliamentary democracy and native chieftains

Economy: Capitalist

Population: 811,000

PPP: \$5,763

Life Expectancy: 71.8

Ethnic Groups: Fijian (51 percent), Indian (42percent), other Pacific islander, Chinese

Capital: Suva

Trend Arrow: Fiji receives an upward trend arrow due to constitutional amendments that dismantled the apartheid system.

Political Rights: 4

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Partly Free



Overview: Fiji's parliament approved constitutional amendments in 1997 designed to dismantle an apartheid political system that contributed to political crises, racial schisms, the migration of 53,000 Indo-Fijians and a depressed economy.

Fiji's paramount chiefs ceded sovereignty over these South Pacific islands to the British in 1874 to end territorial conquests among rival kingdoms. In 1879 the British began bringing Indian laborers to work on plantations. At independence in 1970 the indigenous-Fijian and Indo-Fijian communities were roughly equal in population.

The 1987 elections brought to power a coalition of two predominantly Indo-Fijian parties, the National Federation Party (NFP) and the Fiji Labor Party (FLP), snapping the 17-year rule of the indigenous-Fijian Alliance Party. Backed by extremists alarmed at the emerging political influence of the economically successful Indo-Fijian community, (then) Lieutenant Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka took power in the Pacific's first coups in May and September 1987.

The 1990 constitution guaranteed indigenous-Fijians a perpetual parliamentary majority by reserving for them 37 of the 70 seats in the House of Representatives and 24 of the 34 seats in the appointed Senate, and placed voting entirely along communal rolls. The constitution also required the prime minister to be an indigenous-Fijian.

Rabuka's Fijian Political Party (SVT) led a coalition government following the 1992 elections. At early elections in February 1994, in the indigenous-Fijian voting the SVT won 31 seats; the Fijian Association Party (FAP), led by a Rabuka rival, five, independents, one. In the Indo-Fijian voting, the NFP took 20 seats and the FLP seven. The General Voters Party (GVP) took four of five seats for "other races," with one seat reserved for the island dependency of Rotuma. Rabuka began a five-year term as head of a coalition government of his SVT, the GVP and the two independents.

In September 1996 an independent constitutional review commission (CRC) recommended reforms that formed the basis of constitutional amendments reached in April 1997 by an all-party parliamentary committee and approved unanimously by parliament in July. The centerpiece was a new electoral system making 25 of 71 lower house seats open to all races and reserving 23 seats for indigenous-Fijians, 19 for Indo-Fijians, three for general electors, and one for Rotuma. The reforms also hope to achieve

multiracial government by requiring the leader of the largest party in parliament to invite parties crossing a certain threshold into government. The Great Council of Chiefs (GCC), a group of unelected, traditional rulers, will still appoint the largely ceremonial president, but significantly the revisions allow for an Indo-Fijian premier. The Senate will continue to be appointed.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Fijians have voted twice under a constitution that was promulgated by an unelected government without a referendum and ensures indigenous-Fijians a parliamentary majority.

Opposition parties are active and influential within the limits of the system. Constitutional revisions approved in July 1997 will come into effect in July 1998, including a new Bill of Rights, although the electoral arrangements will not be put into practice until the next elections, due by July 1999. The Indo-Fijian dominated, opposition FLP has criticized the constitutional amendments as inadequate to end race-bound politics. For example, 46 of the 71 seats are still on communal rolls; the CRC had recommended only 25 such seats.

The judiciary is independent. A persistent problem is abuse of detainees and prisoners. The June 1997 *Pacific Islands Monthly* reported allegations of rampant drug dealing and abuse of authority at Suva Prison in the capital.

Two restrictive speech and press laws and the Rabuka government's criticism of editors and journalists over political coverage lead private newspapers to practice some self-censorship. Nevertheless, editorials do criticize the government, and citizens speak freely on political issues. The seldom-used Public Order Act (POA) prohibits speech or actions likely to incite racial antagonism. The Press Correction Act (PCA), which has never been used, authorizes the Minister of Information to order a newspaper to print a "correcting statement" to an article and criminalizes publication of "malicious" material. In May 1996 the government lifted a ban preventing a *Fiji Times* columnist from publishing within three days following a public outcry. The partially-private Fiji One Television provides objective news coverage.

Rape and domestic violence are serious problems. In some rape cases the practice of *Bulubulu* (traditional reconciliation) allows the offender to apologize to a victim's relatives to avoid a felony charge. Cultural norms relegate many women to traditional roles, although women have made inroads in the public service and professions, and in 1997 Rabuka named a woman as deputy premier. Increasing media reports of child sexual exploitation have put pressure on the government to strengthen laws against pedophilia and protecting children. Indo-Fijians occasionally face racially-motivated harassment and are underrepresented in the senior civil service. Indigenous Fijians hold 83 percent of the land, and Indo-Fijians, who are the primary cash crop farmers but have limited land tenure, fear farmers will be evicted as current leases expire between 1997 and 2000.

Indo-Fijians hold leading posts in the vigorous, independent trade union movement. Working conditions, particularly in the garment and canning industries, are often poor, and enforcement of safety standards is weak.

Finland

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Economy: Mixed capitalist
Status: Free

Population: 5,127,000

PPP: \$17,417

Life Expectancy: 76.3

Ethnic Groups: Finn (94 percent), Swede, (Saami) Lapp, Gypsy

Capital: Helsinki



Overview:

Under Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen, Finland's coalition government has sought closer integration into the European Union. In September, Lipponen's Social Democratic Party agreed to seek status for Finland as a founder member of the European monetary union in 1999. Earlier, the leading opposition party announced its opposition to the union.

Finland declared independence in 1917, following eight centuries of foreign domination. Its current constitution, issued in July 1919, provides for a 200-seat parliament elected for a four-year term by universal suffrage. The directly-elected president holds considerable power, particularly because the multi-party, proportional representation system prevents any single party from gaining a parliamentary majority. The president can initiate and veto legislation, dissolve parliament at any time and call for elections. He also appoints the prime minister. The president currently holds primary responsibility for national security and foreign affairs, while the prime minister's mandate covers all other areas. Eleven mainland provinces are headed by governors appointed by the president, while the Swedish-speaking island province of Aland enjoys autonomy.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Finns can change their government by democratic means. In 1994, the country held its first direct presidential election since independence. Legislation passed in 1992 provides all Finnish citizens with the right to their own culture and equal protection under the law. Nevertheless, Gypsies, who have lived in Finland for nearly 500 years and who outnumber the Saamis (or Lapps), often report being treated as outsiders by the largely homogeneous population. Discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex, language or social status is illegal. By law, newspapers cannot identify people by race.

A wide selection of publications is available to the Finnish public. Newspapers are private, and the self-censorship that was traditionally practiced on issues relating to the Soviet Union is no longer in effect. Traditionally, many political parties owned or controlled newspapers, but several dailies have folded in recent years. The Finnish Broadcasting Company controls most radio and television programming, but limited private broadcasting is available.

An overwhelming majority of Finnish workers, who have the right to organize, bargain and strike, belong to trade unions. The Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions dominates the labor movement.

Only 60,000 people in the country are foreign residents. While a strict refugee quota of 500 persons per year maintains the homogeneity of the population, those refugees who are granted admission receive free housing, medical care, monthly stipends and language lessons. In an effort to prevent "ethnic ghettos" from forming, some refugees are placed in small villages in which the residents have never seen foreigners. The government has instituted educational programs to teach children about their new neighbors. Finns enjoy freedom of religion, and both the predominant Lutheran church and the smaller Orthodox church are financed through a special tax from which citizens may exempt themselves.

France

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
 Political Rights: 1
 Civil Liberties: 2
 Economy: Mixed capitalist
 Status: Free

Population: 58,426,000

PPP: \$20,510

Life Expectancy: 78.7

Ethnic Groups: French, regional minorities (Corsican, Alsatian, Basque, Breton), various Arab and African immigrant groups

Capital: Paris



Overview: Socialist Lionel Jospin became prime minister in upset elections in May and June. President Jacques Chirac, exercising his prerogative of "dissolution," had called for an early vote to secure a confirmation of his European policy, which requires that monetary and budgetary targets be met in 1998. Although the Socialists won an absolute majority in the National Assembly (parliament), Jospin named some ministers from other leftist parties, notably the PCF (Communists).

At the same time, the National Front, a far-right party led by the racist Jean-Marie Le Pen, continued to grow in influence. Having received 15 percent of the vote in the 1997 parliamentary elections, the party governs in four southern towns. It expects to increase its power in March 1998 local and regional elections.

After World War II, France established a parliamentary Fourth Republic, which was governed by coalitions and ultimately failed due to the Algerian war. The Fifth Republic began in 1958 under Prime Minister (and later president) Charles de Gaulle. Election of the President by popular suffrage began in 1965. In 1992, French citizens narrowly approved European political and economic union under the Maastricht Treaty.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: French citizens can change their government democratically. The president and National Assembly are directly elected. The constitution grants the president significant emergency powers, including rule by decree under certain circumstances. The president may call referenda and dissolve parliament, but may not veto its acts or routinely issue decrees.

Decentralization has given mayors significant power over housing, transportation, schools, culture, welfare, and law enforcement. The judiciary is independent.

France has drawn criticism for its treatment of immigrants. Children of immigrants are not granted citizenship at birth, but must apply when they are between 16 and 21 years of age or forfeit their right. Despite legal provisions authorizing refugee seekers to cross the border without visas or identity papers, border guards have occasionally used excessive force to discourage crossings.

The status of foreigners in France is confused by a succession of sometimes contradictory immigration laws. The National Front and other far-right groups have gained popularity by blaming immigrants for high unemployment. In fact, the jobless rate of immigrants is three times higher than that of the native French.

During his campaign, Prime Minister Jospin pledged to reverse the country's restrictive immigration law. In October, however, with the country still plagued by high unemployment, he stated that the government would instead "modify" the law "profoundly." If passed, the new law would automatically grant French citizenship at the age of 18 to all French-born children who have lived in France for five years between the ages of 11 and 18. It would also relax political asylum restrictions.

The press in France is free, although the government's financial support of journalism and the registration of journalists has raised concerns about media independence. Publication of opinion polls results is prohibited in the week preceding any election.

Despite open suspicion toward Muslims and prohibitions against wearing religious garb or symbols in state schools, religious freedom is protected. Labor rights are respected in practice, and strikes are widely and effectively used to protest government economic policy.

Incendiary racist remarks by Jean-Marie Le Pen led to the introduction of legislation to punish the publication of xenophobic and racist ideas with mandatory jail sentences. In September, a National Front mayor was given a three-month suspended jail sentence and fined approximately \$9000 for making racist statements in a German newspaper interview. Current law only punishes acts that incite discrimination, hatred or violence. Human rights advocates, however, have expressed concern that the new law will open the door to repression of a wider range of ideas. Most publications banned in recent years have been neo-fascist or anti-Semitic in content.

The initial exercise of power by Le Pen's National Front has already threatened freedoms. In October, the National Front mayor of Vitrolles closed ("as a health measure") a cafe frequented by critics of the party's policies. Earlier, the mayor had purged leftist-oriented books from municipal libraries.

Gabon

Polity: Dominant party **Political Rights:** 5
Economy: Capitalist **Civil Liberties:** 4
Population: 1,173,000 **Status:** Partly Free
PPP: \$3,641
Life Expectancy: 54.1
Ethnic Groups: Duma, Fang (25 percent), Mpongwe, Shogo, others
Capital: Libreville



Overview: President Omar Bongo continues to hold power closely despite the formal trappings of democracy, relying on his proven methods of patronage, manipulation and intimidation. His 1993 re-election was clearly fraudulent. An independent National Election Commission created as part of a new constitution approved by a 1995 referendum has so far proved itself neither autonomous nor competent. Another independent radio station was attacked and silenced in 1997. Opposition parties became further divided in 1997.

Gabon is a heavily forested and oil-rich country straddling the equator on Central Africa's west coast. It gained independence from France in 1960. Bongo moved from soldier to president with French support in 1967 and officially outlawed the opposition. France maintains a 600-strong garrison of elite marines in Gabon, and French troops have twice intervened in support of the Bongo regime. In 1990, protests prompted by economic duress forced Bongo to accept a broad-based national conference which oppositionists hoped would allow a peaceful transition to democratic governance. But Bongo retained his position in rigged December 1993 elections that sparked violent protests and repression led by Bongo's Presidential Guard. The 1994 Paris Accords claimed to institute true democratic reforms. Municipal elections in 1996 saw major opposition gains, including the election of Paul Mba Abbesole, leader of the largest opposition party, the National Lumberjack's Rally (RNB), as mayor of the capital, Libreville. Yet legislative polls, delayed by decree until December 1996 were again beset by fraud as Bongo's Gabon Democratic Party (PDG) won an overwhelming but thoroughly unconvincing victory.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Gabon's citizens cannot exercise their constitutional right to change their government democratically. Bongo was declared winner of the December 1993 election before many votes were counted after a campaign that included profligate use of state resources and state media to promote his incumbency. For nearly three decades, Bongo has retained power by manipulating elections, co-opting opponents and occasionally using brute force.

All institutions of state are influenced or controlled by Bongo and a small elite around him. Constitutionally guaranteed rights to legal counsel and public criminal trials are generally respected, but from the Constitutional Court down the judiciary suffers from political interference. The law presumes one is guilty as charged, and judges may deliver a verdict at an initial hearing if they decide sufficient evidence is

presented. Torture remains a standard method to obtain confessions. Prison conditions are abysmal, with insufficient food and water, inadequate medical facilities and frequent beatings. The government often detains illegal and legal refugees without charge, and there have been reports of forced labor by detainees. In August, contravening international law, the government forcibly expatriated 168 Rwandan Hutu refugees by air directly to Rwanda, and has threatened to expel any other Hutus arriving illegally in Gabon.

Free speech is generally respected, and print media operate with little hindrance. About a dozen private weeklies, primarily controlled by opposition parties, are published, in addition to a government daily. But broadcast media are the most crucial means of communication in a country of low literacy and few roads. Here, government domination is nearly complete. Only a few private broadcasters have been licensed, and their viability is tenuous. In May, the independent radio broadcaster *La Radio Commercial* in Libreville was attacked by armed men who destroyed the station's transmitters. Military attacks wrecked two other private radio stations in 1994. Foreign newspapers, magazines and broadcasts are usually available, but editions containing criticisms of President Bongo have been seized.

Rights of assembly and association are guaranteed under the constitution. Permits are required for public gatherings. Freedom to form and join political parties is generally respected, but civil servants may face harassment because of their associations. A number of non-governmental organizations operate openly, although the Gabonese League of Human Rights has reported threats and harassment.

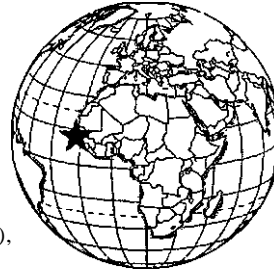
Unions must register with the government in order to be officially recognized, and nearly all the small formal sector work force is unionized. Despite legal protections, the government has taken action against numerous strikers and unions and used force to suppress illegal demonstrations. Religious freedom is guaranteed under the constitution, and an official ban on Jehovah's Witnesses is currently unenforced.

Legal protections for women include equal access laws for education, business and investment. In addition to owning property and businesses, women constitute over 50 percent of the salaried workforce in the health and trading sectors. There are only six women in the 120-member national assembly and one woman in the cabinet. Women continue to face legal and cultural discrimination, particularly in rural areas and are subject to reportedly widespread domestic violence.

Gabon's \$4,600 per capita income, most of it from oil revenues, is one of Africa's highest, yet endemic corruption and mismanagement has allowed little of the wealth to escape the pockets of Bongo and a small elite around him. France's ELF oil company plays a dominant role in the country's economic and political life. Gabon's social indicators are among the world's worst, and there are few roads or other infrastructure outside the capital.

The Gambia

Polity: Military Political Rights: 7
 Economy: Capitalist Civil Liberties: 6
 Population: 1,155,000 Status: Not Free
 PPP: \$939
 Life Expectancy: 45.6
 Ethnic Groups: Mandinka (42 percent), Fulani (18 percent),
 Wolof (16 percent), Jola, Serahuli
 Capital: Banjul



Overview:

The Gambian army's efforts to clothe itself in civilian legitimacy continued in 1997 with flawed January legislative elections that produced a sweeping victory for the ruling Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC) party. Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh, who seized power as an army lieutenant in 1994, was proclaimed president after a September 1996 electoral charade. Indiscipline and abuses by security forces continued, along with harassment of opposition activists and the country's small independent media by the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) and other security agencies. Three pre-coup political parties remained illegal.

The Gambia was a functioning electoral democracy under President Sir Dawda K. Jawara and his People's Progressive Party for nearly three decades after receiving independence from Britain in 1965. The Gambia is a tiny and poor country of about one million people, mostly subsistence farmers, long dependent on foreign aid for about three-quarters of its national budget and on European vacationers for most of its foreign exchange earnings. A 1981 coup by leftist soldiers was reversed by armed intervention from Senegal, which surrounds the Gambia on three sides. The two countries formed the Confederation of Senegambia a year later, an experiment that lasted seven years before differences rising from disparate colonial legacies (Senegal was a French colony) and Gambians' fear of submersion into their far larger neighbor caused the Gambia to dissolve the arrangement. When coup-makers led by Lt. Jammeh struck in 1994, Senegal declined to again rescue the Jawara government.

The coup makers received a mixed domestic reception as they denounced the ousted government's alleged corruption and promised transparency, accountability and early elections after cleaning up the administration. However, the junta quickly imposed draconian decrees curtailing civil and political rights and the free media. A reported November 1994 counter-coup was crushed and several alleged plotters summarily executed. Five men accused of another November 1996 coup plot that included an attack on an army barracks have been sentenced to death, but may receive a new trial.

The country's economy, hard hit by a sharp post coup drop in tourism and Western aid and a severe fall in groundnut production, is being buoyed by assistance from Libya and Taiwan, with which Gambia maintains full diplomatic ties. A reported security agreement with Libya reached in June renews fears of a Gambian—and Libyan—connection to the guerrilla struggle in Senegal's southern Cassamance province by people of President Jammeh's Jola ethnicity, whose traditional lands straddle the two countries' frontier.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Gambian citizens currently cannot exercise their right to choose or change their government by peaceful means, despite the September 1996 presidential and January legislative elections. Neither electoral exercise was free or fair, and President Jammeh and his parliamentary majority cannot be considered democratically-elected. A new constitution adopted by a closely-controlled August 1996 referendum allowed the 32-year old Jammeh to transform his military dictatorship to a nominally civilian administration. The 1996 presidential contest barred the most formidable opposition candidates and was marked by military intimidation of oppositionists and heavy use of state resources and media to promote the recently retired Colonel Jammeh's candidacy. A study of state radio broadcasts found that coverage of Jammeh had received over 1,400 minutes of air time while the leading opposition candidate was given just 60 minutes. Even the Commonwealth and the Organization of African Unity, usually quite elastic in its election-observation standards, refused to send observers. It is unlikely that an independent election commission appointed in June will have the autonomy to conduct genuine polls.

Free expression has been severely curtailed under Jammeh's rule. The Committee to Protect Journalists reported in 1996 that "the independent press has been a primary target of Jammeh's repression. Countless restrictive decrees, arbitrary detention, physical beatings, and deportations and expulsions are just a few of the weapons in Jammeh's arsenal." In February, *Daily Observer* assistant editor and senior reporter Goodwin Okon was struck by an automobile driven by National Intelligence Agency (NIA) plainclothes agents. Okon recovered, but was repeatedly questioned and threatened by NIA agents after writing about the incident. There is extensive self-censorship in independent newspapers allowed to continue to publish. Post coup decrees still in effect allow arbitrary detention and prohibit possession and distribution of documents deemed to be "political literature." State-run Radio Gambia broadcasts only tightly-controlled news that was also relayed by the country's two private radio stations. A single government-run television station now operates.

Broader human rights abuses also continue. The Gambia's legal system exists now in form but with little substance. Lack of due process and arbitrary detention is common. Extrajudicial killings and torture in jails and barracks are reported. Except for religious observances, public assembly is now severely limited. Non-governmental organizations operated in several areas, including two groups that addressed human rights. Requests to visit prisons where severe and life-threatening conditions prevail were ignored by the government.

The Jammeh regime has awarded itself extensive repressive powers. A 1995 decree allows the NIA to "search, arrest or detain any person, or seize, impound or search any vessel, equipment, plant, property without a warrant when to obtain a warrant at the material time would cause or facilitate the commission of a crime or an act detrimental to state security." The interior minister may arrest without warrant anyone "in the interest of the security, peace and stability of the Gambia," adding that the right to seek a writ of *habeas corpus* would not apply in such cases.

Despite legal protections women suffer de facto discrimination in many areas. Education and wage employment opportunities for women are far fewer than those for men, especially in rural areas. *Shari'a* law provisions applied in family law and inheritance restrict women's rights. Female genital mutilation is widely practiced.

All workers but civil servants and security forces may unionize under the 1990 Labor Act, which also provides the right to strike. The country's two labor federations, the Gambian Worker's Confederation and the Gambian Workers' Union have not been banned, but their functionality is not clear. While the junta has not changed prevailing labor laws, trade union activities are subject to broader restrictions on political rights and civil liberties.

Georgia

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy

Economy: Statist transitional

Population: 5,376,000

PPP: \$1,585

Life Expectancy: 73.1

Ethnic Groups: Georgians (70 percent), Armenian (8 percent) Russian (6 percent), Abkhazian, Azeri, Ossetian, others

Capital: Tbilisi

Ratings Change: Georgia's political rights rating changed from 4 to 3 due to improved relations with Abkhazia.

Political Rights: 3*

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Overview:

Measured progress in mediation efforts with the breakaway Abkhazia region and the status of Russian peacekeepers were among key issues facing President Eduard Shevardnadze.

In 1995 elections, Shevardnadze won over 75 percent of the vote, and his Centrist Union won 150 of 235 seats in parliament. In an effort to stabilize the country, the president pushed through a new constitution, disbanded the paramilitary *Mkhedrioni*, and implemented an economic austerity program that improved the country's economic outlook.

Absorbed by Russia in the early nineteenth century, Georgia proclaimed independence in 1918, gaining Soviet recognition two years later. In 1921, it was overrun by the Red Army. In 1922, it entered the USSR as a component of the Transcaucasian Federated Soviet Republic, becoming a separate union republic in 1936. Georgia declared independence from a crumbling Soviet Union after a referendum in April 1991. Nationalist leader and former dissident Zviad Gamsakhurdia was elected president, but his authoritarian and erratic behavior led to his violent ouster by opposition units that included the *Mkhedrioni*.

In early 1992, former Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze was asked by a temporary State Council to head a new government, and he was subsequently elected speaker of the parliament, making him acting head of state. In 1993, Georgia experienced the violent secession of the long-simmering Abkhazia region and armed insurrection by Gamsakhurdia loyalists. Although Shevardnadze blamed the Russians for arming and encouraging Abkhazian separatists, he legalized the presence of 19,000 Russian troops in five Georgian bases in exchange for Russian support against Gamsakhurdia, who was defeated and reportedly committed suicide. In early 1994, Georgians and Abkhazians signed an agreement in Moscow that called for a cease-

fire, the stationing of CIS troops under Russian command along the Abkhazian border and the return of refugees under United Nations supervision.

In 1996, Vladislav Ardzinba, president of Abkhazia, announced parliamentary elections. The Georgian parliament denounced the election plan as illegal given that the 200,000 ethnic Georgians displaced in the 1992-93 war would not be able to participate. The Abkhaz election also raised the issue of the future of Russian peacekeepers. In a resolution condemning the vote, the Georgian parliament demanded that Russian troops leave Georgia if Moscow failed to help restore Georgian authority over Abkhazia. The resolution said that there was "no legal basis" for Russian armed forces or border guards to be in Georgia. The resolution reflected frustration over the course of Russian-brokered mediation talks with Abkhazian officials and the failure of Russian troops to provide adequate security for Georgian refugees.

In mid-August 1997, President Shevardnadze and his Abkhazian counterpart, meeting in Tbilisi, signed a joint statement pledging to refrain from resuming hostilities. The agreement met with protests from nationalist parliamentarians and the Abkhazian parliament-in-exile. Paramilitary groups, including the Georgian "White Legion," continued sporadic attacks against Russian peacekeepers along the border. Georgia's nascent economic recovery, plans to build a lucrative oil pipeline across its territory, and Abkhazia's deteriorating economic situation were factors in spurring the talks. Russian and United Nations mediation efforts continued through the fall. In a related issue, preliminary agreement was reached in March after two days of talks in Moscow on the political status of the separatist South Ossetia region. The protocol signed preserved Georgia's territorial integrity while giving South Ossetia "special powers for self-determination."

The issue of Russia's 1,500 peacekeepers was raised by the Georgia delegation to the October 20 meeting of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in Chisinau, Moldova. At issue was the repatriation of Georgian refugees, which was part of the broadened mandate of the peacekeeping force adopted by the CIS in March. Georgia urged the CIS summit to set a deadline for implementing the March resolution or withdraw the peacekeeping force. On March 17, 7,000 ethnic Georgians forced from Abkhazia held a demonstration in Tbilisi to protest the stationing of Russian peacekeeping forces in Abkhazia. The protest coincided with the end of a 19-day hunger strike by 10 parliamentarians, who were demanding the withdrawal of Russian troops from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. A similar protest in October drew 3,000 demonstrators. The rally was preceded by a conference of the Coordination Council of Political Parties and organizations representing the refugees from Abkhazia.

In economics, a GDP growth rate of ten percent was projected for 1997, much of it driven by private small and medium enterprises. Georgia's adherence to an IMF and World Bank-supported program of tight monetary and stringent fiscal reform brought inflation to 8.7 percent in 1997, down from 60 percent in 1995. Credits and subsidies were cut, and the national currency, the lari, steadily appreciated since 1995.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Georgians can change their government democratically, but the government's loss of control over Abkhazia and South Ossetia affected the scope of the government's power and representation. The November 1995 elections were judged generally free and fair by international observers. However, voting in ten of 85 districts, in Abkhazia and South

Ossetia, was postponed indefinitely. The new constitution creates a federal state and gives the president the power to appoint and dismiss the prime minister, to dismiss the cabinet, and to appoint governors, heads of district administrations and city mayors.

There are over 60 political parties registered; 52 contested the 1995 elections, but only three groupings met the five percent threshold for representation in parliament.

Under a 1991 press law, journalists are obliged to "respect the dignity and honor" of the president and the citizens or undermine the regime. Publications can face legal action for "malevolently using freedom of the press, [and] spreading facts not corresponding to reality." State-run radio and television generally reflect official views. Independent newspapers publish discerning and sophisticated political analysis, though their importance is being eclipsed by electronic media. There are some dozen local independent television stations which have faced varying degrees of government harassment. In April, Rustavi-2, the most professional private TV station, resumed broadcasting after nine months of silence. Ibervision, another independent TV station, has faced government pressure. Self-censorship occurs, particularly in state-run media.

There are restrictions, often arbitrary, on freedom of assembly. Freedom of religion is generally respected in this predominantly Christian Orthodox country. Ethnic and minority rights are not always respected. While some Georgian refugees have returned to Abkhazia, repatriation plans were halted in the face of violence against ethnic Georgians and stalled negotiations. Dozens of Georgians have been detained by Abkhazian police solely on the grounds of ethnic origin.

The legal system remains a hybrid of laws from Georgia's brief period of pre-Soviet independence, the Soviet era, the Gamsakhurdia presidency and the State Council period. A nine-member Constitutional Court represents the three main branches of government and arbitrates constitutional questions, treaties, referendums, elections and jurisdictional disputes. Many "political" crimes remain on the books as a mean to prosecute and deter opponents, and the system is plagued by documented cases of illegal arrests, arbitrary dismissal of defense attorneys and related problems. Members of the judiciary have engaged in corrupt practices. Nongovernmental Georgian human rights groups report that prisoners are subjected to poor prison conditions, torture, beatings and other abuses, as well as to violations of due process. In June, President Shevardnadze issued a decree "On Measures Aimed at Protecting Human Rights in Georgia" which expressed concern over the lack of effective protection of human rights and the violation of the constitutional rights of those held in confinement. A February report by the Vienna-based International Helsinki Federation criticized human rights violations, including torture of political prisoners. In January, police arrested 12 people who, according to the Interior Ministry, plotted to assassinate high-level officials. Some allegedly had ties to the Mkhedrioni. In July, the Supreme Court sentenced the leader of the Unified Communist Party to five years' imprisonment for illegal possession of firearms and abuse of office. He had been accused of high treason, but the court did not support the charge. A court ordered former Prime Minister Tengus Sigua to reimburse \$5.8 million in damages caused to the state as a result of his economic policies in 1992-95.

The Georgian Confederation of Trade Unions, the successor to the official Communist-era structure, includes about thirty different sectoral unions. Striking in labor disputes is legal. Unions must be registered with the Ministry of Justice. Women are found mostly in low-paying occupations.

Germany

Polity: Federal parliamentary democracy
Economy: Mixed capitalist

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free

Population: 81,694,000

PPP: \$19,675

Life Expectancy: 76.3

Ethnic Groups: German (95 percent), numerous immigrant groups

Capital: Berlin



Overview:

Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Europe's longest-serving leader, saw tensions within his Christian Democratic Union (CDU) grow during the year, but upturns in the economy enabled his coalition government to maintain popular levels of support. Unemployment levels, however, remained at the highest level since World War II. In addition to domestic economic programs designed to meet EU monetary requirements, the government continued to promote NATO and European Union enlargement.

After World War II, Germany was divided into Soviet, U.S., British and French occupation zones. Four years later, the Allies helped to establish a democratic Federal Republic of Germany, while the Soviets oversaw the formation of the communist German Democratic Republic (GDR). The division of Berlin was reinforced by the 1961 construction of the Berlin Wall. After the collapse of Erich Honecker's hard-line GDR regime in 1989 and the destruction of the wall in 1990, citizens voted in the country's first free parliamentary election, in which parties supporting rapid re-unification triumphed.

Kohl and his CDU-led coalition have governed since 1982. In October, Kohl pledged to seek a fifth term. Advocates of domestic economic reform, however, increasingly prefer that he allow his designated successor, Wolfgang Schauble, to lead the party in the next election. Schauble is considered a proponent of flexibility in the labor force, reform of the social welfare system and cuts in government subsidies.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

German citizens can change their government democratically. The federal system provides for a considerable amount of self-government among the 16 states. Individuals are free to form political parties and to receive federal funding as long as the parties are democratic in nature. The country's judiciary is independent.

The Basic Law (Constitution) provides for unrestricted citizenship and legal residence immediately upon application for ethnic Germans entering the country. Individuals not of German ethnicity may acquire citizenship if they meet certain requirements, including legal residence for ten years (five if married to a German) and renunciation of all other citizenships.

Germany has no anti-discrimination law to protect immigrants, and even ethnic German immigrants increasingly face hostility from citizens who attribute the country's economic woes and high unemployment to immigration.

The German press and broadcast media are free and independent. They offer plu-

realistic viewpoints. Nazi propaganda and statements endorsing Nazism are illegal. Germany has exceeded other countries' practices in its attempts to police the Internet by blocking access to obscene, violent or "dangerous" material. The government has brought charges against service-providers and individual users.

Nazi-related, anti-foreigner, anti-immigrant and racist incidents all increased during the year, and xenophobic political policies and pronouncements found increasing support among voters. In July, Amnesty International reported that police ill-treatment of foreigners was racially motivated and constituted a "clear pattern of abuse."

The government drew criticism from human rights groups and even from other governments over its decision to begin forcible repatriations of Bosnian refugees. Germany had been the most generous host country for Bosnians fleeing the war; indeed, by some estimates, one-twelfth of Bosnia's surviving Muslim population resided in Germany by war's end. Early in the year, in an apparent attempt to frighten large numbers of the refugees into leaving, the government began forcible repatriations, in which small numbers of refugees were awakened during the night, taken to remote airport terminals and loaded onto planes to Bosnia.

The government announced in October that the country's anti-terrorist law, which also bans terrorist defendants from sharing lawyers and prevents contact between co-defendants and co-prisoners, will be used against organized crime. Left-wing political parties—the SPD and the Greens—oppose retention of the laws, which were enacted in the 1970s to combat the Baader-Meinhof guerrillas. Leftist parties also criticized the passage in October of a law to facilitate police use of telephone surveillance.

Freedom of religion is established under the Basic Law. State governments subsidize church-affiliated schools and provide religious instruction in schools and universities for those of the Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish faiths.

Scientologists have been at the center of a heated debate over the group's legal status. Major political parties, which exclude Scientologists from membership, hold that the group does not constitute a religion, but a for-profit organization based on anti-democratic principles. In October, Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel stated, "Scientology is not a religion or world view society. Its goals, at least in Germany, are directed at business activities." Other officials have stated that the group financially exploits its followers and exerts extreme psychological pressure on those who attempt to leave the group. Officials have also stated that Germany's unique history necessitates their close scrutiny of extremist groups that could, like the Nazi Party, begin as a small organization and then undergo explosive growth.

In June, the interior ministers from the country's 16 federal states agreed to place Scientologists under coordinated observation to determine whether its practices are undemocratic. The decision enables police, if they so choose, to intercept their mail, tap their telephones and infiltrate their offices for a twelve-month period.

In June, a court denied Jehovah's Witnesses "public body" status, which would have allowed the church to benefit from tax revenues, conduct prison visits and obtain representation on broadcast advisory panels. The ruling was based on the refusal of the church, which claims 190,000 German adherents, to allow its members to exercise their right to vote in German elections.

Labor, business and farming groups are free, highly organized and influential. In recent years, however, trade union federation membership has dropped sharply due to the collapse of industry in the East and layoffs in the West.

Ghana

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
 Political Rights: 3
 Civil Liberties: 3*
 Economy: Capitalist-statist
 Status: Partly Free

Population: 17,974,000

PPP: \$1,960

Life Expectancy: 56.6

Ethnic Groups: Akan (including Fanti) (44 percent),

Mossi-Dagomba (16 percent), Ewe (13 percent), Ga (8 percent), Ashanti, others

Capital: Accra

Ratings Change: Ghana's civil liberties rating changed from 4 to 3 due to continued movement toward democracy.



Overview:

Ghana continued to move toward democracy one year after President Jerry Rawlings and his National Democratic Congress (NDC) were returned to power in December 1996 presidential and legislative elections judged free and fair by international observers. Opposition parliamentarians sought legal redress and encouraged public pressure to change government policy, and a vigorous and often vociferous independent print media criticized both the ruling and opposition parties. Ghana has experienced a progressive liberalization since the severe repression and failed socialism that Rawlings imposed when he seized power in a 1981 coup were abandoned over a decade ago. The rule of law is still far from assured in Ghana, however. The judiciary is not yet truly independent. Police and other security forces still act with impunity. The private media remain pressured by threats of criminal libel suits and other forms of harassment. And corruption is becoming an increasingly serious problem that could block economic growth. There is an overall lack of accountability at all levels of government.

Long known as the Gold Coast, a jewel of Britain's empire and once a major center of the slave trade, Ghana was the first colony in Africa to gain independence. The country was wracked by a series of military coups for fifteen years after the 1966 overthrow of its charismatic independence leader, Kwame Nkrumah. Successive military and civilian governments vied with each other in both incompetence and corruption. In 1979, Flight-Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings led a coup against the ruling military junta and, as promised, returned power to a civilian government after a "housecleaning" of corrupt senior army officers. The new civilian administration did not live up to Rawlings' expectations, however, and he seized power again in December 1981 and set up the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC). The PNDC junta was radically socialist and populist and brutally repressive, banning political parties and free expression. A crumbling economy worsened by severe drought in the early 1980s convinced Rawlings that only massive international aid could save the country. Turning his back on socialism, Rawlings transformed Ghana into an early model for the structural adjustment programs urged by international lenders.

A new constitution adopted in April 1992 legalized political parties. Rawlings was declared president after elections held in November 1992 which were neither free nor fair. Extensive irregularities in the presidential poll convinced opposition parties

to boycott legislative elections a month later. The NDC, successor to the PNDC, swept into parliament unopposed and effectively continued one-party rule.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Ghanaians exercised their right to elect their president and parliamentary representatives under Ghana's 1992 constitution in genuine elections in December 1996. Voting was preceded by an extensive civic education campaign and international assistance with registration and other electoral procedures. The elections were also marked by the ruling party's extensive use of state media and patronage to support the incumbents. Rawlings' victory, which extended his sixteen-year rule since seizing power in a military coup, was also assured by the opposition's failure to forge a strong alliance. Rawlings won re-election with 57 percent of the vote over opposition Great Alliance challenger John Agyekum Kufuor. Ghana's 200-member legislature, elected on a single-member district system, is controlled by the NDC, which holds 133 seats.

Freedom of expression is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected. Ghanaians enjoy open political debate reflected in about a score of independent and opposition newspapers. Financial problems and government pressure, however, constrain private media. The government uses criminal libel laws that make reporting false information a felony to intimidate the media. Journalists have been charged under obscure and rarely used laws. A 1964 law makes anyone publishing a report "likely to injure the reputation of Ghana or its government and which he knows or has reason to believe is false" subject to felony charges. Another 1960 law provides 10-year prison sentences for defaming or slandering the "Ghanian State." In May, a senior U.S. diplomat was expelled from Ghana after suggesting that the government drop libel charges against two journalists.

The power of state media also creates serious imbalances. Despite the licensing of several independent radio and television stations, the government allows little expression of opposition views over the national radio and television networks and in the two daily newspapers it controls. First licenses for private radio stations have gone to government supporters whose stations report little hard news.

Permits are not required for meetings or demonstrations, and the right to peaceful assembly and association is constitutionally guaranteed. Numerous non-governmental organizations operate openly and freely, including human rights groups. Religious freedom is respected, but there are occasional tensions between Christian and Muslim communities and within the Muslim community itself.

Ghanaian courts have acted with increased autonomy under the 1992 constitution but are still subject to considerable governmental influence. In rural areas, traditional courts often handle minor cases according to local customs that fail to meet constitutional standards. Lack of judicial resources also means that large numbers of people are held for long periods of pre-trial detention under harsh conditions in the country's prisons.

Ghanaian women suffer societal discrimination that is particularly serious in rural areas, where opportunities for education and wage employment are limited, despite their equal rights under the law. Domestic violence against women is reportedly common, but is often unreported. The tro-kosi system of young girls being forced into indefinite servitude to traditional religious priests is still practiced in parts of northern Ghana. Several NGOs, including the National Council on Women and Development

(NCWD), are campaigning against the practice and have been joined in the campaign by the country's human rights commissioner. Efforts are also being made to end the indefinite imprisonment of women deemed witches by customary courts.

The requirement for trade union registration under the Trades Union Ordinance is not currently used to block union formation. However, civil servants may not join unions. Mediation and arbitration are required before strikes are authorized under the Industrial Relations Act. The only labor confederation, the Trade Union Congress, is still aligned with the ruling party, although it has shown signs of autonomy.

Ghana's ambitious privatization program has continued to draw foreign investment into an increasingly active stock exchange. Gold mining profits have helped boost growth to over five per cent. Rising corruption may impede progress, but a stronger parliamentary opposition and independent media have continued to expose alleged wrongdoing.

Greece

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
Economy: Mixed capitalist
Population: 10,492,000
PPP: \$11,265
Life Expectancy: 77.8
Ethnic Groups: Greek (98 percent), Macedonian, Turk
Capital: Athens

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Free



Overview:

In his second year in office, Prime Minister Costas Simitis and his Socialist Party (PASOK) strengthened their hold on power by hewing to more moderate domestic political and economic policies.

In July, the United States brokered a six-point agreement that is expected to improve Greek-Turkish relations. The agreement commits the two countries to respect each other's sovereignty, avoid violence and improve bilateral relations, but it does not require action regarding the divided island of Cyprus.

With socialists (former communists) restored to power in Tirana, Greece's relations with Albania also appeared to improve. At the same time, however, Albanian guest-workers and immigrants to Greece continued to report police and other abuse.

Greece gained independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1830. The ensuing century brought continued struggle between royalist and republican forces. Occupation by the Axis powers in 1941 was followed by civil war between noncommunist and communist forces until 1949. Following a 1967 coup that brought a military junta to power, a failed counter-coup by Naval officers in 1973, aiming to overthrow the colonels' junta and restore the king led to the formal deposition of the monarch and the proclamation of a republic. The current constitution, adopted in 1975, provides for a parliamentary system with a largely ceremonial presidency.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Greeks can change their government democratically. Voting is compulsory for citizens between the ages of 18 and 70, yet change of voting address is not permitted. As a result, nearly 650,000 people are forced to travel to prior residences to participate in elections.

The judiciary is independent. With the exception of politically related restrictions, the media have substantial freedom. The public prosecutor may press charges against publishers and can seize publications deemed offensive to the president or to religious beliefs. A controversial law bans "unwarranted" publicity for terrorists from the media, including terrorists' proclamations following explosions.

Ninety-eight percent of the population are nominal adherents to Greek Orthodoxy, the state religion. Orthodox bishops have the privilege of granting or denying permission to other faiths to build houses of worship in their jurisdictions. The European Court of Human Rights condemned this practice in 1996. Members of non-Orthodox communities have been barred from entering occupations such as primary school teaching, the military and the police.

The constitution prohibits proselytizing, and Jehovah's Witnesses have been a target of political and legal persecution. Despite objections from Roman Catholics, Jews, Muslims and other minorities, national identity cards, which have been required since 1992, continue to list the bearer's religious affiliation.

Western Thrace's Turkish Muslim minority, whose religious rights were guaranteed under the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, objects to its classification as a "Turkish" rather than "Muslim" minority and to the Greek government's ability to choose its mufti, or Muslim community leader. In February, Abdulhalim Dede, a prominent journalist and publisher of the region's weekly Turkish-language newspaper was tried under a law against "spreading false information that may cause public unrest or shake people's faith in the Greek state." Dede, who had reported that local Greek authorities were obstructing community projects for the region's Muslims, was acquitted.

The country's ethnic Slavic minority, which is not recognized by the state, makes similar objections. In September, four leaders of the Macedonian minority were charged with inciting division in the population and disturbing public order by displaying a sign in the Greek and Macedonian languages.

Greeks enjoy freedom of association, and all workers except military personnel and the police have the right to form and join unions, which are linked to political parties, but independent of party and government control.

Greece has a long history of jailing conscientious objectors to military service. In May, however, the government passed a new law to allow objectors to perform alternative, civilian service. Amnesty International condemned the measure, however, as "punitive" because it requires objectors to serve twice as long as military conscripts. The rights group also called for the immediate release of 300 objectors still held in military prisons.

Grenada

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
 Economy: Capitalist-statist
 Population: 95,000
 PPP: \$5,137
 Life Expectancy: 72.0
 Ethnic Groups: Mostly black
 Capital: St. George's



Overview:

In 1997, an attempt to bring down Keith Mitchell's government with a no-confidence vote in parliament nearly succeeded, highlighting a political year which also saw the death of the controversial Sir Eric Gairy, Grenada's first prime minister, and continuing debate over the fate of two of the ultra-leftists who led a short-lived coup in 1983.

Grenada, a member of the British Commonwealth, is a parliamentary democracy. The British monarchy is represented by a governor-general. Grenada gained independence in 1974 and includes the islands of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. The bicameral parliament consists of a 15-seat House of Representatives and a 13-seat Senate, to which the prime minister appoints ten senators and the opposition leader names three.

Maurice Bishop's Marxist New Jewel Movement seized power in 1979. In 1983 Bishop was murdered by New Jewel hardliners Bernard Coard and Hudson Austin, who took control of the country. A joint U.S.-Caribbean military intervention removed Coard and Austin, and the New National Party (NNP) won the 1984 elections. Herbert Blaize became prime minister until his death in 1989, when Deputy Prime Minister Ben Jones replaced him.

In the 1990 elections the NNP coalition had unraveled, and there were five principal contenders: The National Party (TNP) headed by Jones; the centrist National Democratic Congress (NDC) led by Nicholas Braithwaite, head of the 1983-1984 interim government; the NNP headed by Keith Mitchell; the leftist Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement (MBPM), led by Terry Marryshow; and Eric Gairy's rightist Grenada United Labour Party (GULP). The NDC won seven seats and took in a defector from the GULP, and Braithwaite became prime minister with a one-seat majority. After implementing unpopular economic reforms, the aging Braithwaite stepped down in early 1995 in favor of agricultural minister George Brizan.

The 1995 campaign was a raucous affair. Brizan sought to retain power by pointing to the improved economy. The other candidates accused the ruling NDC of corruption and harped on high unemployment.

The NNP startled local observers by winning eight of 15 seats. The NDC won five seats and the GULP, two. Mitchell became prime minister. Afterwards, NDC deputy leader Francis Alexis split off to form the Democratic Labour Party (DLP), underscoring the fractious nature of Grenadian politics.

In his first months in office, Mitchell was accused by opposition leader Brizan

and others of censoring news unfavorable to the government in state-run television and radio broadcasts, and of purging civil servants appointed during the NDC administration. Mitchell denied the allegations. In 1996 Mitchell's reorganization of the state-owned Grenada Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) was viewed by some as another attempt to fill political positions with NNP supporters and to control the dissemination of information at GBC.

In 1997 the Conference of Churches of Grenada formally petitioned for the release from custody of Coard and Coleville McBarnette, two of the 1983 coup plotters convicted in the murders of Bishop and three of his ministers. The NDC charged the government with granting a casino license to a foreign company it alleged has gangster connections. On August 24, Gairy, the autocratic and corrupt former prime minister known for dabbling in the occult, died, leaving behind a controversial legacy accentuated by the declining fortunes of the GULP. Mitchell survived a parliamentary motion no-confidence by one vote.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens are able to change their government through democratic elections. Many political parties exist, and few obstacles face those establishing new parties. But there has been a decline in turnout as young people, in particular, appear to have lost confidence in a system riddled with fragmented politics and allegations of corruption.

The independent, nondiscriminatory judiciary has authority generally respected by the police. In 1991 Grenada rejoined the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States court system, with the right of appeal to the Privy Council in London. Detainees and defendants are guaranteed a range of legal rights which the government respects in practice. Like many Caribbean island nations, Grenada has suffered from a rise in violent drug-related crime, particularly among increasingly disaffected youth. Prison conditions are poor, though they meet minimum international standards and the government allows human rights monitors to visit.

Constitutional guarantees regarding the right to organize political, labor or civic groups are respected. The exercise of religion and the right of free expression are generally respected. Newspapers, including four weekly political party organs, are independent and freely criticize the government. Television is both private and public, and radio is operated by the government. Since the 1995 elections, a number of new radio and television stations, not one of which is aligned with the NNP, were issued licenses to operate.

Numerous independent labor unions include an estimated 20 to 25 percent of the workforce. A 1993 law gives the government the right to establish tribunals empowered to make "binding and final" rulings when a labor dispute is considered of vital interest to the state. The national trade union federation claimed the law was an infringement on the right to strike. Workers have the right to organize and to bargain collectively.

Women are represented in the government, though in greater numbers in the ministries than in parliament. No official discrimination takes place, but women generally earn less than men for equal work.

Guatemala

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy (military-dominated) Political Rights: 3 Civil Liberties: 4 Status: Partly Free

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 9,858,000

PPP: \$3,208

Life Expectancy: 65.6

Ethnic Groups: Mayan and other Indian (over 60 percent), mestizo

Capital: Guatemala City

Trend Arrow: Guatemala receives an upward trend arrow due to the successful implementation of peace accords.



Overview: President Alvaro Arzu, who in 1997 celebrated his second year in office, found that the largely successful implementation of peace accords signed in late December 1996 has been overshadowed somewhat by a continuing high rate of violent crime and much of it linked to organized crime and drug trafficking. As the government seeks to set up a new National Civilian Police force to replace the discredited internal security forces, which for decades were dominated by the army, the absence of an effective law enforcement presence, particularly in rural areas, has led to an increasing rate of lynching, some of which have been carried out by entire communities. Thinly policed, Guatemala remains one of the most violent countries in Latin America, and ranks fourth in the number of kidnappings in the region.

The Republic of Guatemala was established in 1839, 18 years after independence from Spain. The nation has endured a history of dictatorship, coups d'etat and guerrilla insurgency, with only intermittent democratic government. It has had elected civilian rule since 1985. Amended in 1994, the 1985 constitution provides for a four-year presidential term and prohibits re-election. An 80-member unicameral Congress is elected for four years.

Right-wing businessman Jorge Serrano became president in 1991 after winning a runoff election. In 1993 Serrano attempted to dissolve the legislature. After initially supporting him, the military changed its mind as a result of mass protests and international pressure. Serrano was sent to Panama. The Congress, under pressure from an alliance of unions, moderate businessmen and civic groups, chose as president Ramiro de Leon Carpio, the government's human rights ombudsman.

De Leon Carpio was practically powerless to halt human rights violations by the military or to curb its power as final arbiter in national affairs. U.N.-mediated talks were launched, however, between the government and the left-wing URNG guerrillas. The URNG called a unilateral truce for the 1995 election and backed the left-wing New Guatemala Democratic Front (FDNG). The top presidential contenders were former Guatemala City Mayor Arzu, of the National Advancement Party (PAN) and Alfonso Portillo Cabrera of the hard-right Guatemalan Republic Front (FRG). FRG founder and former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt was constitutionally barred from running but remained a power in the party.

Arzu won with 36.6 percent of the vote and Portillo Cabrera 22 percent. In the

January 7, 1996 runoff Arzu defeated Portillo, 51.2 percent to 48.8 percent. The PAN won 43 seats in Congress, the FRG 21, the centrist National Alliance nine and the URNG-backed FDNG six. But a turnout of only 36.9 percent (of 3.5 million registered voters) suggested growing disenchantment in the political process.

Soon after taking office, Arzu reshuffled the military, forcing the early retirement of generals linked to drug-trafficking, car-theft rings and human rights abuses. Two colonels linked to killings involving Americans were also dismissed. The purge had the backing of a small but influential group of reformist officers who dominate the military high command. Moderate General Julio Balconi was named defense minister. Many of the officers stripped of their titles continued to draw their pay, however, and dismissed policemen went to court to sue for reinstatement.

The shake-up in the army and police instigated a wave of kidnappings by former military men in an attempt to destabilize the government. By June 1996, kidnappings, car-jackings and street crime had soared. Corrupt police officials were accused in the press of releasing prisoners on condition that they bring them a percentage of proceeds from robberies and muggings.

In March 1996, Arzu made a surprise visit to URNG headquarters in Mexico City, leading to an historic, open-ended cease-fire by the guerrillas as a gesture of goodwill. In May, the government and guerrillas signed a social reform accord and called for the creation of a land bank to provide soft loans for peasants to buy property, the introduction of a land tax and the establishment of a registry to define land ownership. After a brief suspension of talks in October because of a rebel kidnapping, agreement on the return of rebel forces to civilian life and a permanent cease-fire led to the December 1996 peace accords. A decree establishing the PACs, created 14 years earlier as civilian anti-insurgency groups, was abolished by the Congress on December 10, 1996. The move sought to demobilize some 200,000 PAC members, whose activities included numerous human rights violations and criminal activities, particularly in rural areas.

In 1997 Arzu's government won plaudits for important advances in carrying out the peace process, including the successful demobilization of the URNG guerrillas and their political legalization; the retirement of more than 40 senior military officers on corruption and narcotics charges, and gains in the reduction of the army's strength by one third by the end of the year, including the disbanding of the 3,000-member Ambulatory Military Police. In June, Defense Minister Balconi, a leading advocate of military compliance with the peace agreement was sacked by Arzu in a delicate balancing act that also led to the dismissal of hard-line General Sergio Camargo, chief of the defense staff. In August, a truth commission mandated by the peace accords began receiving tens of thousands of complaints of rights violations committed during the 36-year internal conflict. Rising expectations brought about by the peace accords have exacerbated long-standing disputes over land in a country with striking inequalities in its distribution and an antiquated system of titling. The lack of a catastral survey of land ownership has meant the death and injury of dozens of peasants in 1997.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens can change their governments through elections. But recent voter turnouts suggest that people are increasingly disillusioned with the process. Efforts by President Arzu to reduce the armed forces' ability to restrict constitutional powers granted to civilian

administrations appeared, at the end of two years, to have taken hold. However, the rule of law is undermined by the systemic corruption that afflicts all public institutions, particularly the legislature and the courts.

The constitution guarantees religious freedom and the right to organize political parties, civic organizations and labor unions. However, political and civic expression is severely restricted by a climate of violence, lawlessness and military repression. Political violence, including murders, disappearances, bombings and death threats, decreased in 1997, but violent crime continued unabated. Politicians, student organizations, street children, peasant groups, labor unions, Indian organizations, refugees returning from Mexico, human rights groups and the media are all still at risk..

The principal human rights offenders are the military, especially its intelligence unit; the police, until 1997 under military authority; a network of killers-for-hire linked to the armed forces, right-wing political groups and vigilante "social-cleansing" groups. Despite penal code reforms in 1994 the judicial system remains little more than a black hole for most legal or human rights complaints. Reforms included trying soldiers accused of common crimes in civilian rather than military courts, but most civil courts remained corrupt. Drug trafficking is a serious problem, and Guatemala remains a warehousing and transit point for South American drugs going to the U.S. The justice system in general suffers from chronic problems of corruption, intimidation, insufficient personnel, lack of training opportunities and a lack of accountability.

The National Civilian Police force, which graduated its first 1,200 members in mid-July, is slated to be fully staffed—with 20,000 members—and operational throughout the country in late 1999. The closing of military barracks throughout the country—the armed forces in the one Guatemalan institution which enjoyed a truly national presence—created a noticeable vacuum in which criminal interests are free to operate. Lynchings were up by some 60 percent compared to 1996, as communities organized to take the law into their own hands. In October, for example, some 1,000 people helped yank five men suspected of cattle rustling from a local jail and burned them to death in the western province of San Marcos. Despite the clear intent of the peace accords to remove the military from internal security tasks, on April 8, army troops began to patrol Guatemala City streets as part of a crackdown on violent crime. The operation of the truth commission mandated by the peace accords is considered by human rights groups to be key to combating the virtually unrestricted impunity enjoyed by rights violators in the past. There are an estimated 500 clandestine cemeteries in Guatemala, and efforts to exhume and identify remains of victims, a key part of the commission's work, was imperiled in 1997 by continued death threats against relatives of missing people and against those working on the excavations.

The Runejel Junam Council of Ethnic Communities (CERJ) represents the interests of the country's Indians, a majority of the population who have faced severe repression and violence by the army and PACs, as well as being used by the URNG guerrillas. In 1996, Indians showed signs of flexing some political muscle. Indians candidates won control of an estimated 40 urban areas—including Guatemala's second largest city—and ten percent of congressional seats. Under a new law, Mayan descendants are allowed to seek office as independents and not as representatives of the national political parties that have ignored their needs. Many of the candidates, however, received death threats and were the subject of racial attacks in handbills. With 23 tribes and many Indian officials still beholden to national parties, Indian

political parties are still in a nascent stage. In 1996, Mayan political and cultural organizations were formed, and a flurry of books, newspapers and radio programs were offered in the Mayan language.

Workers are frequently denied the right to organize and subjected to mass firings and blacklisting, particularly in export-processing zones where a majority of workers are women. Existing unions are targets of systematic intimidation, physical attacks and assassination, particularly in rural areas during land disputes. Guatemala is among the most dangerous countries in the world for trade unionists. Child labor is a growing problem in the agricultural industry.

The press and most of the broadcast media are privately-owned, with several independent newspapers and dozens of radio stations, most of them commercial. Five of six television stations are commercially-operated. However, journalists remain at great risk. In recent years, more than a dozen Guatemalan journalists have been forced into exile. The 1993 murder of newspaper publisher Jorge Carpio Nicolle, a former presidential candidate, remains unsolved.

Guinea

Polity: Dominant party (military-influenced)
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 7,412,000
PPP: \$1,103
Life Expectancy: 45.1
Ethnic Groups: Fulani (40 percent), Malinke (30 percent), Susu (20 percent), others
Capital: Conakry

Political Rights: 6
Civil Liberties: 5
Status: Not Free



Overview:

President Lansana Conte retreated from the gradual political and economic liberalization of the previous two years. Old-line Progress and Unity Party (PUP) loyalists were reinstated in powerful positions, and proposals to open broadcast media and create an independent electoral commission dismissed as informal campaigning began for the presidential election required by the end of 1998. Opposition leaders are trying to unite, the only basis on which they can hope to prevent Conte's re-election.

There are fears of armed anti-government activity from dissidents based in neighboring Liberia and Sierra Leone. Unrest within the military also remains a threat. A February 1996 army mutiny that nearly ousted long-serving President Conte was accompanied by general looting in the capital, Conakry. Conte, who himself seized power in a 1984 coup, rallied loyal troops and reasserted control. Conte claims legitimacy from his highly flawed December 1993 election "victory." Legislative elections in June 1995 were won by the PUP.

In 1958 Guinea declared independence under the leadership of Ahmed S6kou Toure and his Guinea Democratic Party. Alone among France's many African colonies, it rejected continued close ties with—and effective domination by—France. This stand cost Guinea dearly. France removed or destroyed all "colonial property" and imposed

an unofficial but devastating economic boycott. Sekou Toure's one-party rule became highly repressive after an early effort to introduce egalitarian laws, and Guinea sank into poverty under his disastrous Soviet-style economic policies. Today the country ranks near the bottom on international social development indicators.

The country's politics and parties are largely defined on ethnic bases. President Conte's ruling PUP is strongly Susu, the Rally of the Guinean People (RPG) party mostly Malinke, and both the Party for Renewal and Progress (PRP) and the Union for the New Republic (UNR) party are Fulani-dominated. Ethnicity, patronage and nepotism provide the subtext to almost every political debate. Conflicts in neighboring Liberia and Sierra Leone raise fears of ethnic conflict and national disintegration. The country today hosts about 800,000 refugees from those two countries. It has contributed about 2,000 troops to the West African force in Sierra Leone.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

The Guinean people's constitutional right to freely elect their government is not yet respected in practice. Electoral manipulation and fraud were widespread in the 1993 election.

June 1995 national assembly elections were more open. A total of eight opposition parties won just enough seats to deny the PUP the two-thirds majority needed to make constitutional changes.

The president retains decree power that could eviscerate the parliamentary process. Despite constitutional guarantees, several statutes restrict freedom of association and assembly. The government may ban any gathering that "threatens national unity." Registration requirements have not deterred the formation of at least 46 political parties. But many opposition politicians have been harassed or arrested; a special target is the Rally of the Guinean People (RPG) party. Several human rights groups such as the Guinean Organization for the Defense of Human Rights (OGDH) and many non-governmental groups operate openly. Constitutionally-protected religious rights are respected in practice, and missionaries operate freely.

While nominally independent, the judicial system is beset by corruption, nepotism, ethnic bias and political interference and lack of resources and training. Minor civil cases are often handled by traditional ethnic based courts. A new State Security Court, whose proceedings may be secret and whose verdicts cannot be appealed, was established in June. Arbitrary arrests and detention are common and regular maltreatment and torture of detainees is reported. Conditions in the country's prisons are harsh and can be life-threatening.

The small and often strongly partisan private print media in the capital, Conakry are often harassed. A restrictive press law allows the government to censor or close publications on broad and ill-defined bases. The government has wide powers to bar any communications that "insult" the president or, in its opinion, disturb the peace. In August, Ousmane Camara and Louis Celestin, editors of the independent magazine *l'Oeil*, were arrested and charged with spreading false information and defamation after publishing two articles critical of the justice minister. The print media have little impact in rural areas where incomes are low and illiteracy high. All broadcasting and the country's largest newspaper are state-controlled and offer little coverage of the opposition and few criticisms of government policies. Parliamentary proposals to open broadcasting were rejected by the president, and a reform-minded information minister, Michel Kamano, dismissed. In October, long time exile journalist Boubacar Kante

was murdered by unknown assailants in Abidjan only days after agreeing to return home to head President Conte's presidential office press office.

Constitutionally protected women's rights are often unrealized. Women have far fewer educational and employment opportunities than men and many societal customs discriminate against women. Spousal abuse and other violence against women is said to be prevalent. Female genital mutilation as a traditional rite is widely practiced.

The constitution provides the right to form and join unions. However, only a very small formal sector exists within the country's preponderantly subsistence farming economy, and only about one-twentieth of the work force is unionized. Several labor confederations compete in this small market and have the right to bargain collectively. Labor grievances are regularly heard by a labor court in the capital and civil courts elsewhere.

Privatization plans, including a planned sell-off of the country's bauxite industry, moved ahead in 1997. A diamond exploration contract was signed with the South African de Beers company. However, serious corruption and the concentration of power around President Conte remain serious obstacles to investment and economic growth.

Guinea-Bissau

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 4

Economy: Mixed statist transitional

Status: Partly Free

Population: 1,096,000

PPP: \$793

Life Expectancy: 43.2

Ethnic Groups: Balanta (30 percent), Fulani (20 percent), Mandjague (14 percent), Mandinka (13 percent), mulatto, Moor, Lebanese and Portuguese minorities

Capital: Bissau



Overview:

Guinea-Bissau President Joao Bernardo Vieira, who won office in the country's first open election in June 1994 and has announced his candidacy in the scheduled July 1998 replaced an unpopular prime minister and pressed economic reforms after violent student-led demonstrations in April and May left at least one youth dead and many other people injured. His ruling African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (PAIGC) has come under increasing criticism for economic mismanagement. The fierce police reaction to student demonstrations sparked by a teachers' strike over unpaid salaries further angered public sentiment. In May, Prime Minister Saturino da Costa, who had been a target of public anger for his policy decisions and his habit of personally and publicly assaulting citizens on the streets of the capital, Bissau, was sacked in May and replaced by Carlos Correia, a former prime minister and long-time PAIGC functionary. Correia was in turn dismissed in October as political unrest continued.

Guinea-Bissau achieved independence from Portugal in 1973 after a fierce twelve-year guerrilla war. The PAIGC ran a repressive one-party state until 1991 constitu-

tional revisions ended the PAIGC's status as the "leading force in society." Political parties were legalized, and direct elections for both the president and members of parliament to five year terms introduced. Thirteen parties registered for national elections in 1994. The PAIGC won a majority in parliament and President Vieira retained his post in a runoff vote in elections accepted as free and fair by both the opposition and a UN observer mission.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Guinea-Bissau's citizens voted for the first time in democratic elections in 1994, and both direct presidential polls and legislative elections were judged free and fair by international observers. The PAIGC retained the presidency and a parliamentary majority, but five opposition parties are represented in the national assembly. Municipal elections first set for 1996 have been delayed repeatedly. The July 1998 presidential and legislative elections will test the country's democratic transition.

Freedoms of assembly and expression are constitutionally-guaranteed and generally respected. The Guinean Human Rights League has raised allegations of numerous instances of torture and other mistreatment by security forces. The judiciary has shown some autonomy, although it remains part of the executive branch and judicial performance is often unpredictable as a result of political interference, poor training and scant resources. In rural areas, traditional law usually prevails. Individuals suspected of "subversive" activities may be legally detained, but there are reports of detention without resort to any statute. Constitutionally guaranteed rights of privacy and protections against search and seizure are routinely ignored by police. Citizens may generally travel freely within the country, and there are no legal restrictions on foreign travel.

Few private newspapers publish, but the lack of vibrant independent media appears more due to financial constraints than government interference. State media practice broad self-censorship and rarely question or criticize government policies. The mainly rural population is 60 percent illiterate, and radio remains the most important medium for reaching people. Five private radio stations are now broadcasting, two of which rebroadcast French and Portuguese programming, offering more balanced coverage than government services.

While official registration is required, no religious group has been denied registration since 1982, and religious freedom is respected. Most people follow traditional religions, but proselytizing is permitted, and there is a significant Muslim population, as well as a small Christian minority and foreign missionary activity.

Women face some legal and significant traditional and societal discrimination. They generally do not receive equal pay for equal work and have fewer opportunities for education and jobs in the small formal sector. Only eight of 100 national assembly members are women. Female genital mutilation is widespread.

The vast majority of the one million citizens of Guinea-Bissau survive on subsistence agriculture. Eleven labor unions operate in the formal sector. Workers have the right to organize and to strike with prior notice. Guinea-Bissau's low life expectancy, high infant mortality and declining living standards are consequences both of Portuguese colonial neglect and misrule since independence. Economic reforms encouraged by international donors include sharply cutting the civil service and reducing imports. In July, the country formally joined the *Communauté Financière Africaine*

(African Financial Community) monetary union, adopting the French-backed CFA franc as its new currency. The move is expected to bring new stability to the country's finances. A broad privatization plan is underway, and Guinea-Bissau won new grants and credits from the International Monetary Fund.

Guyana

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
 Political Rights: 2
 Civil Liberties: 2
 Economy: Mixed statist
 Status: Free
 Population: 722,000
 PPP: \$2,729
 Life Expectancy: 63.2
 Ethnic Groups: East Indian (51 percent), black (36 percent), mixed (5 percent), Indian (4 percent), European
 Capital: Georgetown



Overview: The bitterly contested election served to remind Guyanese of an enduring ethnic divide in the politics of a nation with a slender legacy of democratic rule. Interim Prime Minister Janet Jagan, the Chicago-born former first lady, widow of Chedi Jagan who died in March, was elected in December amidst opposition charges of election rigging and violent street protests, and was quickly sworn into office in an effort to head off efforts to unseat her.

Guyana is a member of the British Commonwealth. From independence in 1966 until 1992 it was ruled by the autocratic, predominantly Afro-Guyanese, People's National Congress (PNC). The 1980 constitution provides for a strong president and a 65-seat National Assembly elected every five years. Twelve seats are occupied by elected local officials. The leader of the party winning the plurality of parliamentary seats becomes president for a five-year term. The president appoints the prime minister and cabinet.

The first free and fair elections were held in 1992, and 80 percent of the eligible population voted. The PNC lost to the predominantly Indo-Guyanese People's Progressive Party (PPP)-Civic alliance. PPP leader Cheddi Jagan, a long-time Marxist whose revolutionary ardor had dampened since the collapse of Soviet communism, became president.

Indo-Guyanese outnumber Afro-Guyanese, 52 percent to 36 percent. Jagan won 52 percent of the vote; PNC leader Desmond Hoyte took 41 percent. A third candidate from the Working People's Alliance (WPA), the only mixed-race party in the country, won less than two percent. In the legislature, the PPP won 36 of 65 seats, the PNC 26; the WPA, which campaigned on a platform of multiracial cooperation, won two seats, and the centrist United Force (UF) took one.

Fear and distrust of the Indo-Guyanese ruling party continues among Afro-Guyanese, despite Jagan's record of governing in a relatively evenhanded manner. He was slow to move on promised constitutional and electoral reforms, but in 1995 got to work with an eye towards the 1997 elections.

Jagan's work was cut short by his death in March. He was replaced by Hinds, a member of Civic, the PPP's coalition partner. Hinds called elections for December 15 and—a first for a member of the Caribbean Community—the parliament will be elected by proportional representation. Janet Jagan, an American-born journalist and the 76-year-old widow of the late president, is the presidential candidate of the PPP-Civic alliance. Her main competitor is Hoyte.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens can change their government through direct, multi-party elections. In 1997, some 390,000 voted, out of some 460,000 who were eligible, the latter number an increase by 100,000 from 1992. The 1997 election included voter photo identification cards designed to reduce fraud and impersonation; however, there were accusations of ballot stuffing and voter intimidation.

The rights of free expression, freedom of religion and freedom to organize political parties, civic organizations and labor unions are generally respected. Nonetheless, without more explicit constitutional guarantees, political rights and civil liberties rest more on government tolerance than institutional protection.

The judicial system is independent; however, due process is undermined by the shortage of staff and funds. Prisons are overcrowded, and conditions are poor. Guyana is the only Caribbean country to have cut all ties to the British Privy Council, the court of last resort of other former colonies in the region. Guyanese officials have complained that U.S. efforts to deport Guyanese from their northern neighbor has caused an upsurge in violent crimes such as carjackings and shootouts with police.

The police force is prone to corruption; particularly so given the penetration by the hemispheric drug trade. The Guyana Human Rights Association has charged the police with frequent recurrence to excessive force, sometimes causing death. The GHRA is autonomous, effective and backed by independent civic and religious groups. In 1997, it also criticized the government for the manner in which the juvenile justice system deals with offenders, particularly with regard to a lack of due process.

In September 1997, Hinds approved a corruption bill containing stiff penalties for public officials who are unable to explain the sources of unseemly wealth. False declarations of assets and failure to satisfactorily account for large sums of income are punishable by up to three years in jail and a small fine.

Several independent newspapers operate freely, including the *Stabroek News* and the *Catholic Standard*, a Church weekly. Only two radio stations operate; both are government owned. The government owns one television station. Fifteen privately-owned television stations freely criticize the government.

Labor unions are well-organized. In 1995 the government sought to dilute the right to strike among some public sector unions. Companies are not obligated to recognize unions in former state enterprises sold off by the government.

Racial clashes have diminished since the 1992 election, but remains a concern. The government has formed a race relations committee to promote tolerance.

Guyana's Amerindian Act gives indigenous groups title to their land. Native American groups complain that the government is selling mining and logging concessions in Guyana's immense rain forest without regard for the land rights.

Domestic violence is common, but the government is reluctant to address the issue.

↓ Haiti

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 7,269,000

PPP: \$896

Life Expectancy: 54.4

Ethnic Groups: Black (95 percent), mulatto

Capital: Port-au-Prince

Trend Arrow: Haiti receives a downward trend arrow due to continuing political crisis.

Political Rights: 4
Civil Liberties: 5
Status: Partly Free



Overview:

The government of President Rene Preval spent its second year in office careening from crisis to crisis, unable to consolidate any of the conditions—political tolerance and fair play, security and foreign investment—needed for democracy to establish a firm hold.

Since gaining independence from France in 1804 following a slave revolt led by Toussaint Ouverture, 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. It provides for a president elected for five years, an elected parliament composed of a 27-member Senate and an 83-member House of Representatives, and a presidentially-appointed prime minister.

In the 1990 elections Aristide, a charismatic left-wing priest, won in a landslide over conservative Marc Bazin. Aristide sought to establish civilian authority over the military; he also tried to end corruption. Haiti's mostly mulatto elites and the military then conspired to overthrow him. In response, he overstepped the constitution by calling on supporters to defend the government by violent means.

Aristide was overthrown in September 1991. Haiti came under the ruthless control of the military triumvirate of General Raoul Cedras, General Philippe Biamby and Colonel Michel Francois. Tens of thousands of paramilitary thugs terrorized the populace, and the regime was steeped in narcotics trafficking. The U.S. and the U.N. imposed a trade and oil embargo.

In September 1994, facing an imminent U.S. invasion, Cedras and Biamby agreed to step down. U.S. troops took control of the country, and Aristide was reinstated. His security, as well as that of average Haitians, now depended on the U.S. and U.N. forces.

Aristide dismantled the military before the June 1995 parliamentary elections got underway. International observers questioned the legitimacy of the June election, and Aristide's supporters fell out among themselves. The more militant Lavalas movement remained firmly behind him. But the National Front for Change and Democracy (FNCD), a leftist coalition that had backed him in 1990, claimed fraud and boycotted the runoff elections. In the end, the Lavalas won an overwhelming majority.

In the fall Lavalas nominated Preval, Aristide's prime minister in 1991, as its presidential candidate. With Aristide backing him and the FNCD and most other major

opposition parties boycotting, the result of the December 17 election, which opposition politicians claimed was marred by serious irregularities and fraud, was a foregone conclusion. Preval won about 89 percent with a very poor turnout.

Preval took office February 7, 1996. The U.N. had planned to withdraw its troops by the end of the month. The new U.S.-trained Haitian National Police, however, clearly lacked the competence to fill the void. At Preval's urging, the U.N. extended its stay, but by June cut its presence to 1,300. The final U.S. combat force had withdrawn two months earlier.

In September 1996, Preval purged much of his security force which, according to American officials, was involved in the murders a month earlier of two politicians from the rightwing Mobilization for National Development (MDN) party, which counted on heavy support from former soldiers.

Senate elections held in April 1997, in which some five percent of the electorate voted, were fraught with irregularities, and the resulting on-going election dispute meant that parliament would not approve a new prime minister to replace Rosny Smarth, who resigned in June following growing criticism of the government's economic policies. That same month two parliamentary deputies were arrested on charges of trafficking diplomatic passports. Since June effective governance ground to a standstill, and vital economic recovery efforts were paralyzed. In September Aristide announced an alliance with other congressional groups to oppose, Preval's economic reform plans. In October a grenade attack in downtown Port-au-Prince one person was killed was linked to a plot to destabilize the government. In late November, the U.N. withdrew all but 300 of its remaining 1,170 troops. That same month a reported 60 people were killed by armed gangs.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

The April 6, 1997 elections for one-third of the Senate and 565 local councils, overseen by a politicized and incompetent electoral commission, were characterized by fraud and significant violations of law. The Organization of American States said the elections were marred by irregularities in vote counting.

The constitution guarantees a full range of political rights and civil liberties. The protection of such rights in 1997, however, remained precarious, as was the rule of law. Scores of people were killed by the former military, Aristide supporters and others.

The new 5,200-member Haitian National Police, trained by the U.S. Justice Department, is inexperienced and lacking in resources. Human rights groups say the police frequently use excessive force and mistreat detainees, and several unarmed civilians have been murdered. The police are particularly under siege from drug trafficking and related corruption. There is no evidence, however, that the grave violations of human rights by the police form part of official policy, as they have in previous governments. The police have been increasingly called upon to put down protests against the government's economic austerity program.

Mob violence and armed gangs posed severe security threats in urban areas. Former soldiers and others linked to the former military regime and common criminals were responsible for much of the violence, including political assassinations. However, there is evidence that a number of killings were carried out by supporters of Aristide, who himself has been courting members of the discredited army. Haitian officials also say

that the rise in crime is due to convicted criminals who have been repatriated from other countries, particularly the U.S. Turf wars between rival drug gangs resulted in the killing of scores of people in 1997, including several policemen. Private security forces that carry out extra-legal search and seizures are illegal but flourishing.

The judicial system remains corrupt, inefficient and essentially dysfunctional, particularly in rural areas, and U.S. reform efforts have been tainted by allegations of corruption involving contractors and others. Prison conditions are grim, and a severe backlog of cases means hundreds suffer lengthy pre-trial detention periods.

A number of independent newspapers and radio stations exist. Outlets critical of the government remain targets of official intimidation, including mob attacks. Television is state-run and strongly-biased toward the government. In 1997 police officers participated in a number of attacks on journalists, including an illegal search of a Cayes radio station, the violent incursion onto the premises of the private broadcaster Radio Telediffusion Cayenne (RTC) and the beating of a Haiti Progres photographer covering a protest in downtown Port-au-Prince.

Labor rights, as with all other legally-sanctioned guarantees, are essentially unenforced. Unions are generally too weak to engage in collective bargaining, and their organizing efforts are undermined by the high unemployment rate.

Honduras

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy (military-influenced) **Political Rights:** 2*
Civil Liberties: 3

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 5,605,000

PPP: \$2,050

Life Expectancy: 68.4

Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (90 percent), Indian (7 percent)

Capital: Tegucigalpa

Ratings Change: Honduras' political rights rating changed from 3 to 2 due to tough anti-crime initiatives.



Overview: The election of Liberal Party candidate Carlos Flores Facusse, the 47-year-old president of Congress, to succeed 71-year-old President Carlos Roberto Reina, also a Liberal, marked a generational shift in Honduran politics. Reina prepared to leave office in 1998 after having made significant reforms of the country's highly-militarized internal security apparatus.

The Republic of Honduras was established in 1839, 18 years after independence from Spain. It has endured decades of military rule and intermittent elected government. The last military regime gave way to elected civilian rule in 1982. The constitution provides for a president and a 130-member, unicameral congress elected for four years.

The two main parties are the center-left Liberal Party (PL) and the conservative National Party (PN). In the 1993 presidential election, the PN nominated Oswaldo

Ramos Soto, an outspoken right-winger. The PL, which held power during most of the 1980s, nominated Reina, a 67-year-old progressive and former president of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Reina won with 52 percent of the vote. The PL won 70 seats in congress, the PN 56.

Reina promised a "moral revolution" and greater civilian control over the military. His administration has had a positive if uneven record. The size of the military has been reduced greatly, although its spending is still secret, and officers suspected of human rights violations are unpunished. Positive developments include the abolition of a heavily class-biased compulsory military service and the Supreme Court's reversal of the military amnesty for nine officers accused of the torture and attempted murder of six students in 1982. Separation of the police from the military is underway following the December 1996 approval by Congress of a constitutional amendment to place the police under civilian control.

However a virulent crime wave believed to be, in part, the work of former and serving military and intelligence officers, has not been curbed. Several leaders of Indian and Garifuna minority groups attempting to defend their land from encroachments by non-Indian landowners have been murdered.

In November Flores Facusse defeated Nora Gunera de Melgar, the former mayor of Tegucigalpa by a margin of 54 to 41 percent. The Liberal also won a majority of the country's municipalities, although they lost in the capital.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens are able to change their government through elections. The November elections were carried out in relative calm. In 1997, Congress passed a bill which reduced the number of congressmen to 80, and that of alternates to 40; to take effect the measure must be ratified by the new legislature in 1998.

Constitutional guarantees regarding free expression, freedom of religion and the right to form political parties and civic organizations are generally respected. But repressive measures coming in the face of peaceful protests and mounting crime have limited political rights and civil liberties.

The military exerts considerable, if waning, influence over the government. Reina promised that the post of commander of the armed forces will be suppressed, and that a civilian defense minister will be in charge. A constellation of military-owned businesses makes the army one of Honduras' ten largest corporations.

The military remains the principal human rights violator, and the institution protects members linked to both political repression and street crime, including narcotics trafficking. In 1997 the government moved to place the police under civilian control, a task made easier by the emergence of a cadre of police professionals at the top reaches of a force controlled by the military since 1963. However, despite Reina's attempts to sever the link between the 5,000 person Public Security Force (FSB) and the military, he has frequently used the military for internal security tasks, putting down labor unrest, quelling protests, and seeking to control street crime.

Arbitrary detention and torture by the police still occur. In July of 1997 a judge issued an arrest warrant, for involvement in auto theft and other criminal activities, against the chief of the police's intelligence service, who already faced charges in the illegal execution of criminals.

A crime wave throughout Honduras has been fueled by the presence of some 120

youth gangs whose main activities include murder, kidnapping and robbery. Where crime rings have been effectively broken up, good police work, rather than troops in the streets, has made the difference.

The judicial system, headed by the Supreme Court, is weak and corrupt. In 1997 the court announced the dismissal of 38 judges, including two appellate court magistrates, for "irregularities." Judges who assert themselves in human rights cases face death threats and attacks. Most criminal cases against the military remain in military court jurisdiction, and the charges are usually dismissed. Although 90 percent of those incarcerated are awaiting trial, they share deplorable prison conditions with convicted inmates. In August 1997, fires broke out at two prisons, resulting in mass escapes, rioting and the death of two inmates.

Labor unions are well organized and can strike. Labor leaders, religious groups and indigenous-based peasant unions pressing for land rights remain vulnerable to repression, and Reina is criticized for failing to address ethnic rights issues or to stand up to large landowners who hire gunmen to terrorize Indians.

Hungary

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2

Economy: Mixed capitalist

Status: Free

Population: 10,197,000

PPP: \$6,437

Life Expectancy: 68.8

Ethnic Groups: Hungarian (90 percent), Roma (4 percent), German (3 percent), Slovak, Romanian

Capital: Budapest



Overview:

Hungary's invitation to join NATO and the European Union, political jockeying before the 1998 parliamentary elections and an improving economy were key issues for the ruling coalition led by Socialist Prime Minister Gyula Horn. In September the prime minister rebuffed calls for his resignation after an investigating committee determined he had served with a paramilitary force responsible for restoring order after the anti-Communist uprising in 1956.

With the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire after World War I, Hungary lost two-thirds of its territory under the 1920 Trianon Treaty, leaving 3.5 million Hungarians as minorities in neighboring Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, Croatia and Ukraine. After World War II, Soviet forces helped install a Communist regime. In 1956, Soviet tanks quashed an armed uprising by Hungarians. Under the politically repressive regime of Janos Kadar, Hungary enjoyed comparative economic well-being under so-called "goulash communism," which had aspects of a market economy. By the late 1980s, with the economy deteriorating, the ruling Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (MSzMP) lost its legitimacy. The ouster of Kadar in 1988 led the way to political reform and the eventual introduction of a multiparty system in 1989.

In 1994 parliamentary elections, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSzP), a successor to the MSzMP made up largely of "reform" communists, unseated the conservative Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), which had won control of the 386-member parliament in 1990. The MSzP won 209 seats, the pro-market Alliance of Free Democrats (SzDSz) captured 70; the MDF, 37; the pre-war rightist Independent Smallholders Party (FKGP), 26; the Christian Democrats (KDNP), 22, and the Federation of Young Democrats (FiDeSz), 20. The Socialists agreed to share power with the SzDSz, and former foreign minister Horn was named prime minister.

In early 1995, under Finance Minister Bokros, the government announced radical spending cuts and devalued the forint. The unpopular reform package met strong opposition from unions, and led to the resignations of the welfare and national security affairs ministers. The government slashed state spending and moved to step up privatization. While the Constitutional Court overruled some of the planned budget cuts, the program had a positive impact on the economy. Balance of payments and public finances improved, and a recovery was spurred by exports—made competitive by higher productivity and the devalued forint—and investment. In February 1996, Finance Minister Bokros resigned after a second austerity package aimed at reforming the country's huge public sector, including its health and welfare systems, met stiff resistance from the Socialist-led cabinet.

In 1997, controversy arose over the government's plan to hold a referendum on NATO membership and a land law that would allow foreigners to own agricultural land. On August 20, the center-left opposition FiDeSz and the conservative FKGP launched a petition drive against foreign land ownership intended to force a referendum on the issue. On October 13, the Constitutional Court ruled that a referendum initiated by at least 200,000 citizens took priority over a referendum initiated by the government. The decision raised the possibility that the NATO referendum would be postponed until the land issue was resolved. FiDeSz and the FKGP maintained that since Hungarian land prices are only a fraction of those in Western Europe, the government plan would provoke an explosion of land speculation. On November 4, parliament voted 312-26 to hold a binding referendum on NATO. The two questions on foreign ownership of lands proposed by the opposition, were dropped from the ballot. The referendum was held on November 16, and more than 85 percent of voters endorsed accession to NATO. Turnout was just below 50 percent.

With parliamentary elections due in the first half of 1998, parties sought to cement electoral coalitions. In late September, FiDeSz, the most popular party according to polls, and the MDF announced an electoral alliance. The parties agreed to present joint candidates in 60 electoral districts and individual candidates in the remaining 116. The FKGP and the Christian Democrats concluded a similar arrangement. The historic Social Democratic Party (SzDP) merged with the Anna Kéthly Social Democratic Party (AKSzDP), and the coalition planned to enter 100 candidates in the 1998 parliamentary race. Government and party leaders moved to shore up the often uneasy relationship between the ruling MSzP-SzDSz coalition. In October, the SzDSz announced it was preparing for the election campaign independently. Party alignments and alliances were expected to shift as the elections neared.

The government continued to be buffeted by scandals. In April, SzDSz Chairman Ivan Peto resigned for his involvement in a 1996 privatization scandal, the so-called "Tocsik affair," which centered on a record consultancy fee paid an independent ex-

pert. Two months earlier, the president of the supervisory board of the State Privatization and Holding Company (ADV) resigned. Peto was replaced in May by Interior Minister Gabor Kuncze. In March, two members of the Intelligence Office were dismissed for secretly collecting information on Socialist deputies in what came to be known as the "Birch Tree Affair." A subsequent report by parliament's National Security Committee recommended that the government should regulate the national security organization's duties, reporting obligations, and the way information is analyzed and used.

In other issues, tensions with Slovakia were exacerbated over the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. In February, the government said the Slovak government was violating the Hungarian-Slovak basic treaty and international agreements by banning bilingual schools. In September, Slovak Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar proposed that the two countries exchange ethnic minorities, further angering the government. The economy continued to show signs of growth under the austerity program.

In the first nine months of 1997, the GDP grew by 3 percent, unemployment dropped to 10 percent, and real wages increased. In July, parliament approved a package of bills on a drastic overhaul of the pension system beginning in 1998. The new resolution will supplement the antiquated "pay-as-you-go" system, operated by the social security pension fund, with private funds from which employees will receive 25 percent of their pensions in the future.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Hungarians can change their government democratically under a multiparty system enshrined in an amended Communist-era constitution. Close to 200 parties have been registered since 1989, but most are inactive. The 1994 elections were free and fair.

After a six year "media war" over control of electronic media, parliament passed a media law in December 1995. It provides for the privatization of TV-2 and Radio Danubis, and the operation of public service television and radio (including satellite Duna TV) as joint-stock companies run by public foundations. Each of these media organizations would be directed and supervised by a board comprised of members nominated by political bodies and interest groups. In the eight-member presidency of each board, the political parties would have equal representation. The other 21 members would be drawn from prominent media experts, academics, religious and social groups, ethnic minorities and human rights organizations. Some foreign media experts and Hungarian journalists criticized the new statute as overly complex and susceptible to allow further political infighting and exertion of political pressure. In August, a member of the Hungarian Radio Board resigned, charging the influence of "party-based supply of information and disinformation." In July, the Hungarian Television and Radio Commission granted national television licenses to two Western-led consortia, CLT-Ufa and the Scandinavian Broadcasting System. There is a wide variety of national and local papers, 80 percent in private hands. The press faces economic pressure, a concentration of proprietors, and political pressures.

Freedoms of assembly and association are respected. In March, farmers protested high taxes and social security contributions. Freedoms of conscience and religion are viewed as fundamental liberties not granted by the state. In April, the Jewish community protested anti-Semitic remarks by Agnes Nagy Maczo, vice president of the Smallholders Party. In October, the Federation of Jewish Communities in Hungary

called for the recall of the country's ambassador to Canada after he met with an alleged war criminal. In October, the Catholic, Reform and Evangelical Churches and the Jewish federation protested a bill on funding churches that backtracked on earlier government promises of support for religious education. In May, the Hungarian Interest Protection Alliance was formed to recover religious assets confiscated in Hungarian populated areas of neighboring countries.

The country's estimated 500,000 Roma (Gypsies) continue to suffer de facto discrimination in employment and housing. In August, the National Self-Government of Hungarian Gypsies demanded collective compensation from the government for abuses suffered by the Gypsy community during World War II. The Slovak minority complained to the OSCE that the mass media ignores its concerns. In April, parliament approved a resolution proposal on budget assistance for national and ethnic minority organizations effecting some 130 organizations.

The judiciary is independent and the Constitutional Court has ruled against the government on several occasions, notably nullifying aspects of the 1995 austerity economic program and the 1997 referendum issues. In 1993, the Court lifted the statute of limitations on the persecution of former Communist officials who suppressed the 1956 uprising. In 1997, the country's three-tier judicial system was replaced by a four-tier model that includes regional courts. Criteria for would-be judges were made more rigorous, calling for four rather than two years of preparatory practice as a lawyer. Court procedures are often slow. An ombudsman monitors civil complaints and reports to parliament.

In 1996, the vetting of parliamentary deputies began, with judges and parliamentary deputies examining whether lawmakers held important positions in the secret service, interior ministry or the police during the 1956 anti-Communist uprising. In August, the government's Historical Office announced that Communist-era state security documents would be available to researchers who believe they were under observation during the Communist regime. In September, the "vetting" committee announced that Prime Minister Horn helped restore order after the 1956 anti-Communist uprising and that in the late 1980s he had access to secret reports on dissidents.

An estimated 2.5 million Hungarian workers belong to five independent labor federations. The largest is the National Confederation of Hungarian Trade Unions. Another is the Cooperation Forum of Trade Unions. Farmers are represented by Metesz, which organized several protests in March. In October, the Soldiers Trade Union demanded higher wage increases.

Iceland

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 270,000
PPP: \$20,566
Life Expectancy: 79.1
Ethnic Groups: Icelander
Capital: Reykjavik

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Overview:

Since 1995, Iceland has been governed by a center-right coalition led by Prime Minister David Oddsson. In 1996, former leftist party chairman and finance minister Olafur Ragnar Grimsson was elected president with 41 percent of the vote. Although membership in the European Union (EU) remains an unresolved issue, Reykjavik has established EU links through membership in the European Economic Area. In 1996, Iceland, along with four other Nordic countries, joined Europe's Schengen Convention as observer states. The convention provides for the abolition of systematic internal border controls, a common visa policy and close cooperation in police matters. These steps, taken to preserve the Nordic countries' "passport union," suggest that, despite Iceland's reluctance to join the EU, it cannot avoid participation in EU policies. Although their country has strong historical, cultural and economic ties with Europe, Icelanders are hesitant to agree to the EU common fisheries policy, which they believe would threaten their marine industry. This industry accounts for eighty percent of Iceland's exported goods and half of its export revenues.

Iceland achieved full independence in 1944. Multiparty governments have been in power since then. In 1995, after attempting to appeal to younger voters and non-marine industry interests by advocating EU membership, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) lost three seats and more than four percent of the popular vote. The Independence Party opted to join forces with the anti-EU Progressive Party, pledging to continue economic stabilization efforts and to eliminate the country's budget deficit.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Icelanders can change their government democratically. The constitution, adopted by referendum in 1944, provides for a popularly-elected, primarily ceremonial president, who is responsible for appointing a prime minister from the largest party in the 63-member Althing (parliament). The parliament is elected on the basis of a mixed system of proportional and direct representation. Elections are held every four years. There are six major political parties. The Awakening of the Nation party broke away from the SDP shortly before the 1995 elections and won four Althing seats.

The country's judiciary is independent. The law does not provide for trial by jury, but many trials, especially during the appeals process, use panels comprised of several judges. All judges serve for life. The Ministry of Justice administers the lower courts, and the Supreme Court ensures that the judicial process is fair. Defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to legal counsel. Two special courts handle cases of impeachment of government officials and labor disputes.

The constitution provides for freedom of speech, freedom of peaceful assembly and association and freedom of the press. These freedoms are respected in practice. Constitutional bans on censorship are respected. A wide range of publications includes both independent and party-affiliated newspapers. An autonomous board of directors oversees the Icelandic State Broadcasting Service, which operates a number of transmitting and relay stations. There are both public and private television broadcast companies. In March, the country's two private television companies merged. There are six major radio stations.

Most eligible workers belong to free labor unions, and all enjoy the right to strike. Citizens have the right to hold private property. Disabled persons enjoy extensive rights in employment and education.

Virtually everyone in the country holds at least nominal membership in the state-supported Lutheran Church. Legal protections against discrimination are respected: Freedom of worship is allowed, and discrimination on the basis of race, language, social class and gender is outlawed.

No legal barriers oppose women's participation in the political process. An active women's party, the Women's List, holds three of the 63 seats in the Althing. Women are paid 20 to 40 percent less than their male counterparts for comparable work. Labor union membership is predominantly male.

India

Polity: Parliamentary democracy (insurgencies)
 Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 941,871,000

PPP: \$1,348

Life Expectancy: 61.3

Ethnic Groups: Indo-Aryan (72 percent), Dravidian (25 percent), others

Capital: New Delhi

Political Rights: 2
 Civil Liberties: 4
 Status: Partly Free



Overview:

In the year marking the 50th anniversary of independence, the collapse of the United Front (UF) government in November 1997 left India heading for an election in early 1998. The election seemed likely to produce another fractured parliament and little consensus on policies for economic development, strengthening the rule of law, cleaning up corruption and criminality in politics, and other critical issues.

India achieved independence from Britain in August 1947 with the partition of the subcontinent into predominantly-Hindu India, under premier Jawaharlal Nehru, and Muslim Pakistan. The 1950 constitution provides for a lower *Lok Sabha* (House of the People), with 543 seats, elected for a five-year term (plus two appointed Anglo-Indian seats), and an upper *Rajya Sabha* (Council of States). Executive authority is vested in a prime minister, who is the leader of the party commanding the most support in the lower house.

The centrist, secular Congress party ruled continuously except for periods in op-

position in 1977-80 and 1989-91. The 1991 elections were marred by the assassination of former premier Rajiv Gandhi, heir to the political dynasty of Congress standard bearers Nehru and Indira Gandhi, his daughter. New prime minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, heading a minority Congress government and facing a balance of payments crisis, began reforms aimed at transforming an autarkic, control-bound economy into a market-based system and encouraging foreign investment.

In December 1992 150,000 Hindu fundamentalists, incited by the BJP and militant Hindu organizations, destroyed a 16th century mosque in the northern town of Ayodhya, touching off weeks of deadly communal violence. Between 1993 and late 1995 Congress lost eleven state elections, as regional parties in southern India and lower caste-based parties and the BJP in the northern Hindi-speaking belt capitalized on a string of corruption scandals, a backlash against economic reforms by poor and lower caste voters and Muslim anger over the Rao government's failure to prevent communal violence.

The 1996 election campaign polls showed voters mainly concerned with unemployment, inflation and other regional matters. In voting staggered over five weeks to May 30, low caste Hindus and Muslims deserted Congress in droves, characterizing it as corrupt and indifferent to the poor, and gave regional, caste- and Muslim-based parties the balance of power for the first time. The BJP (161) and four allies won 196 seats, mainly in five northern and western states; Congress, 140; a seven party, center-left National Front-Left Front (NF-LF) coalition headed by the Janata Dal party, 119; 19 regional, lower caste and Muslim-based parties, 79; independents, nine.

In May a BJP-led minority government resigned after 13 days after failing to attract secular allies. On June 1 the NF-LF, reconstituted as the 178-seat UF, formed a government under H.D. Deve Gowda. Congress supported the UF to keep the BJP out of power. In September Congress elected veteran politician Sitaram Kesri as party president.

In late March 1997 Kesri launched a bid to form a Congress-led government, but in early April restored Congress support for the UF in return for replacing Gowda with Inder Kumar Gujral, the respected foreign minister. Gujral took steps to improve relations with Pakistan and continued a policy of incremental economic liberalization, with few changes to politically sensitive subsidies, the bureaucracy and the loss-making state enterprise sector, that has found broad consensus among all parties. In November a commission investigating Rajiv Gandhi's death linked a tiny, Tamil Nadu-based UF constituent party to Sri Lankan guerrillas implicated in the assassination. On November 28 Congress withdrew its support from the UF, as some party veterans saw the issue as a vote-getter and sought fresh elections, and Gujral resigned at midnight. On December 4, after both the Congress party and the BJP failed to cobble together a new coalition, President K.R. Narayanan called for elections that will take place beginning in mid-February 1998.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Indian citizens can change their government democratically. However, weak rule of law, social and communal tensions and traditional customs contribute to widespread violations

of civil liberties.

The 1996 elections were the fairest in India's history. Authorities monitored compliance with campaign spending limits and restricted use of state resources for cam-

paigning. Photo identity cards helped prevent fraud. "Booth capturing," intimidation, violence and other irregularities were most prevalent in the northern state of Bihar.

The constitution allows the central government to dissolve state governments following a breakdown in normal administration. Successive governments have misused this power to gain control of states under opposition administration, although in October President Narayanan persuaded the government not to impose central rule on Uttar Pradesh after a BJP government took power. Overall, economic reforms are steadily devolving power to the states. Official corruption siphons off huge sums of development money annually. An official 1993 report, partially released in 1995, concluded that criminals and organized crime have penetrated politics, particularly in Bihar. The Election Commission estimates that 40 MPs and 700 state assembly representatives are facing charges or have been convicted of offenses ranging from murder to extortion.

The judiciary is independent and in recent years has exercised unprecedented activism in response to public interest litigation over official corruption, environmental issues and other matters. However, the judicial system has a backlog of more than 30 million cases, is subject to corruption and manipulation at the lower levels, and is largely inaccessible to the poor. In July the government said it would introduce plea bargaining and other measures to reduce the backlog, but also proposed to regulate public interest litigation.

Police, army and paramilitary forces are responsible for rape, torture, arbitrary detentions, "disappearances," staged "encounter killings" and destruction of homes, particularly in Kashmir, Punjab and Assam and other northeastern states. (*A separate report on Kashmir appears in the Related Territories section*). The 1983 Armed Forces (Punjab and Chandigarh) Special Powers Act grants security forces wide latitude to use lethal force in Punjab, where a brutal army crackdown in the early 1990s largely ended a Sikh insurgency that began in the early 1980s. Maoist Naxalite guerrillas kill dozens of police, politicians, landlords and villagers each year in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa, and run parallel courts in parts of Bihar.

The broadly drawn 1980 National Security Act allows police to detain suspects for up to one year (two in Punjab) without charges. Police torture of suspects and abuse of ordinary prisoners, particularly low caste members, is routine, as is rape of female convicts. Since its establishment in 1993 the National Human Rights Commission has monitored deaths and incidences of torture in prisons, but it cannot investigate complaints of human rights violations committed by security forces. The Criminal Procedure Code requires central or state government approval for prosecutions of armed forces members, and in practice this generally protects security forces from prosecution. In October the government signed the United Nations Convention Against Torture.

The seven states of northeast India, a resource-rich, strategic region, continue to be swept by anti-government militancy and intertribal and internecine conflict fueled by arms and drugs from Burma. In recent decades hundreds of thousands of migrants from other parts of India and Bangladesh have settled in the region, generating unrest over land tenure and development policies. More than 40 mainly indigenous-based rebel armies are seeking either greater autonomy or independence for their tribal regions or states. Under the 1958 Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, which grants security forces broad powers to use lethal force and detention in Assam and four nearby

states, the army has committed atrocities with impunity during counterinsurgency operations. Guerrillas commit hundreds of killings, abductions and rapes each year, and extort millions of dollars annually from tea gardens and merchants.

The private press is vigorous. The Official Secrets Act empowers authorities to censor security-related articles; in practice this is occasionally used to limit criticism of the government. Journalists are occasionally pressured and harassed by government officials, militant Hindu groups and others. Radio is both public and private, although the state-owned All India Radio is dominant and its news coverage favors the government. The government maintains a monopoly on domestic television broadcasting, and in May announced plans to regulate foreign satellite television broadcasting.

Nongovernmental human rights organizations generally operate freely, but face harassment in rural areas from landlords and other powerful interests. Authorities continue to hold Rongthong Kuenley Dorji, the exile-based Bhutanese opposition leader, after arresting him on April 18 in response to a Bhutanese government extradition request. Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which empowers state authorities to declare a state of emergency, restrict free assembly and impose curfews, has been used prevent demonstrations. In July Amnesty International reported that state police in Maharashtra have forcibly suppressed protests against the construction of a foreign-sponsored power plant. Local authorities have taken similar action at other development sites. In July Bombay police shot dead 11 people during caste-based protests over a desecrated statue.

Several thousand women are burnt to death, driven to suicide or otherwise killed, and countless others are harassed, beaten, or deserted by husbands in dowry disputes each year. Although dowry is illegal, convictions in dowry deaths are rare. Rape and other violence against women is prevalent. Many of the hundreds of thousands of women and children in Indian brothels, including tens of thousands of Nepalese trafficking victims, are held in debt servitude and subjected to rape, beatings and other torture in a system that thrives with the complicity of local officials. Hindu women are often denied inheritances, and under *Shari'a* (Islamic law) Muslim daughters generally receive half the inheritance a son receives. Tribal land systems, particularly in Bihar, deny tribal women the right to own land.

The constitution bars discrimination based on caste, but in practice members of so-called scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, as well as religious and ethnic minorities, routinely face discrimination. Scores of people are killed each year in caste-related violence. Freedom of religion is respected.

Numerous religious traditions that place children in positions of servitude are responsible for child sexual exploitation in rural India. Major cities have tens of thousands of street children, many of whom work as porters, vendors and in other informal sector jobs. A 1996 Human Rights Watch/Asia report detailed illegal detentions, beatings, and torture of street children by police.

UNICEF estimates that there are up to 60 million child laborers, mostly from lower castes and ethnic minorities, in fireworks, carpet and glass factories, agriculture and other sectors. Several million are bonded laborers. In December 1996 the Supreme Court ordered states to enforce the 1986 Child Labor Act, which bans child labor in 16 industries but excludes agriculture and the informal sector, and directed employers to provide compensation to children in nine major industries. Notoriously corrupt

inspectors compromise implementation. Trade unions are powerful and independent, and workers exercise their rights to bargain collectively and strike.

The 43,000 Bangladeshi Chakma refugees in the northeast face abuses from local residents. Some 7,000 accepted repatriation in March and April. There are 80,000 Sri Lankan refugees in Tamil Nadu.

Indonesia

Polity: Dominant party (military-dominated)
Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 198,947,000

PPP: \$3,740

Life Expectancy: 63.5

Ethnic Groups: Javanese (45 percent), Sundanese (14 percent), Madurese (8 percent), Coastal Malay (8 percent), others

Capital: Jakarta

Trend Arrow: Indonesia receives a downward trend arrow due to increasing social strife and government repression of dissidents.



Overview:

In 1997, fallout from Indonesian President Suharto's authoritarian rule characterized a turbulent year that included a violent parliamentary election campaign; a broad crackdown on dissidents, labor activists and student leaders; ethnic and sectarian violence, rooted in frustration over corruption and income inequalities; and a financial crisis.

President Sukarno proclaimed Indonesia's independence from Holland in 1945. Following a left-wing coup attempt in October 1965, the Army Strategic Reserve, headed by then-General Suharto, led a slaughter of an estimated 500,000 suspected Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) members. In 1968, two years after assuming key political and military powers, Suharto formally became president.

Under Suharto's highly-centralized regime economic development has lifted millions of Indonesians out of poverty, but the president's family and cronies hold privileged business positions, corruption has drained resources and political and social freedoms are heavily restricted. The 500-member parliament has 425 elected legislators and 75 seats reserved for the military. There are three legally recognized political parties: the ruling Golkar; the Christian, nationalist Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI); and the Muslim-oriented United Development Party (PPP). However, neither the PDI nor PPP function as a true opposition, and the legislature has little independent power. In theory, the 1,000-member People's Consultative Assembly, consisting of the parliament plus 500 appointed members, elects the president and vice president every five years. In reality, Suharto has always chosen to run unopposed. At the 1992 parliamentary elections Golkar took 282 of the then-400 contested seats, and in 1993 the Assembly formally "elected" Suharto to a sixth five-year term.

In 1994 a labor strike in the northwestern city of Medan exploded into anti-Chinese riots that many accused the government of covertly instigating to discredit the

independent labor movement. In June 1996 a government-backed, rebel PDI faction ousted Megawati Sukarnoputri, the daughter of the first president and the leading opposition figure, as PDI leader. On July 27 police forcibly evicted Megawati supporters from the PDI headquarters in Jakarta, touching off the worst rioting in the capital since the mid-1970s. Troops killed at least five people, and within weeks police had arrested more than 100 dissidents, beginning an ongoing crackdown against dissent.

The May 29, 1997 parliamentary elections followed a violent, month-long campaign that included attacks on government institutions and more than 250 deaths, mainly on Java and Borneo. With the government having banned Megawati and several other ousted PDI figures from running, the PPP became the party of protest. Official results gave Golkar 74 percent of the vote; the PPP, 22 percent; and the PDI, three percent. Eyewitnesses reported double voting by civil servants and other irregularities.

In early August the government floated the currency, the *rupiah*, following a wave of speculative attacks. By late October, local companies seeking to cover unhedged, foreign currency-denominated debts had driven the rupiah down 33 percent, contributing to a 40 percent slide in the benchmark share index. On October 31 Indonesia agreed to a \$37 billion IMF-led stabilization package conditioned on fiscal austerity, banking sector reforms, and a reduction in trading monopolies owned by Suharto's relatives and cronies and other liberalizations. In November the government took the unprecedented step of closing three banks partly owned by Suharto's relatives, and 16 ailing banks overall. But by December the government's commitment to the reforms was flagging.

The economic slowdown, combined with higher interest rates, bank failures and rising prices for staple foods will hit ordinary Indonesians in a period of mounting economic and social grievances that often find outlets in communal passions. Ethnic violence between the indigenous Dayaks and Madurese settlers in Kalimantan on Borneo killed hundreds of people and displaced thousands in early 1997. Muslim rioting on Java and elsewhere has targeted the mainly Christian, ethnic-Chinese community. The Chinese comprise only 3.5 percent of the population, but their wealth—estimated at 70-80 percent of private capital—is often attributed to government connections.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Indonesians lack the democratic means to change their government due to tight restrictions on political activity and free expression and institutional barriers that include a presidency chosen by a largely appointed body. The armed forces hold 15 percent of seats in national, provincial and district legislatures. The government sharply limits political debate by requiring political parties, the media, nongovernmental organizations (NGO), and individuals to adhere to an overarching, consensus-oriented *Pancasila* philosophy.

During the 1997 parliamentary election campaign, the government restricted street marches, outdoor rallies and vehicular parades and closely scripted newly-instituted television air slots for candidates, all of whom were state-approved. Amnesty International reported that authorities arrested more than 40 people for calling for an election boycott, and harassed others for establishing independent parties or involvement in independent monitoring efforts.

The most severe rights violations occur in Aceh, East Timor and Irian Jaya. (*Sepa-*

rate reports on East Timor and Irian Jaya appear in the *Related Territories* section). In Aceh province the army has killed more than 2,000 civilians and *Aceh Merdeka* (Free Aceh) guerrillas since 1989, and security forces arbitrarily detain and torture suspects.

The judiciary is not independent. The executive branch appoints and can dismiss or reassign judges. Police frequently torture suspects and prisoners, and security forces are rarely punished for human rights violations.

The Agency for Coordination of Assistance for the Consolidation of National Security (BAKORSTANAS) has wide latitude in curbing alleged security threats. During Suharto's rule authorities have used the 1963 Anti-Subversion Law to imprison hundreds of political prisoners for peaceful dissent. In April 1997 courts in Jakarta sentenced nine members of the tiny, unregistered People's Democratic Party (PRD), which the government accuses of fomenting the 1996 riots, to lengthy prison terms under the Anti-Subversion Law; a court in Surabaya jailed three PRD-affiliated labor activists, including Dita Sari, leader of the independent Indonesian Center for Workers' Struggle, under the Anti-Subversion Law over a July 1996 labor demonstration. During the year courts also sentenced several other opposition figures, including an MP, under other statutes. Scores or even hundreds of people, many of them political dissidents, are jailed under sedition or hate-sowing statutes.

The private media operate under threats from authorities to censure sensitive stories and practice considerable self-censorship, although some publications are increasingly reporting on the business dealings of Suharto's children. Several journalists are in prison for association with the independent Alliance of Independent Journalists or with underground political publications. The deaths in 1996-97 of two journalists, both of whom had done investigative reporting on corruption, remain unsolved. In 1996 the Supreme Court upheld a 1994 government ban on the weekly *Tempo* magazine which, along with two other banned weeklies, had criticized official policies. Political coverage on TVRI and other state-owned media heavily favors Golkar. Since the late 1980s, the government has authorized five private television stations, but all are owned by Suharto supporters and accept restrictions on news coverage.

Public assemblies and demonstrations require permits, which are frequently denied, and police often forcibly break up unsanctioned peaceful demonstrations. Grassroots legal aid, human rights and environmental NGO activists have been subjected to imprisonment, police raids on offices, restrictions on public speaking and other harassment. The official National Commission on Human Rights has been surprisingly critical, blaming the government for instigating the 1996 riots and calling for the Anti-Subversion Law to be repealed.

In addition to the unrest described in the Overview, ethnic Chinese face cultural, educational and business restrictions. Women face discrimination in education and employment opportunities, and female genital mutilation is widely practiced. Thousands of street children live in Jakarta and other cities.

Strict numerical requirements for trade union registration perpetuate a de facto single union system. The government-controlled All Indonesian Workers Union is the sole recognized union. Factory owners frequently ignore minimum wages, dismiss labor activists and strike leaders and physically abuse workers. The military often intervenes on behalf of factory owners in labor disputes. The Berlin-based Transparency International rates Indonesia as the most corrupt country in Asia.

Iran

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary (clergy-dominated)
Political Rights: 6
Civil Liberties: 7
Status: Not Free

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 63,101,000

PPP: \$5,766

Life Expectancy: 68.2

Ethnic Groups: Persian (51 percent), Azeri (24 percent), Kurd (7 percent), Turkic, Arab, others

Capital: Teheran

Trend Arrow: Iran receives an upward trend arrow due to May presidential elections which brought to power a relative moderate demonstrating popular desire for greater economic and social openness.



Overview:

In the most significant and free election held since the 1979 Khomeinist revolution, Iranians voted on May 23 to elect Mohammed Khatami, a moderate with a reputation for tolerance on cultural issues, president of one of the world's most socially and politically repressive governments. Khatami won 69 percent of the vote in a stunning upset over Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, speaker of parliament and favorite of the conservative religious establishment.

In January 1979, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the hereditary monarch whose decades-long authoritarian rule was marked by widespread corruption, fled Iran amid mounting religious and political unrest. A month later, the exiled Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini returned to lead the formation of the world's first Islamic republic. The 1979 constitution provides for a directly-elected president and a 12-member Council of Guardians, which certifies that all bills passed by the directly-elected, 270-member majlis accord with Islamic law. The Council must approve all presidential and parliamentary candidates, thus maintaining the political dominance of a few Shi'ite Muslim clerics and their allies. Khomeini was named supreme religious leader for life and invested with control over the armed forces, the power to dismiss the president following a legislative request or a ruling by the Supreme Court and influence in all areas of national and foreign policy.

Following Khomeini's death in June 1989, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei assumed the role of supreme religious leader and chief of state. In July, a constitutional referendum approved a stronger presidency, and in August Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a cleric, took office after running unopposed and winning nearly 95 percent of the vote. During his first term, Rafsanjani introduced limited free-market reforms, overcoming opposition from more radical clerics favoring statist economic policies. Rafsanjani won a second term in 1993, again running unopposed. But this time he only took 63 percent of the vote, in a reflection of popular disillusionment over declining living standards and due largely to the economic devastation resulting from the eight-year war with Iraq.

The Council of Guardians selected four of 238 hopefuls for the race in March to succeed Rafsanjani, who is constitutionally barred from seeking a third term. With the support of the Ayatollah and the majority conservatives in the majlis, Nateq-Nouri

was expected to claim an easy victory over Khatami, a former culture minister who was forced to resign in 1992 because he was considered too tolerant. But Khatami's liberal reputation won him the support of intellectuals, women, youths and business groups who want greater social openness and an end to state interference in the economy.

Some 90 percent of eligible voters turned out at the polls. The large number was attributed to a popular perception that this contest, unlike previous ones, offered a real choice. Unaccustomed to hearing new, moderate ideas from politicians, voters felt that they had an opportunity to make their voices heard. They are widely dissatisfied with the rising cost of living, a huge foreign debt, and 25 percent inflation. Since the revolution, per-capita annual income has decreased from \$1200 to \$800, while in the last two years alone, the prices of basic items such as food and fuel have doubled. Two-thirds of Iranians are under 25 years old, and increasingly resentful of a government which restricts personal freedoms without offering better education and employment opportunities.

Soon after taking office in August, Khatami won his first political victory when all 22 of his cabinet choices were approved by the majlis. Most controversial was his nominee for head of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Ayatollah Mohajerani. Mohajerani, a former vice president, has been criticized for advocating direct talks with the United States. Other surprising appointees include Kamal Kharazi, Iran's envoy to the United Nations, as foreign minister. Kharazi draws skepticism from hardliners who say he has spent too many years in the U.S. Massoumeh Ebtekar is the first woman vice-president for Iran, a position which does not require majlis approval.

Khatami may offer hope for greater social and cultural freedoms, but he must still work within the constraints of a highly restrictive political system. In Iran, the president is accountable to the conservative-dominated majlis and bound by the absolute rule of the supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei. A network of hardline clerics and merchants will challenge any moves toward reform. Furthermore, Rafsanjani was appointed head of the Expediency Council, which exists to mediate differences between the majlis and the Council of Guardians. The powers of the Expediency Council were expanded, possibly making Rafsanjani more powerful than Khatami, according to some observers. And since the election, the Ayatollah took control of the national police, formerly under the Interior Ministry.

In September, some 30 municipal officials were arrested, ostensibly for corruption, but never charged. Teheran mayor Gholamhossein Karbaschi is at the center of a scandal based on allegations that city officials profited from development contracts. Karbaschi denies the allegations, accusing hardliners of setting up the arrests in an attempt to discredit Khatami supporters. A former mayor of Teheran was convicted in October of corruption and embezzlement. He was sentenced to seven years imprisonment, 170 lashes, a lifetime ban on serving in government, and a fine of 400 million rials. Up to 85 percent of the Iranian economy is controlled by state and bureaucratic vested interests.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Iranians cannot change their government democratically. As all legislative and presidential candidates must support the ruling theocracy, meaningful opposition is effectively barred.

A Shi'ite clerical elite runs the government, and there is no separation of religion and

state. Political parties are strongly discouraged, and the few that exist are not allowed to participate in elections.

The March presidential election was marred by violations of free expression and low-level harassment of Khatami's campaign. A number of newspapers were closed or pressured to stop reporting on the elections. Officials closed down Khatami's Tehran headquarters and banned a pro-Khatami rally in a sports stadium. No international observers were permitted to oversee polling or ballot-counting.

The state maintains control through terror: arbitrary detention, torture, disappearance, summary trial and execution. Reports that 100-200 people are executed annually for political reasons are widely considered to be underestimates. There is no legal limit on length of detention, and prison conditions are harsh.

The judiciary is not independent. Judges, like all officials, must meet strict political and religious qualifications. Bribery is common. Civil courts feature some procedural safeguards, though judges may serve simultaneously as prosecutors during trials. Revolutionary courts try political and religious cases, but are often arbitrarily assigned cases which normally fall under civil court jurisdiction. Charges are often vague, detainees are often denied access to legal counsel, and revolutionary courts do not uphold due process. There is no right of appeal.

The Intelligence and Interior ministries operate informant networks. Security forces enter homes and offices, open mail, and monitor telephone conversations without court authorization. Activities of international human rights monitors are censored.

Women face discrimination in legal, educational, and employment matters. They were expelled from the courts and removed from legal positions after 1979, but allowed in 1994 to be legal advisors in the courts. The government encourages fundamentalist groups to enforce strict Islamic dress codes for women regardless of faith. Morality police called the Guidance Patrol arrest women for showing too much hair or for wearing makeup or nail polish. Jail terms and fines are set for such offenses, though a 1996 law abolished lashing as punishment. Women need permission from a male relative in order to obtain passports. Unlike Arab women in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, women in Iran are allowed to drive and to vote. They may also run for parliament; 17 members of the current majlis are women.

Some public criticism of government policy is allowed. Several relatively outspoken newspapers and cultural journals exist, though tolerance is arbitrary and crackdowns occur frequently. Since 1995, at least ten publications have been shut down. Promoting the rights of ethnic minorities and criticizing the notion of an Islamic government are prohibited. The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance censors all printed material and reviews imported publications. Journalists were banned from the majlis in July, and a journalist was killed in February after an earlier arrest and death threats. Faraj Sarkuhi, editor of the literary journal *Adineh*, was imprisoned in January and sentenced to one year in prison for slandering the Islamic republic. He was charged with "espionage" and "attempting to flee Iran" His wife and children live in Germany. Satellite dishes were banned in 1995, and the government authorized police units to raid homes to remove them. The parameters for permissible creative work shift without notice.

During the presidential campaign, Nateq-Nouri received disproportionate coverage from radio and television, which are controlled by government hardliners. Coverage of Khatami was relatively sparse in those media, but the largest national newspa-

per, owned by the Teheran municipality, was criticized for printing advertising supplements supporting him.

Since Khatami took office in August, newspapers have begun to test the limits of state tolerance. Stories of rape, child abuse, and other crime, as well as reports on government corruption were allowed. More balanced economic news discussed public dissatisfaction with the progress of economic development. Editorials called for the Ayatollah to be stripped of some of his power in the interests of pluralism. Foreign journalists, formerly tightly screened, began to enter Iran in large numbers. In September, journalists bid to form their first independent trade union since the revolution.

Religious freedom is limited. The 1979 constitution recognizes Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians as religious minorities. Authorities rarely grant approval for publication of Christian texts, and church services are routinely monitored. Christians and Jews face restrictions on operating schools, and in areas such as education, employment and property ownership. Demonstrating knowledge of Islam is required for university admission and civil service jobs. Jewish families may not travel abroad together.

The Baha'i faith is not recognized. Some 300,000 Iranian Baha'is face significant official discrimination, confiscation of property, arbitrary detention, a ban on university admission, heavy employment restrictions and prohibitions on teaching their faith and on practicing their religion communally. Amnesty International estimates that over 200 Baha'is have been executed since 1979 for reasons related to their religion. The Kurdish community also faces restrictions and state-sanctioned discrimination.

There are no independent labor unions. The government-controlled Worker's House is the only authorized federation. Collective bargaining is nonexistent. Private sector strikes are infrequent and risk being disbanded by the militant Revolutionary Guards. Wage protests by oil workers in February and by industrial machinery workers in September were widely covered in the media.

Iraq

Polity: One-party **Political Rights:** 7
Economy: Statist **Civil Liberties:** 7
Population: 17,422,000 **Status:** Not Free
PPP: \$3,159
Life Expectancy: 57.0
Ethnic Groups: Arab (75 percent), Kurd (15 percent), Turk, others
Capital: Baghdad



Overview:

Iraqi officials blocked United Nations disarmament inspection teams in 1997 amid reports of an escalating public health crisis as the country entered its eighth year under U.N.-imposed trade sanctions.

Iraq gained formal independence in 1932, though the British maintained influence over the Hashemite monarchy. In 1958, the monarchy was overthrown in a military coup. A 1968 coup established a government under the Arab *Ba'ath* (Renaissance)

sance) Socialist Party, which has kept power since. The frequently-amended 1968 provisional constitution designated the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) the country's highest power, and granted it virtually unlimited and unchecked authority. In 1979 Saddam Hussein, long considered the strongman of the regime, formally assumed the titles of State President and RCC Chairman.

Iraq attacked Iran in 1980, touching off an eight-year war of attrition during which the economy suffered extensively and at least 150,000 Iraqis died. In August 1990 Iraq invaded Kuwait. At least 100,000 Iraqi troops were killed in the Persian Gulf War before a 22-nation coalition liberated Kuwait in February 1991. In April, the U.N. Security Council passed Resolution 687, which called on Iraq to destroy its weapons of mass destruction, accept long-range monitoring of its weapons facilities, and recognize Kuwait's sovereignty. The U.N. also imposed an oil embargo on Iraq, which may be lifted when the government complies with the terms of Resolution 687.

Chief U.N. weapons inspector Richard Butler issued a report in October 1997 charging Iraqi officials with blocking inspectors' access to several sites and interfering with their investigations. The report prompted the Security Council to impose travel bans on Iraqi police and military officials responsible for hindering weapons inspections. Iraq responded by barring American members of disarmament inspection teams from entering Iraq from bases in Bahrain, and calling for the expulsion of American inspectors already in Iraq. Tensions escalated as Iraq refused to comply with the travel ban, demanded an immediate end to sanctions, and threatened to shoot down American U-2 planes used for weapons surveillance, while the U.S. increased military deployments in the Persian Gulf.

In November, the U.N. ordered all weapons inspectors out of Iraq, and the U.S. suspended U-2 surveillance flights. After an unsuccessful attempt by a U.N. delegation to defuse the crisis, Russian and Iraqi leaders drafted a proposal which allowed for the return of all inspectors on November 21. American U-2 flights resumed without incident, but Iraq continues to deny U.N. inspectors access to "sensitive sites," including over 60 presidential properties, despite Security Council demands for unconditional access to all suspected weapons sites.

The U.N. has authorized Iraq to sell a limited amount of oil in exchange for food and medicine because of a growing public health crisis resulting from the oil embargo. In 1997, Iraq's health minister reported that some 1.2 million Iraqis have died as a result of medical shortages, and a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report in November indicated a dramatic deterioration in the health of Iraqi children under the sanctions, noting that nearly one million children are chronically malnourished. The "oil-for-food" program, which took effect in December 1996, appears to have done little so far to alleviate suffering. The purchase and distribution of humanitarian goods has been delayed by disputes over monitoring, distribution, and contracts. Iraq temporarily suspended oil sales during the summer in protest of what it called deliberate delays of humanitarian contracts by the United States.

In September, Iranian planes bombed bases in southern Iraq held by Iranian Mujahideen rebels. Iran's main opposition group operates from military camps inside Iraq and has intensified its cross-border attacks in the past year. Iran's attacks violate a Western-imposed no-fly zone in southern Iraq meant to protect a large Shi'ite population against attacks from Baghdad. Pledging to enforce the no-fly zone, the U.S. rushed an aircraft carrier to the Gulf and threatened to shoot down Iranian planes

entering the disputed airspace.

After a year-long, Western-brokered ceasefire, rival Kurdish factions resumed fighting in October along a buffer zone separating their positions in northern Iraq. The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) have been at odds since 1994 over the administration of territory and revenues from cross-border trade with Turkey. After nearly six weeks of intense conflict which hampered U.N. relief operations in the area, the two sides declared a cease-fire in late November.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Iraqis cannot change their government democratically. Saddam holds supreme power in one of the world's most repressive regimes. Relatives and close friends from Saddam's hometown of Tikrit hold most key positions. A 1991 law outlaws opposition parties, and the 250-seat National Assembly has no power. All media, print and broadcast, are owned and operated by the Ba'ath party. Satellite dishes have been banned since 1994, and in April, new penalties for ownership were instituted, including confiscation of all household furniture, fines and imprisonment.

Citizens are denied freedom of speech, assembly and religion. The rule of law is nonexistent. State control is maintained by the extensive use of intimidation through arbitrary arrest, torture and summary execution. The U.N. has documented the disappearance of over 16,000 Iraqi citizens in recent years. The security services routinely search homes without warrants, monitor personal communications and maintain an intricate network of informers.

Some procedural safeguards exist for defendants in ordinary cases. Political and "economic" cases are tried in separate security courts, where confessions extracted through torture are admissible as evidence and no procedural safeguards are in evidence. Punishments are often disproportionate to the crimes committed. The death penalty is frequently invoked for expression of dissent, and in 1995 the range of capital crimes increased to include possession of stolen goods and refusal by agricultural workers to supply food for government distribution. Theft, corruption, desertion from the army, and currency speculation are punishable by amputation, branding and execution. Doctors have been executed for refusing to carry out these punishments and for attempting reconstructive surgery.

The Shi'ite Muslim majority, comprising over 60 percent of the population, faces severe persecution. The army has arrested thousands of Shi'ites and executed an undetermined number of these detainees. Security forces have desecrated Shi'ite mosques and holy sites. Bans on some Shi'ite public ceremonies and on Shi'ite books and television programs remain in effect. The army has indiscriminately targeted civilian Shi'ite Marsh Arab villagers, razed homes and drained the southern Amara and Hammar marshes in order to flush out Shi'ite guerrillas. Tens of thousands of Shi'ite civilians have been forcibly relocated, driven out of the country or killed.

A 1981 law gives the government control over mosques, the appointment of clergy and the publication of religious literature. The government harasses the small Turcomen and Christian Assyrian communities, and Jewish citizens face restrictions on traveling abroad and on communications with Jews outside Iraq.

An estimated 50,000 to 100,000 Kurds were killed during the six-month Anfal campaign in 1988. This effort to exterminate the Iraqi Kurdish population incorpo-

rated prison camps, firing squads, and chemical attacks. In the first half of 1997, some 500 Kurdish and Turcomen families were reportedly displaced under a policy of Arabization in the Kirkuk and Khanaquin areas.

The state-backed General Federation of Trade Unions is the only legal labor federation. Independent unions do not exist. The right to collective bargaining is not recognized by law and is not practiced. The right to strike is limited by law, and strikes do not occur.

Human rights monitors and other observers are restricted from investigating abuses. The government and security forces have harassed, intimidated, and reportedly offered rewards for killing international relief personnel.

Men are granted immunity for killing daughters or wives caught committing "immoral deeds." Women are not permitted to travel abroad unescorted by a male relative. Numerous areas are off-limits for travel inside the country. For all, foreign travel is tightly restricted.

Ireland

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 3,588,000
PPP: \$16,061
Life Expectancy: 76.3
Ethnic Groups: Irish (Celtic), English
Capital: Dublin

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Overview:

After an inconclusive general election on June 6, Fianna Fail leader Bertie Ahern assembled a minority governing coalition including the right-of-center Progressive Democrats and a handful of independents to unseat former prime minister John Bruton's Fine Gael-led "Rainbow Coalition." In all, Ahern's coalition won 81 seats in the 166-member *Dail* (parliament); Bruton's, including Fine Gael, Labor, and the Democratic Left, 75; Sinn Fein, the political arm of the Irish Republican Army, one; Green Alliance, two; and smaller parties, seven. Despite a political donations scandal, Ahern has successfully maintained the unity of his coalition and even secured a public vote of confidence when the government's candidate in the October presidential vote won by an overwhelming majority.

The 26 counties of Ireland held Dominion status within the British Commonwealth from 1921 until 1948, when Ireland became a fully independent state. The six counties of Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom at the insistence of its Protestant majority (See *Northern Ireland* under United Kingdom, Related Territories). Despite Articles two and three of the Irish constitution, which lay claim to the Northern counties, the republic plays only a consultative role in Northern affairs, as set out by the 1985 Anglo-Irish accord.

John Bruton's two and a half year-old government presided over the largest economic boom in the country's history, with a growth rate of seven percent a year since

1994. Drug-related crime, which became a primary public concern in 1996 with the murder of journalist Veronica Guerin, has been sharply reduced as a result of efforts by *gardai* (police) and community activists. But Bruton came under attack in the months leading to the election over a stalemate in the Northern Ireland peace process and was denounced by the opposition as being "soft" on Sinn Fein. His integrity was called into question when department store magnate Ben Dunne, the focus of a fundraising scandal, admitted to having donated \$280,000 to Fine Gael. A poor electoral showing by coalition partner Labor sealed defeat for the "Rainbow Coalition" this year.

No major policy changes are expected under Ahern's government; economic policy is largely determined by Maastricht Treaty provisions for European Monetary Union (EMU), and the current wave of prosperity is expected to continue well into the next decade. However, predictions that Ahern would be more successful than his predecessor in reviving the Northern Ireland peace talks were realized with a new IRA ceasefire in July and a formal renunciation of violence by Sinn Fein in September. Talks began in September with the participation of Sinn Fein, though disagreement among the parties over key issues and a wave of reprisal killings at year's end set off a crisis which deadlocked the proceedings.

A tribunal created to investigate payments to politicians by Ben Dunne submitted a report in August accusing former Fianna Fail leader and Ahern ally Charles Haughey of tax evasion and lying to a public tribunal about money received from Dunne. The report also condemned Michael Lowry, a former transport minister from Fine Gael, for tax evasion and for an "unorthodox" business relationship with Dunne. Embarrassment to the new government was compounded in October with the resignation of foreign minister Ray Burke following similar corruption allegations. A new tribunal, set up to inquire further into payments made to Haughey and Lowry, is set to begin oral hearings in January.

President Mary Robinson stepped down in October to become United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The campaign to succeed her highlighted her transformation of the mostly ceremonial post from a sinecure for retired politicians into a high-profile position of influence. An unprecedented four of the five candidates were women, and all were from outside the established party system. Fianna Fail candidate Mary McAleese, a former law professor and vice-chancellor at Queens University in Belfast, won a landslide victory despite a controversy over leaked government documents suggesting she was sympathetic to Sinn Fein. She is the first Northern Irish president of the Republic.

After 15 years as Labor leader, Dick Spring resigned the position in November, though he will keep his seat in the Dail. The party suffers a lack of morale since the general election cut its representation by a third, and because of a disastrous showing by its presidential candidate. His successor, Ruairi Quinn, said he aims to radically increase Dail representation in order to guarantee Labor's involvement in the formation of future governments.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Irish citizens can change their government democratically. Northern Irish are considered citizens and may run for office in the republic. Currently, only diplomatic families and security forces living abroad may vote by absentee ballot.

Civil liberties activists have denounced Ireland's refusal to incorporate the Euro-

pean Convention on Human Rights into domestic law. Currently, Irish citizens who believe that particular laws or decisions violate their rights under the Convention cannot bring grievances to the Irish courts, since the Convention is not part of Irish law. But they may not go to the European Commission or the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg unless they have "exhausted domestic remedies"—the Irish courts. Great Britain recently incorporated the Convention into its law, thereby giving Northern Irish citizens access to the Convention through the Northern courts. The fact that Northern Irish will have greater access than the Irish to legal remedies for rights violations may prove an embarrassment to Ireland in the context of the peace process.

A 56 year-old state of emergency was lifted in 1995, though the government stopped short of revoking all special powers associated with emergency law. These include special search, arrest, and detention powers of the police, and the juryless Special Criminal Court (SCC) for suspected terrorists. The SCC involves a three-judge panel instead of a jury, and the sworn statement of a police chief identifying the accused as a member of an illegal organization is accepted as prima facie evidence. The Irish Council for Civil Liberties expressed concern that high-profile drug and crime cases would increasingly be heard in the SCC as the number of cases linked to the Northern conflict declines. Such fears were confirmed when it was decided that the case of Paul Ward, charged with the murder of Veronica Guerin, would be tried in the SCC.

The Irish media are free, though they may not publish or broadcast anything likely to undermine state authority or promote violence. In addition to international cable broadcasts, international newspapers, particularly from Britain, are gaining a growing share of the Irish market. The government has been accused of placing Irish newspapers at a disadvantage by levying on them the highest value-added tax in the EU. Concentrated ownership and harsh libel laws also restrict information.

The High Court in January ruled that it was unnecessary to jail journalist Barry O'Kelly of the *Daily Star* for refusing to reveal his source of information in a court case in which he was a witness last year. The judge decided that if he had not been able to decide the case without the name of O'Kelly's source, O'Kelly would have been jailed.

In an October referendum, voters decided in favor of an amendment which would enshrine the absolute confidentiality of cabinet discussions in the constitution for the first time. Two possible exceptions will be made: if disclosure is in the interests of the administration of justice by a court, and if disclosure satisfies an overriding public interest. Civil libertarians argue that the law would stifle debate about cabinet discussions and restrict public understanding of government decisionmaking.

A Freedom of Information Bill was signed into law in April. It will take effect in April 1998. The law will give citizens the right to access all government information with the exception of that relating to the security of the state, Northern Ireland, or ongoing criminal investigations. Refusal of access on the grounds that information may be "damaging" will be subject to a public-interest override. The information will be released if public interest is deemed greater than possible damage. An Information Commissioner will head an appeals process for those denied access to information. Critics note that ministers will be able to issue unchallenged certificates to keep highly sensitive information secret, and that the police may be brought under the scope of the law only by ministerial order.

Freedom of assembly is generally respected, though a parliamentary candidate with the Socialist Workers' Party was arrested in May under the "breach of peace" provision of the 1951 Public Order Act. He was giving out leaflets and addressing passers-by outside the Swan Center in Dublin.

In June, the High Court struck down an Employment Equality Bill which would outlaw numerous types of discrimination in employment. The court found provisions making employers liable for discrimination by employees and requiring employers to bear the costs of special arrangements for disabled employees unconstitutional.

At least 11 IRA inmates were paroled in 1997 in a gesture of support for the IRA ceasefire.

Israel

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Mixed capitalist

Population: 5,819,000

PPP: \$16,023

Life Expectancy: 77.5

Ethnic Groups: Jewish (83 percent), Arab (17 percent)

Capital: Jerusalem (most countries maintain their embassies in Tel Aviv)

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Free



Overview:

An influence-peddling scandal, a botched assassination attempt on a Hamas official and a stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process were among the crises which besieged prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ruling coalition in 1997. Protracted political infighting kept Netanyahu struggling to maintain his government, a diverse coalition of nationalists, religious parties and conservatives with sometimes conflicting agendas.

Israel was formed in 1948 from less than one-fifth of the original British Palestine Mandate. Its neighbors, rejecting a United Nations partition plan that would have also created a Palestinian state, attacked immediately following independence in the first of several Arab-Israeli conflicts.

Israel has functioned as a parliamentary democracy since independence. Since 1977 the conservative Likud and the center-left Labor party have shared or alternated power. Following the June 1992 Knesset (parliament) elections, Yitzhak Rabin formed a Labor-led coalition government which secured a breakthrough agreement with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993. The Declaration of Principles, negotiated secretly between Israeli and Palestinian delegations in Oslo, Norway, provides gradual Palestinian autonomy in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

On November 4, 1995, a right-wing Jewish extremist, opposed to the peace process on the grounds that it would lead to a Palestinian state in the West Bank, assassinated Rabin in Tel Aviv. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres became acting prime minister.

The peace process, strained since Netanyahu's election, stalled in March when Israel began constructing a Jewish housing settlement at Har Homa in disputed East

Jerusalem. The situation became critical when two incidents of suicide bombings in Jerusalem killed 20 people in July and September. Efforts by Egypt and the U.S. to bring the two sides to the table produced little progress as Netanyahu demanded that PLO chairman Yassir Arafat control terrorism, while Arafat refused to negotiate as long as settlement building continued. Scheduled talks on the future of Jerusalem, the fate of refugees, and borders have not yet begun.

In October, two agents of Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service, botched an assassination attempt on a senior Hamas official in Jordan. The attack, apparently in retaliation for the suicide bombings, brought down a hail of criticism on Netanyahu from leaders of his own government as well as from Jordan's King Hussein. Israel's only ally in the Middle East, the furious king requested that Netanyahu take "positive steps" to bolster the peace process. Netanyahu responded by releasing Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the founder and spiritual leader of Hamas, from prison. In turn, Jordan agreed to release the Mossad agents in exchange for the release of some 70 Palestinians from Israeli prisons.

In February, top government officials were implicated in an illegal deal with the head of the ultra-Orthodox Shas party Aryeh Deri to appoint Roni BarOn attorney general. Under indictment for bribery and fraud, Deri had arranged in advance a plea bargain with BarOn. A major coalition partner, Deri allegedly agreed to support Israeli troop withdrawal from Hebron in exchange for the BarOn appointment. Amid rampant criticism of his lack of professional qualifications, BarOn resigned after one day in office. Police recommended felony indictments against several officials, including Netanyahu, but prosecutors closed the case, citing a "lack of sufficient evidence," and only Deri was indicted.

Several coalition factions threatened withdrawal in June after finance minister Dan Meridor was forced to resign over a budget dispute. The position was offered to Ariel Sharon, who then demanded an additional position in the inner cabinet, which decides government policy on the Palestinians. A firestorm erupted when it was disclosed that Sharon had met secretly with a senior Palestinian official without the knowledge of foreign minister David Levy. The job was ultimately given to Yaakov Neeman, a corporate lawyer with no independent political base.

A Likud rebellion in November centered around allegations that Netanyahu chief of staff Avigdor Lieberman orchestrated a fraudulent vote to abolish primary elections for Likud Knesset candidates. Lieberman, who resigned in November, is under investigation for fraud. Netanyahu was accused of deceitfully maneuvering to reinforce his control over the party.

On June 3, Ehud Barak was elected to succeed Shimon Peres as head of the opposition Labor party. Peres led Labor in five election campaigns beginning in 1977, but left the post when the Labor congress refused to grant him the honorary title of party president.

Escalation of hostilities in Israeli-occupied southern Lebanon claimed the lives of 39 Israeli soldiers this year, in addition to 73 who were killed when two helicopters collided en route to Lebanon in February. The death toll (the highest in over ten years) prompted several government and opposition leaders to call for withdrawal from the region.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Israeli citizens can change their government democratically. Although Israel has no formal constitution; a series of Basic Laws has the force of constitutional principles.

The judiciary is independent, and procedural safeguards are respected. Security trials can be closed to the public only on limited grounds. A 1979 law provides for administrative detention without charge for renewable six-month periods, subject to automatic review every three months. Most administrative detainees are Palestinians. Detention facilities run by the Israeli Defense Forces holding male Palestinian security prisoners do not meet international standards.

The Shin Bet (General Security Service) is accused of torturing Palestinian detainees. A September Supreme Court decision held that Shin Bet has the authority to forcefully interrogate Palestinian suspects believed to have information on terrorist attacks in Israel. Human rights groups, including Amnesty International and the International Committee of the Red Cross, denounce Shin Bet's methods of moderate physical pressure such as prolonged sleep deprivation and violent shaking, as violations of the Geneva convention against torture.

Freedoms of assembly and association are respected. Newspaper and magazine articles dealing with security matters must be submitted to a military censor, although the scope of permissible reporting is expanding. Editors can appeal a censorship decision to a three-member tribunal which includes two civilians. Arabic-language publications are censored more frequently than are Hebrew-language ones. Newspapers are privately-owned and freely criticize government policies. Several Palestinian journalists were refused entry to Israel this year for security reasons. A Tel Aviv court in September banned the sale of a book about a missing Israeli submarine after state prosecutors claimed it endangered national security.

Freedom of religion is respected. Each community has jurisdiction over its members in questions of marriage and divorce. Orthodox Jewish authorities have jurisdiction over marriage, divorce and burial affairs for the entire Jewish community.

Groups of Conservative men and women were assaulted in June by Orthodox Jews while they prayed at the Western Wall, one of Israel's most holy sites. Under Orthodox rules, women may not pray with men. The incidents were indicative of rising tensions between the Orthodox movement and the Conservative and Reform movements, which center around Orthodox efforts to legally formalize the monopoly of Orthodox rabbis in performing conversions. Conversion to Judaism grants the convert the right to Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return. Also at issue is the right of women to serve on local religious councils. The Supreme Court ruled in August over Orthodox objections that women should have that right, prompting Orthodox legislators to pledge to introduce a law prohibiting Reform and Conservative Jews from sitting on the councils.

Some 900,000 Arab citizens receive inferior education, housing and social services relative to the Jewish population. Apart from the Druze and Circassian communities, which serve at their own initiative, Israeli Arabs are not subject to the draft, though they may serve voluntarily. This places them at a disadvantage in obtaining housing subsidies and other economic benefits to which army veterans receive preferential access.

Workers can join unions of their choice and enjoy the right to strike and to bargain collectively. Three-quarters of the work force either belong to unions affiliated

with Histadrut (General Federation of Labor) or are covered under its social programs and collective bargaining agreements.

Italy

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 57,339,000

PPP: \$19,363

Life Expectancy: 77.8

Ethnic Groups: Italian, small German, Slovene, Albanian and Roma minorities

Capital: Rome

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Overview: Romano Prodi's ruling Olive Tree coalition emerged stronger than ever after threats from hardline communists to withdraw parliamentary support brought his government to the brink of collapse. The center-right opposition, led by Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia party, is divided by factional infighting and discredited by continuing allegations of corruption. After nearly two years in office, it appears that the first left-of-center Italian government since World War II might survive an entire legislative term.

Most of Italy had merged into one kingdom by 1870. Italy allied with Germany and Austria-Hungary at the outset of World War I, but switched over to the Allies. From 1922-43, the country was a fascist dictatorship under Benito Mussolini. As the Allies advanced, the Germans established a puppet state in the north called the "Republic of Salo." After World War II, a republican constitution replaced the monarchy.

The president, whose role is largely ceremonial, is elected to a seven-year term by an assembly of parliamentarians and delegates from the Regional Councils. The president chooses the prime minister, who is often, but not always, a member of the largest party in the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of parliament. Members of the upper house, the Senate, represent the regions.

Efforts to bring the economy into line with Maastricht Treaty criteria for European Monetary Union (EMU) have created tensions between the government and Fausto Bertinotti's Communist Renewal (RC), which firmly opposes any cuts in Italy's bloated welfare state. With a majority in the upper house only, the government depends on the support of RC's 35 seats. When the government presented its budget in September, Bertinotti took issue with its modest pension cuts and promised to vote against it. It is widely believed that Bertinotti provoked a crisis in order to sabotage proposed constitutional reforms, which would marginalize smaller parties. After several days of unsuccessful negotiations, Prodi resigned, touching off a revolt within the RC. Major trade unions broke ranks to support Prodi's budget, and within days the two sides had negotiated a settlement in which RC would approve the budget in exchange for minor reductions in pension cuts and a pledge to introduce legislation for a 35-hour work week by 2001. Prodi's tough stance and his success in winning over

big business and unions without sacrificing EMU strengthened his position in the political establishment. The RC lost ground as a result of Bertinotti's embarrassing turnabout and the revolt within his party.

The Olive Tree won significant victories in local elections in May and November. The November vote, in which the ruling party won landslides in mayoral races in Rome, Venice and Naples, was seen largely as a test of public faith in the government after the budget crisis. Antonio Di Pietro, a right-wing politician running as the Olive Tree candidate, won a parliamentary by-election in Tuscany in November. Formerly the chief prosecutor in the corruption trials of the early 1990s, Di Pietro is expected to back the government and attract broader popular support. With the RC and the right-wing opposition beset by internal divisions and corruption charges, the government's unprecedented popularity has actually raised concerns among analysts that Italy will lack the opposition necessary for effective democracy.

An aggressive anti-corruption campaign has led to thousands of indictments of politicians and businessmen since 1992. Former prime minister Bettino Craxi—beyond reach in Tunisia—was sentenced to prison in 1996 in a high-profile bribery trial. At year's end, parliament was still deciding whether to call for the arrest of former defense minister and Berlusconi ally Cesare Previti, who allegedly bribed a group of magistrates in 1994.

The northern separatist movement, led by Umberto Bossi's Northern League, held an unofficial election in October for a 200-member constituent assembly to represent Padania, an unspecified area north of the Po river. Some 1,176 candidates, representing 63 parties in 46 provinces, contested the election. The new assembly will convene to draw up a constitution to make Padania fully independent or loosely confederated with Italy. A popular referendum on the constitution is set for April 1998. Italy's prosperous north pays a disproportionate share of the country's taxes, and receives relatively little in return in the way of services or infrastructure. Resentment among northern residents over the burden of supporting what they consider an impoverished and corrupt south resulted in the Northern League's winning ten percent of the vote in the 1996 general election. The Italian government allowed this vote to proceed, regarding it officially as an internal party matter.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Italians can change their government democratically. Electoral reforms implemented in 1993 allowed voters to choose individual candidates rather than party lists and converted 75 percent of parliamentary seats to a British-style "first-past-the-post" system. A new constitutional reform commission presented its proposals to parliament in October. They include a presidential system of government in which a directly-elected head of state has limited power to dissolve parliament as well as influence in defense and foreign policy; two rounds of general elections to weed out smaller parties and strengthen the prime minister's office; the responsibility of the central state for 31 policy areas, including foreign and monetary policies and public order; and the reduction of the number of seats per parliamentary house. Judicial reforms would establish separate governing bodies for judges and district attorneys to ensure judicial independence. Such reforms are aimed at bringing Italian politics closer to a bipolar system with broad alliances on the left and right.

Italian citizens are free to form political organizations, with the exception of reor-

ganizing the constitutionally forbidden prewar fascist party. The postwar constitution established an elaborate system of counter-balancing powers between executive, legislative and judicial functions in order to prevent another Mussolini-style dictatorship. This system is perceived to be destabilizing and conducive to political deadlock.

Italy's judiciary is independent but notoriously slow. A 1995 law allows for preventive detention only as a last resort or if there is convincing evidence of a serious offense, such as crimes involving the Mafia or those related to drugs, arms and subversion. A maximum of two years of preliminary investigation is permitted. The average waiting period for trials is about 18 months, but can exceed two years. A Council of Europe report in December criticized Italy for prison overcrowding and for police ill-treatment of detainees. The prison population reportedly exceeds the maximum capacity of the nation's prisons by some 20 percent.

The Italian press is free and competitive, with restrictions on obscenity and defamation. Most of the 80 daily newspapers are independently owned. The main state-owned network and the three main channels of Radio Audizioni Italiane, or RAI, provide Italians with most of their news. Their boards of directors are entirely parliament-appointed. A parliamentary commission in charge of state broadcasting censured RAI for political bias after a reporter called the Fall political crisis "absurd."

In June, the government instituted an 18-month trial period during which bars, petrol stations, supermarkets and other businesses will be granted licenses to sell newspapers and magazines. Traditionally, these items are only sold at kiosks or shops with exclusive licenses, and the newspaper vendors' association has lobbied to protect its monopoly. The result has been poor availability of print news.

In April, an authority was created to monitor privacy issues. Since then, it has received over 200 cases. In July, it censured the media for violating the right to privacy of Cesare Romiti, the head of Fiat. Newspapers reported before Romiti was notified that he would be questioned by magistrates regarding alleged falsification of accounts. The media were also censured for publishing personal details about a child who committed suicide. The authority may impose fines if offenses are repeated. A privacy law introduced in May requires that information be published in a "lawful and correct" way and carries penalties of up to three years in jail.

Freedom of speech is guaranteed by the constitution as are freedom of assembly and association, with the exception of fascist and racist groups. Unions are active, though in 1995 they were weakened by a voter referendum and government legislation aimed at restricting their power.

Religious freedom is guaranteed in this overwhelmingly Roman Catholic country. Italy's first grand mosque opened in 1995. North African migrants comprise many of the estimated 650,000 Muslims residing in Italy.

March and April saw an influx of close to 20,000 Albanian refugees fleeing political chaos in their country, which prompted the government to declare a three-month state of emergency. Authorities were given special powers to release funds quickly and to grant 60 to 90-day residence permits. In November, some 1,000 people, mostly Turkish Kurds, arrived seeking refuge and political asylum. Facing pressure from the EU to crack down on illegal immigration, Italy had expelled most of the Albanians by the end of November.

Jamaica

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 2,594,000
PPP: \$3,816
Life Expectancy: 73.9
Ethnic Groups: Black (76 percent), Creole (15 percent), European, Chinese, East Indian
Capital: Kingston

Political Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Free



Overview:

Prime Minister P.J. Patterson and his governing People's National Party were returned to power in December 1997, in elections that were considered the most peaceful in recent history. Despite a mixed record on the economy, crime and human rights, Patterson and the PNP won 56 percent of the vote.

Jamaica, a member of the British Commonwealth, achieved independence from Great Britain in 1962. It is a parliamentary democracy, with the British monarchy represented by a governor general. The bicameral parliament consists of a 60-member House of Representatives elected for five years and a 21-member Senate, with 13 senators appointed by the prime minister and eight by the leader of the parliamentary opposition. Executive authority is vested in the prime minister, who leads the political party commanding a majority in the House.

Since independence, power has alternated between the social-democratic PNP and the conservative Jamaica Labor Party (JLP). The PNP's Michael Manley, who died in 1997, was prime minister from 1972 to 1980, and again from 1989 until his resignation for health reasons in 1992. JLP leader Edward Seaga held the post from 1980 until 1989.

In 1992 the PNP elected P.J. Patterson to replace Manley as party leader and prime minister. In the 1993 elections, the PNP won 52 parliamentary seats, and the JLP eight. The parties differed little on continuing the structural adjustment begun in the 1980s, but the JLP was hurt by long-standing internal rifts.

Irregularities and violence marred the vote. The PNP agreed to address subsequent JLP demands for electoral reform. Meanwhile, the Patterson government continued to confront labor unrest and an unrelenting crime wave.

In October 1995 Bruce Golding, a well-respected economist and businessman and former chairman of the JLP, left the party to launch the National Democratic Movement (NDM), one of the most significant political developments since independence. Golding brought with him a number of key JLP figures, including one other member of parliament, cutting the JLP's seats to six.

Politically-motivated fighting between supporters of the JLP and the NDM claimed at least ten lives during 1996. In February 1997 masked gunmen killed a high-ranking PNP official. In May 1997, Seaga blamed violent incidents that month—in which five people were killed in what he called "random shooting" by the police—in the Tivoli Gardens area of Kingston, a JLP stronghold, on the use of the security forces for political "terrorism." In July, he accused the government of sabotaging

voter registration in an effort to boost its own chances in the upcoming elections. In November, Venezuela's ambassador to Jamaica, Alfredo Vargas, was murdered in his apartment by an intruder.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens are able to change their government through elections. However, as in 1993 voter turnout was low and significant irregularities were observed. International observers noted that the short election campaign did not allow enough time for election officials to prepare voter list, identity cards and "black books" with the names and photos of all registered voters.

Constitutional guarantees regarding the right to free expression, freedom of religion and the right to organize are generally respected.

Labor unions are politically influential and have the right to strike. An Industrial Disputes Tribunal mediates labor conflicts.

Violence is now the major cause of death in Jamaica, and the murder rate is one of the highest in the world. Between January and September 1997, there were 765 killings, 100 more than during the same time last year. Much of the violence is the result of warfare between drug gangs known as posses. Criminal deportees from the United States and a growing illegal weapons trade are major causes of the violence. Mobs have been responsible for numerous vigilante killings of suspected criminals. In August 1997, 16 inmates were killed in four days of rioting at two major prisons, which authorities attributed to overcrowding and court delays. Four more inmates died in rioting in November.

In October 1997, Amnesty International issued a report which expressed concern about the imposition of death sentences, following proceedings which fall short of international standards for fair trials. In the same report Amnesty International cited many other human rights violations which include killings by law enforcement officials in disputed circumstances, deaths in custody, corporal punishment, appalling conditions in places of detention and prisons, and laws punishing consensual sexual acts in private between adult men.

The judicial system is headed by a Supreme Court and includes several magistrate courts and a Court of Appeal, with final recourse to the Privy Council in London. The system is slow and inefficient, particularly in addressing police abuses and the deplorable, violent conditions of prisons. 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. In February 1997 Jamaica signed on to the hemispheric anti-drug strategy formulated by the Organization of American States (OAS).

A mounting crime rate led the government to take the controversial steps of restoring capital punishment and flogging. Rights groups protested both measures. Critics charge that flogging is unconstitutional because it can be characterized as "inhuman or degrading punishment," which the Constitution prohibits.

Newspapers are free of government control. Journalists are occasionally intimidated during election campaigns. Broadcast media are largely public but are open to pluralistic points of view. Public opinion polls play a key role in the political process, and election campaigns feature debates on state-run television.

Japan

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 125,792,000
PPP: \$21,581
Life Expectancy: 79.8
Ethnic Groups: Japanese (98 percent), Korean, Ainu
Capital: Tokyo



Overview:

In 1997 Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's government appeared impotent in dealing with a banking crisis brought on in part by a lack of transparency that hid huge losses at some institutions. Yet even after several years of political realignment, there was no credible opposition party to challenge the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

Following its defeat in World War II, Japan adopted an American-drafted constitution in 1947 that vested legislative authority in the two-house *Diet* (parliament) and ended the emperor's divine status. In 1955 the two wings of the opposition Japan Socialist Party (JSP) united, and the two main conservative parties merged to form the LDP. This "1955 system" remained in place throughout the Cold War, as the LDP won successive elections, presided over a steadily expanding economy, and maintained a close security relationship with the United States. The leftist JSP served as an institutional opposition.

By the early 1990s the LDP's chronic factionalism and corruption, combined with an easing of Cold War security tensions, had led ordinary Japanese to question the *iron triangle* of politics, business and the bureaucracy that favored corporations, farmers and other special interests, as well as the burdensome regulations imposed by the country's powerful ministries. The 1955 system cracked in the 1993 elections. The LDP won a 223-seat plurality but lost its majority in the 508 seat lower house for the first time in 38 years, and the JSP, renamed the Socialist Democratic Party (SDP), won only 70 seats. In August the SDP and six smaller conservative and centrist parties formed a governing coalition, placing the LDP in opposition for the first time.

A financial scandal and the governing coalition's instability forced the resignation of two prime ministers within a year, and in June 1994 the LDP returned to power in a three-party coalition that included the SDP. Citizens expressed anger over this opportunistic left-right alliance. In December nine conservative opposition parties joined together as the center-right New Frontier Party (NFP), promising economic deregulation, a more assertive foreign policy and a competitive two-party system.

In September 1995 Ryutaro Hashimoto, the international trade and industry minister, was elected LDP president and became prime minister. In December Ichiro Ozawa, the most vocal proponent of the NFP's reformist agenda, won the party's top spot. In 1996 the 850,000-strong central bureaucracy was hit by corruption scandals. In early elections called for October 20, nearly all parties pledged to curb the bureaucracy's power. Under a record-low 59.6 percent turnout, voters opted for the stability and conservatism of the LDP, which won 239 seats; NFP, 156; the new,

reformist Democratic Party, 52; Communist Party, 26; SDP, 15; minor parties and independents, 12. In November Hashimoto formed an LDP minority government.

By mid-August 1997 the LDP had also built its lower house strength to 250 seats, mainly from among the more than 50 defections from the NFP.

In November financial crises in Southeast Asia and South Korea further undermined a banking system already staggering under bad debt since asset prices collapsed in the early 1990s. Ending the previous practice of forcing solvent banks to bail out weak ones, the government allowed several institutions, including the tenth largest bank and the fourth largest securities company to shut down. While Hashimoto's commitment to fiscal austerity and the LDP's factional fighting left the government unable to deal with the mounting banking crisis, the opposition remained too weak to offer alternative policies. On December 27 the fractious NFP dissolved itself. Ozawa hoped to resurrect the party under a new name with his loyal supporters.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Japanese citizens can change their government democratically. Electoral reforms in 1994 reduced the permissible disparity in population between urban and rural districts; tightened campaign finance laws; and scrapped the previous multiple-seat constituencies in favor of a 500 seat lower house with 300 single-seat districts and 200 seats chosen on a proportional basis, and an upper house with 152 single-seat districts and 100 seats chosen in proportional balloting. The July 1995 upper house elections were the first under the new laws.

A continuing civil liberties concern involves the 700,000 Korean permanent residents, many of whom trace their ancestry in Japan for two or three generations. Ethnic Koreans regularly face discrimination in housing, education and employment opportunities, are not automatically Japanese citizens at birth and must submit to an official background check and adopt Japanese names to become naturalized. Both the *Burakumin*, who are descendants of feudal-era outcasts, and the indigenous Ainu minority also face unofficial discrimination and social ostracism.

The judiciary is independent. The Criminal Procedure Code allows authorities to restrict a suspect's right to counsel during an investigation and bars counsel during interrogations. The common practice of using police cells to hold the accused between arrest and sentencing reportedly encourages physical abuse to extract confessions. Human rights groups criticize the penal system's extreme emphasis on regimentation and dehumanizing punishments. Immigration officers are accused of regularly beating detainees.

Civic institutions are strong and freedoms of expression, assembly and association are respected in practice. Exclusive private press clubs provide journalists with access to top politicians and major ministries, and in return journalists often practice self-censorship with sensitive stories. Foreign news services must negotiate with each club directly, and entry is occasionally denied.

Since the end of World War II the Education Ministry has routinely censored passages in history textbooks describing Japan's wartime atrocities. On August 29 the Supreme Court affirmed the government's right of censorship, but for the first time ruled that the Education Ministry had broken the law by censoring references to well-documented Japanese germ warfare experiments in China in the 1940s.

Women face significant employment discrimination and are frequently tracked into clerical careers. In June parliament passed a law banning workplace discrimina-

tion against women, and lifting restrictions on women's working hours that unions say had been used to keep women out of management positions. However, sanctions for corporate violators are weak. Thousands of Filipino and Thai victims of trafficking work as prostitutes. There is full freedom of religion; Buddhism and Shintoism have the most adherents. Trade unions are independent and active.

Jordan

Polity: Monarchy and elected parliament
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 4,232,000
PPP: \$4,187
Life Expectancy: 68.5

Political Rights: 4
Civil Liberties: 4
Status: Partly Free



Ethnic Groups: Palestinian and Bedouin Arab (98 percent), Circassian, Armenian, Kurd

Capital: Amman

Trend Arrow: Jordan receives a downward trend arrow because of increasing restrictions on democratic freedoms and civil society, as illustrated by amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law.

Overview: Low voter turnout in November 1997 parliamentary elections reflected popular discontent with a government that curtails democratic freedoms while it fails to deliver on promises of economic prosperity.

Great Britain installed the Hashemite monarchy in 1921 and granted it full independence in 1946. The current monarch, King Hussein, ascended the throne in 1952. Under the 1952 constitution, executive power rests with the king, who appoints the prime minister and can dissolve the National Assembly. The assembly currently consists of a 40-member Senate appointed by the king and an 80-member, directly-elected Chamber of Deputies.

In 1989, after rioting erupted over fuel price increases, Hussein eased tensions by lifting restrictions on freedom of expression and ending a 32-year ban on party activity. In November of that year, the kingdom held its first elections since 1956 with the participation of the Islamic Action Front (IAF), the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Islamists took 22 seats. The king accepted the results, which shocked the conservative establishment, but the electoral law was soon amended to allow "one man, one vote" instead of votes for parties. The changes to the law were meant to prevent an even stronger showing by the IAF in 1993 elections. The Islamists won 16 seats in that race.

In October 1994, Jordan and Israel signed a peace treaty, formally ending a 46-year state of war. In part, the treaty was an attempt by the king to improve his international standing after the Gulf War, in which Jordan supported Iraq. Hussein also saw the treaty as a way to benefit Jordan's economy, which was dependent upon Iraq before the war. In July 1995 municipal elections, pro-government candidates won significant victories over IAF candidates opposed to the peace accord.

Parliamentary elections in November 1997 produced the weakest opposition in the Chamber of Deputies since 1989. Tribal leaders loyal to the king won a clear majority of 47 seats, while a loose opposition coalition of independent Islamists, leftists, and pan-Arab nationalists took 11 seats. Seventeen women contested the elections; none of them successfully.

Nine opposition and Islamist parties, led by the IAF, boycotted the elections, citing opposition to normalization of relations with Israel, government restrictions on public freedom, ineffective economic policies, and the 1993 amendments to the electoral law, which leaves Islamists at a disadvantage vis-a-vis tribal leaders who support the king. The boycott was partly to blame for the 54 percent voter turnout—the lowest since 1989.

Economic hardship and growing public opinion that Jordanian democracy is deteriorating also contribute to voter apathy. The peace treaty with Israel has failed to raise living standards. Unemployment remains at 25 percent, and government austerity measures are increasingly unpopular. Normalization with Israel has provoked widespread anger among the Jordanian people, more than half of whom are of Palestinian origin. Media criticism of government policies was met in May with broad legal bans on press content. Such repressive measures against opposition voices have raised fears of a violent reaction by Islamic militants.

Many observers are skeptical about whether King Hussein can continue to manage his balancing act of normalizing relations with Israel and maintaining domestic stability. In March, he lashed out at army officers for not shooting a Jordanian soldier who killed seven Israeli schoolgirls in northern Jordan. A week later, he sacked prime minister Abdul-Karim al-Kabariti, whose views on Israel have been critical of the peace process. In September, opposition parties staged protests when Jordanian police arrested Islamic Resistance Party (Hamas) spokesman Ibrahim Ghawshah after Hamas took responsibility for a triple suicide bombing in Jerusalem. While these developments were apparently intended to appease Israeli opinion, they exacerbated domestic tensions among Jordanians who see the government's policy toward Israel as hostile to their own interests.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Jordanians cannot change their government democratically. King Hussein holds broad executive powers, can dissolve parliament and must approve all laws. The electoral districts favor the king's rural stronghold. Constitutional changes are unlikely, since they require a two-thirds majority of the 120 parliamentary seats, and the king appoints the entire 40-member Senate.

Authorities frequently arrest Islamic fundamentalists arbitrarily, and police abuse detainees to extract confessions. The judiciary is not independent in sensitive cases. Defendants in state security courts often lack sufficient pre-trial access to lawyers.

Amendments to the 1993 Press and Publications Law, enacted by decree without public or parliamentary debate, broadened the content bans of the earlier law to include prohibitions on publishing government documents and news about the security services in all forms of published information. The amendments increase the capital requirements for licensing of daily and weekly publications, and provide for suspension, closure, and extremely high fines for publications that violate the law. At least 13 weekly papers have been suspended under the amendments, and the govern-

ment has barred the entry of several foreign Arab publications for alleged violation of the law. Broadcast media are all state-owned and occasionally criticize state policy. Journalists routinely practice self-censorship.

The Jordanian government grants permits for demonstrations. In May, a peaceful protest against the new press law escalated into clashes which ended in the arrest and injury of several journalists by police. According to Human Rights Watch, the government increased pressure on opposition political parties, professional associations, and cultural clubs in 1997. Prior to the elections, public meetings, lectures and rallies were widely prohibited.

Islam is the state religion. The government does not permit the Baha'i faith to run schools, and Baha'i family legal matters are handled in the Islamic *Shari'a* courts. Beginning in 1997, Christian students in public schools will study their religion, using a curriculum from Syria. Islamists have criticized the decision to teach Christianity, asserting that it will breed sectarianism which will lead to disputes.

Some 30 to 60 women are the victims of "honor killings" by male relatives each year for alleged moral offenses. The penal code sharply limits the penalties for such killings. Women must receive permission from a male guardian to travel abroad and are discriminated against in inheritance and divorce settlements.

Private sector workers may join independent trade unions. The government can prohibit private sector strikes by referring a dispute to an arbitration committee. Some government employees can form unions but none may strike. The International Confederation of Trade Unions has called for greater protection against anti-union discrimination. An intellectual property rights law is currently being finalized.

Kazakhstan

Polity: Dominant party (presidential-dominated)
 Political Rights: 6
 Civil Liberties: 5
 Economy: Statist transitional
 Status: Not Free
 Population: 16,460,000
 PPP: \$3,284
 Life Expectancy: 67.5
 Ethnic Groups: Kazakh (43 percent), Russian (35 percent), Ukrainian (6 percent), others
 Capital: Almaty



Overview:

In 1997, President Nursultan Nazarbayev reasserted his grip on power by drastically reducing the number of government structures and undermining the authority of popular Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin, who resigned in October, ostensibly for health reasons. Kazhegeldin, who had overseen economic improvement and built a power base among the country's economic elite, was seen by many as a possible threat to the president's almost complete authority. He was replaced by Nurlan Balgimbayev, former president of the state-owned Kazakhoil petroleum company.

This sparsely populated, multi-ethnic land the size of India stretching from the

Caspian Sea east to the Chinese border was controlled by Russia from 1730 to 1840. After a brief period of independence in 1917, it became an autonomous Soviet republic in 1929 and a union republic in 1936. Kazakhstan formally declared independence from a crumbling Soviet Union in December 1991. President Nazarbayev, former first-secretary of the Kazakhstan Communist Party and head of the Kazakhstan National Unity Party (PNEK), was directly elected in 1991. In March 1995, Nazarbayev dissolved parliament and ruled by decree. Nazarbayev ordered a referendum extending his rule to the year 2000 (his term expired in 1996), and on April 29 a reported 95 percent supported the measure. On August 30, voters overwhelmingly approved a new constitution, which gave the president the right to dissolve parliament if it approves a no-confidence vote in the government or twice rejects his nominee for prime minister. It also codified periods of presidential rule by decree. The December Senate elections were largely uncontested, with Nazarbayev supporters taking all the seats. The PNEK dominated the vote for the *Majilis*, or lower house.

In March 1997, President Nazarbayev took a series of steps to weaken the prime minister. By decree, he halved the number of national-level administrative agencies from 47 to 20, and cut the government by a third, from 21 to 14 ministries. The move marked the culmination of a campaign that included the creation of several executive agencies outside the government's control. The president told the government that the reorganization was part of a process to transfer the country to full presidential rule. The prime minister, who had admitted working for the Soviet KGB in the late 1980s, was criticized in the official press for economic mismanagement and investigated by the National Security Committee for corruption. With his position increasingly untenable, he resigned in October, citing ill health. His replacement, Nurlan Balgimbayev, a former minister of the oil and gas industry, was widely credited for attracting Chevron to develop the Tengiz oilfield and successfully negotiating with China's National Petroleum Company, which won the rights to three large oilfields and will build a 1,860-mile pipeline to Xinjiang province. Plans continued to construct a pipeline to Novorossiysk in Russia and another through Iran.

President Nazarbayev continued to crack down on the political opposition and repressed demonstrations to protest hardships caused by the economic austerity program. Leaders of *Azamat* (Citizen), established in 1996 by leading intellectuals and public figures, called on all opposition parties and movements to consolidate and put forth a single candidate for the presidential elections in 2000. Divisions remained among the opposition.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) reported that the country's long-term prospects were auspicious because of oil reserves estimated at 6 billion barrels. A United Nations report noted a sharp decline in living standards for ordinary citizens, and unemployment—particularly among young people—was a serious problem in 1997. In August, the World Bank granted a new \$230 million loan to reform administrative structures and budget processes. In other developments, plans to move the capital from Almaty to Akmola were due to be finalized in late November.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens can participate in multi-party elections, but under the constitution power is centered in the hands of President Nazarbayev, whose regime has cracked down on the opposition and the media. Parliament is largely powerless, and in 1997 President Nazarbayev restructured the government to broaden and safeguard his authority.

Opposition parties include the Azamat, Socialists (former Communists), the nationalist Azat (Freedom) Party, the ethnic-Russian Unity Party, and the Rightist Respublika Party, as well as smaller groups. Opposition parties have complained of harassment, surveillance, denial of access to the state-run media and arbitrary bans from registering candidates. A 1996 law regulating relations between public organizations and the government maintained some restrictions on the rights of non-governmental groups.

Obstacles to press freedom include economic factors as well as government interference. In 1996, President Nazarbayev signed a decree establishing a reorganized National Agency for the Media responsible to him, not the government, with the president having the power to appoint to dismiss the chairman. Kazakhstani journalists warned that the new agency gives the president control of all newspapers and magazines financed through the state budget. Fees and tenders for independent radio and television stations are exorbitant. In February, authorities banned media outlets; the transmitters of two TV stations, Russian TV-6-Moskva and the private Kazak Totem TV, as well as radio stations Totem Radio and Radio Max were suddenly disconnected. In May, 27 regional non-state television and radio companies went off the air following a decision by the government commission for allocating TV and radio frequency. Tenders for TV and radio frequency rights indicate continued pressure on non-state electronic media. In June, the government confirmed a regulation for accreditation procedures for foreign journalists. Government interference with independent newspapers has resulted in widespread self-censorship. *Karavan*, which has the largest circulation, continues to print articles critical of the authorities.

Freedom of assembly is restricted. Several unsanctioned rallies by workers, pensioners and the political opposition to protest deteriorating social and economic conditions were broken up by police and demonstrators were detained. Azamat reported that they were illegally denied access to facilities to hold meetings.

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, but religious associations may not pursue political goals. Christian, Muslims and Jews can worship freely. Minority and ethnic rights are not safeguarded. Russian, Germans and other non-Kazakhs have charged discrimination in favor of ethnic Kazakhs in state-run businesses, government, housing and education. Ethnic Russians have left in droves, particularly from the northern industrial cities, such as Karaganda. Some 65 percent of ethnic Germans have left the country since 1990, leaving 370,000. To discourage further emigration, the German government has spent \$32 million over the last six years to help set up businesses and create jobs. There are Russian-, German- and Korean-language newspapers. The government continues to crack down on the Uigur minority that supports the Uigur independence movement in northern China. In September, more than 20 ethnic Uigurs were detained in Almaty for protesting near the Chinese Embassy. In July, a new language law went into effect, making Kazakh the language of state administration, legislation, legal proceedings and record-keeping, operating in all spheres of social relations throughout the country. Russian retained its status as a

language which is officially used on par with the Kazakh language in state organizations and bodies of local self-government.

The judiciary is not free of government interference. Judges are subject to bribery and political bias. Judges are appointed by the Ministry of Justice with little or no parliamentary oversight. Supreme Court and lower court judges are now required to take exams attesting to their professional qualifications. The Kazakh-American Human Rights Bureau reported in April that such basic rights as freedom of speech and independent media are being violated. Prison conditions are dismal, and there were several cases in which law enforcement officers killed prisoners in detention centers. Articles in the criminal code restrict activities of political parties.

The largest trade union remains the successor to the Soviet-era General Council of Trade Unions, in practice a government organ. The Independent Trade Union Center, with twelve unions, includes the important coal miner's union in Karaganda. A new labor law places restrictions on the right to strike. Workers who join independent unions are subject to threats and harassment by enterprise management and have no legal recourse. Deteriorating living standards led to the formation of opposition labor unions, including the City Workers Movement, which led several demonstrations in 1997. In May its leader, Medel Ismailov, was detained for 15 days for attending an unauthorized rally of senior citizens outside parliament. Several independent women's groups exist to address such issues as discrimination in hiring and education and domestic violence.

Kenya

Polity: Dominant-party **Political Rights:** 6*

Economy: Capitalist **Civil Liberties:** 6

Population: 28,176,000 **Status:** Not Free

PPP: \$1,404

Life Expectancy: 53.6

Ethnic Groups: Kikuyu (21 percent), Luhya (14 percent), Luo (13 percent), Kalenjin (12 percent), Kamba (11 percent), Somali (2 percent), others

Capital: Nairobi

Ratings Change: Kenya's political rights rating changed from 7 to 6 due to positive changes in the electoral laws.



Overview:

President Daniel arap Moi was re-elected president with 40 percent of the vote against a divided opposition and his ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) won a slender parliamentary majority in December voting that capped a year of deadly political and ethnic violence and manipulation that afforded the incumbents large advantage and left a fractious opposition facing five years of renewed authoritarian rule. The existence of a multiparty system in Kenya is today little more than window dressing for repressive rule by Moi and the KANU party.

Several opposition parties boycotted the election, declaring that limited constitutional and other reforms introduced by Moi in September after concerted pressure

from civil society were insufficient to guarantee a free and fair contest. Some parties were not permitted to register at all. The ruling party's blatant use of state resources for campaigning was an important advantage for Moi, as was the almost unfailingly pro-Moi message offered by the state dominated broadcast news. Attacks and intimidation against oppositionists took place throughout the year, and students and other activists occasionally responded in kind. Ethnic violence wracked the Kenyan coast in August as unidentified attackers sought to drive away migrants from other parts of the country. Dissatisfaction with the Moi regime was heightened by an economic slowdown exacerbated by a sharp drop in tourism and the August suspension of \$220 million in International Monetary Fund assistance after the government failed to implement pledges to tackle endemic corruption.

British imperial forces conquered Kenya in the late eighteenth century to open a route to control the River Nile headwaters in Uganda. President Jomo Kenyatta, a leader of the 1952-58 Mau-Mau rebellion dominated by people of his Kikuyu ethnicity, led the country to independence in 1963 under the KANU party. Kikuyu were pre-eminent in Kenyan politics until Kenyatta's death in 1978. Vice-President Moi's succession kept KANU in power but eventually limited Kikuyu influence. Opposition parties were proscribed in 1982, and ethnic tensions between Moi's Kalenjin ethnic group and others widely believed to have been provoked by the government itself took thousands of lives from 1989-93.

Pressure from international aid donors and domestic unrest convinced Moi to end the ban of opposition parties and allow multiparty elections in December 1992. Moi was proclaimed victor with 36 percent of the vote in polls marked by both opposition discord and highly suspect electoral conduct.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Kenyans have been unable to exercise their right to choose their leaders in genuinely open and competitive elections. Moi's two presidential victories included political repression, media control and dubious electoral procedures. Moi's refusal to allow an independent election commission provided additional insurance against his possible upset. The use of police powers and executive decrees to harass and attack political opponents and the wider civil society, as well as physical violence, was backed by a usually docile judiciary. The opposition's inability to field a single candidate helped seal Moi's victory. The ruling KANU party took only 109 of 210 parliamentary seats, despite its many advantages of incumbency.

Lack of access to state media and repression of the private press severely limit freedom of expression. Broadcast media are almost entirely under the control of the regime or the ruling KANU party. The few private radio and television stations are either pro-Moi or carefully apolitical. Private print media remain vibrant, but journalists have been assaulted by KANU activists as police stood by, and independent publications are subject to harassment in their business operations. Editors of the weekly *The People* have been repeatedly sued for defamation. President Moi has decreed it is a crime to "insult" him, and sedition laws are being used in efforts to silence any criticism. Numerous books are banned.

The security forces violate constitutional guarantees regarding detention, privacy, search and seizure with apparent impunity. Many laws directly limit freedom of association and political organization, including the Public Order Act, the Public

Security Act and the Chief's Authority Act. The government registered ten new political parties in 1997, but rejected the potentially important Safina (Swahili for Noah's Ark) party, among whose leaders is prominent white Kenyan Richard Leakey. Also refused was the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK) of Muslim cleric Sheikh Khalid Balala, who was allowed to return from exile in June. Groups such as Release Political Prisoners (RPP), an organization founded in 1992 by ex-detainees, and the non-governmental Kenyan Human Rights Commission (KHRC) have publicized abuses and demanded respect for human rights, but suffered sometimes deadly assaults. Amnesty International and the International Bar Association each issued reports in 1997 calling for broad reforms and respect for the rule of law.

Leading oppositionist, writer and former member of parliament Koigi wa Wamwere remains imprisoned, along with his brother Charles Kuria Wamwere, and G.G. Njuguna Ngengi. The three were sentenced in October 1995 to four years imprisonment and six lashes on highly dubious armed robbery charges. Mr. Wamwere's lawyers and journalists were harassed and detained, and independent observers described court proceedings as little more than a show trial. Mr. Wamwere is reportedly suffering seriously from ailments for which the authorities do not allow him proper treatment.

Kenyan Asians, who are heavily represented in the country's commercial class, have become the target of racist propaganda from leading opposition politicians who sought to use racial chauvinism as a campaign tool. Kenyans of Somali ethnicity have been subjected to numerous abuses and must carry special identification.

Domestic violence against women is reportedly widespread, and female genital mutilation is still common. Women's groups such as the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA)-Kenya and Kituo cha Sheria (Legal Advice Centre) offer legal aid and advocate on behalf domestic violence victims. Women also face legal discrimination that includes restrictions on obtaining credit and passports and societal inequalities in inheritance and property rights. Females are afforded fewer educational opportunities, especially at higher levels. A fast rising population, economic dislocation and unrest in the countryside have also led to a large number of street children, estimated to number as many as 50,000, in the capital, Nairobi, and other cities.

Unions are active, and some workers have defied a 1993 Ministry of Labor decree forbidding all strikes that contravene constitutional guarantees. The Central Organization of Trade Unions (COTU) is nominally autonomous but still heavily influenced by the government. Civil servants and university academic staff may join only government-designated unions. Only about one-fifth of the country's 1.5 million industrial work force is unionized. Most of Kenya's 29 million people survive on subsistence agriculture. Nepotism, corruption and massive fraud inhibit economic opportunity and discourage greater foreign investment. The customs commissioner was removed from his post, reportedly after discovering massive tax evasion. Political violence scared off many tourists in the latter part of the year, costing the country about \$300,000 daily in foreign exchange earnings.

Kiribati

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist-statist
Population: 81,000
PPP: na
Life Expectancy: na
Ethnic Groups: Micronesian (84 percent), Polynesian (14 percent), others
Capital: Tarawa

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Overview:

The Republic of Kiribati consists of 33 islands of the Gilbert, Line and Phoenix groups scattered over two-million square miles of the central Pacific Ocean, as well as Banaba Island in the west. The country, with a Micronesian majority and a Polynesian minority, achieved independence from Great Britain in July 1979.

The 1979 constitution established a unicameral *Maneaba ni Maungatabu* (House of Assembly) with 39 members directly elected for a four-year term, one representative from Banaba Island elected by the Banaban Rabi Council of Leaders, and the attorney general, *ex officio* if he is not already an elected member. Executive powers are vested in the president, who is directly elected from a list of three to four candidates nominated by the parliament from among its members, and is limited to three four-year terms. In July 1991 President Ieremia Tabai, who came to office at independence, served out his third term and threw his support in the presidential election behind Teatao Teannaki, who beat out his main competitor, Roniti Teiwaki.

In May 1994 parliament set up a select committee to investigate misuse of public funds by a cabinet minister. Reading this as a vote of no-confidence in the administration, the speaker dissolved parliament, and President Teannaki resigned. Acting according to the constitution, a three-member caretaker Council of State, consisting of the speaker of parliament, the chief justice and the chairman of the Public Service Commission (PSC), took power pending fresh elections. A brief constitutional crisis ensued after police forcibly removed acting head of state Tekire Tameura on the grounds that his tenure as chairman of the PSC had expired three days earlier.

In early parliamentary elections in July 1994, the Protestant-based Christian Democratic Party (MTM) won 13 seats, the incumbent Gilbertese National Progressive Party (GNPP), seven, and independents, 19. (The MTM and the GNPP later merged to form the Christian Democratic Unity Party). In September Teburoro Tito won the presidential election, in which all four candidates represented the MTM, with 51 percent of the votes.

A five-member select committee, established in late 1994, continues to review the 1979 constitution. The 1994 constitutional crisis, albeit minor, highlighted the fact that many clauses relating to key issues, including vacancies on the Council of State, are vague and ill-defined.

In recent years Kiribati has sought economic benefits from its location along the

equator, which is ideal for monitoring satellite launchings and operations. In October 1997, China completed construction of an aerospace tracking station in Tarawa, the capital.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Kiribati can change their government democratically. In addition to the directly-elected parliament, local island councils serve all inhabited islands. Politics are generally conducted on a personal and issue-oriented basis rather than on a partisan level. Several parties exist, but most lack true platforms and business offices.

The president's ability to dismiss judges raises questions about the judiciary's independence. In November 1994 President Tito suspended and later deported the chief justice, a British expatriate, over a ruling in a defamation case against the president. The judicial system is modeled on English common law, and provides adequate due process rights. Traditional customs permit corporal punishment, and island councils on some outer islands occasionally order such punishment for petty theft and other minor offenses.

Freedoms of speech, press, assembly, religion and association are respected. The government-run Kiribati Broadcasting Service's radio service transmits in Gilbertese, Tuvaluan and English and offers diverse views. A state-owned weekly is the country's sole newspaper, although church newsletters are an important source of information.

Women are entering the workforce in increasing numbers but still face discrimination in this male-dominated society. Citizens are free to travel internally and abroad. Although more than 90 percent of the workforce is in subsistence agriculture and fishing and operates outside of the wage structure, the well-organized, independent Kiribati Trade Union Congress includes seven trade unions with approximately 2,500 members.

Korea, North

Polity: Communist one-party

Economy: Statist

Population: 23,904,000

PPP: \$3,965

Life Expectancy: 71.4

Ethnic Groups: Korean

Capital: Pyongyang

Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 7
Status: Not Free



Overview:

In October 1997 North Korean leader Kim Jong II formally assumed this tightly controlled country's top leadership post, three years after it was vacated by the death of his father Kim II Sung. Kim inherited a country in extreme deprivation caused by decades of command industrial and agricultural production, recent natural disasters and the huge costs of maintaining one of the largest armed forces in the world.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea was formally established in Sep-

tember 1948, three years after the partition of the Korean Peninsula. Soviet-installed leader Marshall Kim Il Sung barred private enterprise and closed the country to the world, basing his rule on a philosophy of "Juche" (I Myself) that combines Stalinist control of all aspects of private and public life with a system of economic self-reliance that has brought the country to the brink of mass starvation. The ruling doctrine also relies on a personality cult that credits the leader with making the sun rise. Kim organized the state as a tool to control the population and used the media, the workplace and nearly all aspects of public life to nurture a slavish devotion to himself as "Great Leader" and his son, Kim Jong Il, as "Dear Leader."

In December 1991 the younger Kim replaced his father as army commander. The elder Kim died suddenly of a heart attack in July 1994. Kim Jong Il announced he would wait a year before assuming his father's positions of state president and general secretary of the Korean Workers' Party. State media said this was in observance of the traditional Confucian mourning period. But analysts attributed the decision to the inappropriateness of holding a coronation amidst growing food shortages.

The disintegrating economy forced Pyongyang into talks aimed at curbing its clandestine nuclear weapons program as a precondition for receiving increased food aid. In 1994 North Korea agreed to an United States-brokered deal under which it will abandon its plutonium processing efforts in exchange for emergency oil supplies and two light water nuclear reactors that will be supplied by the U.S., Japan and South Korea.

As the outside world watched for signs that Kim would formally assume his father's positions, intelligence analysts noted that the new leader appeared to be reshuffling government and military officials and installing cronies as part of a generational power shift.

In spring 1997 the regime allowed a trickle of foreign officials, aid workers and journalists into the country in an apparent attempt to publicize the extent of a famine that has its roots in a failed collectivized agricultural system. Heavy flooding in 1995 and 1996 further devastated crop yields. In April the United Nations announced that North Korea would need \$95 million worth of emergency food supplies for 2 million people considered at risk of starvation.

On October 8 Kim, 55, assumed the post of general secretary of the Workers' Party, leaving the secondary post of state president still vacant. Although the food crisis has forced Kim to initiate modest economic liberalizations, including allowing blackmarkets and small private farming in the countryside, it is unclear whether he will be able to attract enough foreign capital and technology to avert a broader economic collapse. In December North Korea, South Korea, China and the United States began talks aimed replacing the armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean War with a formal peace.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

North Koreans live in the most tightly-controlled country in the world and cannot change their government democratically. Elections are held on a regular basis, but all candidates are state-sponsored and belong either to the ruling Workers' Party or smaller, state-organized parties. The Supreme People's Assembly, nominally the highest organ of state power, simply provides a veneer of legitimacy to government decisions. Opposition parties are illegal, and there appears to be little organized dissent due to

the regime's repression, widespread internal surveillance, and isolationist policies, as well as the country's severe economic hardship. The government denies citizens all fundamental rights in what is one of the last totalitarian societies in the world. As such there are not even rudimentary elements of civil society.

The judiciary, like other government organs, is used for controlling the population. Defense lawyers attempt to persuade defendants to plead guilty rather than advocate for them. The Criminal law subjects citizens to arbitrary arrest, detention and execution for "counterrevolutionary crimes" and other broadly-defined political offenses. In practice these can include non-violent acts such as attempted defection, criticism or even a slight to the leadership, and listening to the BBC or other foreign broadcasts. The rule of law is non-existent.

Prison conditions are brutal, characterized by severe mistreatment of prisoners and, by some accounts, frequent summary executions. The regime operates "re-education through labor" camps that are centers of forced labor and reportedly hold tens of thousands of political prisoners and their families. Defectors say some political prisoners are "re-educated" and released after a few years, while others are held indefinitely.

Authorities carry out arbitrary checks of residences, use electronic surveillance, and maintain a network of informants to monitor the population. Children are encouraged at school to report on their parents. The government assigns a security rating to each individual that, to a somewhat lesser extent than in the past, still determines access to education, employment and health services. North Koreans face a steady onslaught of propaganda from radios and televisions that are pre-tuned to government stations.

Religious practice is restricted to state-sponsored Buddhist and Christian services. Travel within the country generally requires a permit which is normally granted only for state business, weddings or funerals, although some reports suggest that internal travel restrictions have been slightly eased. The government reportedly forcibly resettles politically suspect citizens. Chinese authorities return some refugees and defectors at the border, many of whom are reportedly summarily executed. Chinese sources say many North Koreans are in fact returned by North Korean agents operating across the border.

The General Federation of Trade Unions of Korea is the sole legal trade union federation, and its affiliates are used to monitor workers. The regime does not permit strikes, collective bargaining or other core labor activity.

Korea, South

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist-statist
Population: 45,253,000
PPP: \$10,656
Life Expectancy: 71.5
Ethnic Groups: Korean
Capital: Seoul



Overview:

As popular anger mounted over the country's worst economic crisis in decades, blamed largely on collusion between politicians and business, voters elected Kim Dae Jung, the pre-eminent pro-democracy campaigner whom past military governments imprisoned and threatened to murder to the presidency on December 18, 1997. Kim, the first opposition candidate elected president in South Korean history, won 40.4 percent of the vote as two other candidates split the conservative vote. Kim pledged to honor a \$57 billion International Monetary Fund-led bailout, agreed to on December 3 and conditioned on corporate reform and ending lifetime labor guarantees. Worker's braced for bankruptcies and layoffs.

The Republic of Korea was established in August 1948 with the division of the Korean Peninsula. In the next four decades authoritarian rulers suppressed civil liberties while undertaking a state-directed industrialization drive that transformed a poor, agrarian country into the eleventh largest economy in the world. South Korea's democratic transition began in 1987, when violent student-led protests rocked the country after Chun Doo Hwan, a former general who had seized power in a 1980 coup, picked another army general, Roh Tae Woo, as his successor. Roh accepted direct presidential elections in December 1987, and beat the country's best known dissidents, Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung.

Roh introduced a new constitution in 1988 that limits the president to a single five-year term and took away his power to dissolve the 299-seat National Assembly. Kim Young Sam merged his party with the ruling party in 1990 to form the governing Democratic Liberal Party (DLP) and won the December 1992 presidential election to become the first civilian president since 1961.

Kim curbed the internal surveillance powers of the security services, shook up the military hierarchy and launched an anti-corruption campaign. But his popularity waned as the reforms slowed. At the April 1996 legislative elections the DLP, renamed the NKP, won only a 139-seat plurality, with the opposition divided between Kim Dae Jung's center-left National Congress for New Politics and the conservative United Liberal Democrats. In an unprecedented development, in the fall a court sentenced former presidents Chun and Roh to death and 22 years' imprisonment, respectively, on charges of corruption and treason during the military era.

A secret National Assembly session on December 26, 1996 passed laws making it easier for companies to dismiss workers and replace strikers, continuing military-

era restrictions on association and restoring powers to the National Security Planning Agency. Three weeks of union-led, nationwide mass strikes followed. On January 21, 1997 Kim agreed to send the labor and security laws back to parliament, but by then the government's strongarm parliamentary tactics and police crackdowns on union rallies had badly damaged Kim's democratic credentials.

The January collapse of the Hanbo steel company ultimately led to charges against eleven politicians, bankers and businessmen, including several close presidential associates, in a huge bribes-for-loans scandal which tarnished Kim's graft-busting reputation. With Kim constitutionally barred from a second term and his approval ratings below 10 percent, the 1997 presidential election turned into a wide-open race. By mid-August Kim Dae Jung had emerged as the frontrunner with a strong campaign that sought to refute his portrayal by past military governments as a radical who would be soft on the ever-belligerent Communist North Korea. By late October the field had narrowed to three candidates: Kim, the ruling party's Lee Hoi Chang, and Rhee In Je, a ruling party defector.

In early November the currency, the *won*, began plummeting as corporations hoarded dollars in anticipation of higher overseas borrowing costs. The financial turmoil came in reaction to an economic slowdown that caused seven highly leveraged *chaebol*, or conglomerates, to collapse under heavy debts during the year and weakened others. This resulted in credit downgrades for major banks that had, under government pressure, lent huge amounts of money to favored *chaebol* and raised fears of a default on \$66 billion of foreign debt.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

South Koreans can change their government democratically. The judiciary is independent. On October 12, 1997 a court sentenced President Kim's influential youngest son to a three-year prison term for bribery and tax evasion (currently on appeal). Along with other recent high-profile corruption cases, this is an unprecedented development in a country in which rulers and their corporate patrons and families had been above the law.

A key human rights issue is the continued application of the broadly-drawn National Security Law (NSL), under which hundreds of people are arrested each year for allegedly pro-North Korean statements, unauthorized ownership of North Korean publications, contact with North Koreans and other nonviolent activities. According to Amnesty International, between January and early July 1997 authorities arrested at least 290 people under the NSL, many of them as part of a general crackdown following violent student protests that began in late May. Detainees are often beaten to extract confessions and generally do not have access to an attorney during interrogation.

In December 1996 parliament restored the National Security Planning Agency's authority to investigate and interrogate people accused of pro-North Korean sympathies, powers that had largely been rescinded in 1994. The government says legislative oversight has made the Agency more accountable than under the military rule.

Authorities reportedly pressure editors to kill critical articles, and the largely private media practice some self-censorship. Although the president's youngest son had previously warded off media criticism by filing libel suits, in 1997 the media vigorously reported on his involvement in the Hanbo scandal. The broadcast media

are subsidized by the state but offer varied viewpoints. Television featured significantly for the first time in the 1997 presidential election campaign. In December authorities arrested an American journalist for the crime of spreading rumors after a complaint was filed against him over a radio broadcast.

Civic institutions are strong and local human rights groups operate openly. However, in September authorities arrested two students affiliated with human rights groups for organizing a human rights film festival. In November authorities arrested an activist on similar grounds. Authorities broke up massive student demonstrations in September 1996 calling for the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula (after which courts sentenced 190 people to prison terms) and union-led rallies in January 1997. Student protests have become a ritual occurrence and frequently turn violent.

Women face social and workplace discrimination, and domestic violence is fairly widespread. Religious freedom is respected.

Labor relations are frequently characterized by union militancy and authorities' forceful responses to strikes by unrecognized unions. In March parliament lifted a ban on multiple trade unions in each industry that had maintained the dominance of the military rule-era Federation of Korean Trade Unions. The independent Korean Confederation of Trade Unions had been technically illegal despite representing 500,000 workers. However, union monopolies at the company level will continue until 2002. The new laws also postponed for two years provisions that would expand employers' powers to dismiss workers.

Civil servants and teachers cannot form unions or bargain collectively. Foreign workers are frequently forced to work longer hours and for less pay than initially promised, not allowed to leave factory compounds, and are sometimes beaten.

Kuwait

Polity: Traditional monarchy and limited parliament
Economy: Mixed capitalist-statist
Population: 1,764,000
PPP: \$21,875
Life Expectancy: 75.2
Ethnic Groups: Kuwaiti (45 percent), other Arab (35 percent), Iranian, various foreign workers
Capital: Kuwait City

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



Overview:

Divisions within the ruling al-Sabah family and a lack of cooperation between the government and legislature continue to hinder progress on much-needed economic and social reforms. The success of pro-government candidates in 1996 National Assembly elections raised hopes of greater coordination between the two institutions that have yet to be realized.

The al-Sabah family has ruled Kuwait since 1756. Under a special treaty, Ku-

wait ceded control of its foreign affairs and defense to Britain in 1899. The sheikdom was granted full independence in 1961, and the 1962 constitution provides for an emir with broad executive powers, who rules through an appointed prime minister and Council of Ministers. The emir shares power with an elected 50-member National Assembly, which is subject to dissolution or suspension by decree.

In October 1996, Kuwait held its second parliamentary elections since the 1990-1991 Iraqi invasion. Pro-government candidates won 30 seats, Islamists won 16, and liberals won four.

Economists routinely express concern that Kuwait's cradle-to-grave welfare state cannot be maintained indefinitely. Ninety-three percent of working Kuwaitis draw monthly tax-free salaries from the state, while an estimated 55 percent of the workforce is "underemployed"—that is, placed in menial state jobs with no real duties for the sake of employment statistics. With no viable private sector and one of the world's highest birthrates, Kuwait can maintain this system only as long as high oil revenues continue. Many warn that economic instability in coming years will breed the type of social unrest seen in other countries in the region.

An assassination attempt against an opposition member of the National Assembly in June was linked to charges in the Assembly that former officials misappropriated public funds. The MP, Abdullah Naibari, was involved in efforts to combat corruption. The government is seeking the death penalty against five suspects charged in the attack.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Kuwaitis cannot change their government democratically. According to the constitution, the hereditary emir holds executive power and can declare martial law and suspend both the parliament and specific articles of the constitution.

Kuwait is the only Gulf state to hold legislative elections. In 1996, the government expanded the voting pool to include not only men over 21 who can trace their Kuwaiti ancestry back to 1920, but also men who have been citizens for over 20 years. Women may not vote. Political parties are banned under a 1986 decree but operate informally. The parliament may not overrule the emir.

During a period of martial law following Kuwait's liberation in 1991, suspected Iraqi collaborators, primarily Palestinians, Iraqis, Jordanians, and *bidoon* (stateless Arabs), were subject to extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrest, torture and "disappearance." Hundreds of alleged collaborators were tried in court proceedings that did not meet international standards of fairness. Confessions obtained through torture were used as evidence in many of these cases. Some 160 people are still believed to be serving sentences, while most of the killings and disappearances remain unresolved.

No military court trials have taken place since 1991. The State Security Courts were dissolved in 1995. One court system tries both civil and criminal cases. Defendants have the right to appeal and in felony cases are required to be represented by legal counsel. Women may testify, and a woman's testimony is accorded equal weight to that of a man, except in the *Shari'a* (Islamic law) courts set up to handle family law cases.

Police reportedly physically abuse detainees during interrogation. Though the government claims to investigate allegations of abuse, findings of such investigations and information about punishments are not made public. Under the penal code,

suspects may not be detained for over four days without charge. Several hundred Palestinians, Iraqis, and bidoon are detained under administrative deportation orders not subject to review.

Citizens may freely criticize the government, but not the al-Sabah family. The press law prohibits publication of articles critical of the royal family, as well as those deemed likely to provoke hatred or dissent. Seven privately-owned newspapers exist. Broadcast media are state-owned and favor the government. It is possible to access international media through satellite dishes and radio. Foreign periodicals are sold freely.

Freedom of assembly is restricted by the government, though informal political groupings, some of which may be characterized as oppositionist, exist without government interference. Prior government approval is required for public gatherings. Some 150,000 bidoon are considered illegal residents. They are barred from employment, restricted in their movement, and denied education and social services. As many as 160,000 fled Kuwait during the 1990 Iraqi invasion, and are not permitted to return despite claims that their families remain in Kuwait.

Women are restricted from working in certain professions, though they receive equal pay for equal work. They must receive permission from husbands or male relatives to travel abroad.

Islam is the state religion; both Sunnis and Shi'ites worship freely. Christians may worship and build churches. Proselytizing Muslims is prohibited. Only Muslims may become citizens. People of religions not recognized by the Shari'a may gather publicly. Thus, Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists may not build places of worship but may practice at home.

The government maintains financial control over unions through subsidies that account for 90 percent of union budgets. Only one union is permitted per industry or profession, and only one labor federation, the pro-government Kuwaiti trade Union Federation, exists. Strikes are legal and do occur, though foreign organizers have been arrested and deported.

Foreign workers face discrimination in legal proceedings. They must have five years' residence in Kuwait before joining labor unions. Roughly 100,000 foreign-bom domestic servants are not covered by the labor law and are subject to abuses including rape and beatings.

↓ Kyrgyz Republic

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Economy: Statist (transitional)
Population: 4,579,000
PPP: \$1,930
Life Expectancy: 67.8

Political Rights: 4
Civil Liberties: 4
Status: Partly Free



Ethnic Groups: Kirghiz (52 percent), Russian (22 percent), Uzbek (13 percent), German, others

Capital: Bishkek

Trend Arrow: Kyrgyz Republic receives a downward trend arrow due to continued repression of the media and political opposition.

Overview: In 1997, President Askar Akayev faced increased international criticism for continued repression of the media and political opponents. Despite a publicized campaign to weed out corruption, significant sectors of the economy remained in the hands of the former Communist elite and, with the absence of conflict-of-interest laws, leading government officials. During his July visit to the United States, President Akayev received a cool reception in Washington, meeting with lower echelon officials.

The Kyrgyz Republic declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. In what was called the "Silk Revolution," President Akayev, a respected physicist, committed the country to multiparty democracy and market reforms. But resistance from a Communist-dominated, 350-member parliament elected in 1990 led Akayev in 1994 to dissolve the legislature and decree a national referendum for changes in the constitution and the creation of a bi-cameral, 105-member body (*Jogorku Kenesh*), with a 35-seat lower chamber as a permanent legislature and a 70-member upper chamber to meet only occasionally to approve the budget and confirm presidential appointees. Nearly 75 percent of voters approved the proposal for a new parliament. In 1995 parliamentary elections, 82 seats went to a mix of governing officials, businessmen, intellectuals, and clan leaders, with the Communists gaining only a handful of seats. Akayev then won the presidency with over 60 percent of the vote.

In February 1996, voters approved a referendum that changed more than half of the constitution to enhance presidential power. The new document gave the president the power to appoint all top officials. If parliament rejects three of the president's nominees, he can dissolve the body.

In 1997, there were several demonstrations against the government in Bishkek organized by journalists and by the Deliverance From Poverty Movement, which represents the interests of the young, homeless and unemployed. The Movement charged that government policies were responsible for wage arrears, a deterioration of social services and a falling standard of living. The World Bank estimated that nearly 50 percent of the people live below the poverty level and that the average wage is less than \$25 a month. On July 7, police beat several protesters after 400 demonstrators marched near the government building.

The country is a major transit station for drugs smuggled from Afghanistan and

China. In October, the government passed a resolution prohibiting Russian border guards from destroying confiscated drugs and instructing them to turn over the contraband to local authorities. Over one ton of narcotics were confiscated in the first ten months of the year, according to the government.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens can elect their government under a multiparty system. The 1996 constitution, approved by referendum, codifies strong presidential rule and a weak parliament. Parliamentary and presidential elections in 1995 included such violations as ballot-stuffing, inflation of voter turnout, media restrictions and intimidation.

There are several political parties, from the Communists on the left to the nationalist Asaba on the right. In between are the Social Democrats, the Republican Party, the Agrarians and Erkin (Freedom). The largest political movement is the pro-government Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan. The Party of Protection was founded by members of the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs. Most parties are small and weak, with vague platforms and little financial support.

The new criminal code and press law adopted in 1997 place restrictions on the publication of state secrets, materials that advocate war, violence or intolerance of ethnic groups and libeling public officials. In February, the government shut down the newspaper *Kriminal* after its first issue for reporting on the trial of political activist Topchubek Turgunaliyev and accusing the prime minister of building a house on the site of a cemetery. In March, a reporter from the weekly *Res Publica*, Yrysbeek Omurzakov, was taken into custody for reporting on poor conditions in a factory hostel. The story led to a lawsuit by the factory manager. He was subsequently sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison. In May, four other journalists from the weekly were sentenced for articles criticizing activities of the state gold company; two, chief editor Zamira Sydykova and Aleksandr Alyanchikov, received 18 months in prison and the two others were barred from journalism for 18 months. In early June, hundreds of people protested the sentencing in front of the main government building in Bishkek. Later that month, a municipal court reduced the penalties from 18 months in prison to 18 months in a penal colony, where treatment is more lenient. In August, the Supreme Court ordered the release of Sydykova and restored her right to work in journalism. Alyanchikov got a one-year suspended sentence. In September, an article in the pro-government *Nasha Gazeta* accused the newspaper *Asaba* of "militant criticism and tactless and barbaric distortions" in its reporting on the government. A law on mass media passed by parliament on November 11 bars journalists from reporting on persons under criminal investigation until a verdict is reached. Mass media are not allowed to enter either private or public enterprises without permission or make public information about the private lives of individuals. Journalists must name their sources upon request. No private local radio or television stations exist. Only one private radio station—Radio Almaz—and one private television station operate.

Judges' lack of experience with the rule of law and low salaries encourage corruption in the judiciary system, and the executive branch has a strong influence on the judiciary. In January, prominent opposition politician Topchubek Turgunaliyev was sentenced to ten years imprisonment, allegedly for embezzling money from a university. In February, he was released from custody after the Supreme Court overturned some of the charges. He must reside in Bishkek and report to authorities on a

monthly basis. Under Kyrgyz traditions, the Aksaqal (elders' court) continue to pass judgment on criminals in their villages, but in some cases have exceeded their authority. The Aksaqal are backed by their own police, the "Choro," which often carry out arbitrary arrests, detention and punishment such as whipping or stoning.

Amnesty International tracked at least five prisoners of conscience, and many more are believed to be jailed for political activities. In November, the Committee for Human Rights in Kyrgyzstan cited several examples of torture and mistreatment of prisoners.

Freedoms of assembly and movement are respected inconsistently, and police violently broke up several demonstrations in 1997. Freedom of religion is guaranteed in this predominantly Islamic country, where Christians and Jews can worship freely and openly, though religious groups must register with the proper authorities.

Although the constitution guarantees minority rights and the government has shown sensitivity to the Russian minority (since 1995, Russian has been an official language), there has been an exodus of educated and skilled Russians and Germans. The Uigur organization Ittipak (Unity) has faced sporadic suspension for "separatist activities." The moves have been an effort to placate neighboring China, where Uigur attempts at greater sovereignty have been repressed.

Although a 1992 law permits the formation of independent unions, the overwhelming majority of workers belong to the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Kyrgyzstan (FITUK), the successor to the Soviet-era labor federation. Over 450 non-governmental organizations are registered, ranging from business groups to sports and charitable associations. Cultural traditions undermine women's rights. Abducting women for marriage, though illegal, is still practiced. In 1997, women's groups protested the new criminal code which dropped previous statutes outlawing polygamy.

Laos

Polity: Communist
one-party

Economy: Mixed-statist

Population: 4,976,000

PPP: \$2,484

Life Expectancy: 51.7

Ethnic Groups: Lao (50 percent), Thai (20 percent), Phoutheung (15 percent), Miao (Hmong), Yao, others

Capital: Vientiane

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free



Overview:

This landlocked, mountainous Southeast Asian country became a French protectorate in 1893. Following the Japanese occupation during World War II, the Communist *Pathet Lao* (Land of Lao) won independence from the French in October 1953. Royalist Communist and conservative factions turned on each other in 1964. In May 1975 the *Pathet Lao* took the capital, Vientiane, from a royalist government and seven months later established a one-party state under Prime Minister Kaysone Phomvihane's Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP).

The LPRP introduced market reforms in 1986 to revive an economy that had been decimated by a decade of central planning. The authorities have privatized farms and some state-owned enterprises, removed price controls and encouraged foreign investment.

The 1991 constitution expanded the powers of the president, who heads the armed forces and can remove the prime minister. In theory the 85 member National Assembly is elected for a five-year term and names the president. In reality the parliamentary elections are tightly-controlled, and the presidential election is decided by the LPRP leadership. The constitution also codified the leading political role of the LPRP and transition to a limited market economy. Kaysone subsequently took over as president, while veteran revolutionary Khamtay Siphandone succeeded him as prime minister.

Kaysone died in 1992. Assembly Speaker Nouhak Phoumsavan and Prime Minister Khamtay succeeded Kaysone as state president and LPRP chairman, respectively. The government permitted pre-approved independents to compete for the first time in the December 1992 parliamentary elections. Four independents have won seats.

The sixth LPRP congress in March 1996 carried out personnel changes that continued a generational shift in leadership. But the congress also strengthened the military's political role and promoted several hard-liners who fear that privatization and other economic reforms could erode the LPRP's authority. At the December 21, 1997 parliamentary elections, the party's pre-approved roster of candidates favored old-guard conservatives over technocrats favoring market reforms. Official results for the expanded 99-member assembly are not expected until January 1998, but with only four non-LPRP candidates, few surprises are expected.

The country's poverty, isolation and fear of a growing Thai economic hegemony led the government to push for membership in the Association of Southeast Nations, and in July 1997 the regional group admitted Laos and Burma.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Laos is a one-party state controlled by the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP), and citizens cannot change their government democratically. Opposition parties are not expressly banned, but in practice are not tolerated by the government.

Some elements of state control, including the widespread monitoring of civilians by police, have been relaxed in recent years. However, the security services still search homes without warrants, monitor some personal communications, and maintain neighborhood and workplace committees that inform on the population.

The Hmong, the largest of several hill tribes that collectively comprise half the population, have conducted a small-scale insurgency since the Communist takeover, although this has become less active in recent years. Both the Hmong guerrillas and the armed forces have previously been accused of occasional human rights violations in the context of the insurgency, including extrajudicial killings.

The rule of law is nonexistent. The judiciary is not independent of the government, and trials lack adequate procedural safeguards. Prison conditions are harsh.

The government has released nearly all of the tens of thousands of people who were sent to "re-education camps" following the Communist victory in 1975. The regime may be holding several hundred political prisoners. In December Amnesty

International warned that three former government officials imprisoned in 1990 for advocating peaceful political reform were seriously ill.

Freedoms of speech and press are nonexistent. The government owns all newspapers and electronic media and uses them to spread state propaganda. The LPRP controls all associations and the government does not permit independent elements of civil society. Political assemblies, except for those organized by the government, are illegal. The government's record on religious freedom is mixed. Buddhists can generally worship freely, but the Catholic Church is unable to operate in the north, and in recent years authorities have reportedly detained some Christian clergy members. Christian seminaries have been closed since the Communist takeover.

Members of minority groups are underrepresented in government, and these hill tribes are largely unable to influence official policy regarding their lands. Thousands of Laotians who fled after the Communist takeover have been voluntarily repatriated and the government has apparently not targeted them for specific harassment. Internal travel restrictions have been eased since 1994.

The government does not permit independent trade unions, and all unions must belong to the party-controlled Federation of Lao Trade Unions. There is no legal right to bargain collectively or strike, and in practice such activity does not occur.

Latvia

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy (ethnic limits)

Economy: Mixed capitalist transitional

Population: 2,476,000

PPP: \$3,332

Life Expectancy: 67.9

Ethnic Groups: Latvian (52 percent), Russian (34 percent), Ukrainian, Pole, Belarusian, Lithuanian

Capital: Riga

Ratings Change: Latvia's political rights rating changed from 2 to 1 due to amendments improving the citizenship law.

Political Rights: 1*

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Overview:

Prime Minister Andris Skele who had no party affiliation and was elected by the *Saeima* (parliament) in December 1995, was replaced in August by Guntar Krasts from the nationalist Fatherland and Freedom Union (TUB).

An independent republic from 1918 to 1940, Latvia was forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union under the provisions of a secret protocol the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact. More than fifty years of Soviet occupation saw a massive influx of Russians and the deportation of ethnic Latvians; the proportion of Latvians fell from 77 percent in 1940 to 52 percent in 1991, the year the country declared independence from a crumbling Soviet Union.

October 1995 elections to the 100-member parliament produced no clear major-

ity, and attempts to form a conservative coalition failed. President Guntis Ulmanis called on non-party businessman and former agricultural minister, Andris Skele, to form a center-right coalition that included Saimnieks, the Latvian Way Union (LC), the Latvian Farmer's Union (LZS) and other moderate conservative parties. Backed by most of the coalition parties, President Ulmanis was elected to a second three-year term on June 18, 1996.

Nineteen ninety-seven was marked by continual government instability, with Skele finally turning over the premiership to Krasts in July-August. But the macro-economic policies initiated by Skele and accepted by all the major parties proved remarkably successful, as a \$180-million deficit turned into a \$60-million surplus in the past two years.

March local elections, marked by a low turnout of 57 percent, saw the extreme left Social Democratic Party (LSDP), not represented in the parliament, make impressive gains in the councils of Riga and Daugavpils. A total of 17 parties won seats in the Riga council, with rightist parties getting senior posts. In Liepaja, the rightist United Election List won nine of 15 seats. In August, the prime minister announced that Latvia would sign a border agreement with Russia despite objections from the conservative-nationalist (Latvian National Conservative Party) TUB-LNNK. In November, the citizenship issue came to a head, as the Fatherland and Freedom Union strongly opposed any amendments facilitating the process. Also in November, Latvia followed Lithuania and Estonia in declining Russian President Boris Yeltsin's offer of security guarantees. At November's session of the Baltic Assembly, Foreign Minister Valdis Birkvas noted the importance of building "a common economic, security and stability space." Latvia's government remained committed to eventual membership in the European Union .

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Latvians can change their government democratically. The 1995 parliamentary elections were free and fair. The president is elected by the 100-member parliament (Saeima).

There are no inordinate press restrictions, and there are several independent publications in Latvian and Russian. There are two state-owned television networks, LTV-1 and LTV-2, and scores of television channels operating through independent television production and cable companies.

The majority of non-ethnic Latvians—mostly Russians about a third of permanent residents—are not citizens. In February, the Saeima amended the citizenship law, giving the opportunity to register for citizenship to those who arrived in Latvia after March 31, 1996. In September, the head of the OSCE mission in Latvia recommended making the naturalization process easier, a position shared by President Ulmanis. Since naturalization began in Latvia in 1995, just under 5,000 people had acquired citizenship by May 1997, although about 93,000 had the right to do so.

The judiciary is free from government interference. But judges often lack a strong legal education, courts are often too weak to enforce decisions, and corruption persists. In November, Prime Minister Krasts compared the state of the judiciary to the 1995 banking crisis, declaring it was time to "reform Latvia's judicial system." He said that previous attempts at reforms had been blocked by "groups which were trying to keep the situation in the judicial sphere intact and were acting as they wished." The prime minister called for stricter criteria in the selection of judges and other

changes. In November, former Communist Party leader Alfred Rubiks was released from prison after serving three-quarters of an eight-year sentence. He was imprisoned for supporting the 1991 Soviet crackdown on Latvia's drive for independence.

Religious rights are respected in this largely Lutheran country. Freedom of association and assembly are guaranteed. There are some 1,500 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), among them cultural, professional, business, social, charitable and women's organizations.

Workers can form and join trade unions, and the right to strike is protected by law. Women have equal protection under law and are represented in government, business and education.

Lebanon

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary (military- and foreign-influenced, partly foreign-occupied)
Political Rights: 6
Civil Liberties: 5
Status: Not Free

Economy: Mixed statist

Population: 3,776,000

PPP: \$4,863

Life Expectancy: 69.0

Ethnic Groups: Arab (90 percent), Armenian (4 percent) Greek, Syro-Lebanese

Capital: Beirut



Overview:

Infighting among Lebanon's leaders intensified in April when prime minister Rafiq Hariri unilaterally postponed municipal elections set for June. Claiming that possible political instability generated by the elections would jeopardize investor confidence in the country, Hariri withdrew the electoral draft bill from parliament. His decision drew harsh criticism from president Elias Hrawi and parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri, who viewed it as an unwarranted infringement upon their prerogatives.

Lebanon gained full sovereignty from France in 1946. An unwritten National Pact in 1943 gave Christians political dominance over the Muslim population through a mandatory 6:5 ratio of parliamentary seats. After three decades during which non-Christians tried to end this system, a civil war between Muslim, Christian and Druze militias erupted in 1975, claiming over 150,000 lives before it ended in 1990. Complicating the situation was the presence of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which, after having been expelled from Jordan in 1971, constituted an occupying force. Syria sent troops into Lebanon to support the government in 1976. Syrians, who consider Lebanon part of Greater Syria, continue to occupy the country today.

Efforts to redefine the Lebanese polity began at Taif, Saudi Arabia, in November 1989 with an Arab League-sponsored accord that provided for a new power-sharing constitution. The Taif accord maintained the tradition of a Maronite Christian president indirectly elected to a six-year term, but transferred many executive powers to the prime minister, by agreement a Sunni Muslim. A Shi'ite Muslim serves as speaker of parliament, which is now evenly split between Muslims and Christians.

The Lebanese government is not sovereign in its own country. With some 35,000 troops in Lebanon, Syria dominates the country politically and militarily. The new 128-member parliament, elected in September 1996, continues its predecessor's policy of following the Syrian line on internal and regional affairs. Israel's South Lebanon Army (SLA) controls a 440-square mile security zone in the south, the Hezbollah militia is still active in many southern towns, and Palestinian groups operate autonomously in refugee camps throughout the country.

The balance of power enshrined in the Taif accord has resulted in an overlapping of authority among the three leaders. This overlap, combined with each leader's sensitivity to encroachment upon his authority by the others, as well as their often conflicting priorities, has led to wrangling which has stalled political and economic progress. Hariri's attempts to expedite post-war reconstruction have met with intransigence from Berri, who refuses to let him rush budgetary proposals through parliament. Hrawi angrily accused Hariri of undermining him by postponing the municipal elections.

Underlying this rivalry are the sectarian tensions that fueled the civil war. While not as prevalent as it once was, the primacy of religious identification among Lebanese still exists, especially among the poor and less educated. Each of the 18 "confessions"—including Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims, Maronites, Druze, Catholics, and Alawites—maintains its own courts, education councils and social institutions. Efforts to move away from sectarianism have failed largely because Syria uses its political dominance to preserve and manipulate the confessional system in order to sustain its role as mediator of political conflict.

Hariri's \$60 billion reconstruction drive aimed at restoring Beirut as the region's leading capital market progresses slowly. In October, the government moved to allow foreign investment in Soldere, Lebanon's biggest company, which is charged with the renewal of Beirut's commercial district. The government also announced plans to set up a toll road company in early 1998 to construct 90 kilometers of roads over six years. Despite optimistic planning, redevelopment efforts have strained Lebanon's economy. A public debt of 85 percent of GDP and a budget deficit of 51 percent threaten investment and growth, while increases in the number of poor and unemployed and rampant official corruption have exacerbated public frustration.

In the south, the Iranian- and Syrian-backed Hezbollah has led an insurgency of Lebanese-based guerrilla factions against the SLA since the end of the civil war. In the worst violence since a 1996 Israeli offensive killed 200 civilians, the conflict this year claimed 41 Lebanese civilians and 62 Israeli soldiers, not including 73 who died in a helicopter crash en route to a military operation.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The right of Lebanese citizens to change their government is limited by shortcomings in the electoral system. 1996 parliamentary elections were not prepared or carried out impartially. Municipal elections have not been held since 1963, leaving hundreds of municipal councils paralyzed because heads of municipalities have since died or emigrated, or because officials appointed by the government have failed to perform adequately. Parliament passed a law in December calling for municipal elections in mid-1998. A 1996 election law split the Mount Lebanon region into smaller constituencies both to reduce the showing of anti-Syrian Christians, who boycotted the 1992

elections in protest of Syrian dominance, and to ensure victory for the key pro-Syrian Druze leader allied with Hariri.

The judiciary is independent, though influential politicians intervene in some cases. Extra-governmental groups, such as the SLA, Palestinian factions, and Hezbollah detain suspects and administer justice, generally without due process, in areas under their control. Corruption is widespread. The government has taken no judicial action against groups known to be responsible for thousands of disappearances during the civil war.

According to the Code of Criminal Procedures (CCP), no arrest or detention may be carried out in the absence of an explicit order from a competent judicial authority. However, arbitrary arrests and detention continue. Since 1990, hundreds of people have been arrested for political reasons or on security grounds. Security forces reportedly torture and use excessive force against detainees; a suspect died in January while being interrogated by government agents. The law allows for 20 days' incommunicado detention, and bail only for suspects of petty crimes. Prisons are overcrowded and do not meet minimum international standards.

In 1996, the government began to crack down severely on independent broadcasting, which flourished during the war. The government announced that it would block the operation of over 30 television and 130 radio stations, and by the end of the year only four private TV and 11 radio stations, all linked to pro-Syrian government officials, were granted licenses to broadcast. In September 1997, police attempting to close illegal broadcast stations killed at least one man when they opened fire on protesters. Criticism of the president and of foreign leaders is legally restricted, as is the publication of security-related information. Police must approve all leaflets and other non-periodical materials, and citizens have been imprisoned for unauthorized pamphleteering.

Public assemblies require government approval, which is frequently denied to Christian groups. Unsanctioned demonstrations are often blocked by security forces. Several human rights groups operate openly.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) criticizes government interference with Lebanon's General Labor Confederation (GLC), which is currently split between rival leaderships. In April, security forces surrounded GLC headquarters and arrested its newly-elected president, Ilyas Abu Rizq. In a sham election organized by a breakaway faction, the defeated candidate was elected and immediately recognized by the Ministry of Labor. Abu Rizq refused to step down and launched the "independent GLC," which was recognized by the ILO and Arab trade unions. Abu Rizq was charged with usurping political authority. His case is pending.

Freedom of religion is respected. Citizens may travel abroad freely, though internal travel is restricted in certain areas under Israeli or Hezbollah control. Women suffer from legal and social discrimination. The government does not extend legal rights to some 180,000 stateless persons who live mainly in disputed border areas. Some 350,000-500,000 Palestinian refugees are not allowed to conduct normal commercial affairs outside their refugee camps.

Foreign domestic workers face widespread abuse by employers who treat them as slaves, pay them little or nothing, and confiscate their passports to prevent them from leaving. Women are most vulnerable to brutality and sexual abuse. Lebanon has no written code to arbitrate domestic worker disputes.

Lesotho

Polity: Parliamentary democracy (military- and royal-influenced)
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 2,105,000
PPP: \$1,109
Life Expectancy: 57.9
Ethnic Groups: Sotho
Capital: Maseru

Political Rights: 4
Civil Liberties: 4
Status: Partly Free



Overview:

Lesotho's democratic transition remained tenuous through 1997 as unrest among security forces and political maneuvering continued ahead of national elections scheduled for May 1998. In February, soldiers quashed a police mutiny. The sometimes ambiguous role of royal family and traditional chiefs and lack of a strong judiciary complicated the country's democratic transition. Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehele, faced with ouster as head of the Basotho Congress Party (BCP), which he had led since 1952, quit the party in June to form the Lesotho Congress for Democracy party (LCD). The LCD immediately became the ruling party as 40 of 65 members of the lower house of the national assembly also left the BCP to join the new party. The action sparked street protests and legal challenges, but Mokhehele appeared determined to retain power. The press was banned from covering parliamentary proceedings for 18 days in August-September, and the government is likely to remain paralyzed until fresh elections. An independent election commission was established in September, but its head has complained that the government is failing to cooperate or provide funding for the new body.

A landlocked country of roughly 1.8 million people, Lesotho is entirely surrounded by South Africa. Its status as a British protectorate saved it from being incorporated into South Africa. After independence in 1966, King Moshoeshoe II reigned until a 1990 military coup installed his son as King Letsie III. In 1993, democratic elections produced a government under Prime Minister Mokhehele's BCP. But after bloody military infighting, assassinations and a suspension of constitutional rule in 1994, King Letsie III abdicated to allow his father's reinstatement in January 1995. King Letsie III resumed the throne in February after the accidental death of fifty-nine-year old King Moshoeshoe II in January 1996 and was formally coronated in October 1997. Moshoeshoe II's death and an apparent coup attempt the following month destabilized the country, as did labor unrest. The security forces report to a Defense Commission operating outside parliamentary control, and the civil service shows little respect for the elected government.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Lesotho's citizens freely chose their government in open 1993 elections under a democratic constitution. The BCP took 64 of 65 seats in the lower house of the national assembly. Prime Minister Mokhehele's new LCD is now the ruling party. If the 1998 elections are free and fair the Basotho National Party (BNP) and the Marematluo

Freedom Party (MFP) should give it stiff competition. The senate includes royal appointees and Lesotho's 22 principal traditional chiefs, who still wield considerable authority in rural areas, especially over land rights. The elected government's ability to exercise its constitutional authority remains limited by the autonomy of both the military and the royal family. Potential for popular political participation was broadened in August 1995 local elections, but the local councils' subservience to traditional clan leaders to some degree subverts the democratic process.

Reports persist of arbitrary detention and mistreatment of civilians by security forces that appear to enjoy effective legal impunity. Courts are nominally independent, but higher courts especially are still subject to outside influence. The 1984 Internal Security Act, which provides for up to 42 days of detention without charges in political cases, is among a number of laws inconsistent with the 1993 constitution still on the books. While constitutional rights to assembly and expression are generally respected, as is religious freedom, the existence of such laws is a threat to fundamental freedoms, particularly given the country's continuing instability. A June ban on demonstrations near the royal palace was defied by opposition parties. Several non-governmental organizations, including the Lesotho Human Rights Alert Group (LHRAG) operate openly.

In June, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting accepted a draft media policy drawn up in consultation with the local press, which reinforces media safeguards while including a code of ethics. Extensive radio and television broadcasts reach Lesotho from South Africa, reducing the effect of the government's broadcast monopoly. Several private newspapers published in the capital, Maseru, routinely criticize the government, although incidents of harassment of journalists are reported.

Labor rights are guaranteed by the constitution, but only about ten percent of the country's labor force, which is mostly engaged in subsistence agriculture or working in South Africa, is unionized. The rights to strike and to collective bargaining are recognized by law, but sometimes rejected by government negotiators. Legal requirements for union registration have not been enforced against unregistered unions. There has been no effective investigation of the September 1995 police killing of five striking workers at a controversial dam project in the country's east.

Discrimination based on sex is prohibited by the 1993 constitution, but customary practice and law still restrict women's rights in several areas, including contracts, property rights and inheritance. A woman is considered a legal minor while her husband is alive. Domestic violence is reportedly widespread.

Lesotho relies almost entirely on South Africa for its economic viability. About half of Lesotho's work force is employed in South Africa, and the two countries have a currency and customs union. The end of apartheid in South Africa has prompted some Sothos on both sides of the border to suggest that it makes economic sense to unite the two countries. But the proposal is sharply condemned by Sotho nationalists who believe an independent state will better protect their ethnic identity and cultural heritage. The 1995 Privatization Act calls for extensive divestiture of state-run enterprises, which comprise nearly all the modern economic sector. Land is property of the kingdom, and its distribution is generally controlled by local chiefs.

Liberia

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Political Rights: 4*
Civil Liberties: 5*
Economy: Capitalist
Status: Partly Free

Population: 2,100,000

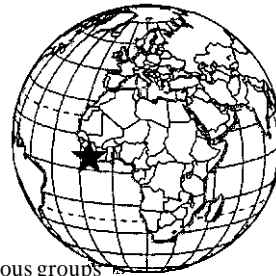
PPP: na

Life Expectancy: na

Ethnic Groups: Krahn, Mandinka, Gio, Mano, other indigenous groups (95 percent), Americo-Liberian (5 percent)

Capital: Monrovia

Ratings Change: Liberia's political rights and civil liberties ratings changed from 7/6 to 4/5 because free and fair elections were held in July.



Overview:

After over six years of anarchy that took an estimated 150,000 lives and forced nearly half of all 2.8 million Liberians to flee their homes, the July presidential election was won by Charles Taylor. Taylor had sparked the war by leading a small guerrilla force into Liberia on the last day of 1989, with the aim of overthrowing the country's military-dominated dictatorship. Torture, rape and murder, often by boy-soldiers recruited into an expanding plethora of factions, became a staple of the conflict, which was fanned by external aid to various combatants. A Nigerian-led West African force twice blocked Taylor's victory, but eventually assumed a more neutral stance. Several peace plans brokered by West African leaders failed, until the war's fourteenth and final peace accord was reached at the end of May 1996. It provided for the demobilization of over 20,000 fighters from nine rival ethnic militias under the supervision of some 13,000 West African peacekeepers, who left in February 1997.

While Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) was as guilty as others of abuses, the ballot box provided him the triumph his troops never achieved in battle. With a 90 percent turnout among Liberia's 700,000 registered voters, Taylor gained over three quarters of all votes in elections international observers deemed free and fair. Sworn in as president on August 2, Taylor faces huge challenges of ethnic reconciliation and economic reconstruction. The country is bankrupt and devastated. Various factions may return to fighting if they believe they are not benefiting from the peace. Taylor's record as an authoritarian warlord offers a dubious resume for the sworn defender of Liberia's constitution.

Settled by freed American slaves beginning in 1821 and established as an independent republic in 1847, Liberia was for more than a century dominated by an "Americo-Liberian" class. In 1980, army Sergeant Samuel Doe led a bloody coup and murdered President William Tolbert. His regime concentrated power among members of his Krahn ethnic group and suppressed others. The NPFL, led by ex-government minister Charles Taylor and backed by Gio and Mano ethnic groups that had been subject to severe repression, launched a guerrilla war against the Doe regime at the end of 1989. Nigeria, under the aegis of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) led an armed intervention force (ECOMOG) by several West African countries and set up an interim government in 1990, preventing Taylor from consummating his victory against the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL).

In 1991, the United Liberation Movement (ULIMO), another rebel group dominated by Kranh and Mandingoe people, entered the war. The capital, Monrovia, was ravaged, and President Doe was captured and tortured to death. ULIMO split into smaller factions, but remained a major force, along with the Liberia Peace Council (LPC). The factions received important financial and military support from neighboring countries and those further afield, and this external interference prolonged the war. Fighting in Monrovia for seven weeks in April and May 1996 left much of the city in ruins after a paroxysm of pillage and murder that killed at least 1,500 people.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Liberians voted in free and fair elections in July under the provisions of the 1986 constitution, for a new president and national assembly established on the basis of proportional representation. President Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Party will dominate the new legislature. The closest runner-up among 12 other contenders for the presidency, long time United Nations official Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of the Unity Party, who campaigned on a platform of clean governance, took less than 10 percent of the vote. Taylor's overwhelming mandate across apparently bitterly divided ethnic lines offers hope that Liberia's leaders will accept the voters' verdict as a popular consensus for peace. Building democratic institutions and enforcing the rule of law is an enormous challenge in a country that has known little of either. Amnesty International has suggested the creation of a South Africa-style Truth and Reconciliation Commission to ensure that wartime abuses are neither dismissed nor denied and to break the cycle of impunity that could evoke future abuses.

Despite years of war, assaults and harassment, the independent media have survived in Liberia, although often only by exercising significant self-censorship. Like the rest of the country, media are seeking to rebuild; the pillage of Monrovia in 1996 destroyed news offices, presses and broadcasting stations. In September, the editor of the independent *Inquirer* newspaper, Philip Wesseh, was detained for several hours on theft charges widely seen as harassment for his newspaper's reporting. Several private radio stations have been used as mouthpieces for various factions. The only country-wide FM station is owned by Charles Taylor, but a private Swiss foundation sponsored non-partisan broadcasts during the election campaign.

Religious groups, relief organizations and human rights organizations, including the Center for Law and Human Rights Education, operated in Monrovia and in the countryside. Several groups addressed the task of rebuilding the lives of more than 10,000 child-soldiers recruited as fighters. Several women's organizations sought to assist the estimated 25,000 women raped during the conflict. Women continue to suffer physical abuse, as well as traditional societal discrimination despite constitutional guarantees of their equality. Union activity is permitted by law but has been in abeyance during the civil war. Rubber workers seeking reinstatement and better conditions were fired on by police in September, leaving six wounded.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees is seeking to return over a half million Liberians to their homes by the end of 1997, an enormous task in a country in which normal economic life does not exist and food production is at historically low levels. Liberia owes \$3 billion in external debt, and its arrears disqualify the country from receiving International Monetary Fund assistance. However, a small economic revival is underway. The country's rubber exports, which

have dropped to less than 5 percent of their 1990 levels, are increasing as the U.S. Firestone Company, operators in Liberia of the world's largest rubber plantation, resumed operations. Mining activities are expanding beyond the current confines.

Libya

Polity: Military **Political Rights:** 7
Economy: Mixed statist **Civil Liberties:** 7
Population: 5,445,000 **Status:** Not Free
PPP: \$6,125
Life Expectancy: 63.8
Ethnic Groups: Arab and Berber (97 percent), Tuareg
Capital: Tripoli



Overview:

A simmering Islamist armed insurgency and a worsening economic situation were ongoing worries for Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi's dictatorial regime. United Nations sanctions related to alleged Libyan involvement in the bombing of Pan American Flight 103 over Scotland in 1988 continued to hurt the country's petroleum sector. Qadhafi expanded diplomatic and commercial links with numerous countries, however, receiving backing from both South Africa's Nelson Mandela and Pope John Paul for an end to sanctions. And new investment from several European and Asian countries is arriving despite the U.S. threat of secondary sanctions against companies investing in Libya's oil industry. It is this petroleum wealth that helps maintain Libya's links with many countries. The sanctions' effects are serious but ultimately limited by their exclusion of oil exports that earn Libya 90 percent of its foreign exchange. Broad concern over the rise of Islamist groups in Libya and across the Maghreb could also dampen support for sanctions in the region and in Europe, and is helping encourage better ties between the Qadhafi regime and its neighbors.

Libya became independent in 1952 after 33 years as an Italian colony and seven years of joint Anglo-French administration after World War II. Under King Idriss for the first 17 years of independence, the country was staunchly pro-Western and hosted a large American military presence until Qadhafi took power in a 1969 coup. Personalized and highly idiosyncratic, Qadhafi's rule has led Libya to costly defeats in clashes with its neighbors (with Egypt in 1977 and over several years in a territorial dispute with Chad) and to ill-fated adventures such as a Libyan expeditionary force which was bloodied while briefly bolstering Idi Amin's crumbling army in Uganda in 1979. In both foreign and domestic policy, Qadhafi rules Libya by decree, with almost a total absence of accountability and transparency.

Besides facing international sanctions, Colonel Qadhafi has become increasingly isolated domestically, even from his own Qadhadhifa clan, relying on close family members as advisors. Ethnic-based rivalries among senior junta officials remained a potential threat to his 29-year rule. Army operations continued against Islamist groups in mountainous areas around Derna, in eastern Libya. Numerous clashes were reported throughout the year, with the Islamic Fighting Group, the Islamic Martyrs Movement and the Libyan Patriots Movement each claiming credit for armed

actions. Qadhafi has sought to co-opt fundamentalist sentiments by broadening *Shari'a* law provisions in 1994 and ordering "purges" against black market traders. Perceptions of corruption and high unemployment have eroded support for the regime.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Libya has no formal constitution, and during the past 85 years of colonial, royal and military-backed dictatorships its people have never been able to choose their representatives through democratic means. Qadhafi rules primarily by decree. Principles and structures of governance are laid out according to a melange of Islamic belief and socialist theory in Qadhafi's *Green Book*, but the document has no legal status. Libya is officially known as *ajamahiriya* (state of the masses), as described by the *Green Book's* "Third Universal Theory." An elaborate structure of Revolutionary Committees and People's Committees serves more as a tool of repression than consultation. Formal elections include mandatory voting, but real power rests with Qadhafi and a small clique who appoint civil and military officials at every level.

Free expression and free media do not exist in Libya. Very limited public debate occurs within the nominally elected bodies. Rare criticisms of the government or its actions usually presage policy shifts or purges. State-run media offer a highly propagandists view of events both in Libya and the wider world. The official news agency in 1997 gave prominence to Qadhafi's theory that the death of Britain's Princess Diana was part of a "racist, anti-Islamic" plot by French and British intelligence agencies. Official controls are so rigid that little formal censorship is apparent, except against foreign programming rebroadcast in Libya and of foreign publications allowed into the country.

Only political parties or associations sanctioned by the regime are permitted. In June 1996, Amnesty International issued a detailed report listing numerous abuses by the regime. Torture and mistreatment of detainees are reportedly routine, and brutality is said to be increasing in response to Islamist guerrilla activities and other dissidence. In January, Libyan media reported the execution of six senior army officers and two civilians who had been detained after an October 1993 army mutiny near the city of Misrata. It is very difficult to garner accurate information regarding events within Libya. The regime's multi-layered security apparatus is pervasive, and contacts with foreigners inside Libya or with the outside world are closely monitored. Anti-Qadhafi activists in exile are also targeted. The 1996 murder of Mohammad ben Ghali in Los Angeles remains unsolved, but is believed to have been an assassination by Libyan agents. One of Libya's most prominent dissidents, Mansur Kikhiya, a former diplomat and Secretary General of the exile opposition National Libyan Alliance, disappeared in Cairo in 1993 and is believed to have been abducted to Libya and executed.

Berber and Tuareg peoples outside Libya's ethnic mainstream have suffered discrimination under policies intended to "Arabize" them. Women's access to education and employment has improved under the regime, yet cultural norms that relegate women to an inferior role may regain strength as Qadhafi seeks to placate fundamentalist opinion by stricter imposition of *Shari'a* law, which among other matters affects marriage, divorce and inheritance rights.

Religion, like every other aspect of life in Libya, is subject to the state. Islamic practice is tailored to Qadhafi's interpretations and mosques are strictly monitored

for incipient dissidence. A small Christian community and expatriate Christians may worship quietly. Qadhafi's relative tolerance in this area was rewarded with the appointment of a papal envoy to the country in March.

All unions are state-run. There is no freedom to form or join unions, nor are there rights to strike or to bargain collectively. The economy is statist, although foreign investment is welcomed in extractive industries.

Liechtenstein

Polity: Prince and parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist-statist

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free

Population: 31,000

PPP: na

Life Expectancy: na

Ethnic Groups: Alemannic German (95 percent), Italian, other European

Capital: Vaduz



Overview:

The Principality of Liechtenstein is governed by Prime Minister Mario Frick's Fatherland Union (VU). In January 1997, the VU won an absolute majority of thirteen seats in the 25-member Landtag (parliament). The Free List environmentalist party won two parliamentary seats. In March, the Progressive Citizens' Party (FBP) voted to end its long-standing coalition with the VU.

Since 1995, Liechtenstein has been a member of the European Economic Area (EEA). The country's economy is closely entwined with that of Switzerland, which is not a part of the EEA. Prince Hans Adam, who enjoys substantial political power, has decreased the principality's economic dependence on Switzerland by leading it into membership not only in the EEA, but also in the United Nations, European Free Trade Association, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

Liechtenstein was established in its present form in 1719 after being purchased by Austria's Liechtenstein family. The royal family lived mainly in Moravia (formerly part of the Austro-Hungarian empire and now a Czech territory) until 1938, when Nazism forced it to flee to Liechtenstein. Native residents of the state are primarily descended from the Germanic Alemanni tribe, and the official language is a German dialect.

In 1923, Liechtenstein entered into a customs union with Switzerland, which continues to administer the principality's customs and provide for its defense and diplomatic representation. From 1938 until 1997, the principality was governed by an FBP-VU coalition. The FBP was the senior partner for most of this period.

The prince exercises legislative powers jointly with the Landtag. He appoints the prime minister from the Landtag's majority party or coalition, and the deputy chief of the five-member government from the minority. Prince Hans Adam has effectively ruled Liechtenstein since 1984, although he did not assume his father's title until the elder sovereign's death in 1989.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Liechtensteiners can change their government democratically. Parties with at least eight percent of the vote receive representation in the Landtag, which is directly elected every four years. The sovereign possesses the power to veto legislation and to dissolve the Landtag. The independent judiciary is headed by a Supreme Court and includes civil and criminal courts, as well as an administrative Court of Appeal and a state court to address questions of constitutionality. Due to the small size of the state, regional disparities are minimal, and modern social problems are few. A strict policy prevents significant numbers of second- and third-generation residents from acquiring citizenship. The native population decides by local vote whether to grant citizenship to those who have five years' residence. Prime Minister Frick has advocated liberalization of the citizenship law in order to reduce the "immigrant" population to approximately half of its present size.

Liechtenstein has one state-owned television station, as well as one state-owned and one privately owned radio station. Residents receive radio and television broadcasts from neighboring countries. Both major parties publish newspapers five times per week.

Although Roman Catholicism is the state religion, other faiths practice freely. Roman Catholic or Protestant religious education is compulsory in all schools, but exemptions are routinely granted.

Liechtensteiners enjoy freedom of association. The principality has one small trade union. Workers have the right to strike, but have not done so for more than 25 years. The prosperous economy includes private and state enterprises. An ongoing labor shortage coupled with high wage rates has begun to drive some companies to open factories in Switzerland and Austria, where labor costs are lower.

The electoral enfranchisement of women at the national level was unanimously approved in the legislature (although only narrowly endorsed by male voters) in 1984 after defeat in referenda in 1971 and 1973. By 1986, universal adult suffrage at the local level had passed in all 11 communes. In the 1989 general elections, a woman won a Landtag seat for the first time. Three years later, a constitutional amendment guaranteed legal equality.

Lithuania

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Economy: Statist transitional

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free

Population: 3,708,000

PPP: \$4,011

Life Expectancy: 70.1

Ethnic Groups: Lithuanian (80 percent), Russian (9 percent), Polish (8 percent), Ukrainian, Belarusian, others

Capital: Vilnius



Overview: December 21 presidential elections failed to produce a winner, as neither Arturas Paulauskas, the son of a KGB informant, nor Valdas Adamkus, a U.S. resident, won more than 50 percent of the vote. Paulauskas got 45 percent and Adamkus 27. A run-off is scheduled for January 4, 1998.

An independent state from 1918 to 1940, Lithuania was forcibly annexed by the Soviet Union under secret provisions of the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact. It regained independence from a disintegrating Soviet Union 1991. In 1992 parliamentary elections, the Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party (LDDP), the renamed ex-Communist party, won 79 of 141 seats. In 1993, Algirdas Brazauskas, a former head of the Communist Party, defeated Vytautas Landsbergis, head of the Lithuanian Reform Movement (Sajudis), becoming the country's first directly elected president. In 1996, with two LDDP-led governments tainted by financial scandal in the wake of a banking crisis, the LDDP was routed in parliamentary elections. Gediminas Vagnorius of the Homeland Union was named prime minister, replacing Laurynas Mindaugas Stankevicus. Landsbergis, leader of the [TS(LK)] alliance, was made parliamentary chairman.

In March 1997 local elections, Homeland nominees won 440 of 1,484 seats in local councils elected in Lithuania's 12 towns and 44 districts. The Christian Democrats won 174 seats, and the LDDP captured 242. Landsbergis said the local vote demonstrated the stability of a political trend away from the former communists.

In October, four former KGB agents, testifying before a special parliamentary commission investigating possible ties between MPs and foreign intelligence agencies, accused Landsbergis of collaborating with Soviet security structures in the late 1950s, a charge that had been made earlier in a book by a former Russian KGB agent. The commission transferred all materials related to the case to the prosecutor general's office. Landsbergis vigorously denied the charges, and the government said the accusations were made to undermine the parliamentary chairman's presidential chances. On October 22, Landsbergis said he found out that the prosecutor general's office had documents that showed he was targeted for recruitment, but was never approached by the KGB. On November 24, Prosecutor General Kazys Pednycia issued a statement that there were no grounds to believe the allegations against Landsbergis. He said his office had a former KGB card index started in 1981 that showed Landsbergis was under surveillance.

Throughout the year, the government pressed for EU accession. After Estonia was recommended for membership in June, Prime Minister Vagnorius warned that further delays in Lithuania's application to the EU might encourage nationalist forces in Russia to reassert their influence over the Baltics. The government took issue with the European Commission's view that Lithuania was not ready for EU membership and needed to overhaul its public finances and restructure its large agricultural sector. In September, President Brazauskas reconfirmed the government's goal of joining the EU and NATO: "Integration in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is a priority direction of Lithuanian foreign policy." In preparing for EU membership, the government moved to speed privatization, public administration reform, anti-corruption and organized crime laws and reforms of the agriculture and energy sectors.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Lithuanians can change their government democratically under a multiparty system. The 1996 parliamentary elections and the 1997 presidential vote were free and fair.

Press freedom is protected; however, there are sanctions against pornography and libel. Over 100 private radio stations exist. Three public national radio stations, three private television stations, and ten local private television stations operate, and there is a variety of private newspapers and publications, including Russian- and Polish-language publications. Three new French-made transmitters began operations in July. A Council of Europe delegation in April reviewed links between local mass media and government institutions.

The rights of ethnic minorities are protected. In 1992, Lithuania extended citizenship to all those born within its borders. Over 90 percent of non-Lithuanians, mainly Russians and Poles, received citizenship. Naturalization requirements include ten-year residency, a permanent job and knowledge of the Lithuanian language.

The judiciary is independent, and a nine-member Constitutional Court reviews laws and decrees that might conflict with the constitution. Freedom of assembly and association are respected. Freedom of religion is guaranteed in this predominantly Roman Catholic country.

Workers have the right to form unions and the right to strike. The Confederation of Freed Trade Unions, the Soviet-era organization, joined eight smaller unions forming the Lithuanian Trade Union Center. Roughly one-third of the work force is unionized.

Luxembourg

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 415,000
PPP: \$34,155
Life Expectancy: 75.9

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Ethnic Groups: Luxembourger (70 percent), other European (30 percent)
Capital: Luxembourg

Overview:

Luxembourg remains on course for membership in the European Monetary Union. It was one of the first countries to meet the 1992 Maastricht Treaty's criteria for participation.

A positive GDP growth rate and the lowest rate of unemployment in the European Union have enabled Luxembourg to fare significantly better economically than its neighbors. Luxembourg's multiparty electoral system is based on proportional representation. In recent years, it has been ruled by coalition governments led by the Christian Social Party (PCS) or the Democratic Party in alliance either with each other or with the Socialist Workers' Party. The current coalition government, which was elected in 1995, is headed by Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker of the PCS. Executive authority is exercised on behalf of the Grand Duke by the prime minister and the cabinet. The government is appointed by the sovereign, but is responsible to the legislature.

After centuries of domination and occupation by foreign powers, the small landlocked Grand Duchy of Luxembourg was recognized as an autonomous, neutral state in 1867. It came under the current ruling house of Nassau-Weilbourg in 1890. It formed an economic union with Belgium in 1922, but retains independent political institutions through its 1868 constitution. After occupation by Germany during both world wars, Luxembourg abandoned its neutrality and became a vocal proponent of European integration.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Luxembourgers can change their government democratically. Voting is compulsory for citizens, and foreigners may register to vote after five years of residence. The prime minister is the leader of the dominant party in the Chamber of Deputies, for which popular elections are held every five years. The Grand Duke appoints the 21 members of the Council of State, which serves as an advisory body to the Chamber.

The independent judiciary is headed by the Superior Court of Justice and includes a Court of Assizes for serious criminal offenses, two district courts and three justices of the peace. Judges are appointed for life by the Grand Duke. In response to a 1995 decision by the European Court of Human Rights, the government passed legislation establishing an administrative court system. The European Court had held that Luxembourg's Council of State could no longer serve as both a legislative advisory body and as an administrative court. This dual role was seen as a violation of the right to a fair trial. The new administrative courts began operations in January.

Luxembourg enjoys a vibrant, free press. All news media are privately owned and free of censorship. While there is no domestic news agency, a number of foreign bureaus operate. Radio and television broadcasts from neighboring countries are available.

Religious freedom is respected in this predominantly Roman Catholic country. There is no state religion, but the state pays the salaries of Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish clergy, and several local governments subsidize sectarian religious facilities.

Although foreigners constitute more than 30 percent of the population, anti-foreigner incidents are infrequent. EU citizens who reside in Luxembourg enjoy the right to vote and run in municipal elections. Minimum residency requirements are six years for voters and 12 years for candidates. Freedom of association is respected, and unions operate without governmental interference. Approximately 65 percent of the labor force is unionized. Workers are organized in two competing labor federations affiliated with the Socialist and Christian Social parties. The right to strike is constitutionally guaranteed.

↓ Macedonia

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Political Rights: 4
Civil Liberties: 3
Economy: Mixed statist
Status: Partly Free
Population: 2,102,000
PPP: \$3,965
Life Expectancy: 71.1
Ethnic Groups: Macedonian (65 percent), Albanian (22 percent), Turk (5 percent), Macedonian Muslim (3 percent), Roma (2 percent), Serb (2 percent)
Capital: Skopje



Trend Arrow: Macedonia receives a downward trend arrow due to the outbreak of ethnic violence.

Overview: In 1997, Macedonia experienced its most serious outbreak of ethnic violence after special anti-terrorist forces removed Albanian flags from city halls in Gostivar and Tetovo. The Gostivar mayor, Rufe Osmani, was ultimately sentenced to 13 years imprisonment for inciting ethnic hatred. The turmoil led the Albanian-dominated Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDPA) to threaten to withdraw from the ruling coalition.

Macedonia was ruled by the Ottoman Turks for 500 years prior to the Balkan Wars in 1912-1913, after which its territory was divided among Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria. After World War II, the communist leader of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz (Tito), launched military campaigns to conquer Greek Macedonian territories. Tito failed and withdrew when the Communists were defeated in the Greek civil war, but he succeeded in fueling Greek distrust of Macedonian loyalty.

Kiro Gligorov, a former Communist leader and head of the Social-Democratic Alliance for Macedonia (SDSM), was appointed interim president in 1992 and directly elected in 1994. The country's first parliamentary elections since indepen-

dence from Yugoslavia, held in October 1994, were marked by fraud and irregularities, and run-offs were boycotted by the VMRO-DPMNE, the free-market nationalist Democratic Party and others. The Alliance, composed of the SDSM, the Liberals, the Socialists and the PDPA won 95 of 120 seats and formed the government from which the liberals resigned in 1996.

In February 1997, ethnic Macedonian students in Skopje, Tetovo and Bitola launched a series of protests to abolish a law permitting Albanian-language instruction at Skopje University's teachers' college. The law was considered a compromise between the demands of Albanians of university-level education in Albanian, and a constitutional provision that guaranteed minority-language teaching only in elementary and secondary school. In June 1996, thousands of Albanians had protested the imprisonment of Fadil Sulejmani, dean of the outlawed Tetovo University, funded privately by ethnic Albanians.

The most serious disturbances occurred in July in Gostivar and Tetovo, when the mayors of these largely Albanian cities flew the Albanian flag, in opposition to a constitutional court ruling, to symbolize discontent over discriminatory employment, housing and education policies. In Gostivar, when troops moved in to remove the flags, several thousand demonstrators confronted riot police. Three young Albanians were killed and several hundred injured. Hundreds more were arrested, including Mayor Osmani.

The Gostivar-Tetovo events weakened a governing coalition hit by scandal over collapsing pyramid schemes. In March, Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski survived a confidence vote over the government's handling of organized crime and financial dealings. The head of the Bitola government financial office was under investigation for allegedly transferring public funds to the TAT savings house, which absconded with \$90 million in deposits from 30,000 savers. The collapse of TAT led to the imprisonment of the deputy central bank governor, Tome Nenovski. In May, the prime minister implemented a far-reaching shake-up of his cabinet in an attempt to rebuild confidence.

Relations with Bulgaria were strained after some Bulgarian newspapers, officials and TV programs questioned the authenticity of the Macedonia nation, language and culture. Although Bulgaria was one of the first countries to recognize Macedonian independence, there are elements in Bulgaria and pro-Bulgarian Macedonians who claim that historically Macedonians are in fact Bulgarians. The mandate of the U.N. Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) was set to expire on November 31. The government, citing instability in Kosovo, asked for an extension of six months that would allow U.N. forces to remain.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Macedonians can change their government democratically, though the October 1994 elections were plagued by irregularities and the run-off was boycotted by several leading opposition groups. The 1996 local elections saw some irregularities and opposition protests, but were called "fair" by international monitors.

Most major newspapers and electronic media are government-controlled or receive some subsidizes. Twenty-nine state-owned radio stations and five state television stations operate in the country. In all, 24 private TV stations and 91 combined radio and television stations share the airwaves, airing mostly top-40 music, video clips and pirated movies, with most operating on shoe-string budgets. News cover-

age is weak. Albanian-language TV is limited to only one hour a day, and the Albanian-language newspaper is distributed only three days a week.

There are some restrictions on freedom of assembly and association. July's ethnic violence in Gostivar led to charges of police brutality. Freedom of religion is respected, and the dominant faiths are Macedonian Orthodox and Muslim (Albanians and Turks).

The judiciary is not free of political or governmental interference. The Republic Court Council proposes judges and prosecutors, but the process is protracted and subject to influences by the legislative and executive branches. In September, Gostivar Mayor Rufi Osmani was sentenced to 13 years imprisonment. The harshness of the sentence raised concerns about the fairness of the trial. Albanians have consistently criticized discrimination in citizenship, government employment, education and underrepresentation in the military and police forces.

The Union of Independent and Autonomous Trade Unions confederation was formed in 1992. The Council of Trade Unions of Macedonia is the successor to the Communist labor federation. There were several strikes in 1997. Locomotive drivers and police staged work stoppages in November. The constitution and laws guarantee men and women equal rights, but women face discrimination in employment and education, particularly in rural and Albanian areas.

↓ Madagascar

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Economy: Mixed statist
Population: 15,236,000
PPP: \$694

Life Expectancy: 57.2

Ethnic Groups: Malayan-Indonesian highlanders, black and mixed coastal peoples, European, Asian and Creole minorities

Capital: Antananarivo

Trend Arrow: Madagascar receives a downward trend arrow due to the indefinite postponement of legislative elections.



Overview:

Legislative polls expected by August 1997 were postponed indefinitely after Madagascar's Supreme Court despite the clear requirement of the country's constitution— approved in July the government's decision to extend until June 1998 the life of the sitting parliament. President Didier Ratsiraka, who won a narrow victory in a second round presidential run-off election in December 1996, called a referendum that in March will decide on broad constitutional changes to create a federal system for the country. Former President Albert Zafy, who was impeached by the Supreme Court in August 1996 and failed to win re-election, is leading a campaign for Ratsiraka's recall, and some political unrest is reported from his home area in the far north of the country. A member of a military junta that seized power in 1972, then-Admiral Ratsiraka emerged

as leader in 1975, keeping power until his authoritarian regime bowed to social unrest and nonviolent mass demonstrations in 1991. His 1996 election campaign claim of a new commitment to democracy now appears increasingly suspect. The country's economy also suffered in 1997 as severe cyclones that wracked the southern provinces were followed by locust swarms devouring food crops. Serious food shortages could increase the misery to the 70 percent of Madagascar's people living in poverty.

The world's fourth largest island, Madagascar lies 220 miles off Africa's southeastern coast. It gained independence in 1960 after seventy years of French colonial rule, which was maintained after World War I through increasingly ferocious repression. The regime of President Philbert Tsiranana was toppled by a military coup in 1972, and a leftist junta took power. Voters approved a new constitution in 1992 and elected Zafy, leader of the Active Forces opposition coalition, to the presidency with over 65 percent of the vote in a February 1993 runoff election. The opposition consolidated this victory four months later by winning seventy of 138 National Assembly seats. Race and ethnicity are important factors in Madagascar's politics. Its 14 million mostly very poor people are divided between Merina people of Malay origin who occupy highland areas and coastal peoples mostly of black African origin.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Madagascar's voters exercised their right to choose their representatives in free and fair legislative elections in 1993 and in open presidential contests in 1992 and 1996. The bicameral parliament consists of a Senate and a National Assembly of directly elected and proportionally representative deputies elected to four-year terms. The Supreme Court's decision to allow an extra-constitutional extension of the current parliament is destabilizing the country's politics and raising fears of a return to electoral manipulation and authoritarianism.

The Supreme Court's decision has damaged the standing of the judiciary, which had begun to operate with little government interference. A lack of training and resources impairs the courts' effectiveness, and magistrates have stage repeated strikes since 1995 to demand judicial reform. Due to court backlogs, a majority of the prison population of over 20,000 inmates are pre-trial detainees who suffer extremely harsh conditions. In many rural areas, traditional *dina* courts that follow neither due process nor standardized judicial practice often hand down a severe brand of justice.

Like all Madagascar's people, women are concentrated in subsistence activities. However, they hold significantly more government and managerial positions than women in continental African countries and account for over 40 percent of the small formal labor force. Yet women still face societal discrimination and have fewer opportunities than men for higher education and official positions.

Freedom of religion is respected, and this year President Ratsiraka ended a long feud with the country's powerful Protestant Church. Over half the population adheres to traditional Malagasy religions and coexists with Christians as well as Muslims. The country's first Islamic political party, the Rally for Madagascar's Muslim Democrats, was registered in September and became the country's 149th political party. The right to free association is respected and hundreds of NGOs are active, including lawyers' groups and others working on human rights issues. A vibrant free press includes several dailies and weekly newspapers that are often highly critical of the government and various politicians. Television is state-controlled and while fa-

voring the government in its reporting presents a wide range of views. At least ten private radio stations are now broadcasting.

Several free labor organizations exist, some with political affiliations. Workers have the right to join unions and to strike, which they do regularly. More than 80 percent of the labor force is employed in agriculture, fishing and forestry at subsistence wages. The state socialism practiced from 1972-1992 severely limited Madagascar's economic growth. A privatization program has stalled, and erratic and questionable financial transactions have hindered growth and slowed international assistance. The per capita income is about \$250.

Malawi

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Political Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 3
Economy: Capitalist
Status: Free
Population: 9,453,000
PPP: \$694
Life Expectancy: 41.1
Ethnic Groups: Chewa, Nyanja, Tumbuku, other Bantu
Capital: Lilongwe



Overview:

Malawi's multi-party democracy was tested by a parliamentary boycott and strikes in 1997 which left President Bakili Muluzi's ruling United Democratic Front (UDF) still in power but threatened by a pending alliance of opposition parties. The government reacted harshly to a six week civil servants' strike that began in early April, using violence to disperse demonstrations and restricting union leaders' public appearances. Fraud charges against former President Hastings Kamuzu Banda were dropped on account of his reported senility, and the government's appeal of his 1996 acquittal on murder charges relating to assassinations of oppositionists during his nearly three decades as Malawi's authoritarian leader was made moot by his death at age 100 on November 25.

Concerns for the long-term stability of Malawi's democratic system center on the three main parties' regional and ethnic bases. President Bakili Muluzi's southern-based UDF party retains a thin parliamentary majority. The northern-based Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) is considering an alliance with the former ruling Malawi Congress Party (MCP), with its strong base in central Malawi. Much more political maneuvering is anticipated before presidential and legislative elections scheduled for 1999. The government's generally good human rights record continues to be marred by reports of police abuses.

For nearly three decades after gaining independence from Britain in 1963, Malawi was ruled by President (later "President-for-Life") Banda. Banda exercised dictatorial and often eccentric rule through the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and its paramilitary youth wing, the Malawi Young Pioneers. Facing a domestic economic crisis and strong international pressure, Banda accepted a referendum approving multi-party rule in June 1993.

Both Banda and the MCP were soundly defeated in presidential and legislative elections in May 1994. Muluzi was victorious with 42 percent of the vote in a free and fair election. Chances for an open contest were helped by the army's disarming of the Young Pioneers in December 1993. As many as 2,000 Banda loyalists fled to neighboring Mozambique. It is believed that former Young Pioneers may be behind the Malawi Movement for the Restoration of Democracy, which the government says is preparing to launch armed actions against the government. In September, U.S. Special Forces arrived in Malawi to train soldiers in peacekeeping operations.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Malawi's people chose their government in free and fair elections for the first time in May 1994 multiparty elections. The president and members of the 177-seat National Assembly won five-year terms. Suffrage was universal for citizens over 18 years old, except for serving members of the military, who were barred from voting to protect the army from politicization. Parliamentary by-elections since 1994 have been marred by vote-buying and other frauds. In 1997 by-elections, the UDF won four of seven seats contested. Several opposition parties exist, but only the MCP with 54 seats and AFORD with 33 seats are represented in parliament. The government has sought to balance cabinet posts and other appointments to prevent perceptions of regional bias.

Malawi's media are generally open and suffer little overt interference. However, the government has on occasion manipulated state broadcasting. The state-owned Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) introduced television for the first time in 1994 but its radio service remains far more important, especially to rural areas with high rates of illiteracy. Malawian journalists have reported pressures not to publish stories critical of the government, which has used libel and other laws to harass journalists. Legislation enacted in 1995 can compel journalists to reveal their sources or face up to two years' imprisonment and \$1,300 in fines. Nonetheless, the private print media remains vigorous and often critical of the government and other politicians.

Free expression and free assembly are generally respected, but police were quick to use force to disperse strikers in April and May. The May 1995 constitution provides strong protection for fundamental freedoms, although critics argued it allows excessive presidential power and does not sufficiently safeguard women's and children's rights. Many non-governmental organizations operate openly and without interference, including groups focusing on human rights and civil liberties. Religious freedom is respected, and the Muslim minority of about 12 percent suffers no discrimination.

There are no reported political prisoners or detainees in Malawi. Police brutality is still common according to local observers. The government has thus far taken few steps in response to human rights groups' suggestions on improving prison conditions that are described as life-threatening.

The courts have shown independence from the current government in several rulings that favored ex-dictator Banda and in a current controversy over whether parliamentarians can also serve as cabinet ministers. Due process is not always respected, largely because the overburdened judicial system lacks resources and training. Many criminal suspects spend years in pre-trial detention, but new efforts are being made to clear the backlog of High Court cases.

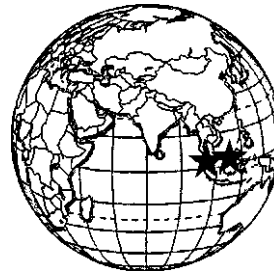
Traditional practices maintain de facto discrimination against women in educational, employment and business opportunities despite equal protection of the law under the 1995 constitution. Few women sit in parliament. Customary practices in rural areas deny women inheritance and property rights, and violence against women is described as routine.

The right to form unions is constitutionally-guaranteed. Registration requirements have not been used to bar unions since the end of the Banda regime. The right to strike is legally-protected, with notice and mediation requirements for workers in essential services. Collective bargaining is widely practiced but not specifically protected by law.

Economic liberalization has continued with the sell-off of government sugar holdings and plans to privatize the state airline. Strong economic growth may be hit by crop failures that will create demands for renewed food imports.

Malaysia

Polity: Dominant party **Political Rights:** 4
Economy: Capitalist **Civil Liberties:** 5
Population: 20,581,000 **Status:** Partly Free
PPP: \$8,865
Life Expectancy: 71.2
Ethnic Groups: Malay (46 percent), other indigenous (9 percent), Chinese (32 percent), Indian (13 percent)
Capital: Kuala Lumpur



Overview:

In 1997 a financial crisis, and predictions of slower economic growth and higher unemployment tested the leadership of longtime Malaysian premier Mahathir Mohamad and belied his claims of the superiority of authoritarian capitalism.

Malaysia was established in 1963 through a merger of independent, ex-British Malaya with the then-British colonies of Sarawak, Sabah and Singapore. (Singapore withdrew in 1965). The constitution provides for a 192-seat House of Representatives, which has functioned since before independence and is directly-elected for a five-year term, and a 58-member Senate. Executive power is vested in the prime minister and cabinet. The King, as head of state, can delay legislation for thirty days.

The 14-party, ruling National Front coalition has captured at least a two-thirds majority in the lower house in nine straight general elections since 1957. The Front is dominated by the conservative, Malay-based United Malays National Organization (UMNO). Although the government has gained considerable legitimacy by presiding over a rapidly expanding economy, it continues to use security laws to limit peaceful dissent.

Mounting Malay frustration over the economic success of the Chinese minority exploded into anti-Chinese rioting in 1969. In 1971 the government responded with still-existing quotas for Malays in education, the civil service and business affairs.

The current premier, Mahathir Mohamad, took office in 1981 and has since consolidated executive authority and largely rejected the notion of a loyal opposition. In

1988, following internal UMNO disputes, dissidents formed *Semangat '46* (Spirit of '46, the year UMNO was founded in Malaya). In 1989 *Semangat '46* joined the country's first Malay-led opposition coalition, but it failed to unseat the Front in the 1990 national elections.

In the April 1995 parliamentary elections the National Front took 162 seats; the remainder went to four opposition parties including *Semangat '46*. In 1996 *Semangat '46* members, frustrated with being in opposition, folded the party into UMNO.

In 1997 free expression continued to come under attack, with the April conviction of an opposition MP on sedition and libel charges, and the September sentencing of an expatriate journalist to prison on contempt charges (see below).

Excessive bank lending and a high current account deficit contributed to the Malaysian *ringgit's* 40 percent plunge in value between July and early December, contributing to a parallel stock slide. Mahathir's erratic response to the crisis, which included anti-foreigner and anti-Semitic harangues and a threat to restrict currency dealing, created dissent within the government and boosted the standing of his likely successor, Anwar Ibrahim, the deputy premier and finance minister. In November Mahathir floated plans for an economic council with emergency powers that could overrule the cabinet, although it had not been established by year's end. In December the government announced an austerity plan that somewhat steadied the markets.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Malaysians have a limited ability to change their government through elections. The government exercises significant control over the media, uses numerous security laws to restrict freedoms of expression and association and chill political activity and dissuades foreign investment and reduces development funds to opposition-held states. Nevertheless, Pas, an Islamic opposition party, has controlled Kelantan state since 1990 and won a key January 1997 by-election. The Mahathir government has made legitimate efforts to curb corruption and money politics.

The judiciary is subject to government influence in sensitive political and commercial cases. Mahathir, as home affairs minister, controls all important judicial appointments.

Ulama (religious scholars) control Islamic matters in each of the 13 states and administer *Shari'a* (Islamic law) courts, which are subordinate to secular civil and criminal courts. Mahathir's advocacy of a progressive practice of Islam, criticism of the *ulama* and the *shari'a* courts for discriminating against women and support for unifying the state Islamic laws under a federal system has created a conservative backlash. In July religious authorities in Selangor arrested three Malay women who took part in a beauty contest and a *shari'a* court fined them for indecent dressing. A hearing on charges of violating Selangor state's decree banning Muslims from participating in beauty contests is scheduled for February 1998. In August Sarawak religious authorities joined Kelantan in barring Muslim participation in bodybuilding contests.

The government detains former Communists, religious extremists and others under the broadly-drawn 1960 Internal Security Act and the 1969 Emergency Ordinance, both of which permit detention of suspects for up to two years. In February the government released the last 14 out of 18 former leaders of the messianic Islamic al-Arqam sect who were arrested in 1996, two years after the sect was banned.

The 1970 Sedition Act Amendments prohibit discussion of the privileges granted to Malays and other sensitive issues. A 1987 amendment to the 1984 Printing Presses and Publications Act (PPPA) bars the publication of "malicious" news, expands the government's power to ban or restrict publications and prohibits publications from challenging such actions in court. The government occasionally uses these powers to shut down newspapers, and journalists practice self-censorship. In April the High Court fined MP Lim Guan Eng under the PPPA for printing false news in a 1995 campaign pamphlet, and under the Sedition Act for criticizing the Attorney General's handling of rape charges involving a former chief minister. On September 4 a judge sentenced a Canadian correspondent for the *Far Eastern Economic Review* to three months in jail for contempt of the judiciary. In an article on growing litigiousness in Malaysia, the journalist had mentioned the complainant's lawsuit and noted that her husband was a judge and that the suit was acted on quickly. The conviction is being appealed.

The broadcast media and the major newspapers are all owned by individuals and companies close to the ruling National Front, and the opposition receives little coverage. In 1997 the government reportedly warned newspapers against printing particularly negative economic news.

The 1967 Police Act requires permits for all public assemblies. Since 1969 political rallies have been banned, although indoor "discussion sessions" are permitted. Under the 1966 Societies Act any association (including political parties) of more than six members must register with the government, and the authorities have deregistered some opposition organizations. The independent National Human Rights Association and several smaller groups function with some harassment.

Conditions in detention centers for illegal immigrants are grim, and detainees have died in at least one detention center near Kuala Lumpur.

Official policy discriminates against Chinese, Indians and other minorities in education, employment and business affairs. Some 60 percent of Malaysians are Muslims, and Islam is the official religion, although non-Muslims worship freely in this secular country.

There are considerable restrictions on trade union association and the right to strike. Each union and labor federation can only represent one trade, and in the export-oriented electronics industry the government permits only "in-house" unions rather than a nationwide union. The government must certify, and can deregister, all unions.

Maldives

Polity: Nonparty, presidential-legislative (elite-clan dominated) **Political Rights:** 6
Civil Liberties: 6

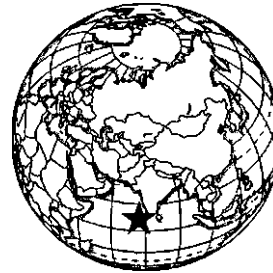
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 270,000

PPP: \$2,200

Life Expectancy: 62.8

Ethnic Groups: Mixed Sinhalese, Dravidian, Arab, and black

Capital: Male



Overview:

The Maldives, a 500-mile string of 26 atolls in the Indian Ocean, achieved independence from British sovereignty in 1965. A 1968 referendum ended the ad-Din sultanate's 815-year rule and established a republic. The 1968 constitution provides for a *majlis* (parliament) with forty seats directly elected for a five year term, along with eight members appointed by the president. In recent years the *majlis* has rejected some government legislation, but it is still heavily influenced by the president. Every five years the *majlis* chooses a sole presidential candidate who is voted on by citizens in a yes-or-no referendum. The constitution bars individuals from campaigning for the parliamentary presidential nomination. The president, who must be a male Sunni Muslim, holds broad executive powers.

There have been several coup attempts since independence. Most recently, in 1988 President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom called in Indian commandos to crush a coup attempt by a disgruntled businessman reportedly backed by Sri Lankan mercenaries. In the aftermath, the autocratic Gayoom strengthened the National Security Service and named several relatives to top government posts. In early 1990 there was a brief period of press freedom as the Maldives prepared to host the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation summit. By June authorities had banned outspoken publications, and several journalists were arrested.

Gayoom won the August 1993 parliamentary nomination for the presidential referendum, despite considerable support for Iliyas Ibrahim, a minister who later fled the country after the government investigated him for corruption. In October Gayoom won a fifth term.

A court subsequently convicted Iliyas *in absentia* of having actively campaigned for the parliamentary presidential nomination. Gayoom allowed 229 independent candidates to contest the December 1994 *majlis* elections, although the government heavily restricted campaigning and detained five candidates during the campaign.

In 1996 Gayoom allowed Iliyas to return to the country under house arrest, and in 1997 the president freed his adversary. In November parliament approved a new constitution. According to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, the revised charter would allow rival candidates to compete for parliament's nomination for the presidency, probably indicating that Gayoom is confident of being approved for a fifth five-year term.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Maldivians cannot change their government democratically. A small hereditary elite, headed by President Gayoom, holds power. Despite having limited power, in recent years the majlis has become a forum for critical debate. Political parties are not expressly banned, but are discouraged by the government, and none exists.

The judiciary is not independent. The president appoints and can remove judges, although this latter power is rarely exercised, and can review High Court decisions. The legal system, based on both *Shari'a* (Islamic law) and civil law, does not always provide adequate due process protection. Persons suspected of terrorism, sedition or drug offenses can be detained indefinitely without trial.

The Penal Code prohibits speech or actions that could "arouse people against the government," although a 1990 amendment decriminalized factual newspaper reports about government errors. A 1968 law prohibits speech considered inimical to Islam, a threat to national security or libelous. In 1994 a Maldivian was sentenced under this law to six months in prison for making false statements about the government.

The strict 1990 Prevention of Terrorism Act can be applied retroactively and was used to imprison several journalists arrested in late 1990. By late 1993 all had been released. Journalist Mohamed Nasheed spent nearly nine months in prison and house arrest on defamation charges over a 1994 article criticizing election procedures before being pardoned in early 1997.

The government can shut newspapers and sanction journalists for articles allegedly containing unfounded criticism. Regulations make editors responsible for the content of published material. Two outspoken publications, *Sangu* and *Hukuru*, that had their licenses revoked in 1990, remain closed. Journalists practice self-censorship, although the mainly private press carries some criticism of the government. The government-owned Voice of the Maldives radio and a small state-run television service carry some pluralistic views.

The government restricts political gatherings during campaigns to small meetings on private premises. Civic associations are permitted, although there are no local human rights groups and civil society is underdeveloped. Traditional norms generally relegate women to subservient roles, although many women are employed by the government. Unlike many Islamic countries, women have the same rights of divorce as men, although inheritance laws favor men.

Islam is the state religion, and all citizens must be Muslims. The government is concerned that the puritanical Wahhabi sect of Islam is gaining adherents on the atolls. Practice of other religions is prohibited, although private worship by non-Muslims is tolerated. There are no legal rights to form trade unions, stage strikes and bargain collectively, and in practice there is no organized labor activity.

Mali

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy

Political Rights: 3*

Civil Liberties: 3*

Economy: Mixed statist

Population: 9,653,000

PPP: \$543

Life Expectancy: 46.6

Ethnic Groups: Mande (Bambara, Malinke, Sara Kole)

(50 percent), Peul (17 percent), Voltaic (12 percent),

Songhai (6 percent), Tuareg and Moor (10 percent), others

Capital: Bamako

Ratings Change: Mali's political rights and civil liberties ratings changed from 1/2 to 3/3 due to badly-run elections and measures against the media and political parties.



Overview:

President Alpha Oumar Konaré and his ruling Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA) party were both returned to power for renewed five year terms in elections largely boycotted by opposition parties and marked by very low voter turnout. The poorly administered and sometimes chaotic polls were denounced by oppositionists as rigged, and the first round in April was voided by the Constitutional Court, although international observers saw incompetence rather than fraud as the preponderant problem. Many analysts believe President Konaré and ADEMA, running on a record of tolerance, peacemaking and economic growth, could have won handily in well-run and fully competitive polls against a fractious opposition. The electoral debacle damaged President Konaré's credibility and raised questions regarding the stability of Mali's transition to an open society. The government took harsh measures against demonstrators and detained opposition leaders after outbreaks of violence, and the independent media began to fear a contraction of its freedom. The trends are especially worrying in a country held by many observers as one of the most successful examples of African democratization.

Mali was ruled by military or one-party dictators for over three decades after achieving independence from France in 1960. In March 1991, after soldiers suppressing demonstrations demanding a multiparty system killed over 100 protesters, President Moussa Traoré was overthrown by his own military. A national conference followed the coup, and open elections rated free and fair by most observers won Alpha Oumar Konaré the presidency in April 1992. Democratic consolidation with increasing respect for fundamental freedoms has followed, although the disputed 1997 elections and civil unrest around them are clouding the favorable trend. And despite steady economic growth, the country remains desperately poor, and hundreds of thousands of Malians are economic migrants across Africa and Europe.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Mali's people first chose their government freely and fairly in presidential and legislative elections in 1992 after a transition from over three decades of authoritarian rule. May 1997 voting that drew little more than a quarter of registered voters saw President Konaré returned to office with almost 85 percent of the votes cast against a weak

candidate who alone broke an opposition boycott of the presidential contest. Oppositionists claimed that the Independent National Election Commission was so only in name. The first round of legislative voting on April 13 was voided by the Constitutional Court after massive confusion and reported irregularities. The rescheduled voting took place in two rounds on July 20 and August 3 and produced a sweeping ADEMA victory in the face of a partial boycott. ADEMA took 127 of 147 national assembly seats, and five opposition parties shared the remaining 18 seats. President Konare has formed a broad-based government that includes four opposition members and four representatives of civil society in a 22-member cabinet.

The government used force against political rallies several times in 1997, and radical opposition activists also resorted to violence. The detention for over two months of ten top opposition leaders after a policeman was murdered at an August political rally cast a shadow over Mali's politics. Oppositionists jailed included umbrella opposition leader Almamy Sylla of the Rally for Democracy and Progress party (RDP) and Mohamed Lamine, former interior minister and head of the Movement for Independence, Renewal and African Integration party (MIRIA). Since the end to military rule, domestic debate has open and extensive. Almost 50 political parties are officially registered and many offer scathing criticism of government policies.

Human rights abuses are much fewer since a 1995 agreement ended a brutal multi-sided conflict among Tuareg guerrillas, black ethnic militias and government troops that raged for five years across the vast deserts of northern Mali. More former guerrilla fighters were integrated into the national army, but efforts at long-term accommodation of the Arab Tuareg people in the increasingly open and democratic system dominated by the country's black African majority may prove difficult. The peace pact provides for development assistance and local autonomy, and three languages spoken by Tuareg people have received recognition as national languages and will be used in local schools in Tuareg areas. Disputes over land tenure and water rights must be handled delicately to avoid a revival of conflict.

A variety of independent newspapers and radio and television stations operate freely, and the media are one Africa's most open. Even state-run television, radio and print media offer a diversity of views. This record is now in jeopardy as broadcasts by the independent radio station *Kayira* have been jammed and its facilities sabotaged. In August, 15 journalists attending an opposition press conference were seized by security forces and some badly beaten before being released several hours later. There are about 60 independent radio stations throughout Mali, including community stations broadcasting in regional languages, especially important for a largely rural country, 75 percent of whose ten million people are illiterate. Legislation enacted in 1993 provides harsh penalties for slander or "public injury" to officials, and is a potentially serious but so far little used threat to press freedom.

Labor unions played a leading role in the pro-democracy movement and remain politically active. Mali is predominantly Muslim, but minority and religious rights are protected by law. Women's rights are yet to be implemented in practice, especially in rural areas. The government has undertaken an educational campaign to reduce female genital mutilation, but there is no law against it.

Mali is desperately poor. An often corrupt bureaucracy stifles economic development and opportunity. Foreign aid makes up about a fifth of the national budget. Economic liberalization and privatization are proceeding. A sharp rise in cotton pro-

duction and gold mining is boosting export earnings. Local crop yields are rising faster than the population.

Malta

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Economy: Mixed capitalist-statist

Status: Free

Population: 374,000

PPP: \$13,009

Life Expectancy: 76.4

Ethnic Groups: Maltese (mixed Arab, Sicilian, Norman, Spanish, Italian, and English)

Capital: Valletta



Overview:

Prime Minister Alfred Sant's Labor Party has a one-seat majority in parliament. Labor's victory in the country's October, 1996, general elections was considered an upset. Immediately after taking office, Sant froze Malta's application for membership in the European Union (EU). The country, he said, would instead seek to expand its current association agreement to formulate an industrial free trade treaty and provide for special political, economic and social cooperation.

Historically, the strategically-located island of Malta was occupied by a long succession of foreign powers. It became independent within the British Commonwealth in 1964. In 1974, it became a republic within the Commonwealth. Under its constitution, Malta is a neutral and non-aligned nation.

When the Labor Party government ended Malta's defense agreement with Britain in 1979, the country lost its British military installations and accompanying expenditures. The government then turned to Libyan leader Mu'ammr al-Qadhafi, who promised financial support. Italy later pledged to protect Malta's neutrality and to provide loans and subsidies. Both agreements had lapsed by 1987. Political and economic cooperation with Libya was reaffirmed in 1988. Parliamentary leadership has alternated between the two main parties, the Malta Labor Party and the Nationalist Party. The constitution was amended in 1987 to allow the award of extra seats so that the party with a majority of the popular vote could secure a legislative majority in the House of Representatives.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Malta can change their government democratically. Members of the House of Representatives, the country's unicameral legislature, are elected on the basis of proportional representation every five years. Parliament elects the country's president to a five-year term. Although the post is largely ceremonial, the president is charged with appointing a prime minister and the cabinet from the parliament.

The judiciary is independent of the executive and legislative branches. The Chief Justice and nine judges are appointed by the president on the advice of the prime

minister. The constitution requires a fair public trial. Defendants have the right to counsel of their choice. If they cannot pay, they are provided with court-appointed counsel at public expense.

Since 1992, the government has sponsored programs to diversify the media. In addition to several Maltese newspapers, two English-language weeklies are published. Television and radio include both public and private domestic broadcasts. Italian television and international radio broadcasts are also popular. The only limit of freedom of speech and the press is a 1987 law prohibiting foreign involvement in Maltese election campaigns.

Roman Catholicism is the state religion, and an estimated 67 percent of the population attends mass at least once a week. Freedom of worship for religious minorities is respected. All groups enjoy freedom of association. There are independent labor unions as well as a federation, the General Union of Workers.

A constitutional amendment banning gender discrimination took effect in July, 1993. Divorce is not permitted, but Prime Minister Sant has labeled it a "social issue" and proposed its legalization.

Marshall Islands

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist-statist
Population: 58,000
PPP: na
Life Expectancy: na
Ethnic Groups: Marshallese (Micronesian)
Capital: Majuro

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Overview: The Marshalls, consisting of 33 Micronesian islands in the Pacific Ocean, came under German control in 1885. Japan seized the islands in 1920, governing them under a League of Nations mandate until the United States Navy occupied them in 1945. The U.S. administered the islands under a United Nations trusteeship after 1947.

The 1979 constitution provides for a bicameral parliament with a 33-seat Nitijela (House of Representatives) that is directly elected for a four-year term. The lower house chooses a president, who holds executive powers as head of state and head of government, from among its members. The upper Iroji (Council of Chiefs) has twelve traditional leaders who offer advice on customary law.

In 1979 parliament elected Amata Kabua as the country's first president. In 1983 the Marshall Islands signed a Compact of Free Association with the United States, which entered into force in 1986. Under the Compact the country is fully sovereign, but defense remains the responsibility of the United States until at least 2001.

In the early years of the Compact, the country enjoyed a steady supply of American-led foreign aid and the government spent beyond its means. Although the service

sector expanded, many government investments failed, there was little development in productive industry, and the country was left saddled with foreign debt.

At the 1991 balloting for parliament a newly-formed, informal Our Islands party, chaired by Kabua, defeated a Democratic Party headed by Tony DeBrum, a former Kabua associate. These ad hoc parties dissolved and in the 1995 parliamentary elections parties did not play a role. In January 1996 parliament re-elected Kabua to fifth four-year term.

As the Compact's expiration in 2001 drew closer, the government focused on steps to secure future development aid. In 1995 the government initiated an austerity program designed by the Asian Development Bank that included budget cuts and civil service layoffs.

Kabua's death in December 1996 left the country bereft of leadership. The president had owed his longevity to personal loyalties within parliament and a limited pool of viable alternative candidates. On January 14, 1997, parliament elected Imata Kabua, a long-time senator and a cousin of the late president, to fulfill the remainder of the term. The Fiji-based *Pacific Islands Monthly* noted that under the constitution, the speaker of the senate should have become acting president.

The previous government had proposed to rent remote, uninhabited islands to foreign countries as nuclear waste dumps. The proposal attracted strong criticism, particularly after data released in 1994 indicated that the extent of the radioactive fallout from the U.S. atomic testing program over the islands in the 1940s and 1950s was greater than previously disclosed. The proposal is on hold pending an environmental impact study. A more immediate concern is revitalizing the tourism and fisheries industries.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of the Marshall Islands can change their government democratically.

The judiciary is independent, and the rule of law is well established. There are two regularly-published private newspapers, which carry diverse views and criticize the government. Journalists occasionally practice self-censorship on sensitive political issues. The official Marshall Islands Gazette monthly contains general notices and avoids political coverage. Three of the four radio stations are privately owned, and all stations offer pluralistic views. Opposition members of parliament own the local cable television station.

Freedom of assembly is respected in practice. Civil society is underdeveloped, although several women's groups, including the Women United Together for the Marshall Islands coalition, conduct civic education and advocacy programs. Inheritance of property and traditional rank is matrilineal, and in most matters women hold a social status equal to men. However, women are underrepresented in politics and government.

There are no restrictions on religious observance in this predominantly Christian country. Freedom of internal movement is unrestricted except on Kwajalein Atoll, the site of a major U.S. military installation.

The government broadly interprets constitutional guarantees of free association to extend to trade unions, although in practice none have formed. There is no formal right to strike or engage in collective bargaining, although in practice there are no restraints on such activity.

Mauritania

Polity: Dominant party (military-dominated)
Economy: Capitalist-statist

Political Rights: 6
Civil Liberties: 6
Status: Not Free

Population: 2,333,000

PPP: \$1,593

Life Expectancy: 52.1

Ethnic Groups: Black Maur (40 percent), white Maur (30 percent), Tukulor, Hal-Pulaar, Soninke, Wolof, others

Capital: Nouakchott



Overview:

President Maaouya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya was elected to another six-year term in December. Most opposition parties boycotted the polls, objecting to the absence of an independent election commission, state control of broadcasts, harassment of independent print media and the incumbent's use of state resources to promote his candidacy. Flawed October 1996 legislative elections resulted in the military-backed ruling Social Democratic Republican Party (PRDS) taking all but one of 79 National Assembly seats against a divided opposition. Still, Mauritania's narrowly-based authoritarian regime has gradually liberalized since 1992. Political activity, open discussion and criticism of the government are increasingly tolerated, although not to the point that it can challenge President Taya's power. Press censorship is practiced. Discrimination against the country's black African minority, and vestiges of traditional slavery, affects between a quarter and a third of the population.

Mauritania's borders as an independent state were formalized in 1960 after nearly six decades of French colonial rule. Among its 2.2 million people are the white Maurs of Arab extraction, Arabic-speaking Muslim black Maurs and black Africans who inhabit the Senegal River valley in the south and comprise about one-third of the population. Mauritania's politics have long revolved around racial and ethnic rivalries. For centuries, black Africans were taken as slaves by both white and black Maurs. Slavery has been officially outlawed several times, but remnants of servitude linger and credible allegations of actual chattel slavery persist. In 1989-90, about 70,000 black Mauritians fled into exile in Senegal and Mali as Arab militia and soldiers drove them from their lands. Several thousand blacks detained during this period were brutally treated, and as many as 600 may have been executed, crimes which have never been prosecuted.

A 1978 military coup ended a civilian one-party state. The military burden of enforcing Mauritania's decision to share in Morocco's seizure of the Spanish Sahara (now known as Western Sahara) hastened economic decline and helped prompt the coup. The new junta renounced Mauritania's claim and pulled out of Western Sahara. An internal purge installed Colonel Maaouya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya as junta chairman in 1984. In January 1992, Taya was declared winner of a six-year presidential term in the country's first, and deeply-flawed, multiparty election. The main opposition parties boycotted National Assembly elections two months later, and the ruling

PRDS swept into power, maintaining a de facto one-party state.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Mauritians have never been able to exercise their right to choose their representatives or change their government in open, competitive elections. The country's 1991 French-style constitution provides for democratic rule that has not been respected in reality. Neither President Taya's December re-election nor the 1996 parliamentary polls could be deemed free and fair. In the October 1996 national assembly elections the Action for Change party took one seat, won by an ex-slave in what appears was a cosmetic concession by the ruling party. The Front of Opposition Parties, an umbrella coalition, boycotted the second round of the 1996 legislative polls as well as December's presidential contest, saying fraud made participation futile and would only lend credibility to the government.

The state monopolizes broadcast media and owns the only two daily newspapers. All publications must be officially registered. Pre-publication censorship, arrests of journalists and seizure and bannings of newspapers devalue constitutional guarantees of free expression. State media rarely offer opposition viewpoints, and some items are taboo, such as allegations of continued slavery or reports criticizing Islam. Punishable offenses include insulting the president and "promoting national disharmony. Private newspapers, some affiliated with various political parties, are often openly critical of the government, and sometimes suffer for that openness. Soldiers ejected journalists from independent newspapers from a September press conference given by Taya and visiting French President Jacques Chirac, and in October the weekly *Mauritanie Nouvelle* newspaper was banned for three months, its third closure since 1992.

Dozens of political activists were detained incommunicado for periods of a day to several weeks during the year, although most were released without charges. Prison conditions for those not released and convicted criminals are reportedly severe. Over 230 university students and teachers were detained for almost two months after police broke up a student strike. A number of teachers' union leaders were banished from the capital, Nouakchott, for six months after issuing a strike notice in March. In September, at least 20 senior government officials were dismissed for alleged membership in a banned political group.

For most of the more than 20 political parties and numerous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), government registration requirements have been only a formality. Some black African activist groups and Islamist parties, including the Oumma party, are banned. Several human rights-oriented NGOs including the Mauritanian Human Rights Association (AMDH) and the anti-slavery groups "SOS-Esclaves" and the "National Committee for the Eradication of the Vestiges of Slavery in Mauritania," operated openly despite not being registered. However, the government posted soldiers to block NGOs from participating in the April meeting of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights held in Nouakchott. There are reports that black Africans are barred from holding meetings or harassed when they attempt to do so without permission. The banned El Hor (Free Man) Movement has fought for black rights and is seeking to transform itself into a political party. Widespread discrimination against blacks continues, and despite the end to legal slavery, up to 100,000 blacks still live in conditions of servitude. In October 1996 the U.S. Con-

gress suspended all non-humanitarian aid to Mauritania until anti-slavery laws are properly enforced. Tens of thousands of black Wolof and Peul peoples who fled the 1989-90 ethnic cleansing remain in refugee camps in Senegal. Black resistance groups based there, including the Mauritanian Forces of African Liberation (FLAM) and the United Front for Armed Resistance in Mauritania (FURAM) still call for armed struggle.

Freedom of religion is not recognized, but the right to worship is generally tolerated. Mauritania is an Islamic state, and by statute all Mauritians are Sunni Muslims who may not possess other religious texts or enter non-Muslim households. Non-Mauritanian Shifa Muslims and Christians are allowed to worship privately, and some churches operate openly.

Mauritania's judicial system is heavily influenced by the government. Many decisions are shaped by Shari'a law, especially regarding family and civil matters. A woman's testimony is weighted as only half that of a man's. A number of legal protections regarding property and pay equality are usually respected only in urban areas among the educated elite. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is widely practiced.

Mauritania faces severe development challenges in its vast and mostly arid territory. Fish and iron ore are its principal exports. The country's foreign debt is virtually unpayable. Nearly all the wage-earners are unionized, but only about a quarter of Mauritania's workers are in the formal sector. The government allied Union of Mauritanian Workers (UTM) lost its monopoly on trade union activities under the new 1993 Labor Code, but remains the dominant labor organization. A new independent confederation, the General Confederation of Mauritanian Workers (CGTM), is registered. The government has taken a hard line on union activities, breaking up strikes and detaining or banning union activists from the capital.

Mauritius

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Capitalist

Population: 1,129,000

PPP: \$13,172

Life Expectancy: 70.7

Ethnic Groups: Indo-Mauritian (68 percent), Creole (27 percent), Sino-Mauritian, and Franco-Mauritian

Capital: Port Louis

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Overview:

Mauritius experienced a year of intense political maneuvering as a June split in the ruling coalition undercut the commanding position of Prime Minister Navin Ramgoola's Labour Party (LP) which is still dominant in parliament. The country's other political parties scrambled to forge new alliances. The Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM), which had joined the LP in a sweeping election victory in December 1995, resigned from the government in June after mounting acrimony between its chief, Deputy Prime

Minister Paul Berenger, and Prime Minister Ramgoola over charges of inefficiency and corruption and unpopular tax increase proposals. The Mauritian Socialist Movement (MSM), thoroughly defeated in the 1995 legislative polls, has rebounded and could form an alliance with either the LP or MMM. A major obstacle could be the desire of MSM leader, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, to return to the prime ministerial office that he long occupied. None of the established parties fared well in August village council contests marked by low voter turnout. The political infighting highlights the fact that Mauritius has achieved a stable democratic order. Political competition is about maintaining ethnic balance and economic growth rather than achieving dominance for any single group.

The island's flourishing economy continued to expand, although political uncertainty may be slowing growth that has averaged about six percent since 1970. Mauritius is often cited as one of post-colonial Africa's few success stories, although its Indian Ocean location and largely non-ethnic African population separate it from the continental mainstream. The Mauritian standard of living has improved markedly, and the island's infrastructure has been overhauled since the mid-1980s. The country boasts fast-rising per capita income and low unemployment. Its well integrated multinational population, stability and preferential European and U.S. market access for its sugar and garment exports all have attracted foreign investment. Development has its costs, however; nearly all the country's native forest and fauna have been destroyed, and its Creole culture is disappearing.

Mauritius had no indigenous people and its ethnically mixed population is mostly descended from immigrants from the Indian sub-continent brought to the island as laborers during 360 years of Dutch, French and then British colonial administration. Mauritius has maintained one of the developing world's most successful democracies since gaining independence from Britain in 1968. The island became a republic within the British Commonwealth in 1993, with a largely ceremonial president as head of state.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: For three decades since independence, Mauritians have regularly chosen their representatives in free, fair and competitive elections. Decentralized structures govern its island dependencies, the largest of which, Rodrigues Island, has its own government and local councils as well as two elected deputies in the National Assembly, who are currently members of the government. The National Assembly consists of a speaker, sixty-two directly elected members and the attorney general, if he is not already an elected member. As many as eight "best loser" seats may also be awarded according to party or ethnic underrepresentation, although only four are currently assigned. The independent judiciary is headed by a Supreme Court, and the legal system is based on both French and British traditions.

Civil rights are respected, although instances of excessive use of force by police are reported. Freedom of religion is respected and both domestic and international travel are unrestricted. There are no known political prisoners and no reports of political or extrajudicial killings.

Freedom of expression and of the press is constitutionally-protected. Numerous private daily and weekly publications are often highly critical of both government and opposition politicians and their policies. However, all broadcast media are state-

owned and usually reflect government viewpoints. Media groups protested the brief September detention of a journalist accused of receiving stolen documents. Freedoms of assembly and association are respected, although police occasionally refuse to issue permits for demonstrations. Numerous non-governmental organizations operate, and there are nine labor federations comprising 300 unions.

Women occupy a subordinate role in society and make up only about one-fifth of the paid labor force. The government has attempted to improve the status of women by removing legal barriers to advancement, but no laws exist mandating equal pay for equal work or prohibiting sexual harassment in the workplace. Women are underrepresented at the national university. Governmental and nongovernmental agencies have mounted educational campaign in efforts to reduce widespread domestic violence and begun assistance programs for abuse victims.

Constitutional prohibitions of discrimination on the basis of race or religion are generally respected, but tensions between the Hindu majority and Muslim and Creole minorities persist and mark one of the country's only potential political flashpoints. Efforts to improve the island's infrastructure and draw more investment into higher technology industries are aimed at continuing the economic growth that is clearly a key to the country's political success.

Mexico

Polity: Dominant party
Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 94,843,000

PPP: \$7,384

Life Expectancy: 72.0

Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (70 percent), Indian (20 percent), European (9 percent), others

Capital: Mexico City

Ratings Change: Mexico's political rights and civil liberties changed from 4/3 to 3/4 due to significant opposition gains and a more equal balance of power.

Political Rights: 3*
Civil Liberties: 4*
Status: Partly Free



Overview:

In 1997, President Ernesto Zedillo's efforts to reform the Mexican political system and improve civil liberties resembled the free-market economic restructuring undertaken by his discredited predecessor, Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

Under Zedillo, as under Salinas, that part of Mexico which considers itself modern did well. Generally free elections, unheard of just a decade ago, were held, with minimal violence and fraud. The political opposition was able to wrest significant national legislative, state and local power from the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Zedillo spoke strongly about the need for change.

But there is another Mexico, a country in which 10 million people speak Indian languages as their first tongue and where poverty, urban and rural, is rampant. In this "other Mexico" that Salinas and Zedillo prefer not to acknowledge, crime and corruption are endemic, civil liberties are not respected and public safety is precariously

maintained by soldiers rather than policemen.

It was in this "other Mexico" that, just three days before Christmas, 45 Indians were brutally murdered by local PRI paramilitaries acting in concert with state security forces.

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). Each state has elected governors and legislatures. The president is elected to a six-year term. A bicameral Congress consists of a 128-member Senate elected for six years with at least one minority senator from each state, and a 500-member Chamber of Deputies elected for three years—300 directly and 200 through proportional representation.

Since its founding in 1929, the PRI has historically dominated the country by means of its corporatist, authoritarian structure maintained through co-optation, patronage, corruption and repression. The formal business of government has taken place mostly in secret and with little legal foundation.

Salinas de Gortari won the 1988 presidential elections through massive and systematic fraud. Most Mexicans believe Salinas actually lost to Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, who headed a coalition of leftist parties that later became the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD).

Under Salinas, corruption reached unparalleled proportions. The wife of his brother, Raul, was detained by Swiss officials in connection with drug trafficking and money laundering after she and her brother attempted to withdraw \$84 million from Swiss bank accounts.

Salinas conceded a few gubernatorial election victories to the right-wing National Action Party (PAN), which had supported his economic policies. In return PAN dropped its demands for political reform and abandoned plans to establish a pro-democracy coalition with the PRD.

Until the outbreak of the Marxist-led Zapatista rebellion in the southern state of Chiapas on New Year's Day 1994, it was assumed that Salinas' handpicked successor, Luis Donaldo Colosio, would defeat Cardenas and PAN congressman Diego Fernandez de Cevallos in the 1994 presidential election. The Zapatistas' demands for democracy and clean elections resonated throughout Mexico. Colosio, who infuriated PRI hardliners by advocating greater democratization, was assassinated on March 23, 1994. As theories abounded about whether PRI hardliners or drug traffickers were responsible, Salinas substituted Zedillo, a 42-year-old U.S.-trained economist with little political experience.

PRI hardliners put aside their animosity for the party technocrats and placed the government machinery—the enormous resources of the state as well as the broadcast media—firmly behind Zedillo.

On August 21, 1994, Zedillo won with nearly 50 percent of the valid vote. The PRI won 95 Senate seats, the PAN 25 and the PRD eight. In the Chamber, the PRI won 300 seats, the PAN 118 and the PRD 70. Both opposition parties disputed the elections' legitimacy. Only PRI legislators in the Chamber voted to affirm the results. Francisco Ruiz Massieu, the reform-minded PRI secretary general who was known to have had several major business disputes with his former brother-in-law, Raul Salinas, was assassinated on September 28, 1994, his murder evidently ordered from

somewhere within the PRI.

Weeks after Zedillo took office on December 1, 1994, the Mexican peso collapsed, and the economy fell into a deep, year-long recession. In early 1995, the now-reviled Salinas went into self-imposed exile and Raul Salinas was accused of involvement in the Ruiz Massieu murder (although two years later evidence was unearthed showing he had been framed by an ambitious federal prosecutor), along with a major corruption scandal. By the end of 1995, however, and despite Zedillo's appointment of an attorney general from the PAN—in whom U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno frequently expressed her confidence—none of the assassinations had been cleared up and no PRI leader had been held accountable for corruption.

Under Zedillo Mexico became the leading supplier of illegal drugs to the U.S., accounting for two-thirds of the cocaine and 20 to 30 percent of the heroin entering the country. Many state-owned companies privatized by Salinas were bought by drug traffickers, further contaminating the economy with corruption.

In 1996, opposition parties of the left and right won important municipal elections in three states—Mexico State, Coahuila and Hidalgo. Post-electoral conflicts took place in several regions. In the southern states of Guerrero, Oaxaca, Tabasco and Chiapas—where many of Mexico's indigenous people live—political violence continued to be a fact of life. But the elections left the PRI governing just two of Mexico's 12 largest cities.

In April 1996, the main political parties, with the exception of the PAN, agreed on reforms aimed at bringing about fairer elections. The reforms introduced direct elections for the mayoralty of Mexico City and abolished government control of the Federal Electoral Commission. The government pledged to increase public financing of political parties and to guarantee them fairer access to television during elections. But unilateral changes by the president and PRI limited the scope of the law, and the main opposition parties voted against it in November 1996.

In January 1997, the former commander of the Mexican Judicial Police admitted that, under Salinas, the Mexican government made a habit of timing the arrest of drug traffickers to have the greater impact in the U.S.—a clear implication that their earlier whereabouts had been well-known to officials. In February Gen. Jose Gutierrez Rebollo, the head of Mexico's anti-drug program who just two months before had been praised by U.S. anti-drug czar Gen. Barry McCaffrey as a man of "unquestioned integrity," was arrested for taking bribes from, and collaborating with, Mexico's drug cartels. That same month Mexican political circles were shaken by a report in *The New York Times*, citing U.S. intelligence sources, that two powerful Mexican PRI state governors cooperated with and protected major drug dealers. Gutierrez Rebollo's arrest was the first of several detentions of retired and active-duty senior army officers alleged to have assisted the narcotics barons.

The climate in which Mexicans went to the polls several times in 1997 was substantially improved from past elections. For the first time voters chose the mayor of Mexico City—and elected PRD opposition leader Cardenas—rather than having the municipal chief appointed by the president. An opposition coalition made up of the PRD, PAN and two other parties not only took control over the lower house of Congress following July elections, but a consensus was reached whereby the presidencies of 61 house committees were allocated on an equitable basis. By year-end, the PAN held six governorships.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Elections in Mexico held in 1997 were the fairest in the country's history. The electoral playing field was substantially leveled, although the PRI continued to hold important advantages. Significant changes were made to make the federal electoral authorities institutionally and politically independent from the government. However, the electoral process was vulnerable to continued manipulation, particularly regarding lack of effective campaign expenditure rules and biased news coverage. The PRI also made a concerted effort to undermine the credibility and effectiveness of independent election monitoring and observation groups.

Constitutional guarantees regarding political and civic organizations are generally respected in the urban north and central parts of the country. However, political and civic expression is restricted throughout rural Mexico, in poor urban areas and in poor southern states where the government frequently takes repressive measures against the left-wing PRD and peasant and indigenous groups. The nearly feudal conditions in the southern states were at the root of the 1994 Indian rebellion in Chiapas.

Civil society has grown in recent years: Human rights, pro-democracy and women's and environmental groups are active. However, anyone critical of the government remains subject to numerous forms of sophisticated intimidation that range from gentle warnings by government officials and anonymous death threats to unwarranted detention and jailing on dubious charges.

An official human rights commission was created in 1990. However, it is barred from examining political and labor rights violations and is unable to enforce its recommendations. In 1997 Amnesty International reported a serious deterioration in human rights over the past three years, with the first eight months of the current year characterized by hundreds of arbitrary detentions, widespread torture, more than 40 extra-judicial executions, several forced disappearances and the failure to punish government officials accused of violations. According to the organization, while in the early 1990s there were no more than five documented prisoners of conscience, the number included more than 30 in 1997 alone. "While new cases of disappearances were rarely reported in the early 1990s, now there is a growing pattern which has included more than 30 in 1997 ... And torture is more prevalent than ever in Mexico today," it stated.

In an April 1997 report, Amnesty scored the torture and ill-treatment by law enforcement agents that continue despite government promises to reform the police agencies. It stated, "Impunity for perpetrators is the rule. No one has been sentenced for the crime of torture in Mexico, despite thousands of complaints filed before the authorities." In October 1997, the Mexico City police chief disbanded an elite police team following the deaths of six men arrested during police raids in crime-ridden neighborhoods.

The government persecutes political and labor figures, journalists, human rights activists and criminal detainees. The Federal Judicial Police often makes political arrests under the pretext of drug enforcement, as do other Mexican law enforcement agencies. Drug-related corruption is evident in the military, police and security forces, and increasingly in government at both the local and national levels.

During the outbreak of the Chiapas rebellion the military was responsible for widespread human rights violations. In 1997 ranchers and landowners continued to

attack indigenous and leftwing groups using their own private police and sometimes aided by official law enforcement agencies. Stepped up army counter-insurgency efforts have meant a continuous number of rights violations in Chiapas and in the state of Guerrero, where a shadowy Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR), thought by some to be agents provocateurs, has provided a pretext for military action against local PRD leaders.

The growing role of the military in internal security— ostensibly to combat domestic terrorism, drug trafficking and street crime— is troubling. By 1997 the armed forces had taken control of public security in 19 states. Putting military officers at the head of Mexico's anti-drug and public security forces, Mexican and international human rights organizations say, is contributing to grave human rights problems, particularly in rural areas. Nearly 2,000 cases of reported human rights violations by the military remain uninvestigated by the official human rights commission, which refuses to issue recommendations on cases involving the military. Since an army general has headed anti-crime efforts in Mexico City, police there have made hundreds of arbitrary arrests in which suspicious-looking people have been detained without being charged.

Throughout 1997 published reports offered new evidence of close links between drug traffickers and the armed forces, contradicting official versions which have sought to portray the military as less prone to corruption and drug cartel influence than civilian law enforcement. In August two army generals were arrested after having been implicated in the theft of a half ton of cocaine from a northern Mexican police station. At the same time Brigadier Jose Francisco Gallardo Rodriguez, under military arrest since 1993 for advocating strict armed forces compliance with human rights standards, remained under detention in 1997 despite a finding a year earlier by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights that called for his immediate release.

Supreme Court judges are appointed by the executive and rubber-stamped by the Senate. The judicial system is weak, politicized and riddled with corruption at all levels. In most rural areas, respect for laws by official agencies is nearly nonexistent. Lower courts and law enforcement in general are undermined by widespread bribery. The exposure of systemic government corruption rarely results in legal proceedings.

The media, while mostly private and nominally independent, depend on the government for advertising revenue. A handful of daily newspapers and weeklies are the exceptions. The ruling party dominates television, by far the country's most influential medium. In the first nine months of 1997 there were some 120 reports of violent attacks against journalists, with reporters investigating police issues, narcotics trafficking and public corruption at particular risk. The Federation of Latin American Journalists cited Mexico as ranking second, after Colombia, with the highest death toll among reporters and media owners.

In 1992 the constitution was amended to restore the legal status of the Catholic Church and other religious institutions. Priests and nuns were allowed to vote for the first time in nearly 80 years. Nonetheless, activist priests promoting the rights of Indians and the poor, particularly in southern states, remain subject to threats and intimidation by conservative landowners and local PRI bosses.

Officially-recognized labor unions operate as political instruments of the PRI, and most are grouped under the Confederation of Mexican Workers. In 1997, 97-

year-old CTM leader Fidel Velazquez died, at a time in which the confederation's leadership was increasingly challenged by trade union dissidents. The government does not recognize independent unions, denying them collective-bargaining rights and the right to strike. The maquiladora regime of export-only production facilities has created substantial abuse of worker rights. Most maquiladora workers are young, uneducated women who accept lower pay more readily, with annual labor turnover averaging between 200 percent and 300 percent. They have no medical insurance, holidays or profit sharing, and female employees are frequently the targets of sexual harassment and abuse. The companies also discriminate against pregnant women, making prospective female employees take pregnancy tests before accepting them in order to avoid have to give them maternity leave. Exploitation of teenage women is increasing in the manufacturing-for-export sector, as the government consistently fails to enforce child-labor laws.

Independent unions and peasant organizations are subject to intimidation, black-listing and violent crackdowns. In 1997 army troops brutally repressed a strike by government oil workers. Dozens of labor and peasant leaders have been killed in recent years in ongoing land disputes, particularly in the southern states where Indians comprise close to half the population.

Micronesia

Polity: Federal parliamentary democracy

Economy: Capitalist

Population: 107,000

PPP: na

Life Expectancy: na

Ethnic Groups: Micronesian majority, Polynesian minority

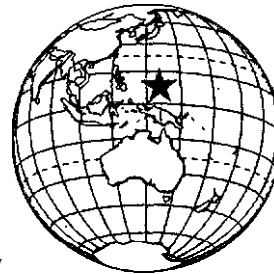
Capital: Palikir

Ratings Change: Micronesia's civil liberties rating changed from 1 to 2 due to increased harassment of free press.

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2*

Status: Free



Overview:

The Federated States of Micronesia occupy the Caroline Islands archipelago in the western Pacific Ocean. The 607 islands have a Micronesian majority and Polynesian minority population. In 1899 Germany purchased the Carolines from Spain, and in 1914 Japan seized the islands, ruling them from 1920 under a League of Nations mandate. The United States Navy occupied the islands during World War II, and in 1947 the Caroline Islands became part of the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific.

In 1978 four districts of the Trust Territory Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae approved a constitution creating the Federated States of Micronesia. The constitution, which went into effect in 1979, provides for a unicameral, 14-Senator congress. One Senator is elected at-large from each of the four states for a four-year term, with the remaining ten Senators elected from single member districts based on population for two-year terms. The president and vice president are selected by congress from

among its four at-large members. Although in practice there is an informal rotation system for the top offices, the alleged political dominance of Chuuk state, which holds nearly half the population and a proportionate number of congressional seats, has created tensions with the three smaller states.

In 1982 the territory concluded a Compact of Free Association with the United States, which entered into effect in 1986. Under the Compact the country is fully sovereign, although the U.S. is responsible for defense until at least 2001. In 1990 the U.N. formally dissolved the trusteeship.

Following the 1991 elections congress elected Bailey Olter of Pohnpei state, a former vice president, as the country's third president. Olter retained his seat in the 1995 elections, and Congress subsequently re-elected him as president over Kosrae state's Senator Jacob Nena, the vice president. Olter suffered a stroke in July 1996, and in November congress ruled him unable to fulfill his responsibilities and installed Nena as acting president.

The press freedom climate unexpectedly worsened in 1997. In March congress adopted a nonbinding resolution calling for the deportation of Sherry O'Sullivan, a Canadian expatriate who for the past three years had been the editor of FSM News, the country's only independent newspaper. O'Sullivan's two business partners then ousted her from the newspaper's board of directors. Both the speaker of congress and her partners accused her of disregard for the local culture in her reporting. The FSM News had attempted to publish an article about a criminal tax evasion case against family members of one of her partners, and in the past had investigated critical government audit reports and election irregularities. In early June, while O'Sullivan was in Guam, the government alleged she had broken immigration and labor laws, and refused her re-entry into the country.

The economy is dependent on fishing, subsistence agriculture, tourism and U.S. aid. The government is working with the Asian Development Bank to identify alternative aid sources once the guaranteed American assistance winds down in 2001.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia can change their government democratically. Politics are based on state, individual and clan loyalties. Political parties are permitted, but none has formed. The country held elections for the single-member congressional districts on March 4, 1997. The next full elections are scheduled for 1999.

The judiciary is independent, and there is a tradition of a rule of law. The government's refusal of re-entry to expatriate editor Sherry O'Sullivan in 1997 (see above), which it tried to justify on legal grounds, raised serious concerns over press freedom. Complicating matters was an apparent attempt to harass O'Sullivan through repeated state radio broadcasts of charges of misconduct against the editor by her business partners. O'Sullivan's counsel is pursuing libel action over the broadcasts.

The federal government's twice-monthly information bulletin, The National Union, and state government newsletters generally avoid politics. Each of the four state governments and religious groups operates radio stations. Television services are limited, but satellite programming is available.

Freedoms of assembly and association are respected, although except for churches there are few nongovernmental organizations. Religious freedom is respected in this predominantly Roman Catholic nation.

Domestic violence, often alcohol-influenced, is common. Such abuse is subject to criminal prosecution, but the authorities, influenced by traditional norms, generally view domestic violence as a family matter and take no action. The official National Women's Advisory Council, conceived as a forum to educate women about their rights, has carried out few activities. Employment discrimination generally limits women to entry-level jobs.

Workers have the constitutional right to form associations, although owing to the small size of the wage economy none has formed. There is no legal basis for collective bargaining, and its practice is limited.

Moldova

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy

Economy: Statist (transitional)

Population: 3,629,000

PPP: \$1,576

Life Expectancy: 67.7

Ethnic Groups: Romanian (65 percent), Ukrainian (14 percent), Russian (13 percent), others

Capital: Chisinau

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Overview:

Ion Ciubuc, an economist and head of the State Auditing Office, was named prime minister in January 1997 and vowed to accelerate economic reforms. He was nominated by President Petru Lucinschi, head of the Agrarian Democratic Party (PDAM), who was elected in November 1996, defeating incumbent Mircea Snegur, head of state since the country's independence.

Key issues during the year were negotiations about the status of the breakaway Transdniester Republic, the withdrawal of Russian troops from the region, and political maneuvering by political parties for parliamentary elections due in 1998.

Moldova, a predominately Romanian-speaking former Soviet republic bordering Ukraine and Romania, declared independence from the Soviet Union, in 1991. Snegur, running unopposed and with the backing of the nationalist Moldovan Popular Front (MPF), was elected president by an overwhelming majority. In 1990, Slavs in the Transdniester region, a sliver of land that was part of Ukraine until 1940 and joined Moldova after Soviet annexation, proclaimed the Dniester Moldovan Republic (DMR). The 150,000 Gagauz, a Turkic Christian people, did the same. Fighting in the Transdniester, where local Slavs were supported by Russian Cossacks, mercenaries and elements of Russia's 14th Army, ended with a cease-fire in mid-1992. In 1994 parliamentary elections, the PDAM, a coalition of former Communists and moderate supporters of Moldovan statehood, won 56 of 104 seats. A MDF-Christian Democratic coalition, which supported reunification with Romania, won nine seats. The Socialist Party and the Unity Movement (Edinstvo) bloc won 28 seats, and the Peasant and Intellectuals bloc, 11.

In 1996, relations between President Snegur, who had resigned from the PDAM and formed the Party of Revival and Accord of Moldova (PRCM), and then-Prime Minister Andrei Sangheli of the PDAM deteriorated. After the prime minister refused Snegur's order to dismiss the defense minister for alleged corruption, the president dispatched troops to surround the government building. An emergency parliamentary session ended the impasses, but the conflict, as well as economic problems, paved the way for Lucinschi's election as president. Sangheli remained interim prime minister until Ciubuc was approved by parliament in January 1997.

In 1997, tension emerged between the president, government and parliament. Many in the PDAM, particularly on the left, had supported Sangheli in the 1996 presidential race, switching to Lucinschi in the second-round to defeat the right-centrist Snegur. To consolidate their position, pro-Lucinschi forces formed the Movement for a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova led by Deputy Speaker Dumitru Diacov. Throughout the year, parliament resisted the president's plans to speed reforms in compliance with the demands of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Deputy Speaker Diacov was removed from office in July. In November, the IMF postponed a tranche of assistance, citing the country's poor financial situation and the lack of progress in economic reforms. While there was restructuring in the energy sector, agriculture and the pension system, the IMF was concerned about parliament's decisions to cancel penalties of past-due taxes and lower electricity tariffs.

Some analysts attributed the gridlock to parties jockeying for position for the 1998 parliamentary elections. Pro-Snegur forces established the Democratic Convention, which included the PRCM, the Christian Democratic-Popular Front group, and several smaller parties. The Social Democratic Party, Social Progress Party, Party of Economic Revival, Socialist Action Party, and the Republican Party formed the United Social Democratic Party of Moldova (PSDUM). In November, the PDAM expelled 15 legislators from the party for supporting President Lucinschi's program.

The Transdniester situation was complicated by the regime's decision to hold presidential elections on December 22, 1996, in defiance of the Moldovan government's contention that such an exercise was illegal and a contravention of an earlier accord providing for the preservation of Moldova's international borders. Igor Smirnov was re-elected. In April 1997, leaders of Moldova and Transdniester reached agreement on questions connected with a memorandum on the principles for the normalization of relations between Moldova and the Dniester region. The negotiations for a final political settlement continued through the year. In November, the two sides signed an agreement, "On the Organizational Framework of Socio-Economic Cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and Dniester," which applied to cooperation in industry, agriculture, communications and health care. Later in the month, President Lucinschi and Smirnov held face-to-face talks.

The government continued to insist that Russia withdraw its 6,500 troops. The Russian Duma failed to ratify a 1994 agreement calling for the removal of Russian forces. In November negotiations representatives of the Russian and Moldovan defense ministries failed to reach a timetable on the withdrawal and removal of combat machinery and armaments.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Moldovans can change their government democratically under a multi-party system enshrined in the 1994 constitution. International monitoring groups, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) characterized the November 1996 presidential elections as "free and fair."

There are some 40 political parties and groupings across the entire political spectrum. In 1997, parties began to coalesce in blocs in preparation for 1998 parliamentary elections. Several new parties were created, among them the centrist United Labor Bloc of Moldova (PUMM) and a hard-line Communist Party of Moldova, which split from the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova (CPRM).

Most political parties publish their own newspapers which frequently criticize government policies. Opposition journalists have complained of harassment and intimidation by authorities and gangsters. The state-run newspapers, *Moldova Suverana* and *Nezavisimaya Moldova* reflect the official government line. In March, the government decided to dismiss the editor of *Moldova Suverana*, who had backed Andrei Sangheli's presidential bid. In the spring, parliament initially refused to approve subsidies for state-run publications, but later allocated reduced funds. Most electronic media are controlled by the state-owned Teleradio-Moldova. A private station, Catalan TV, based in Chisinau, generally avoids political analysis. In March, Ukraine's TV-1, which had aired six hours of programming a day, was taken off the air for failing to pay debts.

There are some restrictions on freedom of assembly. Under law, rallies that slander the state or subvert the constitution are banned. Freedom of religion is respected, though the Orthodox Church has used its influence to discourage proselytizing. In September, the Court of Appeal ruled that the government must recognize the Bessarabian Metropoly, which had sued the government after it failed to register the church in 1992. The government took the case to the Supreme Court.

The judiciary is still not fully independent. Although 1995 reforms provided a separation between police functions and the courts, criminal cases are often weighed in favor of police and prosecutors. The Constitutional Court exercises judicial review and has overturned actions of parliament and the president. In July, the Court ruled that presidential decrees establishing a special department for combating corruption and organized crime were unconstitutional. The Council of Europe and other Western institutions have been working closely to improve legal institutions, education and the rule-of-law.

Moldova has ratified the Council of Europe's Convention on the Protection of Ethnic Minorities. Moldovans in the DMR have protested Russification policies, including the use of the Cyrillic alphabet. In February, leaders of the Gagauz autonomous region asked the government to act on allowing several villages to be incorporated into the region.

The Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Moldova, which replaced the Soviet-era confederation, has been active in pressuring the government to settle salary arrears and not to slash pensions and benefits. In January, teachers held a two-hour warning strike demanding back pay. In July, unions organized a demonstration in Chisinau to protest the government's decision to raise energy prices. The federation and the government signed a protocol in which the government agreed to pay salary arrears in stages. Women face no legal obstacles to full participation in government, business and education.

Monaco

Polity: Prince and legislative democracy

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 32,000

PPP: na

Life Expectancy: na

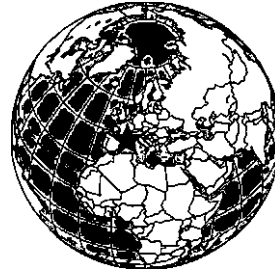
Ethnic Groups: French (47 percent), Italian (16 percent), Monegasque (16 percent), others

Capital: Monaco

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Overview:

In January, Monaco's royal family celebrated its 700th anniversary. Since assuming power in 1949, Prince Rainier III has been responsible for the principality's impressive economic growth. Under his direction, the economy has ended its exclusive dependence on gambling revenue. Rainier has also implemented urban redevelopment programs and built major sports and cultural facilities.

The Principality of Monaco is an independent and sovereign state and a full member of the United Nations. During the first six centuries of rule by the Grimaldi family, it was intermittently controlled by European powers. It achieved independence from France in 1861. 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 Monegasque policy would conform to French interests.

Of 32,000 residents, Monaco is home to only 5000 Monegasques. Only they may participate in the election of the 18-member National Council. As head of state, Prince Rainier holds executive authority, formally appoints the four-member cabinet and proposes all legislation on which the Council votes. Laws initiated by the prince are drafted in his name by the cabinet and then debated for passage in the National Council. The prince holds veto power over the Council.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Monaco may change the National Council and their municipal Councils democratically. The Council is elected every five years by universal adult suffrage. The prince delegates judicial authority to the courts and tribunals, which adjudicate independently in his name. Although Monaco does not have a Minister of Justice, it does have a Supreme Court that deals with constitutional claims and jurisdictional conflicts.

Freedom of expression and association is guaranteed by the 1962 constitution. Denunciations of the Grimaldi family are prohibited by an official Monegasque penal code. Press freedom is respected. Two monthly magazines and a weekly government journal are published in the principality. French daily newspapers are widely available. Radio and television are government-operated and sell time to commercial sponsors. All French broadcasts are freely transmitted to the principality. France maintains a controlling interest in Radio Monte Carlo, which broadcasts in several languages.

Although Monaco experiences chronic labor shortages and relies heavily on migrant and cross-border labor, nationals are given legal preference in employment. Since Monegasques constitute only 16 percent of the population, strict citizenship laws and cultural preservation are viewed as vitally important. A 1992 law stipulates that foreign women marrying male Monegasque citizens are no longer accorded automatic citizenship. Instead, a provision was introduced to require women to remain with their spouses for five years to acquire eligibility for citizenship. Also in 1992, women citizens were granted the right to pass their nationality to their children.

Freedom of association, including the right of workers to organize in unions, is respected. Trade unions are independent of the government. Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed. The state religion is Roman Catholic, but adherents of other faiths may practice freely.

Mongolia

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy **Political Rights:** 2
Civil Liberties: 3

Economy: Statist **Status:** Free
transitional

Population: 2,323,000

PPP: \$3,766

Life Expectancy: 64.4

Ethnic Groups: Khalkha Mongol (75 percent), other Mongol (8 percent), Kazakh (5 percent), others

Capital: Ulaanbaatar

Overview: Mounting popular frustration with an economic "shock therapy" program, enacted by a reformist governing coalition elected in 1996, helped the once-dominant, ex-Communist Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) recapture the presidency in June 1997 elections.

China controlled this vast Central Asian region for two centuries until 1911 and again from 1919 until a Marxist revolt in 1921. The Soviet-backed MPRP formed a Communist state in 1924 following three years of nominal rule by aging Buddhist lamas. For the next 65 years Mongolia was a virtual republic of the Soviet Union.

Following pro-democracy street protests the government resigned in March 1990, and in July Mongolia held its first multiparty elections for the Great Hural (parliament). The MPRP easily defeated an unprepared opposition. In September the Hural named the MPRP's Punsalmaagiyn Orchirbat as president.

The 1992 constitution provides for a president with executive powers who is directly-elected for a four-year term. The president nominates the prime minister for parliamentary approval and can veto legislation, subject to a two-thirds parliamentary override. The constitution also created a smaller, 76-seat Great Hural and provided for private land ownership.

Even with the MPRP still controlling the government, many Mongolians blamed

the opposition for forcing economic reforms that caused higher prices and threw thousands of people out of work. The MPRP won 71 of 76 seats in the 1992 parliamentary elections.

President Orchirbat, having been forced off the MPRP ticket by party hardliners two months earlier, won the 1993 elections as the candidate of the two main opposition parties, the National Democratic Party (NDP) and Social Democratic Party (SDP).

In 1994 the economy grew for the first time after four years of contraction. But the economic restructuring continued to take its toll. The opposition Democratic Union Coalition (DUC), bringing together the NDP and the SDP, ran a well-planned, issues-oriented campaign for the June 1996 parliamentary elections. Under a 91 percent turnout, the DUC won 50 seats to sweep the MPRP out of parliamentary power after 72 years. The MPRP won 25 seats and a minor party, one.

Under new prime minister Mendsaihan Enksaikhan, the coalition government froze spending, lifted price controls, cut pension rolls and stripped tariff protection from domestic industries. Meanwhile a sharp fall in world prices for copper and cashmere, Mongolia's two biggest foreign revenue earners, rocked the economy. With inflation and unemployment rising, in October the MPRP won 14 of 21 provincial assembly elections.

Some 85 percent of voters turned out for the May 18, 1997 presidential elections. The MPRP's Nachagyn Bagabandy, 47, a former parliamentary chairman who had stressed social issues and the need to conduct privatization fairly, won with 60.8 percent of the vote against Orchirbat's 29.8 percent. The coalition's loss of the presidency was significant because it narrowly lacks the two-thirds parliamentary majority needed to override a presidential veto.

Political Rights

and Civil Liberties:

Mongolians can change their government democratically. Hardship associated with the country's difficult transition from central planning to a free market economy led to defeats for the incumbent party or candidate in elections for parliament in 1996 and for the presidency in 1997.

The judiciary is independent. Police and prison officials continue to beat detainees and prisoners, facilities are severely overcrowded and in recent years dozens of prisoners have died from neglect, starvation and illness.

There are scores of private newspapers representing diverse viewpoints. The state broadcast media, which include a television station and several radio stations, generally offer pluralistic views. According to the Far Eastern Economic Review, after taking office in 1996 the coalition government replaced several journalists at broadcast media with its supporters, although this has apparently had little effect on news coverage. A private television station reaches parts of the country, and foreign satellite and cable broadcasts are available.

Freedom of assembly is respected. Nongovernmental organizations (NGO) are active on a variety of issues, including human rights and child welfare. An NGO called Women for Social Progress ran a highly-effective voter education program prior to the 1996 legislative elections.

The country's economic restructuring has both caused hardship and eroded traditional social support systems, and this, along with high rates of alcohol abuse, has apparently contributed to domestic violence. Due in part to traditional norms, women

are underrepresented in parliament, top government and judicial positions, and in the upper professional ranks. The government has been slow to address the plight of thousands of homeless street children in major cities. Freedom of religion is respected in practice, and since the 1990 revolution Buddhist activity has blossomed throughout the country.

Trade unions are independent, although union membership is declining as large enterprises are shut down or broken up. Due to high unemployment, employers have considerable leverage in collective bargaining negotiations. The government lacks the resources to effectively enforce laws on child labor and working conditions.

Morocco

Polity: Monarchy and limited parliament

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 27,563,000

PPP: \$3,681

Life Expectancy: 65.3

Ethnic Groups: Arab and Berber (99 percent), black

Capital: Rabat

Political Rights: 5

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Partly Free



Overview:

Legislative and local elections and increasing decentralization continued Morocco's modest political liberalization, although King Hassan II programs for guided democracy will not end his authoritarian rule. Fewer human rights abuses were reported, but dozens of political prisoners are serving long prison terms and the government jailed activists for shorter periods during the year. The popularity of proscribed Islamist parties could be bolstered by a bad harvest and faltering economy. In September a United Nations-brokered agreement was reached with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (Polisario) to hold a referendum on independence for the former colony of Spanish Sahara occupied by Morocco in 1976, which was ravaged by a 15-year guerrilla war until a 1991 truce. Its people have suffered severe human rights violations by Moroccan security forces.

After 44 years of French rule, Morocco became independent in 1956. Hassan II assumed the throne in 1961 upon the death of his father, Mohammed V. Hassan II has allowed a gradual and limited evolution of democratic institutions, but real power still rests in the palace. The king appoints the prime minister and dissolves the legislature at his discretion. Despite its greater legitimacy, the new bicameral legislature will help maintain conservative power. The directly elected lower house will be balanced by an upper chamber comprised of members elected by local councils and other groups.

Hassan II claims direct lineage from the prophet Mohamed and carries the title Commander of the Faithful." Islamist radicals reject his religious credentials and have gained a following among poorer Moroccans. Morocco is considered a bulwark against the spread of Islamist influence in the Maghreb, and ties with both France

and Spain have strengthened. Crown Prince and heir apparent Sidi Mohamed led a state visit to Spain in May.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Moroccans have greater say in their governance than ever before but cannot change their government by democratic means. The November legislative elections returned 102 center-left Democratic Koutla opposition members in the 325 seat Chamber of Representatives. The Democratic Koutla (Democratic Bloc) comprises five main opposition parties: The Socialist Union of Popular Forces, the Istiqlal Party, the National Union of Popular Forces, the Organization of Democratic and Popular Action and the Party of Progress and Socialism. Any constitutional changes must be approved by the King, who is head of state and through his ministers rules as well as reigns. The constitution approved in a September 1996 referendum created a bicameral legislature with a directly-elected lower house and an upper chamber selected by an electoral college of trade union, employer, professional groups and local council representatives. December elections for the 270 member upper house produced a clear rightist majority and charges of fraud from the Koutla. It is unlikely that the new parliament will possess real governance powers, but opposition parties' strength in the lower house will provide new opportunities for policy debate. Provincial and local officials are appointed, with only less-powerful municipal councils elected. The June local elections for over 24,000 council and commune seats were perhaps the most open the country has ever experienced, and parties of the opposition Koutla grouping took nearly one-third of the seats. Twenty-six advocates of an election boycott were jailed for up to five months. Despite greater openness, however, governance remains neither transparent nor accountable.

Free expression is constitutionally guaranteed but often not respected in practice. Broadcast media are mostly government controlled. Independent and pluralistic print media have developed but remain subject to government pressures. Political control is exercised through publication licensing requirements and the press code allows the Interior Ministry to seize or censor publications. Criticizing the King or his family or the monarchy is punishable by five to 20 years imprisonment. Other taboos include the validity of Morocco's claim to Western Sahara and the sanctity of Islam. At least 16 books, magazines and newspapers have been banned and numerous issues of foreign publications seized since 1986.

Freedom of assembly is constitutionally-protected but limited by several decrees allowing the government to restrict or prohibit public gatherings by requiring permits from the Interior Ministry. Effectively, the government has tolerated sit-in strikes such as a two month protest by unemployed university graduates this year, but not public marches. Freedom of association is also constrained by a registration requirement the government employs to deny Islamist and other groups legal status. Morocco's population is 99 percent Sunni Muslim. Religious freedom is limited to Islam, Christianity and Judaism, and non-Islamic proselytizing is barred. Three officially-recognized human rights groups are among many non-governmental organizations operating openly, although sometimes under official harassment. Their reports have detailed deaths and torture in police custody, harsh prison conditions, harassment of former political prisoners, the denial to them and others of passports and non-investigation of the disappearance of at least 300 Western Saharan activists

over the last decade. Official impunity for past abuses appears intact.

Courts at all levels are subject to political control, especially by interior ministry officials. Up to a year of pretrial detention is legal. Many family law cases are handled by special judges under the Moudouwana, or "Code of Personal Status" based on Shari'a law, which treats women as inferior to men. Societal discrimination is also acute. Women have no rights to receive property or support after a divorce, and much domestic violence is unreported and unpunished. Berber associations, which claim some 60 percent of Morocco's population is of Berber descent, have demanded that the government recognize their native Tarazigh as an official language and to allow it to be taught in schools.

About five million workers are members of seventeen umbrella federations, several of which are aligned with political parties. The government generally respects labor rights. An August agreement negotiated among union officials, the national employers' association and the interior ministry brought a ten percent pay rise and increased benefits for civil servants. Poor rains are cutting economic growth, but the government continues to pursue economic liberalization, including extensive privatization of state enterprises, that has attracted growing foreign investment.

Mozambique

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy

Economy: Mixed statist

Population: 16,537,000

PPP: \$986

Life Expectancy: 46.0

Ethnic Groups: Lomwe, Makonde, Makua, Ndau, Shangaan, Thonga, Yao, others

Capital: Maputo

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Overview:

Mozambique's political and economic liberalization continued five years after the negotiated conclusion to two disastrous decades of anti-colonial and civil war that ravaged the country and left it rated as the world's very least developed nation. The ruling National Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo) continued to dominate almost all institutions of government. Its former guerrilla foe and now principal parliamentary opponent, the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) mounted strikes and demonstrations demanding policy changes that were violently dispersed by security forces. Local elections postponed until May 1998, could offer Renamo a genuine role in governance for the first time, especially in the central and northern provinces where it is strongest. The rule of law is not firmly established, however, and abuses by security forces and plain banditry are widespread. Endemic corruption threatened an ambitious privatization and economic reform plan that has drawn new foreign investment and won support from international donors.

Mozambique's independence from Portugal in 1975 was won after a protracted and costly guerrilla war led by Frelimo leader and Mozambique's first president,

Samora Machel. A one party state was established as the then-Marxist Frelimo party took power. Renamo rebels were organized and armed first by the white-minority Rhodesian regime and after Zimbabwe's independence by South Africa's secret services. The bush war was one of Africa's most gruesome and devastating. The Cold War's end and majority rule in South Africa finally ended external backing for the war. Along with general war-weariness, this allowed a negotiated peace in the 1992 Rome Accords. Both sides accepted multiparty elections and largely disarmed. Frelimo discarded socialist economics along with one-party rule. Its leader, President Joaquim Chissano, who succeeded Machel after his death in a mysterious plane crash ascribed by his comrades to South Africa's white supremacist regime, won a clear victory in internationally-supervised, free and fair elections in October 1994 that also gave Frelimo 129 seats in the 250-seat parliament. Renamo took the balance, save for nine seats won by the Democratic Union party and after initial protests accepted the results. Despite simmering tensions, Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama has repeatedly stated his commitment to the democratic process.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

In October 1994, Mozambicans freely chose their government in the country's first genuine open elections. A United Nations-led civic and voter education effort and logistical assistance helped assure both a massive turnout and broad confidence in the electoral process. However, consolidation of the democratic process is far from certain. Presidential and legislative elections due in 1999 are unlikely to receive the intense levels of international financial and political support that were key to making the 1992 elections a success. It is not clear whether local institutions can properly administer elections across the vast country.

Frelimo enjoys an absolute parliamentary majority with 129 seats in the 200 seat parliament. Both the Democratic Union and Renamo deputies are active in parliament, but Renamo's strong showing in taking 38 percent of the popular vote has not translated into a serious voice in national policy. Fifteen political parties are registered under a statute that bars parties based on ethnicity or religion. This requirement is being challenged by the Mozambique Independent Party (PIMO), which in September announced that it has become a religious party as the Mozambique Islamic Party.

Mozambique's governing institutions have yet to achieve real autonomy from the ruling Frelimo party. The judiciary is underfunded, understaffed and subject to political influence. Mozambique's legal structures are relics of Portuguese colonialism that often conflict with new statutes or the constitution. Customary courts prevail in many parts of the country, settling local grievances but also occasionally ordering executions for alleged witchcraft. Brutality by the police and other security forces is also widely reported by human rights organizations in Mozambique, compounded by apparent impunity and a broad disregard of constitutional protections. Even under the law, however, persons under investigation for vaguely defined "security crimes" may be detained over eight months without charges. Many of the country's prison population are pre-trial detainees who languish, and sometimes die, in appalling conditions that include a lack of food and medical treatment and physical abuse. Freedom of assembly is broadly guaranteed but limited by notification and timing restrictions. In May, national police violently dispersed strikes organized by Renamo in

several central and northern cities and towns, killing several people.

The state controls nearly all broadcast media and owns or influences all the largest newspapers. The opposition is given scant coverage in government media, especially national radio and television, which remain largely Frelimo propaganda tools. The constitution and the peace pact formally protect media freedom, and there has been a gradual growth of the independent media, but private newspapers and fax newsletters published in Maputo have scant influence among the largely illiterate population in the vast countryside. Harassment and intimidation of independent journalists reportedly causes broad self-censorship and allows little direct criticism of the president or reporting on widespread corruption. Criminal libel laws are another important deterrent to open expression.

The Mozambican Human Rights League and numerous other non-governmental organizations are increasingly able to work openly and to issue reports critical of official conduct. International human rights and humanitarian groups are permitted to visit the country. There is no reported interference with free religious practice. Women suffer both legal and societal discrimination. Inheritance laws limit widow's rights, and women have less access to education and formal sector jobs, particularly in rural areas where 80 percent of the population lives. Wife-beating is said to be common, and the government has backed efforts by women's groups such as Women, Law and Development (MULEIDE) in a campaign to reduce domestic violence.

Frelimo closely controlled Mozambique's labor unions during the one-party period. The major trade confederation, the Organization of Mozambican Workers, is now nominally independent. A second more clearly independent group, the Organization of Free and Independent Unions, was formed in 1994. Workers other than employees of essential services have the right to strike, and the right to bargain collectively is legally protected.

The government's privatization program continued with the sell off of state banks. Western, Iranian and Malaysian investors have committed to major projects. Severe corruption remains a problem, although the customs service has improved markedly under the supervision of a British company. In September, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund agreed to classify Mozambique among the "Highly Indebted Poor Countries," which allows accelerated debt relief in exchange for economic reforms. An excellent harvest bolstered local food production and agricultural exports, although it is feared that the climatic effects of El Nino could return drought to the entire southern Africa region over the next two years.

↓ Namibia

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 1,580,000

PPP: \$4,027

Life Expectancy: 55.9

Ethnic Groups: Ovambo (47 percent), Kavango (9 percent), Herero, Damara, Baster and Colored, European, Nama/Hottentot, Bushman, others

Capital: Windhoek

Trend Arrow: Namibia receives a downward trend arrow due to reports of intolerance and abuses by the ruling party.

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Free



Overview:

Namibia continued to enjoy strong economic growth and domestic freedoms, but fears have grown over signs of intolerance and reports of abuses by the ruling South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), led by President Sam Nujoma. Nujoma is expected to run for a third five-year term in 1999 after SWAPO, which commands two-thirds majorities in the country's bicameral legislature, agreed in May on a constitutional interpretation that allows his candidacy beyond the stated two-term limit. Marches and sit-ins by unemployed and increasingly militant ex-guerrilla fighters of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN) provoked a draconian response from Nujoma, who in July banned all public demonstrations without prior written police permission. Less than a month later, however, the country's High Court declared the decree unconstitutional. Media groups opposed new laws that would require journalists to reveal sources of information to parliamentary committees, and human rights groups warned that a new intelligence agency reporting to the president represents a threat to civil liberties.

Conquered by German colonialists in the late 19th Century, Namibia became a South African protectorate after German forces were expelled during World War I. The country was ruled under the apartheid system for 42 years after 1948. Thirteen years of bitter guerrilla war preceded independence, which was achieved in 1990 under a UN-supervised democratic transition with free and fair elections. The country's first post-independence elections took place in November 1994, resulting in a sweeping SWAPO victory and President Nujoma's election with over 70 percent of the vote. SWAPO clearly enjoys wide support, but its electoral dominance may be reducing respect for the rule of law and promoting an increasingly authoritarian governing style by President Nujoma.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

In November 1994 Namibians exercised their constitutional right to choose their president and legislative representatives through free and fair elections for the second time. Plans to make the election commission independent of government would reinforce the likelihood of future honest elections. SWAPO matched President Sam Nujoma's landslide re-election victory by capturing 53 of 72 National Assembly seats. SWAPO

is expected to use this supermajority to make constitutional changes permitting President Nujoma to stand for a third five-year presidential term. The ruling party's main support comes from the country's single largest ethnic group, the Ovambo, and their predominance within SWAPO has also raised concerns over and allegations of ethnic discrimination. The National Society for Human Rights (NSHR) warned in an August report that government favoritism towards its supporters could eventually prompt violence by other groups. Herero and Damara people are among minority ethnic groups demanding larger government allocations for development in their home areas. SWAPO itself seems increasingly factionalized along ethnic lines.

Namibia's human rights performance has been rated among Africa's best, although reports on abuses along the northern border in which over 1,000 people have allegedly been killed is clouding the picture, as are efforts to restrict public assembly. Political discussion is generally open and uninhibited, and the country's political system remains an arena for vigorous debate. Political parties can organize and operate freely. Scant funding is the greatest impediment to political party growth, especially with the country's 1.6 million people widely dispersed over its vast territory. SWAPO is accused of promoting its party activities with government transport and employees. State financing for political parties is provided under 1996 legislation, but allocation of funds according to votes received in the last general election will reinforce only established parties and best benefit SWAPO.

Media are generally free. Press watchdog groups, including the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) have warned against new laws that would require journalists and others to reveal the sources of information in their possession. Electronic media are mostly state controlled, although the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation has regularly presented views critical of the government. Private radio stations and critical independent newspapers operate without official interference.

Police abuses are still reportedly commonplace. Local chiefs with power over traditional courts often ignore constitutional procedures in arresting and trying suspects, although this is usually regarding minor offenses and mainly in rural areas. Despite constitutional guarantees, women continue to face serious discrimination in customary law and other traditional societal practices. Women often do not have equal rights to property and in some areas widows can be divested of all property by their late spouse's family. Violence against women is reported to be widespread.

Trade union rights are constitutionally guaranteed and registration is treated as a formality. The National Union of Namibian Workers and the Namibia People's Social Movement are the two main union federations. All but essential public sector workers have the right to strike. Some domestic and farm workers remain heavily exploited, partially because many are illiterate and do not know their rights.

Economic development is mostly in capital-intensive extractive industries that have drawn significant foreign investment. Medium-size business is still dominated by the white minority. Most Namibians live as subsistence farmers and earn an average monthly wage of less than \$20. Unemployment is a growing social and political challenge, complicated by public perceptions of official corruption and the government's decision to increase pay and benefits for senior officials. Increased diamond and uranium exports and good harvests in 1997 bolstered economic performance.

Nauru

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
Economy: Mixed capitalist-statist
Population: 11,000
PPP: na
Life Expectancy: na
Ethnic Groups: Nauruan (58 percent), other Pacific islander (26 percent), Chinese (8 percent), European (8 percent)
Capital: Yaren

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Free



Overview:

Nauru, a tiny island located 1,600 miles northeast of New Zealand in the west-central Pacific, became a German protectorate in 1888. Following World War I Australia administered the island under mandates from the League of Nations and later from the United Nations. The country achieved independence in January 1968. The 1968 republican constitution provides for an 18-member parliament, representing 14 constituencies, directly elected for a three-year term. Parliament elects the president, who serves as head of state and head of government, from among its members. An elected Nauru Local Government Council provides public services.

Following the November 1995 general elections parliament elected Lagumot Harris as president over three-term incumbent Bernard Dowiyogo in a nine to eight vote. But the intense personal rivalries in the tiny, faction-ridden parliament, where a single vote can break a presidency, led to furious political maneuvering a year later. Two governments fell in November 1996, and a third fell shortly thereafter. Following early elections on February 8, 1997, parliament named Kinza Clodumar, a former finance minister, as president.

Phosphate mining gave Nauru a per capita income that peaked at \$17,000 in 1975 but has since fallen by more than half. Decades of mining have left 80 percent of the land uninhabitable. In 1989 Nauru sued Australia in the International Court of Justice for additional royalties for mining done during the trusteeship period, claiming that Australia had sold the phosphates domestically at below world prices, and for compensation for the physical damages done to the eight-square-mile island. In an out of court settlement reached in 1993 Australia agreed to pay \$70.4 million in compensation over 20 years. The government is currently examining plans for a 23-year program to rehabilitate mined-out areas.

With the phosphate deposits nearly depleted, future generations will draw income from the government's Nauru Phosphate Royalties Trust. However, the trust has lost millions of dollars through failed investments, speculation in the Tokyo stock market and international financial scams. During its tenure the Harris administration had proposed a fiscal austerity program that included a moratorium on public sector salary increases, civil service layoffs and the privatization of broadcast media and other state agencies. The Clodumar administration is expected to carry out some of these measures.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Nauru can change their government democratically. Since independence there have been ad hoc parties, but in general politics are based on personal loyalties and occasional issue-based coalitions.

The judiciary is independent. Many cases are settled out of court through traditional mediation procedures. The government-owned Radio Nauru carries Radio Australia and BBC broadcasts but not local news. There is a private fortnightly, the *Central Star News*, and a weekly government information bulletin. Television New Zealand Ltd. runs a private television service from New Zealand.

Domestic violence and discrimination against women are serious problems in this male-dominated society. In 1996 Ruby Dediya, a nurse elected to parliament in 1995, briefly became the highest ranking woman in politics as finance minister in a short-lived government. However, few women are active in politics or business.

Freedoms of assembly and association are respected. Churches and women's organizations are the mainstays of civil society. All religious faiths worship freely.

The constitution guarantees workers the right to form independent unions, although successive governments have generally discouraged labor organizing and no trade unions have formed. There is no legal basis for collective bargaining or holding strikes, and in practice these activities rarely occur. Foreign workers are generally housed in inadequate facilities and claim that they receive inferior police protection compared with Nauruan citizens. A law requiring foreign workers who are fired to leave the country within 60 days has created serious hardship for many guest workers.

Nepal

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Capitalist

Population: 23,226,000

PPP: \$1,137

Life Expectancy: 55.3

Ethnic Groups: Newar, Indian, Tibetan, Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Bhotia, others

Capital: Kathmandu

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free

**Overview:**

In October 1997 Nepal's fourth prime minister took office since mid-term elections in 1994 returned a hung parliament, adding to popular frustration with a political class mainly absorbed with horse-trading and perks. The political maneuvering meant that socio-economic development and a Maoist insurgency in the central and midwestern hills were left unaddressed.

King Prithvi Narayan Shah unified this Himalayan land in 1769. Following two centuries of palace rule, the center-left Nepali Congress (NC) won the country's first elections in 1959 and began initiating land reforms. In 1960 King Mahendra dissolved parliament and banned political parties.

Pro-democracy demonstrations beginning in early 1990 climaxed violently in April when police fired on demonstrators in Kathmandu. King Birendra agreed to a constitution, promulgated in November, that established a multiparty parliamentary system with a 205-seat House of Representatives, elected for a five-year term, and an appointed sixty-member National Council.

Nepal's first multiparty elections in thirty-two years in 1991 brought the NC to power under premier Girija Prasad Koirala. Opposition protests over a 1991 hydroelectric agreement with India and internal NC wrangling forced mid-term elections in November 1994 that were dominated by the electorate's concern with rising prices and the NC's factionalism and corruption. The Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) (CPN-UML) won 88 seats; the NC, 83; the pro-monarchist National Democratic Party (RPP), 20; minor parties and independents, 14.

A minority CPN (UML) government initiated land reforms and other populist measures that critics charged rewarded supporters. In June 1995 then-premier Man Mohan Adhikary convinced the king to call fresh elections rather than face a confidence vote, but in August the Supreme Court ruled that other parties must first be given the opportunity to form a government. Since then, the RPP has used its swing vote to back the rise and fall of weak governments, initially through a coalition with the NC and the tiny Nepal Goodwill Party (NSS) under the NC's Sher Bahadur Deuba.

In February 1996 the underground Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (CPN (Maoist)) launched a "People's War" in the midwestern hills, where officially 62.4 percent of villagers live in poverty, that targeted government offices, landowners and local party officials.

In early March 1997 Deuba lost a confidence motion, and on March 12 the royalist RPP's Lokendra Bahadur Chand took office as prime minister in an unlikely coalition with the anti-monarchist CPN-UML, joined by two NSS members. In the run-up to village and municipal elections held in two phases in May, Maoist guerrillas threatened, kidnapped and killed several NC candidates. The well-organized CPN-UML capitalized on discontent with the former NC government to win 51 percent of seats, but partisan clashes, CPN-UML attacks on NC workers and bomb explosions marred voting. In July the CPN-UML swept 45 of 56 district-level elections, with Maoist violence postponing voting in 19 districts.

In August and September left-wing parties organized paralyzing strikes in the Kathmandu Valley to protest a petrol price hike, a proposed anti-terrorism law, and the 1996 Mahakali River Treaty with India, which critics say affords greater electricity and irrigation benefits to New Delhi. On October 6 Surya Bahadur Thapa, 69, a two-time premier under the absolute monarchy and Chand's RPP rival, formed a coalition government that brought the NC back into power.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Nepalese can change their government democratically. The May 1997 local elections were marred by widespread violence and irregularities. The government reported 24 election-related deaths; observers say the true figure is at least twice as high. Following the vote the foreign minister, a member of the RPP, quit, accusing the then-ruling coalition's dominant CPN-UML of "widespread rigging and intimidation." Low caste Hindus and ethnic minority groups are politically marginalized.

Many ordinary Nepalese, frustrated with their corrupt, ineffective political sys-

tem, view the judiciary as a potential source of activism. The Supreme Court is independent but lower courts are susceptible to political influence and often lack funds for legal texts and other basic resources.

Human rights conditions have improved since the end of the absolute monarchy, but the rule of law is weak, and serious problems remain. Since the CPN (Maoist) declared a "People's War" in February 1996, more than 125 civilians, Maoists and police have been killed. Armed guerrillas have killed and tortured civilians, and security forces have responded with extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrests, detentions, rape, and torture of suspected members or sympathizers of the CPN (Maoist) or its political wing.

The Public Security Act (PSA), as amended in 1991, allows the government to detain suspects for up to 12 months without charge. The 1970 Public Offenses and Penalties Act grants the seventy-five Chief District Officers powers to detain suspects for 25 days pending investigation. Police act largely with impunity in using excessive force in routine situations, beating suspects to extract confessions (leading to several custodial deaths in recent years), and abusing prisoners. According to Amnesty International, new procedural safeguards for suspects in custody are poorly implemented at the local level.

The Constitution restricts expression that could jeopardize national security, promote communal discord or do harm in other broadly-defined areas. The Press and Publications Act restricts reporting on the monarchy, national security and other sensitive issues. Nevertheless, private newspapers and magazines vigorously criticize government policies. The 21 dailies and 129 weeklies range from Maoist to pro-monarchist. Private journalists criticize parliament for periodically denying them access and slammed the government's July proposal to impose a five percent import duty on newsprint.

The government owns the main television station, but in June authorized the first private FM station. There are two small private cable television stations. Political coverage on the state broadcast media favors the party in power, a trend particularly apparent when state television in August began airing parliamentary proceedings.

Successive governments have banned demonstrations against China and in March police arrested several people protesting China's human rights record. Discussion of Indian rights abuses in Kashmir is similarly restricted. On August 14 authorities arrested 16 Bhutanese refugees demonstrating outside the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu against the continued detention in India of Rongthong Kuenley Dorji, a prominent Bhutanese pro-democracy leader. Nongovernmental organizations are active and operate freely. In November 1996 parliament approved the formation of an official human rights commission, but it has yet to be activated.

Although the constitution describes Nepal as a Hindu kingdom, the true religious breakdown is unclear, and low-caste Hindus and ethnic minorities face discrimination in the civil service, courts and government institutions. Women face legal discrimination in property and divorce matters, and rarely receive the same educational opportunities as men due to early ages of marriage and entry into the workforce. Organized gangs have trafficked some 150-200,000 Nepali women to Indian brothels in recent years, a process that is facilitated by the complicity of local officials and traditional norms that relegate women to an inferior status. Most victims are from the Tamang and other minority communities. Many female prisoners

are held for murder charges stemming from abortions and infanticide, indicating a lack of awareness of the law, and from acts of self-defense.

Nepal hosts 90,000 Bhutanese refugees (see Bhutan report). Police occasionally use excessive force against Tibetans crossing the border, and in recent years authorities forcibly deported, turned back or turned over to Chinese authorities scores of asylum seekers.

An official National Planning Commission survey estimates there are five million child laborers working in carpet factories, mines and construction sites spawned by rapid urbanization, or in agriculture and other traditional fields. Many are bonded laborers. The Labor Act and the Children's Act are rife with vague, inadequate and inconsistent language, which compounds the problem of non-enforcement. Kathmandu and other cities have hundreds of street children working as raggickers or other jobs.

In August the London-based Anti-Slavery International said that forced bonded labor takes two main forms: a feudal-based system enslaving 100,000 people in the lowland *terai* and caste-based servitude in the western hills. Trade unions are independent but are politicized and often militant.

Netherlands

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Mixed capitalist

Population: 15,545,000

PPP: \$19,238

Life Expectancy: 77.3

Ethnic Groups: Dutch (97 percent), Indonesian, others

Capital: Amsterdam

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Overview:

Since 1994, the Netherlands has been governed by a three-party coalition that includes Prime Minister Wim Kok's Labor Party, the Liberal Party and the Democrats-66 party. Throughout its term, the coalition has concentrated on economic issues, such as decreasing budget deficits and unemployment and reforming the country's extensive social welfare system. The Netherlands is on track to join the European Monetary Union (EMU) in 1999.

After the Dutch won independence from Spain in the sixteenth century, the governors of the House of Orange assumed rule over the United Provinces of the Netherlands. A constitutional monarchy based on representative government emerged in the early 19th Century. Queen Beatrix appoints the arbiters of executive authority, the Council of Ministers, and the governor of each province on the recommendation of the majority in parliament. The bicameral States General (parliament) consists of an indirectly elected First Chamber and a larger, more powerful and directly elected Second Chamber.

From the end of World War II until December 1958 the Netherlands was governed by coalitions in which the Labor and Catholic parties predominated. From 1958 to 1994, governments were formed from center-right coalitions of Christian Democrats and Liberals, with the social democratic-oriented Labor party usually in opposition.

The Netherlands' tolerant drug policy has met growing opposition in the EU, most notably from France. Drugs are not legal in the Netherlands, but they are commonly bought and sold in urban coffee shops. Dutch policy stresses prevention and treatment and treats drug use as a health rather than a legal issue. In September, the government announced plans for an experimental program to issue free heroin to 50 long-term users.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

The Dutch can change their government democratically. A series of amendments to the original constitution has provided for welfare and democratic reform. Local voting rights are accorded to foreigners after five years in residence.

A 24-member Supreme Court heads the country's independent judiciary, which also includes five courts of appeal, 19 district courts, and 62 lower courts. All judicial appointments are made by the crown on the basis of nominations by the parliament. Judges are nominally appointed for life, but retire at age 70.

The press is free and independent, although journalists practice self-censorship when reporting on the royal family. All Dutch newspapers cooperate in the administration of the independent Netherlands News Agency. Radio and television broadcasters operate autonomously under the supervision and regulation of the state and offer pluralistic views. Free speech is guaranteed, with the exceptions of promulgation of racism and incitement to racism.

Integration of racial and ethnic minorities into the social and cultural mainstream remains a difficult domestic issue. Discrimination on the basis of race or nationality is prohibited by law, and those who believe that they have been victims of discrimination may take the offender to court under civil law. According to the Criminal Investigation Service, the number of incidents of violence against foreigners and ethnic minorities has increased in recent years.

Immigrant groups face some de facto discrimination in housing and employment. Concentrated in the larger cities, immigrants suffer from a high rate of unemployment. The government has been working for several years with employers' groups and unions to reduce minority unemployment levels to the national average. As a result of these efforts in recent years, the rate of job creation among ethnic minorities has been higher than among the general population.

A new law to tighten criteria for acceptance of refugees was implemented during the year. Nevertheless, the country's asylum policies remain generous. Refugees whose applications for asylum are denied are allowed to remain temporarily.

Membership in labor unions is open to all workers, including military, police, and civil service employees. Workers are entitled to form or join unions of their own choosing without previous government authorization, and unions are free to affiliate with national trade union federations.

Freedom of religion is respected. More than half of the population is Protestant. Approximately 35 percent is Roman Catholic. The state subsidizes church-affiliated schools. The subsidies are based on the number of registered students.

Gender-based discrimination is prohibited. Women are well represented in government, education, and other fields. Same-sex marriages — including the adoption of children by homosexual couples — are likely to be legalized in 1998.

New Zealand

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Capitalist

Population: 3,602,000

PPP: \$16,851

Life Expectancy: 76.4

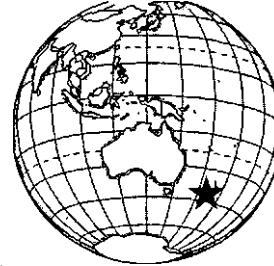
Ethnic Groups: European (79 percent), Maori (12 percent), Pacific islander (3 percent), others

Capital: Wellington

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Overview:

A right-wing faction of the National Party, the dominant partner in New Zealand's conservative governing coalition, ousted Premier Jim Bolger in October 1997 after the government's policy drift contributed to flagging popular support.

New Zealand achieved full self-government prior to World War II, and gained formal independence from Great Britain in 1947. Since 1935, political power in this parliamentary democracy has alternated between the mildly conservative National Party and the center-left Labor Party, both of which helped develop one of the world's most progressive welfare states. In response to an increasingly competitive global trade regime, in 1984 the incoming Labor government began restructuring the economy by cutting farm subsidies, trimming tariffs and privatizing many industries.

The harsh effects of the economic reforms and a deep recession contributed to a National Party landslide at the 1990 parliamentary elections. However, new Prime Minister Jim Bolger's government pushed the reforms even deeper by slashing welfare payments, reworking the labor law to discourage collective bargaining, and ending universal free hospital care.

With the economy showing signs of an upswing, the National Party narrowly won the 1993 elections with 50 seats. In a concurrent referendum, voters chose to replace the current first-past-the-post electoral system with a mixed member proportional system (MMP). The MMP is designed to increase the representation of smaller parties by combining geographic constituencies with proportional representation balloting.

At the October 12, 1996 elections for an expanded 120-seat parliament, the National Party won 44 seats; Labor, 37; New Zealand First (NZF), a populist party headed by former National Party member Winston Peters, 17; and three smaller parties, 22. After two months of negotiations, NZF joined in a coalition with the National Party.

In 1997 the strains of merging the National Party's fiscal conservatism with NZF's populism led to policy drift. In a national referendum on September 26, 92.4 percent of voters rejected a proposed compulsory private pension scheme, which had been championed by both Bolger and Peters.

On October 31 Transport Minister Jenny Shipley led an intra-party coup that forced Bolger to resign, effective one month later, as premier. In one of her first acts as the new prime minister, on December 8 Shipley, 45, announced a cabinet dominated by conservatives favoring further economic deregulation. Labor leader Helen Clark promised to make the government's rightward swing a key issue at elections due by October 1999.

The Shipley government's position on land claims by the Maori minority, a key

political and social issue, is not yet clear. Under the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi the Maori ceded sovereignty to the British in return for land rights guarantees. However, by 1890 the Maori had lost all but 4.4 million hectares of the country's 26.8 million total, and that figure has since shrunk to 1.2 million hectares. In 1994 the government established a \$633 million fund to settle all outstanding Maori land claims within ten years. Although the government has reached agreements with several tribes, many Maori leaders continue to call the fund inadequate.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

New Zealanders can change their government democratically. Four parliamentary seats are reserved for representatives of the Maori minority. In the 1996 elections 15 Maori politicians won seats, proportionate to the 13 percent Maori population.

New Zealand has no written constitution, although fundamental freedoms are respected in practice. The judiciary is independent.

The private press is varied and vigorous. The broadcast media are both privately and publicly held and express pluralistic views. Maori activists say that the state-run TVNZ television network's Maori-language programming is insufficient.

Civil society is advanced and nongovernmental organizations, trade unions and religious groups are outspoken. Religious freedom is respected. The authorities are responsive to complaints of rape and domestic violence, and a Domestic Violence Act came into effect in July 1997.

The indigenous Maori minority and the tiny Pacific Islander population face unofficial discrimination in employment and education opportunities. The 1983 Equal Employment Opportunities Policy, designed to bring more minorities into the public sector, has been only marginally successful. Maori leaders are pressing for more equitable returns on their so-called reserved land. An agreement reached in the 19th century and codified in 1955 leases Maori land in perpetuity to the "settlers." Today, the rents received by the Maori on some 2,500 leases average far lower than those received by commercial landowners.

Trade unions are independent and engage in collective bargaining. The 1991 Employment Contracts Act (ECA) has weakened unions by banning compulsory membership and other practices that had made unions the sole, mandatory negotiators on behalf of employees. Contracts are now generally drawn up at the factory or even individual level, and wages and union membership rolls have fallen. In 1994 the LLO criticized a provision of the ECA prohibiting strikes designed to force an employer to sign on to a multi-company contract.

↑ Nicaragua

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy (military-influenced) **Political Rights:** 3
Civil Liberties: 3 **Status:** Partly Free

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 4,584,000

PPP: \$1,580

Life Expectancy: 67.3

Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (69 percent), European (17 percent), black (9 percent), Indian (5 percent)

Capital: Managua

Trend Arrow: Nicaragua receives an upward trend arrow due to government efforts to curb violence.



Overview:

The formerly ruling Sandinistas held the government of conservative President Arnoldo Aleman hostage for most of 1997 by threatening massive disruptions in protest of his land reform policies and market-oriented economics policy. In April five days of protests by the Sandinistas caused Aleman to moderate his initiatives. In July he called for a "national dialogue" to seek peaceful solutions to Nicaragua's problems, but the sessions were met by a Sandinista-led boycott.

The Republic of Nicaragua was established in 1838, 17 years after independence from Spain. Its history has been marked by internal strife and dictatorship. The authoritarian Somoza regime was overthrown in 1979 by the Sandinistas. Subsequently, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) attempted to impose a Marxist dictatorship, which led to a civil war and indirect U.S. intervention on behalf of the Contras, as the anti-Sandinista insurrection was called. The FSLN in 1987 accepted a new constitution that provides for a president and a 96-member National Assembly elected every six years. Under the Sandinista regime, the economy came close to collapse, and inflation ran at 3,000 percent. Shortly before the 1990 elections, hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland were turned over to peasant cooperatives under a land reform program while Sandinista leaders confiscated the best luxury properties and businesses for themselves.

In 1990, newspaper publisher Violeta Chamorro, whose husband had been murdered by Somoza henchmen, easily defeated incumbent President Daniel Ortega. Her 14-party National Opposition Union (UNO) won a legislative majority in the National Assembly. Chamorro gave substantial authority to her son-in-law and presidency minister Antonio Lacayo. Lacayo reached an agreement with Ortega's brother Humberto, allowing him to remain head of the military. Lacayo's action caused allegations within the UNO of a co-government. UNO soon unraveled into a number of factions. Later, the FSLN split, with moderates following former Vice President Sergio Ramirez to found the social-democratic Sandinista Renewal Movement (MRS), while hardliners remained with Daniel Ortega in a rump-FSLN.

In 1994, the MRS and the anti-Lacayo UNO factions proposed constitutional reforms to limit the powers of the president and end nepotism in presidential succession. Lacayo and Daniel Ortega opposed the measure. In February 1995, after pas-

sage of a law ensuring the military's autonomy, Humberto Ortega turned over command of the military to General Joaquin Cuadra. The army was reduced from 90,000 to 15,000 troops. Despite the apparent "depoliticization" of the army, including the integration into the armed forces of former Contras, the leadership remained essentially the same. The armed forces continued to own a profitable network of businesses and property amassed under the Sandinista regime.

Mrs. Chamorro was forbidden by law to seek a second term. The 1996 elections were held under the auspices of the five-member Supreme Election Council (CSE), an independent branch of government. The CSE was burdened with issuing national identification cards and voting documents, and delays and confusion ensued over registration. Much of the confusion was due to a fraudulent 1995 census that grossly undercounted the population.

During the 1996 campaign, 24 candidates vied for the presidency. Ortega tried to portray himself as a moderate committed to national unity and reconciliation. Aleman ran on a platform that promised economic reforms, dismantling of the Sandinista-era bureaucracy, cleaning up the army and returning property confiscated by the Sandinistas to its original owners. Unlike President Chamorro, who sought negotiation and compromise with the Sandinistas, Aleman took a hard line against the FSLN. He defeated Ortega 51 to 38 percent, avoiding a run-off.

President-elect Aleman's top priority was reform of the army and the police. President Chamorro had served as nominal Minister of Defense, with real power exercised by General Humberto Ortega as military commander. President-elect Aleman named civilian Jaime Cuadra Somarriba as head of a civilian-led Defense Ministry, with a new military code reinforcing his position. The size of the national police was reduced from 16,000 to 6,800, but its leadership is still made up of old Sandinistas. In late December more than 200 of the country's last recognized political rebels laid down their arms, as part of a pacification effort designed to demobilize various left and right-wing armed groups that continued to press their claims against the government through violence.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Nicaraguans can change their government democratically. Though the FSLN and other parties claimed that the elections were illegitimate, they were deemed free and fair by international observers. The 1996 elections were plagued by irregularities such as armed groups disrupting registration in rural areas. In general, the military remains a powerful political force through substantial property and monetary holdings.

Political parties are allowed to organize; over 20 candidates ran for president, and nine parties or blocs are represented in the National Assembly. But political and civic activities continue to be restricted by intermittent political violence, corruption and drug-related crime.

Numerous bands of former Contras continue to operate in the north, competing in criminal activities with groups of former Sandinista soldiers. The cash-strapped government has been unable to guarantee land grants or credits to former Contras, and thus cannot implement the core of the 1990 Contra demobilization agreement. The Organization of American States (OAS) estimates that more than 300 former Contras have been murdered (some analysts put the number at 700—by the army and the Sandinistas). A Tripartite Commission, set up by President Chamorro in 1992,

looked into the unresolved deaths of former Contras. The commission concluded its review in October 1996 and recommended action in 83 human rights cases that involve the deaths of 164 ex-combatants. Some progress was made in 1997 in getting the former soldiers to lay down their arms.

Violence and lack of government control over large parts of the country place de facto restrictions on freedom of movement.

Faced by more than 5,000 claims to property confiscated by the Sandinista regime, the so-called *piñata*, the government in 1995 passed a law providing some compensation in the most egregious cases. Cash-starved peasants who received land during the Sandinista reforms have been selling it to wealthy estate owners. In September 1997 disputes over some 14,000 confiscated properties appeared to be resolved in principle between the FSLN and the government.

Nicaragua's human rights groups have reported continuing intimidation, kidnappings, false arrest, arbitrary detention and torture. The judicial system is weak and often corrupt, and prison conditions are very poor. Twenty-five judges were dismissed in 1997 on charges of corruption, and five lawyers employed by the judiciary were suspended for breaches of professional ethics.

The print media are varied and partisan, representing hardline and moderate Sandinista, as well as pro- and anti-government positions. Before leaving office, the Sandinistas "privatized" the national radio system, mostly to Sandinista loyalists. There are five television stations, three of which carry news programming with partisan political content. A September 1996 law established a professional journalism guild requiring journalists in the Managua area to have a bachelors' degree in journalism or five years of journalistic experience; opposition forces claimed the law was a blow to freedom of expression. Government attempts to block publication of pro-Sandinista papers, such as *Barricada*, on account of their outstanding debts, have met with protest. In July 1997, the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters scored the Aleman government's bias in awarding advertising contracts, which represent up to one third of all advertising in the country. It accused the government of excluding "television stations, publications and radio broadcasters which are independent or which do not agree with its aims, interests and objectives," even though the excluded media represent the largest audience.

Labor rights are complicated by the Sandinistas' use of unions as violent instruments to influence government economic policy. By means of the public sector unions, the Sandinistas have managed to gain ownership of more than three dozen privatized state enterprises. The legal rights of non-Sandinista unions are not fully guaranteed. Citizens have no effective recourse when labor laws are violated either by the government or by violent Sandinista actions.

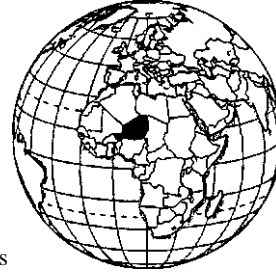
Indigenous peoples, about six percent of the population, live in two autonomous regions, the Northern Autonomous Atlantic Region (RAAN) and the Southern Autonomous Atlantic Region (RAAS). These are primarily Miskito, Sumo, Rama and Garifuna peoples. Despite some efforts by the government to include indigenous peoples in the political process, they have been left out of the debate on land use and expropriation.

Niger

Polity: Military rule
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 9,465,000
PPP: \$787
Life Expectancy: 47.1

Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 5
Status: Not Free

Ethnic Groups: Hausa (56 percent), Djerma (22 percent), Fulani (9 percent), Tuareg (8 percent), Arab, Dhaza, others
Capital: Niamey



Overview:

Niger's regression from its brief experiment in open multi-party democracy continued in 1997 with further diminution of civil liberties. President Ibrahim Bare Mainassara, leader of a January 1996 military coup and the proclaimed winner of an unfree and fraudulent election five months later, tightened controls over political opposition and the independent media. Opposition parties grouped under the Front for the Restoration and Defense of Democracy (FRDD) that boycotted November 1996 legislative elections were increasingly marginalized. Pro-Bare groups now hold 69 of 83 seats in the National Assembly. Army mutinies in two provincial cities in June were easily subdued by loyal troops, and soldiers have been appointed to key regional administrative positions. Simmering rebellions in the north and far east of the vast country flared during the year even as some peace pacts were announced. Despite his usurpation of democratic rule and deepening repression, Bare is receiving renewed international aid from France, the European Union and the United Nations.

For three decades after receiving independence from France in 1960, Niger was governed by one-party and military regimes dominated by leaders of Hausa and Djerma ethnicity. Thirteen years of direct army control were transformed into a one-party state in 1987 under nominal civilian leadership when General Ali Seibou became head of state and leader of the National Movement for a Development Society (MNSD). Niger joined the Africa-wide trend towards democratization in 1990 as the umbrella Niger Union of Trade Union Workers (USTN) led massive pro-democracy demonstrations backed by international pressure for reform.

A new constitution was adopted by a national referendum in 1992 after an all-party national conference. The Alliance of Forces for Change (AFC) party led by Mahamane Ousmane won a majority of seats in February 1993 legislative elections deemed free and fair by international observers. A month later Ousmane won a five-year term as the country's first democratically-elected president. Defections cost the AFC its parliamentary majority, and new elections were called for January 1995. The elections were judged as credible as the former sole legal party, the MNSD, won a parliamentary majority, and its leader was named prime minister. Rivalry between president and prime minister paralyzed the government and provoked confrontations between the presidential guard and the regular army. Colonel Bare cited elected leaders' inability to work together as justification for his coup.

The 1995 peace pact that ended a four-year rebellion by the country's Tuareg nomads in northern Niger continued to generally hold after further agreement was reached on integration of former rebel fighters into the national army. However, some

Tuareg factions and other rebels mounted military operations. Guerrilla fighters of the Democratic Renewal Front (FDR), made up of ethnic Kanuri and Toubou people engaged in sporadic actions to call attention to alleged discrimination against their groups. Other unrest included deadly clashes between herders and farmers in southwestern Niger.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

The Nigerien people cannot today choose their government freely. The January 1996 military coup overthrew a democratically elected president and national assembly.

The July 1996 presidential election held under a revised constitution was deemed neither free nor fair by most independent observers, although French observers applied unusually elastic standards to deem the polls credible. November 1996 parliamentary elections were held in an atmosphere of intense intimidation and boycotted by most opposition parties. Coup leader General Bare's nominal civilian administration is a military dictatorship for all intents and purposes.

The revised 1996 constitution guarantees many basic rights but gives more power to the presidency. The formal allocation of constitutional authority and human rights safeguards counts little today in Niger, however, and almost all power is concentrated in the hands of President Baré. The judicial system is by law independent and retains limited autonomy despite the military-dominated regime. Courts are subject to external influences and constrained by lack of training and resources. A State Security Court whose decisions cannot be appealed was reactivated in 1996, and the period of legal incommunicado detention extended to two months. Traditional courts handle some civil matters.

Freedom of expression guaranteed by the constitution is under severe attack. In March, soldiers vandalized the independent *Anfani* radio station, and the station manager was later detained until he withdrew accusations of military involvement in the attack. A press law adopted in June requires government licensing of journalists and provides stiff penalties for a variety of offenses, including "insulting" the president. In October, editor Moussa Tchangari of the newsweekly *Alternative* was imprisoned for three months for publishing documents said to prove governmental corruption. President of the Nigerien Human Rights League El Hadji Bagnou Bonkoukou was also arrested in October, he in connection with an interview given to a newspaper in Benin charging Niger's army with torture. In April university professor and columnist Souley Adjé was abducted and badly beaten by men believed to be military intelligence agents. Licenses to operate private radio stations have been granted, but the government still controls most broadcasting and publishes a daily newspaper. More than a dozen private newspapers, some strongly partisan, published regularly and carried critiques of politicians and policies of all parties.

Constitutionally guaranteed freedom of assembly and association are not respected. Authorities can prohibit gatherings they say may lead to violence and have banned or dispersed numerous opposition demonstrations. Freedom of religion is respected, although political parties formed on religious, ethnic or regional bases are barred. Non-governmental organizations devoted to human rights research and advocacy are under increasing pressure.

Efforts to revise portions of the legal code most discriminatory against women have been blocked by Islamic conservatives. Some laws appear to contradict consti-

tutional guarantees, and women also suffer extensive societal discrimination. Family law gives women inferior status in inheritance rights and divorce. Domestic violence against women is reportedly common. There is only one female member of parliament.

Although only about 5 percent of the country's work force is in the formal sector, unionized civil servants and other wage earners have exercised formidable political power. Notice of intent must be given and negotiations attempted before a strike is legal, and workers can be required to provide essential services. Collective bargaining agreements are negotiated under the framework of a tripartite agreement among government, employers and unions. The government cracked down hard on trade unionists in 1997, keeping 18 strike leaders detained in April, despite their acquittal on criminal charges.

Nigeria

Polity: Military rule **Political Rights:** 7
Economy: Capitalist **Civil Liberties:** 6
Population: 103,912,000 **Status:** Not Free
PPP: \$1,351
Life Expectancy: 51.1
Ethnic Groups: Hausa (21 percent), Yoruba (20 percent), Ibo (17 percent), Fulani (9 percent), Kanuri, others
Capital: Abuja



Overview:

The Nigerian military dictatorship continued to claim that its program for a transition to constitutional civilian rule capped by a presidential election in October 1998 was on course. Five legal political parties expanded operations, but broad political repression continued through 1997, as opposition politicians, journalists and environmental activists remained constant targets of harassment, detention, torture and murder by state security services. The June 1996 daylight assassination of Kurdiat Abiola, wife of the imprisoned victor of 1993's democratic presidential election Moshood Abiola, remains officially unsolved. Several oppositionists have been detained or charged in connection with a spate of unsolved bombings, despite no apparent evidence of their involvement.

Speculation increased that General Sani Abacha, who seized power in a November 1993 palace coup and heads the ruling junta known as the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC), will himself stand for president under constitutional revisions to allow serving military officers to hold civil office. Abacha may be as unwilling to retire his decree power and military tribunals as his uniform. On Nigeria's October 1 National Day, he claimed that all restrictions on political activities have been lifted," adding a stern warning against "dastardly acts" of opponents seeking to "introduce the alien culture of adventurism." Opposition forces severely hindered by repression are also hurt by their own lack of cohesion. The United Action for Democracy, a new coalition formed in May, is hoping to concentrate opposition forces. Economic stagnation, continuing corruption and a severe gasoline shortage in one the world's largest oil producing countries are fanning increased popular discontent. As repression continues, ethnic tensions are

high, and Nigeria's 100 million people are closer to serious internal conflict than at any time since the horrific Biafra civil war of 1967-70.

Nigeria has known only ten years under elected governments since independence from British rule in 1960. Since 1983 a succession of military dictatorships dominated by officers from the mainly Muslim north of the country have ruled the country, exercising firm control over the far wealthier southern regions. The junta's exclusionary policies could evoke ethnic violence that would dwarf Rwanda's genocide. Nigeria's full and final transition to civilian rule was hoped for after the June 1993 presidential polls, but the military coup has further entrenched both authoritarianism and the country's profound ethnic divisions. The military's new plan includes several sets of elections leading to a new national government in October 1998.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Nigerians are denied their right to choose their representatives in open elections. Chief Moshood K.O. Abiola's 1993 election victory was unrecognized by the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida. The army installed an interim government nominally charged with holding new elections. A surprise high court ruling declared the interim government illegal as the country was wracked by massive strikes against the regime. General Abacha, a principal architect of previous coups, moved in November 1993 to take power himself. A predominantly military Provisional Ruling Council (PRC) was appointed and all democratic structures dissolved and political parties banned. Chief Abiola was arrested in June 1994 after declaring himself Nigeria's rightful president. Abacha's open-ended term of office was affirmed by a compliant "constitutional convention" in 1995. The blatant rejection of the June 1993 poll results offer scant hope the army will accept any election result that displeases it.

Decrees by the current and former military juntas severely restrict civil liberties and often make a mockery of civil court proceedings. Persons suspected of undefined "acts prejudicial to state security or harmful to the economic well-being of the country" may be detained without charge. The PRC vice chairman or the police commissioner may order anyone detained for up to 3 months. The right of habeas corpus was effectively annulled by Decree 14 of 1994 that bars courts from ordering that prisoners be brought to court.

The military dictatorship has kept a tight rein on all opposition. Notable among political prisoners is senior politicians and ex-general Olusegun Obasanjo who is serving a long prison sentence. Obasanjo led a military regime from 1976-79, but relinquished power to a civilian government. Musa Yar'Adua who was the number two in the same military regime and was mooted as a civilian successor to Abacha acceptable to the army died in custody in December. The cause of his death remains unknown. In March, several prominent democracy activists were detained, including Dr. Frederick Fasehun of the Campaign for Democracy and former Finance Minister Chief Olu Falae, who were charged with treason in connection with several deadly bombings mainly aimed at military personnel. The regime has brought treason charges against exiled democracy activists, including Nobel prize winning author Wole Soyinka, and detained some of their relatives without charge or trial.

All writings of Ken Saro-Wiwa, executed in November 1995 along with other men, are banned. Saro-Wiwa provoked the army's wrath by exposing military brutality against southeastern Nigeria's Ogoni people. Oil drilling has usurped and despoiled the Ogoni's

traditional land. Nineteen other Ogoni are imprisoned awaiting trial on similar charges. Conditions for them and other prisoners are harsh and often life-threatening. Nearly 10,000 prisoners are reported to have died of disease or other causes from 1990-95. Almost 36,000 prisoners were detained awaiting trial, some for several years. In July, leaders of the Islamist Brotherhood were charged with sedition after being held ten months incommunicado.

Media freedom was under severe attack in 1997 as journalists were arrested and newspapers forced to suspend publication. In October, Soji Omotunde, editor of *African Concord*, a magazine owned by the Moshood Abiola, was abducted. In July, a senior correspondent for the magazine, Mohammed Adamu, was seized by security agents. In September, chairwoman of the Imo State Council of the Nigerian Union of Journalists Oby Eke Agbai disappeared after being beaten by security agents. Also in September, the Lagos home of *Tell* magazine editor-in-chief Nosa Igiebor was invaded by security agents who arrested his wife. Moshood Fayemiwo, publisher of *Razor* magazine, was allegedly abducted by Nigerian agents from Benin in February 1997 and held since in an underground cell at a Lagos barracks. Chris Anyanwu, a journalist convicted of treason in a 1995 show trial, is reportedly seriously ill in a prison in the northern city of Kaduna. The threat of seizure and closure is evoking greater self-censorship and the threat of draconian action hangs over every Nigerian journalist. Some pro-democratic pirate radio stations have transmitted sporadically.

Religious and ethnic strife has also flared. Northern Nigeria's Christian minority has come under repeated attack as Shiite fundamentalists demanding Islamicization were subject to severe military crack-downs. Repeated clashes among ethnic groups in the southeast delta region took hundreds of lives and disrupted oil production.

Union activities are tightly controlled, and the junta has taken numerous actions contravening international labor standards to which it is a party. The regime has removed the leaderships of many unions and appointed its own head of the Nigerian Labor Congress, which it has also named as the sole central labor confederation. Four oil workers union leaders have been detained incommunicado without trial or even charges since the army quashed industrial unrest in August and September 1994.

A November 1996 economic reform plan titled "Vision 2010" outlined bold proposals for liberalization and privatization. However, the regime has backed away from substantive change, and Nigeria's economic performance remains lackluster at best. Development prospects are hindered by endemic corruption, pervasive government involvement in the economy through parastatals and a plethora of other regulatory disincentives. Economic prospects are further diminished by reduced foreign aid. Alleging that Nigeria has failed to act in good faith to curb large-scale drugs trafficking, the U.S. has "decertified" Nigeria, making the country ineligible for U.S. assistance beyond basic humanitarian aid. Decertification also requires that the U.S. vote against loans to Nigeria from major multilateral development banks. However, massive oil and gas revenues from foreign companies including Shell (Anglo-Dutch), Elf (French) and Agip (Italian) and America's Chevron continue, providing three-quarters of Nigeria's national budget and 90% of its foreign exchange. An embargo on petroleum exports is the only effective tool to pressure the junta to respect human rights and restore democracy, but has been shunned by Western governments whose companies earn immense profits from pumping Nigeria's oil.

Norway

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
Economy: Mixed capitalist

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free

Population: 4,384,000

PPP: \$21,346

Life Expectancy: 77.5

Ethnic Groups: Norwegian, indigenous Finnish and Lappic (Saami) minorities, immigrant groups

Capital: Oslo



Overview:

In October, a centrist government took power in Norway for the first time in 25 years. New Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik leads a coalition of the Center Party, Liberal Party, and his own Christian People's Party. In September elections, the three parties had won a total of 42 seats in the 165-member Storting (parliament).

European Union (EU) membership, which the traditionally dominant Labor Party supports, remains a contentious political issue. In 1994, Norwegians voted against membership. Thereafter, the Labor government sought to delay reconsideration until after the 2001 parliamentary elections. In the current coalition, the Liberal Party supports membership, while the Center Party strongly opposes any form of EU association.

In 1996, Norway became an observer in the Schengen Convention, an accord that ends border controls, establishes a common visa policy and mandates close cooperation in police matters. Norway enjoys nearly full access to the EU's single market through membership in the European Economic Area.

The Eisvold Convention, Norway's current constitution, was adopted during a period of de facto independence immediately prior to the acceptance of the Swedish monarch as king of Norway in 1814. After the peaceful dissolution of its relationship with the Swedish crown, Norway chose a sovereign from the Danish royal house and began to function as a constitutional monarchy with a multiparty parliamentary structure.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Norwegians can change their government democratically. The Storting is directly elected by universal suffrage and proportional representation for a four-year term. It then selects one quarter of its own members to serve as the upper chamber (Lagting). Neither body is subject to dissolution. A vote of no-confidence in the Storting results in the resignation of the cabinet, and the leader of the party that holds the most seats is then asked to form a new government.

Since 1989, the approximately 20,000 Lappic (Saamic) minority has elected an autonomous, 39-member assembly that functions as an advisory body on issues such as regional control of natural resources and preservation of Saami culture. In October, King Harald V apologized to the Saami for the historic repression and "policies of

Norwegianization" by the state.

The constitution guarantees freedom of peaceful assembly, association and the right to strike. Sixty percent of the work force belongs to unions, which are free from government control. Collective bargaining is customary for the purpose of work constraints.

The independent judicial system is headed by a Supreme Court and operates at the local and national levels. Judges are appointed by the king with advice from the ministry of justice. A special labor relations court handles disputes between both public and private sector employers and workers.

Human rights are widely respected. In April, however, the government released a European Council commission report that recommended that Norway review its legislation against discrimination and take local preventive action against xenophobia and anti-Semitism. The Labor government had initially suppressed the report, which also criticized Norwegian police and prosecutors for failing to act upon claims of racial harassment and discrimination against immigrants. Anti-immigrant sentiment has continued to grow in the country, even though strict laws prevent more than a few thousand refugees from settling in Norway each year.

Women's rights are protected under a law that provides for equal wages for men and women engaged in the same work activity. Women constitute approximately 45 percent of the labor force, with half employed part-time. They are concentrated in sales, clerical, and social service jobs. In the Storting, women hold approximately 40 percent of the seats—more than in any other national assembly.

The state finances the Evangelical Lutheran Church, in which more than 90 percent of the population hold at least nominal membership. While other churches receive public funding if they register with the government, there are some restrictions on religious freedom. The law requires that the sovereign and at least half of the cabinet be Lutheran. Potential employers are permitted to inquire about applicants' religious convictions and practices for certain teaching positions. The state religion is taught in schools. Religious groups are required to register with the government only if they seek state support. Discrimination on the basis of race, gender, language, and class are prohibited by law.

Freedom of the press is constitutionally guaranteed, and many newspapers are subsidized by the state in order to promote political pluralism. The country enjoys an especially strong regional press. A majority of newspapers are privately owned and openly partisan. Although radio and television broadcasting is also funded by the state, the government does not interfere with editorial content. Private radio stations were authorized in 1982. The first commercial television channel was licensed in 1991. The Film Control Board has the right to censor blasphemous, overly violent, and pornographic films. The power to censor alleged blasphemy has not been exercised in more than 20 years.

Oman

Polity: Traditional monarchy
Economy: Capitalist-statist
Population: 2,281,000
PPP: \$10,078
Life Expectancy: 70.0
Ethnic Groups: Arab (74 percent), Baluchi, Indian
Capital: Muscat

Political Rights: 6
Civil Liberties: 6
Status: Not Free



Trend Arrow: Oman receives an up trend arrow for its recent increased efforts to widen participation in government.

Overview:

Oman held elections for the 82-member *Majlis al Shura*, or Consultative Council, on October 16. For the first time since the creation of the council in 1991, women in all districts were permitted to cast ballots and run as candidates.

Oman, an absolute sultanate, gained independence from Great Britain in 1951. The current sultan, Qabus ibn Sa'id al Sa'id, overthrew his father in a palace coup to take power in 1970. A five-year rebellion by left-wing guerrillas opposed to the sultan's regime was crushed in 1975 with military assistance from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iran, and Pakistan. Since a formal ceasefire in 1976, the sultan, who rules by decree with the advice of a Council of Ministers, has faced little opposition.

In 1991, the sultan organized caucuses of prominent citizens in each of the country's 59 provinces to nominate three citizens per province for the new majlis. The Sultan selected one nominee per province to sit in the majlis. The majlis comments on legislation and voices citizens' concerns but has no legislative power. In 1994 the sultan named an expanded, 80-seat majlis to sit through 1997. Two more members were appointed with the 1997 elections.

Some 51,000 selected Omanis voted for their choice of delegates to the next majlis, whose term ends in 2000. Of 736 candidates, 164 were selected by voters. The sultan chose from among those nominees to fill the council's 82 seats. Twenty-seven women were among the original candidates, but only two were selected, both outgoing council members.

A cabinet reshuffle in December created a new foreign affairs cabinet post and a separate Justice ministry. Two new women undersecretaries were also appointed, bringing the total to three.

Oman continued to pursue its vigorous program of economic reform and diversification in 1997. According to a survey by *The Middle East*, massive spending on infrastructure, rising oil output, and a surge in non-oil private sector activity have produced positive results. Since the early 1990s, Omanis enjoy a higher standard of living. Social services, public utilities, health, and education are on par with industrialized nations, and infant mortality rates compare well with Western Europe. Plans for development into the next century include greater liberalization, deregulation, and heavy investment in the non-oil sector.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Omanis cannot change their government democratically. The sultan has absolute power and rules by decree. The Basic Law, Oman's first de facto written constitution, was promulgated by the sultan in November 1996. It does not provide for political parties or direct elections. Citizens have access to senior officials through the traditional practice of petitioning their patrons, usually the sultan-appointed local governor, for handling grievances. Citizens may also appeal to the sultan directly during his annual three-week tour of the country.

Calls for autonomy sporadically come from Shihayeen tribesmen in Rous al-Jibal province in the Musandam Peninsula. Administered by Oman since 1970, the province is geographically separate from the rest of the country.

Oman's rudimentary judicial system operates largely according to tradition. There are no jury trials; a single judge tries misdemeanors, and a panel of three judges tries felony and national security offenses. Arbitrary arrest, mistreatment of prisoners, detention without charge beyond the legal 24-hour limit and denial of access to legal counsel have been reported. The Criminal Code does not specify the rights of the accused. In practice, defendants are presumed innocent and do enjoy some procedural rights.

Criticism of the sultan is prohibited, although citizens do criticize government policies. All publications are censored, and foreign publications critical of Oman are banned. Journalists practice self-censorship. Two of the four daily newspapers are government-owned, while the other two rely heavily on government subsidies. Coverage in all four supports government policy. The state-controlled television and radio carry only official views. Private broadcast media are not permitted.

The new Basic Law provides for limited freedom of assembly. All public gatherings must be approved by the government, though this is not always strictly enforced. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor must register all associations, and political groups and human rights organizations are prohibited.

Islam is the state religion, and the majority of Omanis are Sunni Muslim. Mosque sermons are monitored for content by the authorities. Christians, Protestants, and Hindus may worship freely at churches and temples built on land donated by the sultan, but only Muslims may publish religious books.

Despite noticeable gains in education and career opportunities, women face discrimination in the job market. Women comprise approximately half the students at Sultan Qabus University and nearly twenty percent of civil servants. Women must receive permission from their husbands or nearest male relatives to travel abroad, and under Islamic law face discrimination in inheritance claims. Female genital mutilation is practiced in some rural areas.

There are no trade unions, and no provisions for them under law. Employers of more than 50 workers must form a body of labor and management representatives to discuss working conditions. However, these committees may not negotiate wages. Strikes are illegal, though worker actions occasionally occur. Foreign workers must obtain letters of release from employers before they may change jobs.

Pakistan



Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy (military influenced) **Political Rights:** 4 **Civil Liberties:** 5 **Status:** Partly Free

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 133,516,000

PPP: \$2,154

Life Expectancy: 62.3

Ethnic Groups: Pujabi, Sindhi, Pathan, Urdu, Baluchi, Afghan, Mohajir, others

Capital: Islamabad

Overview:

Nawaz Sharif led his Pakistan Muslim League (PML) to a landslide victory in the February 3, 1997 elections, three months after the president dismissed a government headed by Sharif's archrival, Benazir Bhutto. In December Sharif, a Punjab-based industrialist, emerged victorious from a protracted power struggle against the president and judiciary. Many observers saw the crisis as the latest power play by a political class uninterested in the country's slide into bankruptcy and lawlessness.

Pakistan was founded as a Muslim homeland in August 1947 with the partition of the former British India. In 1971 Bangladesh (ex-East Pakistan) achieved independence after a nine-month civil war. The 1973 constitution provides for a lower National Assembly, which currently has 217 seats (including ten reserved for non-Muslims) elected for a five-year term, and an 87-seat Senate appointed by the four provincial assemblies. The president is chosen by an electoral college for a five year term.

Pakistan has been under military rule for nearly half of its 50 years of independence. Governments headed by generals have suspended political and civil liberties, crushed democratic institutions and fostered a culture of violence. In 1985 the last military ruler, General Zia ul-Haq, amended the constitution to allow the president to dismiss elected governments. Successive presidents sacked four elected governments between 1985 and 1996, and none has served a full term. Since Zia's death in 1988 the president, premier and army chief of staff have informally shared power. There is widespread disillusionment with a corrupt political elite, dominated by rural landowners and industrialists, that has failed to address poverty, income disparities and illiteracy.

The 1993 elections, held after the president dismissed a government headed by Sharif, returned Bhutto to a second term as premier. Between 1993 and 1996 political and sectarian violence killed at least 3,000 people in Karachi, the commercial capital. On November 5, 1996 President Farooq Ahmed Leghari ordered fresh elections after dismissing Bhutto's government on charges of corruption, undermining the judiciary, and sanctioning extrajudicial killings during an army crackdown in Karachi.

In January 1997 Leghari established a controversial ten-member council that gives the armed forces a formal political and security role. Barely 35 percent of voters turned out for the February election. The PML and its allies won more than 160 seats, and Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party, 18. Regional parties and independents won the remainder. On April 1 parliament repealed the president's constitutional powers to unilaterally sack elected national and provincial governments, and made the premier's advice on top military appointments binding. In July Sharif won parliamentary ap-

proval of a law tightening party discipline in parliament.

Sharif also cut taxes and tariffs to stimulate the economy, but rising violence in Punjab and Sindh provinces threatened to undercut his efforts. On August 13, parliament approved a harsh anti-terrorism law. Because the law authorizes a parallel court system, the judiciary views it as a threat. The confrontation sharpened in early September when Sharif tried to block the appointment of five additional Supreme Court justices.

In early November the chief justice began contempt proceedings against Sharif. The premier, in danger of losing his parliamentary seat, threatened impeachment proceedings against President Leghari for blocking a new law making it easier to appeal a contempt conviction. The crisis ended on December 2 when Leghari resigned and a ten-justice panel ruling on a case brought against Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah ousted him. Human rights advocates expressed concern that Sharif, who arguably emerged as the country's strongest premier ever, would rule in an autocratic manner. On December 31, parliament and the provincial legislatures elected Rafiq Tarar as president.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Pakistanis can change their government through elections. The electoral system concentrates political power in a rural landowning elite that dominates both main parties. Some 80 percent of parliamentary seats represent rural areas, but this is based on a 1981 census, and there has since been a significant shift to urban areas. Democratic institutions are weak, presidential ordinances are frequently used to bypass parliament and basic liberties are undermined by a weak rule of law and widespread corruption.

Because the Northern Areas are part of the disputed territory of Kashmir, its million-plus residents are not represented in parliament. According to the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), some 20 million bonded laborers cannot vote. In the 1997 elections citizens of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas voted for the first time. Some of the 35,000 male tribal leaders threatened to fine families and burn houses for allowing women to vote; consequently few women voted. Christians and other minorities must vote on separate electoral rolls.

The Supreme Court is independent. But lower courts are manipulated by influential persons, and government officials frequently ignore court orders. As premier, Bhutto appointed cronies and transferred judges at will. In 1996 the Supreme Court ruled that the government should make permanent appointments to fill vacancies and consult with chief justices over appointments and voided previous appointments that violated these guidelines. Local tribal law often prevails in rural areas.

The police, are ill-disciplined, subject to political interference and frequently involved in crimes. Police routinely torture detainees to extract confessions or bribes, use excessive force in routine situations, rape female detainees and prisoners, are responsible for scores of deaths in custody and commit dozens of extrajudicial executions each year of criminals and opposition politicians. Successive governments have used a 1960 public order law, complaints registered with the police or outright false criminal charges to arrest and detain political opponents.

The rural-urban electoral disparities referred to above have led to a neglect of urban development, contributing to social unrest. During Bhutto's second term both security forces and the Immigrants National Movement (MQM), representing Urdu-speak-

ers who migrated to Pakistan after Partition, committed considerable human rights abuses. In 1997 factional MQM violence in Karachi left more than 225 dead by July and required the deployment of 8,000 paramilitary troops; there were more than 400 political-related killings in Sindh province overall. Sectarian violence in Punjab between the Sunni-based *Sipah-e-Sahaba* and the minority Shiite *Sipah-e-Mohammed* extremist groups killed more than 170 people by early August.

The government initially responded with mass arbitrary detentions in both provinces. When this failed, parliament passed an anti-terrorism law in August giving police broad powers to conduct searches, make arrests and use lethal force, thereby indemnifying officers from prosecution. The law created special courts that must conclude trials within seven days, grant defendants limited rights of appeal and offer few safeguards. Critics fear the law will encourage police brutality. The law also authorized the government to ban groups or associations.

Laws and constitutional provisions restricting freedom of expression cover broad subjects including the army and Islam. Authorities occasionally detain, file false charges against, threaten or otherwise harass journalists. Party activists and Islamic fundamentalists often harass or assault journalists, attack newspaper offices, and interfere with newspaper distribution. Nevertheless, Pakistan's press is among the most outspoken in South Asia. The government owns nearly all electronic media, and news coverage favors the ruling party. Police forcibly break up some demonstrations.

Section 295-C of the penal code, added in 1986, mandates the death sentence for defiling the Prophet Mohammed. Thus far appeals courts have overturned all blasphemy convictions, and magistrates are now required to conduct investigations before accepting charges. Nevertheless, some Muslims have filed spurious blasphemy charges against Ahmadis, Christians, Hindus and other religious minorities with whom they have commercial or personal disputes, and minorities have been severely harassed by Islamic fundamentalists. In February Muslims burned or looted 12 churches and 600 homes in Khanewal in Punjab following allegations that Christians had defiled the Koran. A 1984 ordinance prohibits Ahmadis, who are legally considered non-Muslims, from calling themselves Muslim and worshipping as Muslims. According to Amnesty International, 152 Ahmadis have been charged with blasphemy, and many have spent lengthy periods in pre-trial detention or prison. Christians, Ahmadis and other religious minorities also face economic and social discrimination.

The 1979 Zina Ordinance introduced *Shari'a* (Islamic law) into the penal code and covers sexual offenses. In practice the concept of extra-marital sexual intercourse has been used to imprison many women, often as part of marital disputes, or when a rape victim cannot meet the strict legal requirement to prove the crime and is then charged with adultery. Although the most severe penalties, including death for adultery, have never been carried out, the ordinance deters many women from reporting rape and may even encourage rape by police. In a landmark decision, in March a court ruled that an adult Muslim woman can choose her marriage partner without her guardian's consent. A counter case is pending. Violence against women remains a serious problem.

The Karachi-based Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid estimates that criminal gangs have trafficked some 200,000 Bangladeshi women to Pakistan, often with the complicity of local officials. Many are sold into prostitution and are subjected to physical abuse. Some 2,000 trafficking victims are detained under criminal charges,

mainly for illegal entry or under the Zina Ordinances for extramarital sex.

The HRCP estimates there are 11 to 12 million child laborers, many of them bonded, working in brick kilns, carpet factories, farms and elsewhere. Politicians, landowners and police reportedly run private jails for bonded laborers, despite 1992 legislation outlawing bonded labor and canceling enslaving debts. Trade unions are independent, but several sectors cannot organize, and unions are prohibited in export processing zones. In 1996 the Berlin-based Transparency International rated Pakistan as the second most corrupt country in the world.

Palau

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 17,000
PPP: na
Life Expectancy: na
Ethnic Groups: Palauan (Micronesian, Malayan and Melanesian), mixed Palauan-European-Asian, Filipino
Capital: Koror

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Overview:

The 200-odd Micronesian islands of the Carolines chain in the western Pacific were transferred from Spanish to German control in 1899. The Japanese seized the islands in 1914 and administered them under a League of Nations mandate from 1920. The United States Navy occupied the islands in 1944, and in 1947 the possessions became part of the U.S. Trust Territory of the Pacific under a United Nations mandate.

The 1979 constitution vests executive powers in a president who is directly elected for a four-year term. A vice president is elected on a separate ticket. The bicameral parliament consists of a Senate, currently comprised of 14 members, that is elected on a geographic basis and a 16-seat House of Representatives with one member elected from each of the states.

Between 1983 and 1990 the territory held seven plebiscites on a Compact of Free Association with the United States. None managed to cross the three-fourths threshold required for approval. In 1992 voters amended the constitution to require a simple majority for passage of the Compact. In concurrent balloting, vice president Kuniwo Nakamura defeated challenger Johnson Toribiong in the presidential race.

In 1993 voters finally approved the Compact with a 68 percent majority. Under the Compact, Palau is a sovereign country, but the U.S. remains responsible for defense. The U.S. is providing \$442 million in aid over 15 years in exchange for the right to maintain military facilities. Palau proclaimed independence in October 1994.

American aid and East Asian investment have supported a modest economic boom, which helped president Nakamura win re-election on November 6, 1996 over Paramount Chief Ibedul Yutaka Gibbons. East Asian investment could emerge as an even more important source of income after the guaranteed American assistance under the Compact winds down. However, opposition leader Toribiong continued to criticize Nakamura's strategy for increasing the number of foreign tourists and workers.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Palau can change their government democratically. Elections are competitive and tend to revolve around personalities and issues rather than party affiliations. A 16-member Council of Chiefs advises the government on issues involving tribal laws and customs. The chiefs wield considerable traditional authority, and there are often tensions between the chiefs and political leaders.

The judiciary is independent. The rule of law is strong, although Palau is a transshipment point for illegal drugs going from Southeast Asia to the U.S. There are both government and private newspapers, although the state-run radio and television broadcast services are the primary sources of news and information. There is also a private cable television station.

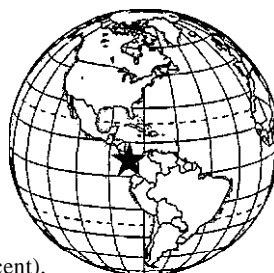
Inheritance of property and traditional rank is matrilineal, and each of the two traditional high chiefs is chosen by one of the two Councils of Women Chiefs, giving women a high status in society. Nevertheless, domestic violence is a continuing problem.

Freedom of religion exists in this predominantly Roman Catholic country. Freedom of association is respected, although there are few elements of civil society. Workers can organize and bargain collectively, although in practice there is little organized labor activity. There is no legal right to strike, and legislation protecting workers' rights is inadequate. Foreign workers comprise nearly half the labor force and 20 percent of the population and face discrimination in employment and education, as well as random violence. Employers occasionally coerce foreign workers, particularly domestics and unskilled laborers, into remaining at their jobs by withholding passports.

Panama

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy
Economy: Capitalist-statist
Population: 2,655,000
PPP: \$6,104
Life Expectancy: 73.2
Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (70 percent), West Indian (14 percent), European (10 percent), Indian (6 percent)
Capital: Panama City

Political Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Free



Overview:

Seven years after the end of General Manuel Noriega's dictatorship, his political heirs in the ruling Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD) headed by President Ernesto Perez Balladares are making use of some of his more dubious legacies — censorship, corruption and contempt for the rule of law.

Panama was part of Colombia until 1903, when a U.S.-supported revolt resulted in the proclamation of an independent Republic of Panama. A period of weak civilian rule ended with a military coup that brought General Omar Torrijos to power.

After the signing of the 1977 canal treaties with the U.S., Torrijos promised democratization. The 1972 constitution was revised, providing for the direct elections of a president and a legislative assembly for five years. After Torrijos' death in 1981, Noriega emerged as Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) chief and rigged the 1984 election that brought to power the PRD, then the political arm of the PDF.

The Democratic Alliance of Civic Opposition (ADOC) won the 1989 election, but Noriega annulled the vote and declared himself head of state. He was removed during a U.S. military invasion, and ADOC's Guillermo Endara became president.

Endara's prestige plummeted and ADOC unraveled amid charges of corruption and poverty-fueled social unrest. In the 1994 election, Perez Balladares, a 47-year-old millionaire and former banker, won with 33.3 percent of the vote. The PRD won 32 of 71 seats in the Legislative Assembly and, with the support of allied parties that won six seats, achieved an effective majority.

Perez Balladares kept a campaign promise by choosing for his cabinet technocrats and politicians from across the ideological spectrum. But economic reforms, rising unemployment, and a doubling of ministerial salaries led to widespread protests in 1995 by labor unions and students. The president's popularity declined when the government met protests with harsh crackdowns.

During the 1994 campaign, Perez Balladares pledged to rid the country of drug influence. However, the PRD was accused of involvement in drug trafficking in the aftermath of the collapse of the Agro-Industrial and Commercial Bank of Panama (BANAICO) in January 1996. An investigation by the Banking Commission found accounts empty and \$50 million unaccounted for, as well as evidence that the bank was a central money-laundering facility. BANAICO was named in several American drug investigations, including one targeted at Jose Castrillon Henao, a Colombian who was arrested in April 1996 as the reputed organizer of the Cali cartel's seagoing cocaine shipments to the U.S. Mayor Alfredo Aleman, a board member of BANAICO, is also a friend and top advisor to Perez Balladares, and was a major contributor to the party's 1994 campaign. Perez Balladares himself was forced to admit that his campaign unknowingly accepted a contribution from Castrillon Henao.

The Perez Balladares administration further damaged its popularity when it restored government jobs and awarded a reported \$35 million in back pay to former members of the Dignity Battalions who had been Noriega's paramilitary enforcers.

In 1997 Perez Balladares moved ahead with plans to reform the constitution so that he might stand for re-election. The son of a prominent politician and two other Panamanians were found innocent of killing an unarmed U.S. soldier in 1992 in a trial plagued by political pressure and other irregularities. And a weeks-long standoff in which the government tried to expel a muckracking Peruvian reporter who had uncovered the BANAICO scandal ended only following the reported personal intervention of U.S. First Lady Hillary Clinton.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Panama's citizens can change their government democratically. The constitution guarantees freedom of political and civic organization. More than a dozen parties from across the political system participated in the 1994 elections.

The judicial system, headed by a Supreme Court, was revamped in 1990. It remains overworked, however, and its administration is inefficient, politicized and un-

determined by the corruption rampant in all public and governmental bodies. An unwieldy criminal code and a surge in cases, many against former soldiers and officials of the military period, complicate the panorama.

In October 1997, Pedro Miguel Gonzalez, son of Gerardo Gonzalez, who is president of congress and of the governing PRD, and two others were acquitted in the killing of U.S. Army Sgt. Zak Hernandez, who died in June 1992 when bullets from an AK-47 rifle fired from a passing car sprayed the military vehicle in which he and other soldiers were riding. The car allegedly used in the murder was found on a ranch owned by Gonzalez's father; FBI experts said ballistics tests indicated the bullets fired at the soldiers came from guns also found at the ranch, and three eyewitnesses identified Gonzalez as one of the assailants. The police chief who directed the murder investigation was prosecuted on criminal charges filed by Gerardo Gonzalez.

The PDF was dismantled after 1989, and the military was formally abolished in 1994. But the civilian-run Public Force (National Police) that replaced the PDF, trained by the U.S. Justice Department, is poorly disciplined, corrupt and practices physical abuse. It has been ineffectual against the drug trade, as Panama remains a major transshipment point for both cocaine and illicit arms, as well as a money-laundering hub.

The penal system is marked by violent disturbances in decrepit facilities packed with up to eight times their intended capacity. About two-thirds of prisoners face delays of about 18 months in having their cases heard, and less than 15 percent of the nation's inmates in 1995 had been tried and convicted.

Labor unions are well organized. However, labor rights were diluted in 1995 when Perez Balladares pushed labor code revisions through Congress. When 49 unions initiated peaceful protests, the government cracked down in a series of violent clashes that resulted in four deaths and hundreds of arrests.

The media are a raucous assortment of radio and television stations, daily newspapers and weekly publications. Restrictive media laws dating back to the Noriega regime remain on the books, however. The law permits officials to jail without trial anyone who defames the government. Legal codes establish government control of work permits for journalists, strict defamation and libel rules, and a clause that permits reporters to be punished for "damaging the nation's economy" or national security. Perez Balladares began to apply the laws against media critical of his government in 1995.

In October 1997, the government dropped its two-month effort to deport Gustavo Gorriti, a Peruvian national who worked as associate editor of the daily *La Prensa*. Gorriti headed the newspaper's investigative unit and led the probe of the BANAICO bankruptcy, which linked Perez Balladares to Castrillon Henao.

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. Amnesty International also criticized the decision of the Panamanian government to forcibly return some 550 Colombian refugees who fled their country to escape political violence.

Papua New Guinea

Polity: Parliamentary democracy (insurgency)
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 4,313,000
PPP: \$2,821
Life Expectancy: 56.4
Ethnic Groups: Papuan, Melanesian
Capital: Port Moresby



Overview: Public anger over the government's hiring of foreign mercenaries to crush a secessionist rebellion forced Papua New Guinea premier Sir Julius Chan to resign in March 1997. Elections in June expressed the widespread frustration over the resource-rich country's limited economic development.

This South Pacific country, consisting of the eastern half of New Guinea and some 600 smaller islands, achieved independence from Australia in 1975 under premier Michael Somare. The 1975 constitution vests executive power in a prime minister and cabinet and a largely ceremonial governor-general. Parliament has 89 at-large members and 20 members representing the 19 provinces and Port Moresby, all elected for a five-year term. Parties are centered around personalities, and since independence the country has been governed by unstable and shifting coalitions.

In late 1988 miners and landowners on Bougainville Island, 560 miles northeast of the capital, began organizing guerrilla attacks against an Australian-owned mine to demand compensation and profit-sharing. Within months the rebels transformed their long-standing grievances into a secessionist struggle under the newly-formed Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA).

Following the 1992 elections parliament chose a former premier, Pias Wingti, to head a coalition government. Wingti was re-elected by parliament in 1993, thus gaining a fresh 18 months of immunity from no-confidence motions under the constitution. In 1994 the Supreme Court invalidated Wingti's re-election, and parliament subsequently elected former premier Chan to the top office.

Chan pledged to resolve the Bougainville crisis, and in 1995 his government swore in a Bougainville Transitional Government (BTG) as an outlet for local grievances. But a 1994 cease-fire broke down in March 1996.

The February 1997 revelation that the government had signed a \$27 million contract with a London-based mercenary outfit to fight on Bougainville attracted widespread anger. Critics noted that in 1995 the country had been forced to accept an IMF and World Bank austerity program. On March 17 Chan sacked Brigadier General Jerry Singirok, the armed forces chief, who had called for the premier's resignation. Ordinary citizens rallied around Singirok, and on March 26 Chan resigned after several days of anti-government demonstrations.

At the June 14-28 elections an anti-incumbent mood swept Chan and several other senior politicians out of parliament. Voters expressed frustration with poor living standards in a country that has considerable mineral wealth, but is plagued with official corruption and rising crime. On July 22 parliament elected Bill Skate, a former oppo-

sition leader, as prime minister after Skate unexpectedly took his People's National Congress into a coalition with the former ruling coalition.

With prodding from Sydney and Wellington, in October the government and the BRA signed a truce. However, the BRA refused to drop its demand for independence.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of Papua New Guinea can change their government democratically. But elections are usually marred by irregularities and violence.

Democratic institutions are tested by fiscal pressures, corruption, and the challenge of nation-building given the extreme cultural differences between the cities and highlands and the complex mix of languages spoken by the country's 1,000 tribes. However, the judiciary is independent.

The security forces are marked by poor discipline and low morale. The army, army-backed paramilitary groups and the BRA have committed torture, disappearances, arbitrary detentions and extrajudicial executions against civilians and combatants on Bougainville. A 1996 United Nations report on Bougainville documented at least 64 extrajudicial executions by the army against civilians between 1992 and 1995. In 1996 an inquest linked soldiers and pro-government militiamen to the October assassination of BTG premier Theodore Miriung, who some believed favored independence. Overall, according to Radio Australia some 20,000 people on Bougainville and nearby Buka Island have died in the conflict, many due to limited medical treatment and supplies. The army has forced tens of thousands of Bougainville's 168,000 residents to live in "care centers," which human rights groups say are rife with abuses.

In urban areas violent gangs known as "Rascals" have contributed to a severe law and order crisis. The 1993 Internal Security Act gave police expanded powers to conduct searches without warrants. Police frequently use excessive force against suspects and ordinary civilians, causing several deaths in recent years, and continue to abuse detainees and prisoners. In the highlands police occasionally burn homes to punish communities suspected of harboring criminals or of participating in tribal warfare, which has killed dozens of people in recent years, or to punish crimes committed by individuals.

The private press freely reports on official corruption and the Bougainville crisis, although authorities restrict media access to Bougainville. The state-run radio's news coverage is generally balanced. There is a private television station. Nongovernmental organizations (NGO) are active and outspoken. In May the local Pacific Concerns Resource Center reported that police had raided the offices of three other NGOs that had organized the protests that forced Chan to resign.

In rural areas foreign logging companies frequently swindle villagers and often renege on promises to build schools and hospitals. Women face significant social discrimination, and rape and domestic violence are serious problems. In a case that highlighted the way tribal law co-exists with the formal legal system, in spring 1997 a judge ruled in favor of a woman who had refused to be sent to another clan as traditional compensation for the killing of a clan leader.

Unions are independent, and workers bargain collectively and stage strikes. The International Labor Organization has criticized a law allowing the government to invalidate arbitration agreements or wage awards.

↓ Paraguay

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy (military-influenced) **Political Rights:** 4
Civil Liberties: 3

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 4,955,000

PPP: \$3,531

Life Expectancy: 68.8

Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (95 percent), Indian, European, black

Capital: Asuncion

Trend Arrow: Paraguay receives a downward trend arrow due to rampant corruption in the government.



Overview:

The dominant Colorado Party nominated General Lino Oviedo as its candidate in the 1998 presidential election, a surprising choice in view of Oviedo's leadership of a botched coup in 1996. The incumbent president, Juan Carlos Wasmosy, who was lauded for beating back the 1996 coup, was widely perceived as being out of touch with the electorate and unable to control the rampant corruption in the government.

In 1989 a coup ended the 35-year dictatorship of General Alfredo Stroessner. Oviedo himself stormed into the bunker of Latin America's oldest surviving dictator with a pistol in one hand and a grenade in the other and demanded that he surrender. General Andres Rodriguez, who died in April 1997, took over Stroessner's Colorado Party and engineered his own election to finish Stroessner's last presidential term.

The Colorados won a majority in a vote for a constituent assembly, which produced the 1992 constitution. It provides for a president, a vice president and a bi-cameral Congress consisting of a 45-member Senate and an 80-member Chamber of Deputies elected for five years. The president is elected by a simple majority, and reelection is prohibited. The constitution bans the military from engaging in politics.

In the 1992 Colorado primary election, Luis Maria Argana, an old-style machine politician, defeated construction tycoon Wasmosy. Rodriguez and Oviedo engineered a highly dubious re-count that made Wasmosy the winner.

The 1993 candidates were Wasmosy, Domingo Laino of the center-left Authentic Radical Liberal Party (PLRA), and Guillermo Caballero Vargas, a wealthy businessman. Wasmosy promised to modernize the economy. Laino played on his decades of resistance to Stroessner. Caballero Vargas campaigned as a centrist, free of the politics of the past.

Every poll showed Wasmosy trailing until three weeks before the election, when Oviedo threatened a coup if the Colorado Party lost. He declared that the military "would govern together with the glorious Colorado Party forever and ever." Fear of a coup proved decisive, as Wasmosy won with 40.3 percent of the vote. Laino took 32 percent and Caballero Vargas 23.5.

Oviedo was then appointed army commander, becoming the most powerful officer in the armed forces. Wasmosy allowed Oviedo to eliminate rivals in the military by forcing them to retire. The game of mutual interest came to an end as Wasmosy moved to reduce the influence of the drug-tainted military in government and it be-

came increasingly obvious that Oviedo and a hardline Colorado faction planned to use Wasmosy as a stepping stone for the general's own accession to the presidency.

Wasmosy ordered Oviedo's resignation on April 22, 1996. The general in turn threatened a coup and mobilized troops. Wasmosy took refuge in the U.S. embassy and prepared his resignation. International pressure and the turnout of tens of thousands of Paraguayans in support of democracy encouraged Wasmosy to offer Oviedo the post of Defense Minister in exchange for his resignation as army commander. When Oviedo accepted the public protests grew, and a newly strengthened Wasmosy rescinded the offer. No longer in charge of his troops, the civilian Oviedo was forced to go quietly, but not before vowing to seek the presidency in the 1998 elections.

In 1997 Paraguay was shaken by a number of corruption scandals, mostly involving money laundering in the banking system by financial racketeers from neighboring countries and by drug traffickers. Oviedo won the Colorado party presidential nomination by besting Argana by 10,000 votes. Argana's supporters claimed fraud and demanded that 50,000 of the votes cast be reviewed. Oviedo warned that if the courts refused to recognize his victory in the 1998 elections, he would head a popular insurrection. Oviedo faces a coalition between the PLRA and the Caballero Vargas' National Reunion Party (PEN), headed by the charismatic Laino. In late December, Paraguay's highest electoral court confirmed Oviedo as the Colorado's presidential candidate. The ruling came as Oviedo was confined to an army barracks for 30 days after accusing Wasmosy of corruption and incompetence.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

The 1992 constitution provides for regular elections. But elections have been neither free nor fair because of military pressure, serious irregularities and fraud. Overall, the influence of and continuing turmoil in the military has sapped the civilian government's legitimacy and ability to deal with other problems. A year before the 1998 elections, Paraguayan election officials admitted that they lack the resources to ensure transparency in the voting.

Overcrowding, unsanitary living conditions and mistreatment are serious problems in Paraguayan prisons. More than 95 percent of the prisoners held are pending trial, many for months or years after arrest. The constitution permits detention without trial until the accused completes the minimum sentence for the alleged crime.

The constitution guarantees free political and civic organization and religious expression. However, political rights and civil liberties are undermined by the government's resort to repressive tactics when faced with protests.

Peasant and Indian organizations demanding land often meet with police crackdowns, death threats, detentions and forced evictions by vigilante groups in the employ of landowners. Peasants have been killed in the ongoing disputes. Activist priests who support land reform are frequent targets of intimidation. The government's promise of land reform remains largely unfilled, as nearly 90 percent of agricultural land remains in the hands of foreign companies and a few hundred Paraguayan families.

There are numerous trade unions and two major union federations. Strikes are often broken up violently by the police and the military, and labor activists detained. The 1992 constitution gives public-sector workers the rights to organize, bargain collectively and strike, but these rights are often not respected in practice. A new labor code designed to protect worker rights was passed in October 1993, but enforcement

has been weak.

The judiciary is under the influence of the ruling party and the military, susceptible to the corruption pervading all public and governmental institutions. Corruption cases languish for years in the courts and most are not adjudicated. The courts are unresponsive to human rights groups that present cases of rights violations committed either before or after the overthrow of Stroessner. Allegations include illegal detention by police and torture during incarceration, particularly in rural areas. Colombian drug traffickers continue to expand operations in Paraguay, and accusations of high official involvement in drug trafficking date back to the 1980s. In 1997, the commander of the national police was dismissed following a newspaper expose about his force's involvement in car theft, corruption and bribery.

The media are both public and private. State-run broadcast media present pluralistic points of view and a number of independent newspapers publish. However, journalists investigating corruption or covering strikes and protests are often the victims of intimidation and violent attacks by security forces. Free expression is also threatened by vague laws that mandate "responsible" behavior by journalists and media

Peru

Polity: Presidential-military (insurgencies) **Political Rights:** 5*
Civil Liberties: 4*

Economy: Capitalist-statist **Status:** Partly Free

Population: 24,041,000

PPP: \$3,645

Life Expectancy: 67.4

Ethnic Groups: Indian (45 percent), mestizo (37 percent), European (15 percent), black, Asian

Capital: Lima

Ratings Change: Peru's change is due to attacks on the press and the military's control over Fujimori and the revelations about domestic spying.



Overview:

In 1997 President Alberto Fujimori's campaign against a critical press, while satisfying to the increasingly dominant military partners of his regime, made the Peruvian leader second only to Cuba's Fidel Castro as the hemisphere's leader in carrying out threats against the news media. Similarly, government-initiated action against the Tribunal of Constitutional Guarantees, which refused to go along with Fujimori pretensions to stand for a third term, suggested that executive and (Fujimori-directed) legislative interference with Peru's judiciary continues unabated. The violent suppression of a band of leftist Tupac Amaru guerrillas who had seized the Japanese embassy in December 1996 and held 72 guests (of the hundreds initially captured) for four months also nearly boomeranged on the prideful Peruvian leader when it was established that several of the guerrillas had been executed after they surrendered. The role of the security forces in systematic torture and disappearance of opponents was highlighted when it was revealed that two women belonging to the intelligence services were tortured, and

one killed and mutilated, by fellow service members suspicious of their alleged contacts with the press. The large intelligence network created to fight leftist guerrillas is now being directed against government opponents.

Since independence in 1821, Peru has seen alternating periods of civilian and military rule. Civilian rule was restored in 1980 after 12 years of dictatorship. That same year the Maoist Shining Path terrorist group launched a guerrilla war that killed 30,000 people over the next 13 years.

Fujimori, a university rector and engineer, defeated novelist Mario Vargas Llosa in the 1990 election. In 1992 Fujimori, backed by the military, suspended the constitution and dissolved Congress. The move was popular because of popular disdain for Peru's corrupt, elitist political establishment and fear of the Shining Path.

Fujimori held a state-controlled election for an 80-member constituent assembly to replace the Congress. The assembly drafted a constitution that established a unicameral Congress more closely under presidential control. The constitution was approved in a state-controlled referendum following Shining Path leader Abimael Guzman's capture.

Fujimori's principal opponent in the 1995 election was former U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar, who vowed to end Fujimori's "dictatorship" and initially looked strong in opinion polls. Fujimori countered with a massive public spending and propaganda campaign that utilized state resources. The National Intelligence Service (SIN), under de facto head Vladimiro Montesinos, a Fujimori ally and one-time legal counsel to drug kingpins, was employed to spy on and discredit Perez de Cuellar and other opposition candidates. The extent of the spying campaign was revealed in 1997.

On April 9, Fujimori won an easy victory, outpolling Perez de Cuellar by about three to one, while his loose coalition of allies won a majority in the new 120-seat Congress.

Prior to the 1995 presidential election the government had increased spending; by early 1996 subsequent spending cuts had led to an economic slowdown. In April Fujimori appointed a revamped cabinet, headed by Premier Alberto Pandolfi, that was more supportive of the president's privatization program and free market reforms.

In August 1996 Congress passed a law allowing Fujimori to run for a third term, despite a constitutional provision limiting the president to two terms. The law evaded this by defining Fujimori's current term as his first under the 1993 constitution.

On April 22, 1997, the seizure of the Japanese ambassador's residence came to a violent end when a commando raid liberated all but one of the 72 hostages and killed all 14 of the outgunned insurgents. Fujimori, who visited the scene when gunpowder still wafted in the air, benefited from a momentary surge in the polls that seemed to endorse his government's hard line. Although responsibility for the intelligence failure that led to the guerrilla takeover appeared to be distributed among several security services, only the national police came in for sanction as 19 officers were charged with negligence, disobedience and abuse of power—a reflection of the power of the military and intelligence services within the government.

In May, the president of the seven-person Tribunal of Constitutional Guarantees—the body that assesses the constitutional legality of national legislation—resigned with the words, "the rule of law has broken down in Peru." His action came after Congress dismissed three other tribunal members after these had ruled at the end of 1996 that

legislation designed to enable Fujimori to stand for reelection in 2000 was not applicable. Rivalries within the military and intelligence services appeared to have severely limited Fujimori's own capacity for maneuver, and opposition leader Perez de Cuellar decried the "permanent coup d'etat" which Peruvians have lived with since 1992.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

In the past the Fujimori government has been termed a presidential-military regime with the trappings of a formal democracy; however, the armed forces' ascendancy in 1997, particularly that of their intelligence services, makes it an open question whether Fujimori is becoming more of a civilian figurehead of a military regime. Although, he ultimately prevailed over Gen. Nicolas Hermoza, knowledgeable observers point out that Fujimori had been unable to remove the army chief, as was his wish since 1994.

Although Fujimori had considerable popular support, the 1995 election was not fair by international standards due to the massive use of state resources and military and state intelligence during the campaign. Electoral laws require any party that failed to obtain five percent of the popular vote in 1995 to obtain 400,000 signatures to re-register; few parties have managed to do so. Given the marginalization of political parties, the lack of an independent judiciary and the relative weakness of trade unions and other elements of civil society, few independent power centers exist outside of the president and his allies in the military high command.

Under the December 1993 constitution, the president can rule virtually by decree. Fujimori can dissolve Congress in the event of a "grave conflict" between the executive and legislature, as he did in 1992. The constitution overturned Peru's tradition of no re-election.

In 1994 a new, nominally independent election commission was named. The Congress, dominated by the government, blocked the commission's attempt to limit the regime's overwhelming advantages in the 1994-1995 campaign. However, in a development that indicated a degree of autonomy, in 1996 the commission ruled that a new law tightening the requirements to hold a popular referendum could not be applied retroactively.

In 1994, there were judicial reforms and a new Supreme Court was named. But judicial independence remains suspect. In August 1996 Congress installed a Tribunal of Constitutional Guarantees, as called for under the 1993 constitution, with powers of judicial review. However parliament also passed a law requiring the votes of six of the seven members of the Tribunal to declare a law or government action unconstitutional. The first real test of the Tribunal's mandate—the ruling on Fujimori's eligibility for re-election to a third consecutive term—also proved to be its undoing.

Public safety, particularly in Lima, has been threatened in 1997 by vicious gang warfare and out-of-control violent crime. Police estimate that there are more than 1,000 criminal gangs in the capital alone.

A draconian 1992 antiterrorist decree, in force for most of 1997, practically eliminated judicial guarantees in a system of military tribunals with anonymous judges installed to try alleged subversives. The defense lawyers were unable to call witnesses or cross examine government witnesses, who were unidentified. Sentences were pronounced within hours. In August 1996 the government set up a congressionally mandated ad hoc commission to review cases of detainees believed to be wrongly imprisoned or accused of terrorism or treason. By year's end Fujimori had granted more

than 100 pardons. Due in part to pressure from national and international human rights groups, on September 29, 1997, the government announced that it would stop the practice of using "faceless judges" on October 15, and that additional releases would take place. Human rights groups say that up to 1,000 of the 3,900 prisoners with alleged ties to the guerrillas are innocent.

In 1995 the regime implemented an amnesty law absolving everyone implicated in human rights violations during the counterinsurgency against the Shining Path, thus relieving hundreds of police and soldiers responsible for extrajudicial killings, rapes, disappearances and torture. The regime imposed a law dictating that the judiciary could not dispute the amnesty's constitutionality.

Torture is routine in police detention centers, and conditions remain deplorable in prisons for common criminals. In 1996 the head of the National Prison Institute conceded that 75 percent of the nation's prisoners were awaiting trial or sentence. Following the MRTA's seizure of hostages the government suspended an agreement that had allowed the International Commission of the Red Cross to visit some 4,000 accused or convicted terrorists.

The labor code authorizes the government to disband any strike it deems a threat to a company, an industry, or the public sector. In 1996 the International Labor Organization criticized the labor code for failing to protect workers from anti-union discrimination and for restricting collective bargaining rights. Forced labor, including child labor, is prevalent in the gold mining region of the Amazon.

The press is largely privately-owned. Radio and television are both privately and publicly-owned. State-owned media are blatantly pro-government. Since 1992, many media, especially television and print journalists, have been pressured into self-censorship or exile by a broad government campaign of intimidation—abductions, death threats, libel suits, withholding advertising, police harassment, arbitrary detention, physical mistreatment, and imprisonment on charges of "apology for terrorism." In 1997 there was a dramatic upswing of such incidents as compared to the previous year.

On June 6, 1997 the Fujimori government announced a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the identity of an alleged member of the military intelligence service who appeared on America Television wearing a hood and who linked the death of a military officer to operatives of a state-sponsored paramilitary group. The broadcast came just weeks after Fujimori himself went on television to deny the existence of "paramilitary" groups operating within the intelligence services.

In September 1997, a government-controlled court stripped Baruch Ivcher, an Israeli immigrant and the owner of the Channel 2 television station, of control of his media business and his Peruvian citizenship after the station aired reports linking the military to torture and corruption, as well as an expose of a telephone espionage ring run by intelligence agents to spy on opposition politicians and journalists. Ivcher, considered a former ally of the intelligence services, fled to Miami after being summoned to appear before a military tribunal on charges of trying to bring the armed forces into disrepute. The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists called the move "the latest and most alarming episode of a concerted government campaign intended to punish journalists for doing their job."

In 1997, two opposition Congressmen, Javier Diez Canseco and Gustavo Saberbein, were attacked in separate incidents by government intelligence agents.

Philippines

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy
Economy: Capitalist-statist

Political Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Free

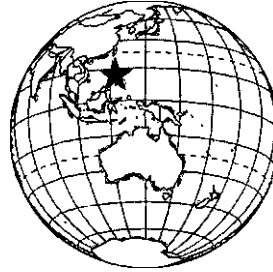
Population: 71,974,000

PPP: \$2,681

Life Expectancy: 67.4

Ethnic Groups: Christian Malay (92 percent), Muslim Malay (4 percent), Chinese (2 percent) other

Capital: Manila



Overview:

Mounting popular pressure forced Philippine President Fidel Ramos to pledge, in September 1997, that he would not stand in the May 1998 elections, ending a divisive debate over amending the constitution to allow him to seek re-election. With Ramos out, populist Vice President Joseph Estrada maintained his position as frontrunner in the race. On southern Mindanao Island, fighting between the army and the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) internally displaced tens of thousands of villagers.

The Philippines achieved independence in 1946 after 43 years of United States rule and Japanese occupation during World War II. Ferdinand Marcos, first elected as president in 1965, declared martial law in 1972 to circumvent a constitutional two-term limit. The 1986 "People Power" revolution, which saw massive street protests over a blatantly rigged election, ended Marcos's dictatorial rule. His opponent, Corazon Aquino, took office. The 1987 constitution provides for a president who is directly elected for a six-year term but whose power is checked by a strong judiciary and a single-term limit. The Congress consists of a Senate with 24 directly elected members, and a House of Representatives with 201 directly elected members and up to 50 more appointed by the president.

Aquino drew praise for her support for democracy, but her term was marked by at least six coup attempts, and she had limited success in reforming a feudal-oriented society and crony-capitalist economy. In the 1992 elections Aquino backed former army chief-of-staff Ramos, who won with just 23.5 percent of the vote. Ramos's measures to liberalize the economy ended power shortages and boosted GDP growth. In the May 1995 congressional elections, a short-lived coalition of the president's National Union of Christian Democrats (Lakas-NUCD) party and the Democratic Filipino Struggle party won nine of 12 seats contested in the Senate and 170 House seats.

In 1996 Ramos's supporters mounted a signature campaign for a referendum on amending the constitution to allow the president to run for re-election. Opponents argued against subordinating the constitution to politics, and said a so-called "charter change" could set a precedent allowing a future strongman to abuse power.

In mid-1997, the financial crisis that hit Southeast Asian markets caused the *peso's* value to slide. Business blamed Ramos's equivocation on charter change for exacerbating the crisis. On September 21 Aquino and Roman Catholic Cardinal Jaime Sin led church groups, business representatives, students and ordinary Filipinos in a huge rally in Manila that forced Ramos to declare he would not run. On December 8 the

president endorsed House speaker Jose de Venecia, a Lakas-NUCD insider with limited popular support. Meanwhile, frontrunner Estrada faced a challenge from Senator Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, an economist, as well as criticism from the highly influential Cardinal Sin over an admitted history of heavy drinking and sexual license.

Ramos is credited with improving the security situation. In 1993 the president reached a peace pact with right-wing military elements, and protracted negotiations have reduced the threat from a Communist insurgency that began in the early 1970s, despite several fresh attacks beginning in late October. In September 1996 the government signed a peace agreement with the separatist Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which had waged a 24-year insurgency on Mindanao. The deal established Nur Misuari, the MNLF leader, as head of a transitional body overseeing development projects in 14 Mindanao provinces and called for a local plebescite in 1999 on expanding an existing autonomous region. But two smaller groups, the MILF and Abu Sanyaf, continue to wage a low-grade insurgency for an independent Islamic state.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Filipinos can change their government democratically, although elections are marred by vote-buying and fraud. Ramos's economic reforms have reduced the disproportionate political power of economic oligarchies and wealthy landowners, but have also widened income disparities and brought only marginal benefits to poorer Filipinos. Official corruption is rampant.

Complaints by the Moros, or Muslims who live primarily in Mindanao, of economic and social discrimination by the country's Christian majority have been the underlying cause of insurgencies since the 1970s. According to the Washington-based U.S. Committee for Refugees, during the first half of 1997 skirmishes between the army and the MILF on Mindanao and nearby Basilan Island temporarily displaced some 178,500 villagers. The army reportedly indiscriminately bombs and shells villages during counterinsurgency operations, and soldiers loot and burn homes. The MILF and other groups often force villagers to evacuate homes and operate protection rackets and kidnapping syndicates that mainly target ethnic Chinese businessmen and their families. Members of the army and the Philippine National Police (PNP) are also involved in kidnappings, and in December the PNP chief resigned after an upsurge in kidnappings and the arrest of a police sergeant allegedly involved in an attempted kidnapping and murder.

The judiciary is independent, but is heavily backlogged and rife with corruption. In May a three-part series in the *Manila Times* and *BusinessWorld* detailed allegations of bribery in several business-related cases brought before the Supreme Court in recent years.

An October 1997 report by the London-based Amnesty International accused the police of torture and ill-treatment of criminal suspects. Private armies and security forces kept by politicians, wealthy landowners and logging operations are allegedly responsible for abductions and extrajudicial killings.

The private press is vigorous, although journalists face intimidation outside Manila from illegal logging outfits, drug traffickers and other criminal groups. The government sometimes restricts free assembly relating to issues that might antagonize fellow Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries. Nongovernmental human rights and humanitarian organizations are highly active. Security forces often falsely

link human rights activists to Communist groups, which allegedly encourages abuses against activists by private armies and other non-state groups.

Freedom of religion is respected. Trafficking of Filipino women abroad is a serious problem, and domestic prostitution, including child prostitution, is rampant. Cities have large numbers of street children. To clear land for development projects, the government has forcibly resettled thousands of tenant farmers and urban squatters, often to areas with few services and job opportunities.

Unions are independent and active. The International Labor Organization has criticized labor code provisions restricting the right to strike, including a 1989 law providing for compulsory arbitration of disputes in "essential" industries. Police often harass striking workers. Anti-union discrimination has prevented workers from organizing in most export processing zones (EPZ). The Rosario EPZ south of Manila is particularly notorious for anti-union discrimination and minimum wage violations.

Poland

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy

Economy: Mixed capitalist

Population: 38,639,000

PPP: \$5,002

Life Expectancy: 71.2

Ethnic Groups: Polish (98 percent), German, Ukrainian, Belarusian

Capital: Warsaw

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Overview:

The Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS) coalition won September parliamentary elections, gaining 201 seats in the 460-seat *Sejm*. President Alexander Kwasniewski's ruling ex-communist Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) came in second with 164 seats. In October, Jerzy Buzek (AWS) was sworn in as prime minister to lead a coalition government with the pro-market Freedom Union (UW), which has 60 parliamentary seats.

Key issues in Poland this year included adoption of a constitution and official recommendations for Poland to join an expanded NATO and the European Union (EU).

Partitioned by Prussia, Russia, and Austria in the 18th century, Poland re-emerged as an independent republic after World War I. In 1939, it was invaded and divided by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, coming under full German control after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. After the war, its eastern territories stayed part of Ukraine but it acquired large tracts of eastern Prussia. The Communists gained control after fraudulent elections in 1947.

In 1980, the Solidarity free trade union, led by Lech Walesa, was established by striking workers in the Gdansk shipyards. In December 1981, after Solidarity threatened a national referendum on the Communist government, Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski declared martial law, banned the union and detained most senior activists.

In 1989, round-table discussions between the opposition and the ruling commu-

nists ended post-war Communist dominance. In 1992, a so-called "Little Constitution" gave considerable power to Walesa, who was elected president by direct and universal suffrage in 1990. A highly fragmented parliament, with some 30 parties, and a powerful president led to a series of failed governments while so-called "shock therapy" market reforms steadily improved economic conditions.

In 1993, voters put the former Communists back into power under a new electoral law designed to reduce the number of parties in parliament. The SLD won 171 seats in the Sejm (lower house), followed by the Peasant Party (PSL), a descendant of the Communist-era party, with 131 seats. The Democratic Union (UD), the mainstream Solidarity party, captured 74 seats. The year-old leftist Union of Labor (UP) won 41 seats. Walesa's Non-Party Bloc to Support Reform (BBWR) gained 20 seats, while the nationalist Confederation for an Independent Poland (KPN) won 24. Waldemar Pawlak of the PSL was named prime minister.

In March 1995, Pawlak was replaced as prime minister by Jozef Oleksy after a three-month crisis during which opposition groups called for a caretaker non-party government of national unity. In November 1995, Kwasniewski defeated President Walesa in a run-off with 51.7 percent of the vote. After months of charges that he had held regular meetings with Soviet and Russian intelligence since 1983, Oleksy stepped down in January 1996 and was replaced by Wlodzimierz Cimoszewicz. The new government was made up chiefly of SLD and PSL members. In June, AWS, a Solidarity-led coalition of over 30 centrist and right-center parties was created, under the direction of Solidarity leader Marian Krzaklewski.

Throughout 1997, the AWS coalition, using existing Solidarity organizational structures, positioned itself as a populist, nationalist, Catholic and staunchly anti-Communist alternative to the ruling SLD. On May 25, Polish citizens approved a new constitution by referendum. Though 53 percent supported the document, turnout was only 43 percent. The 243-article document, which replaced the 1992 "Little Constitution," confirmed civil and political rights, and largely retained the existing system while weakening some of the appointive powers of the president. It also allowed a presidential veto to be overruled by a vote of three-fifths of the members of parliament rather than two-thirds. The AWS had opposed the constitution, arguing that it did not make a clean break with the communist past and that the preamble's reference to God was too ambiguous.

In July, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary were invited to join NATO. The same month, the European Commission recommended Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Estonia for accession to the EU.

Weeks of disastrous flooding in July undermined the SLD. The opposition heavily criticized the government for its handling of the floods, which killed 55 people, forced tens of thousands from their homes and caused billion of dollars in damage. In the weeks prior to the September 21 parliamentary elections, polls showed the AWS and SLD running neck and neck. The programs of both coalitions promised economic growth and pledged support for EU and NATO membership. The official results showed the AWS with 33.83 percent of the vote; the SLD, 27.13 percent; the UW, 13.37 percent; the Peasant Party 7.31 percent; and the Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland (ROP), 5.56 percent.

Negotiations on forming a government between the AWS and the pro-business UW, led by Leszek Balcerowicz, architect of Poland's post-1990 radical market re-

forms, were often tense. The UW demanded a big say over economic policy. Jerzy Buzek, a 57-year-old chemical engineer who played an important role in the Solidarity underground in the 1980s, was chosen prime minister. Balcerowicz was named finance minister. The inclusion of UW members in key ministries was criticized by the AWS's right-wing and pro-Catholic elements who oppose abortion and support greater social spending. In November, AWS leader Krzaklewski announced the formation of the AWS Social Movement (RS AWS) as Christian-Democratic party.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Poles can change their government democratically under a multiparty system. In 1997, voters adopted a new constitution. Most constitutional and legal experts concluded that the new basic document made important progress in rights and liberties and that most provisions met with European standards. The president's position is weaker, not because concrete powers have been taken away, but because constitutional ambiguities and implied powers in the "Little Constitution" were eliminated.

Poland has a wide range of political parties estimated to total over 200. But most are small or exist mainly on paper. The 1997 parliamentary elections were free and fair, as was the 1995 presidential vote.

Private media account for over 85 percent. There are some 3,000 newspapers and magazines, 119 commercial radio stations (six national stations, four of which are state owned) as well as 10 commercial TV stations. State-run television stations TVP-1 and TVP-2, dominate the market. The independent Polsat remains the most popular commercial TV station. Penal laws punish defaming the president and the state, as well as publishing state secrets.

Freedoms of discussion, assembly and association are respected. Religious freedom is guaranteed. In November, the Rev. Henryk Jankowski, rector of St. Brygida's Church in Gdansk, was suspended from preaching sermons for one year by the chancellor of the Gdansk Metropolitan Curia for suggesting that the Jewish minority not be represented in the government, a reference to Foreign Affairs Minister Bronislaw Geremek.

Financial and personnel woes continue to plague the justice ministry, the prosecutor's office and the courts. Many judges are holdovers from the communist era. Political parties, parliamentary commissions, the State Security Office (under the jurisdiction of the minister of internal affairs), the government and the president's office continue to exert political pressure on the justice minister and prosecutors. In June, the president signed a vetting law to screen officials who may have collaborated with the Communist authorities between 1944-1990. Cases will be reviewed by a 21-member Review Court.

There are four national interbranch industrial unions registered, along with 17 other major independent industrial branch unions and three agricultural unions. The Independent Self-Governing Trade Union (NSZZ) Solidarity claims a membership of two million. Spin-offs from mainstream Solidarity include the Christian Trade Union Solidarity and Solidarity '80. The National Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ), the successor of its communist-era namesake, has about three million members and 61 parliamentary deputies. Other unions include the Free Miners' Union, which claims more than 300,000 members, and the National Teachers' Union.

Women are represented in government, business and educational institutions.

Portugal

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Economy: Mixed capitalist
Population: 9,942,000
PPP: \$12,326
Life Expectancy: 74.4
Ethnic Groups: Portuguese, African minority
Capital: Lisbon

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Overview:

Portugal has been ruled by Prime Minister Antonio Guterres' minority Socialist government since 1995. Despite opposition from small left- and right-wing groups the ruling Socialists and opposition Social Democrats both support early entry into the European Monetary Union (EMU). The country is well on its way to meeting this goal. The government plans two referenda in 1998: one on European integration, and the other on the creation of elected regional administrations. Voters are likely to pass the referendum on Europe overwhelmingly.

Formerly a great maritime and colonial empire, Portugal ended its monarchy in a bloodless revolution in 1910. The republic, plagued by chronic instability and violence, ended in a military revolt in 1926. A fascist dictatorship under Antonio Salazar lasted from 1932 to 1968. In 1968, the dying Salazar was replaced by his lieutenant, Marcello Caetano. During what is now termed the "Marcello Spring," repression and censorship were relaxed somewhat, and a liberal wing developed inside the one-party National Assembly. In 1974, Caetano was overthrown in a bloodless coup by the Armed Forces Movement, which opposed the ongoing colonial war in Mozambique and Angola. A transition to democracy then began with the election of a constitutional assembly that adopted a democratic constitution in 1976. The constitution was revised in 1982 to bring the military under civilian control, curb the president's powers and abolish an unelected "Revolutionary Council." In 1989, a second revision of the constitution provided for further privatization of nationalized industries and state-owned media.

The election of the Socialist Party's Jorge Sampaio as president in 1996 marked the end of a conservative era in which Portugal benefited economically, but failed to satisfy its voters' eagerness for social change. In his ten years as prime minister, Social Democrat Anibal Cavaco Silva led the country into the European Union, launched an ambitious privatization program and channeled massive funding into the country's infrastructure. Sampaio has vowed to continue economic reforms, but he won popularity by adding a social dimension to his agenda. In the minds of constituents, issues such as education, health, housing and the environment have assumed greater importance.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

The Portuguese can change their government democratically. In direct, competitive elections, voters, including a large number of Portuguese living abroad, select both the president and members of parliament. The president, who also commands the country's armed forces, is elected to a five-year term. The president receives advice from the Council of State, which includes six senior civilian officials, former presidents, five members chosen by the legislature and five chosen by the president. The country's unicameral legislature includes up to 235 deputies.

With the exception of fascist organizations, political association is unrestricted. Members of small, extreme-right groups, however, have run candidates for public office without interference. In September, the constitution was amended to allow immigrants to vote in presidential elections.

Portuguese courts are autonomous and operate only under the restraints of established law and the constitution. They include a Constitutional Court, a Supreme Court of Justice and judicial courts of the first and second instance. Separate administrative courts address administrative and tax disputes. They are generally noted for their adherence to traditional principles of independent jurisprudence, but inefficient bureaucratic organization has created an enormous backlog of cases in the system.

Freedoms of speech and assembly are respected with few exceptions. Although the law forbids insults directed at the government or the armed forces and intended to undermine the rule of law, the state has never prosecuted cases under this provision. Human rights organizations have repeatedly criticized Portugal for the occasional beating of prisoners and other detainees. In general, prison conditions are poor.

The print media, which are owned by political parties and private publishers, are free and competitive. Until 1990, all television and radio media, with the exception of the Roman Catholic radio station, were state-owned. Although television broadcasting is dominated by the state-owned Radiotelevisao Portuguesa, two independent stations have operated in recent years.

Workers have the right to strike and are represented by competing Communist and non-Communist organizations. In recent years, the two principal labor federations, the General Union of Workers and the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers Intersindical, have charged "clandestine" companies with exploiting child labor in the impoverished north.

The status of women has improved with economic modernization. Concentrated in agriculture and domestic service, women workers now comprise 37 percent of the official labor force. Despite a few prominent exceptions, female representation in government and politics averages less than ten percent. Sexual harassment is only illegal if committed by a superior in the workplace.

Qatar

Polity: Traditional
monarchy

Economy: Capitalist-
statist

Population: 667,000

PPP: \$18,403

Life Expectancy: 70.9

Ethnic Groups: Arab (40 percent), Pakistani (18 percent), Indian (18 percent), Iranian

Capital: Doha

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 6

Status: Not Free



Overview:

On November 26, 110 defendants went on trial for plotting to overthrow the emir, Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, in 1996. Forty of the accused are being tried in absentia. All are charged with treason, which carries the death penalty.

Qatar became a British protectorate in 1916, and gained independence when Great Britain withdrew from the Persian Gulf in 1971. Under the 1970 Basic Law, an emir is chosen from adult males of the Al Thani family. The Basic Law also provides for a Council of Ministers and a partially elected *Majlis al Shura*, or Advisory Council. In practice, the 35-member Majlis is appointed, and no elections have ever been held.

On June 27, 1995, Crown Prince Hamad, long recognized as the real power in the country, deposed his father in a palace coup while the emir vacationed in Switzerland. Since then, the new emir has called for greater political openness, and some small steps to that end have been taken. Press censorship was formally lifted in 1995, and Sheik Hamad has announced plans to increase popular participation in government. This course is an apparent reaction to the increasing violence of dissident movements in other Arab countries.

Municipal elections scheduled to take place in mid-1997 did not occur. However, a draft law was introduced in the opening session of the Majlis on December 1 which would provide for the direct election of a 29-member Municipal Council. All citizens over 18 years of age would be allowed to vote. Women would be permitted not only to vote, but also to stand for election. The issues over which the Council would have authority are not yet clear. Elections are expected to be held in early 1998.

Businessmen from over 60 countries attended a U.S.-sponsored conference in November aimed at encouraging business cooperation and international investment in the region. Most Arab countries boycotted the conference, however, in protest of what they deemed Israeli intransigence regarding the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Qataris cannot change their government democratically. Political parties are illegal, and elections have never been held. The emir holds absolute power and appoints his cabinet. While the emir consults with leading members of society on policy issues and works to reach a consensus with the appointed Majlis, the only recourse for ordinary citizens is to submit appeals to the emir.

The security apparatus includes the Interior Ministry's *Mubahathat* (Investigatory Police), which handles sedition and espionage cases, and the military's *Mukhabarat* (Intelligence Service), which monitors political dissidents. Both services can detain suspects indefinitely without charge while conducting investigations, though long-term detention occurs infrequently. Defendants in the case of the coup attempt reported being tortured in prison, kept in solitary confinement, denied family visits and not being informed of the charges against them.

The judiciary is not independent. Most judges are foreign nationals whose residence permits may be revoked at any time. Civil courts have jurisdiction in civil and commercial disputes, while Islamic *Shari'a* courts handle criminal and family cases. *Shari'a* court trials are closed to the general public, although family members are permitted. Lawyers help participants prepare cases but are not permitted in the courtroom. Non-Muslims may not bring suits to the *Shari'a* courts. In November, the Qatari government invited Amnesty International and foreign ambassadors to observe the trial of 110 defendants accused in a failed 1996 coup attempt.

Freedoms of speech, expression, and press are severely restricted. Public criticism of the ruling family or of Islam is forbidden. The emir ended formal censorship in 1995, though newspapers have been shut down twice since then for publishing articles deemed contrary to Qatar's interests. Self-censorship is pervasive. The Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs censors cable television and imported print material. The electronic media are state-owned and promote official views. A government censorship board screens all locally published books and other printed material. Academic freedom is not protected, and university professors practice self-censorship. Civil society is limited to professional associations and strictly non-political organizations which are monitored by the government.

Foreign nationals employed as domestic workers face sexual harassment and physical abuse. Although the authorities have investigated and punished several employers, most women apparently do not report abuse for fear of losing their residence permits. Women face social and legal discrimination in divorce and inheritance matters. A woman needs permission from a male relative to obtain a driver's license. A woman's right to refuse a marriage proposal is becoming widely accepted, whereas just five years ago it was not. Women enjoy greater opportunity in employment and education than they did under the former emir.

The Wahabbi branch of Sunni Islam is the state religion. Non-Muslims may not worship publicly and face discrimination in employment.

Workers may not form unions or bargain collectively. They may belong to "joint consultative committees" of worker and management representatives that discuss such issues as working conditions and work schedules, but not wages. The government's Labor Conciliation Board mediates disputes. Workers, excepting those in government or domestic employment, may strike if mediation fails. Strikes rarely occur in practice, however, because employers may dismiss workers after the Board has heard a case. Employers sometimes exercise leverage over foreign workers by refusing to grant mandatory exit permits.

Romania

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Political Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 2*
Economy: Mixed statist transitional
Status: Free

Population: 22,644,000

PPP: \$4,037

Life Expectancy: 69.5

Ethnic Groups: Romanian (88 percent), Hungarian (9 percent), German, Roma

Capital: Bucharest

Ratings Change: Romania's civil liberties changed from 3 to 2 due to increasing efforts by the government to insure economic stability



Overview:

In 1997, reformist President Emil Constantinescu and Prime Minister Victor Ciorbea launched a comprehensive program of "shock therapy" economic restructuring, introducing over 80 measures aimed at macro-economic stability, privatization and overhauling the industrial sector. While the president and government remained popular, a drop in living standards and the prospects of unemployment resulting from the planned closing of unprofitable enterprises led to a series of strikes and union demonstrations.

In other issues, amendments to the education law doing away with the obligation of national minorities to study history or geography in Romanian aroused fierce debate among nationalists and the government, which includes the Hungarian-based Hungarian Democratic Union (UDMR) in the ruling coalition. In foreign policy, U.S. opposition to Romania's inclusion in the first-round of NATO expansion was a setback for the government. In June, Romania and Ukraine signed a treaty to settle post-World War II differences over borders.

Romania became independent following the 1878 Berlin Congress. Romania gained territory after World War I, but lost some to the Soviet Union and Bulgaria in 1940. Soviet troops entered the country in 1944, whereupon King Michael dismissed the pro-German regime and backed the Allies. In 1945, he was forced to accept a Communist-led coalition government. Nicolae Ceausescu's autarkic economics and repressive governance devastated Romania during his rule from 1965 to 1989. A popular uprising and palace coup by disgruntled Communists toppled Ceausescu, who was tried and executed on December 25, 1989. A provisional government was formed under President Ion Iliescu, a high-ranking Communist and leader of the National Salvation Front (NSF). The 1992 parliamentary elections saw the NSF split between neo-Communist and more reformist members. Iliescu's new Democratic National Salvation (DNSF) won a combined 163 of 483 seats in the bicameral legislature. The opposition coalition, the center-right Democratic Convention (CDR), won 116. The rump-NSF, eventually renamed the Democratic Party (PD) under former Prime Minister Petre Roman, won 61 seats; the ultra-nationalist Romanian National Unity Party (PUNR), 44; the Hungarian-based (UDMR), 39; the ultra-nationalist Greater Romanian Party (PRM), 22; the pro-Communist Socialist Labor Party (SLP), 18; the Agrarian Democrats, five. In 1993, the DNSF and several extra-parliamentary parties formed the Party of Social Democracy of Romania (PSDR).

By 1996, with Romania lagging behind its Central-East European neighbors in reform, foreign investment and political liberalization, President Iliescu's popularity began to wane. In November, Constantinescu of the CDR defeated Iliescu in a runoff, 53.8 percent to 46.2 percent. In the parliamentary vote, the CDR, spearheaded by the Christian Democratic-National Peasant Party (PNTCD), took 122 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, and 53 in the Senate; the PDSR won 91, and 41; the Social Democratic Union (USD), of which Petre Roman's PD is the largest element, 53 and 23; the (UDMR) 25 and 12; the PRM, 19 and 8; and the PUNR, 18 and 7. Ciorbea, a lawyer, former labor leader and ex-mayor of Bucharest, was chosen prime minister to lead a CDR-USD-UDMR coalition government.

In 1997, the new administration embarked on a comprehensive economic reform program. Laws were passed allowing foreigners to own land, permitting foreign portfolio investment, preparing for the privatization of banks and transforming state utilities into joint stock companies prior to privatization. The State Ownership Fund completed several deals, with the Korean Samsung company buying 51 percent of the Romanian steel producer, Otelinox, and the French construction giant, Lafarge, buying 51 percent of ROMCIM, the biggest concrete producer in the country. More than 700 companies were sold off. Following commitments from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), foreign exchange controls, which maintained cheap energy prices for industry, were lifted. Prices for energy and food were liberalized. While average living standards dropped about 20 percent, the "unofficial" economy and an increase in social spending eased some of the hardship on the population. Nevertheless, there were several strikes and protests by miners, engineers and steel workers.

Inter-coalition squabbling over the pace and effectiveness of reform led to a major cabinet reshuffling in December. The prime minister announced the abolition of some ten cabinet and government posts, the creation of a Ministry of Privatization and the subordination of the State Ownership Fund to the government. Two key posts, the finance and reform ministries, were given to non-party specialists, rankling the PD and other coalition parties who accused President Constantinescu of interfering in the process.

A more serious challenge to the coalition was the threat by the UDMR in December to withdraw its support for the government over an amendment to the education law. In May, the government approved a measure that would allow Hungarians to study history and geography in their own language. The measure was opposed by Romanian nationalist parties. In December, the Senate, at the urging of Sen. George Pruteanu, chairman of the Romanian Senate Education Committee, voted that Romania's history and geography should be taught in the Romanian language in all schools. The Senate rejected the setting up of university departments and universities using the language of ethnic minorities. The UDMR called for Sen. Pruteanu's ouster, but decided to remain in the coalition after assurances that President Constantinescu supported their position.

In other issues, President Bill Clinton visited Romania in July after its campaign for NATO admittance had been blocked by the U.S. The president said Romania's time to join the alliance would come if the country continued on the path of political and economic change. In December, European Integration Minister Alexandru Herlea said "economically, Romania is not prepared to become an EU member." President

Constantinescu, on the eve of the EU summit in Luxembourg, said that Romania met the legislative and human rights criteria for EU membership, but not the economic ones.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens can change the government democratically under a multiparty system enshrined in a 1991 post-Communist constitution. The OSCE judged the 1996 presidential and parliamentary elections as "free and generally fair," citing such problems as incomplete voter registration rolls and irregularities in registering candidates.

There are a number of well-organized political parties; in addition to the six major parliamentary parties, 15 smaller parties representing minorities have a seat in the Chamber of Deputies. In December, the Alliance for Romania Party (APR), which broke with the PSDR, held its founding convention, calling itself a social-democratic party with 30,000 members.

There are a vigorous independent and party press and several private television stations that broadcast in almost all major urban areas, among them PRO TV and Antena 1. Laws against defamation of public officials, libel and disseminating false information remain in place. In early 1997, two prominent journalists from the daily *Ziua* who were sentenced to prison for reporting that former President Iliescu was once recruited by the Soviet KGB had their convictions overturned on appeal. But another court in the town of Buzau convicted three journalists from the paper *Opina* for libeling a former local prosecutor and sentenced them to one year in prison. In January, sweeping personnel changes at state-run Romania Television (RTV) were launched under its new director general, Stere Gulea, a Constantinescu appointee. State-run television had been widely regarded as pro-Iliescu.

The judiciary is only partly independent. A 1992 reorganization of the judicial system did not change the Ministry of Justice's control over the selection and advancement of judges. The ministry exerts considerable control over judicial advancement because it nominates judges and public prosecutors. In addition, the Constitutional Court's decisions may be overruled by a two-thirds vote of parliament. The military prosecutor's office oversees police conduct. Criminal and commercial law proceedings are generally lengthy and there is a lack of qualified personnel. Corruption is also widespread in the judiciary. In May, the government passed an amnesty that led to the release of 9,700 prisoners. In October, the government decided to open the files of the Securitate, the dreaded former secret police. Citizens would potentially have access to their own files and to those of public figures. It is questionable how many files still exist. In 1991, several thousand partly burned Securitate documents were found in the Romanian mountains, and in 1992 the defense minister said tens of thousands of files were missing.

Religious freedom is generally respected, though some Protestant denominations have complained of harassment by local-level officials. In November, the government approved an allotment of money to improve Orthodox Churches in Transylvania, which has a large Hungarian Catholic population. Relations with the Hungarian minority remain strained. While the UDMR remains in the governing coalition, amendments to the education law which struck down a provision that would have allowed the teaching of Romanian geography and history in the native language of minorities raised concerns. The government has also been slow in returning Hungarian churches con-

fiscated under the Communists. In May, the government submitted an emergency decree to the Senate on returning six buildings and land to the Federation of Jewish Communities. The country's Roma (Gypsy) population faces discrimination.

Workers have the right to form unions and strike. There are several active and well-organized trade union federations, and in 1997 unions led several demonstrations and strikes to protest the impact of government economic reform policies on workers. The Fratia National Trade Union Confederation claims 3.7 million members. The Alfa Workers Confederation claims one million members. The National Trade Union Block (BNS) is another major confederation. In December, 5,000 workers demonstrated about the precarious state of the food industry in a protest organized by the Trade Union Federation of Food Industries (FSIA). In June, an eight-day walk-out by coal miners was settled when the government offered a 23 percent wage increase. In August, laid off oil workers and police battled in Ploiesti. The leader of the largest coal miners union, Miron Cozma, went on trial for his part in a three-day rampage by miners in Bucharest in 1991 which led to the resignation of then-Prime Minister Roman. Women face no legal obstacles to full participation in society.

↓ Russia

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Political Rights: 3
Civil Liberties: 4
Economy: Mixed statist transitional
Status: Partly Free

Population: 147,700,000

PPP: \$4,828

Life Expectancy: 65.7

Ethnic Groups: Russian (82 percent), over 100 ethnic groups

Capital: Moscow

Trend Arrow: Russia receives a downward trend arrow due to the ever increasing corruption problem.



Overview:

In 1997, politics in Russia was animated by conflicts among the financial-industrial elites that financed President Boris Yeltsin's successful 1996 re-election campaign. One result was the loss of power by reformist Deputy Prime Ministers Anatoly Chubais and Boris Nemtsov, and the resurgence of Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. Despite recurring health problems, President Yeltsin remained the arbiter of authority. Relations with the leftist-dominated legislature (State Duma), weakened by a fragmented "red-brown" opposition, improved. Corruption, the central government's inability to collect taxes and pay wage arrears, controversial insider privatization schemes and resistance to market reforms by powerful monopolies continued to dampen economic performance, but inflation remained low, and the GDP increased for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

In other important issues, Chechen commander Alsan Maskhadov was elected president of the war-ravaged break-away republic. But while Moscow and Chechnya signed a peace treaty in May, by year's end there was no comprehensive agreement

governing relations between Moscow and Grozny. Tensions increased in December when Shamil Basayev, a former field commander who led a hostage-taking raid in Russia in 1995, was made de facto prime minister. In foreign policy, Moscow begrudgingly accepted NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe and signed a special charter with the alliance in May. But by the end of the year Russia had still not ratified the START II a treaty (approved by the U.S. Senate January 1996), and Moscow's warm relations with Iran and Iraq hurt relations with the West. The 1997 summit in Moldova of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), constituted by Russia as a post-Soviet alliance, failed to reach any agreement on major issues such as regional conflicts or economic integration.

With the USSR's collapse in December 1991, Russia re-emerged as a separate, independent state for the first time since 1921. President Yeltsin was directly elected by universal suffrage in June 1991. In 1992, Yeltsin was challenged by a hostile anti-reform legislature, as parliament replaced acting-Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, a principal architect of reforms, with Viktor Chernomyrdin, a Soviet-era manager of the giant natural gas monopoly, Gazprom.

In 1993, the Yeltsin-parliament struggle intensified over presidential powers and a new constitution. In September, Yeltsin suspended hard-line Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoi, dissolved parliament and set parliamentary elections for December. Opposition deputies barricaded themselves in the parliamentary complex. In early October, after riots by extremists supporting the protesters, troops crushed the uprising, arresting Ruslan Khasbulatov and Rutskoi. In December Russians approved Yeltsin's constitution, which established a bi-cameral Federal Assembly: a Federation Council (Upper House) consisting of two representatives from the country's eighty-nine regions and territories, and a 450-member State Duma.

In December 1995, forty-three parties registered for the parliamentary vote. Communists and nationalists won the most seats, as nearly 70 million of 107 million eligible voters went to the polls.

In the 1996 presidential vote, Yeltsin campaigned vigorously and was openly supported by Russia's most influential media and business elites. His key challenger was Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov. Yeltsin won July's runoff with a clear majority.

The first six months of 1997 were marked by a government reshuffle and the ascension of key reformers. In a major government reshuffle in March, Chief of Staff Chubais, mastermind of the mass privatization drive and manager of President Yeltsin's re-election, was named deputy prime minister and finance minister responsible for day-to-day economic management, and Boris Nemtsov, a radical reformer as governor of Nizhny Novgorod, was made deputy prime minister for social affairs, housing and reform of monopolies. The industry and defense ministries were absorbed by the economic ministry. The Duma passed a resolution calling the appointment of Chubais "a direct challenge to public opinion." The streamlined government seemed to diminish Prime Minister Chernomyrdin's authority. Under an ambitious reform program, the deputy prime ministers forced out corrupt or conservative officials and replaced them with their own allies and started to chip away the power of Russia's natural monopolies, which included Gazprom, the giant natural gas producer with close ties to Prime Minister Chernomyrdin. They weakened the ties between the government and its banker allies.

In July, the Chubais-led team became involved in what observers called the "bankers' war" among the financial magnates who bankrolled President Yeltsin's re-election campaign. The seven largest financial institutions, Alfa, Ikombank, Logo Vaz, Menatep, Most, Oneximbank, and SBS-ARGO have major holdings in large industrial enterprises and media, usually joined in holding companies called financial-industrial groups, splintered from the Communist Party nomenklatura, which controlled half the Russian economy.

Controversy erupted in August when the Oneximbank, led by financier Vladimir Potanin and closely identified with Chubais, won a 25 percent stake of the Svyazinvest telecommunications monopoly. Financial tycoon Boris Berezovsky, deputy head of the influential Security Council, and founder of Logo VAZ with business interests in airlines, newspapers and TV, and Vladimir Gusinsky, head of Most, with extensive media holdings, accused Chubais and members of his team of rigging the tender in favor of Oneximbank.

Using their media holdings, Chubais's enemies conducted a propaganda war against the young reformers and Oneximbank, culminating in the disclosure that Chubais and his allies had accepted a \$450,000 book contract from an Oneximbank-related publishing house. Even though the money was donated to charity, the struggle developed into what Nemtsov characterized as those in favor of "robber capitalism" and those supporting "people's capitalism" backed by a "strong state."

The weakening of Chubais emboldened parliament in October to threaten a no-confidence vote to oust the government unless it expelled radical reformers from the cabinet. But after President Yeltsin made it clear that he was sticking with his cabinet and reform programs, the Communists in the Duma gave in.

On November 5, the reformers won a minor victory when President Yeltsin dismissed Berezovsky, a long-time friend of the Yeltsin family, as deputy secretary of the Security Council. He blamed the dismissal on Chubais and Nemtsov. But on November 15, Yeltsin also fired Chubais's two top aides, and later in the month Chubais was stripped of his job as finance minister. Nemtsov was dismissed as energy minister. The shake-up was an effort by Yeltsin to mollify parliament and financial-industrial groups hostile to reform. While both ministers remained in the government to assuage creditors and financial markets, the dismissal of their team of loyal aides and their diminished responsibilities made it unlikely that the reformers could score major gains in their drive to reshape Russia's economy. The events bolstered the power of Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, who was expected to assume oversight of the finance, interior, defense, foreign and fuel and energy ministries.

Toward year's end, the crisis in the Asian markets buffeted Russia. It had to postpone privatization auctions for shares in Rosneft, the last big state-owned oil company, because bidders withdrew when they were unable to borrow money. The government admitted it would have trouble finding the \$1.5 billion needed to pay off wage arrears to public-sector employees. Renewed opposition to a draft budget for 1998 furthered uncertainty. Year-end popularity polls showed Communist Party boss Zyuganov with the highest popularity of Russian politicians.

The year also saw a surge in regional power. The 1996 direct elections of 52 oblasts and krajs brought the regions into line with Russia's 21 republics, which began electing their presidents in 1991. In December, Nemtsov observed that foreign investors were shying away from Communist-run regions. With little or no federal money avail-

able for the regions, many local leaders struck deals with Moscow to let them keep a larger share of their tax revenues and borrow money overseas. In December, when the regional government of Saratov brought in local laws to let farmland be freely bought and sold, 12 more regions promptly said they would follow suit, a show of regional impatience that prompted President Yeltsin and parliamentary leaders to promise a federal law for privatizing land.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Russians can change their government democratically. The 1993 constitution established a strong presidency, but decentralization and institutional checks put limits on executive authority. The 1995 parliamentary elections were generally free and fair, though over one million votes were invalidated, and the presidential race in 1996 was also free and fair. Several regional governor's races were marred by ballot-stuffing, incomplete voter lists and other irregularities.

Forty-three parties contested the 1996 parliamentary elections, and more than fifty parties and groups are registered. There are several "unregistered" groups, mainly extremists on the left and right of the political spectrum. In December 1996, the State Duma passed a law to limit so-called "divan parties," in which all members could fit on a single sofa. The law stipulates that only a group of at least 100 people can found a political party. Parties that seek to violently change the constitutional order or to violate the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation would be prohibited, as would be the creation of armed groups or parties that promote racial, ethnic and religious hatred.

More than 150 independent TV and radio companies operate in Russia, as well as foreign cable broadcasts and satellite dishes in large cities. Increasingly, Russia's powerful financial syndicates, some with close ties to the government, have acquired, control or fund most of the major media assets, raising the issues of press independence. In September, a former director of Moscow's powerful Menatep bank was named deputy chief of the government news agency ITAR-TASS. Berezovsky's LogoVAZ owns shares in Russian State Television (ORT) and TV 6, and has a controlling stake in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* through Obedinonny Bank. Gusinsky's Media Most controls 70 percent of NTV, an influential station that broadcasts nationwide, and owns *Segodnya* and other leading newspapers. Oneximbank, along with Lukoil, has stakes in several papers, including *Izvestia*. SBS-AGBRO is part of a consortium that own 38 percent of ORT and several papers and periodicals. Gazprom, with close ties to the prime minister, owns shares in NTV and ORT, as well as stakes or controlling interests in newspapers. In April, Lukoil moved to gain total control of *Izvestia* after it reprinted a controversial article which alleged that Prime Minister Chernomyrdin had accumulated a personal fortune of \$5 billion through his close links with Gazprom. Protections were included in the 1992 Law on Mass Media. The law forbids the use of mass media to commit criminal offenses or to inflame social intolerance or strife. The 1993 constitution "guaranteed" the freedom of mass media, though "the compulsory suspension of the activity or close down of a medium of mass information are permitted on the basis of the law in accordance with a ruling of a court of law." While censorship is proscribed by the constitution and the Law on Mass Media, court decisions have substantially limited journalists' freedom to criticize public figures, according to the Glasnost Defense Foundation. Libel cases are tried in court on the basis of the

Law on the Mass Media and the Law on the Protection of the Honor, Dignity, and Business Reputation of Citizens (1991). In February, the government revoked the accreditation of *Komsomolskaya pravda* journalist Aleksandr Gamov for reporting that President Yeltsin's wife had asked him to step down for health reasons.

Freedoms of assembly are generally respected. In March, 1.8 million workers and pensioners staged 1,300 strikes and demonstrations coordinated by the Federation of Independent Trade Unions to protest wage and pension arrears. Freedom of religion is generally respected in this primarily Russian Orthodox country. However, in September 1997 President Yeltsin signed a controversial law on religion which favors established religions with national organizations and 15 years of existence. The law aroused international condemnation and protests by Russia's Catholics, Baptists, Pentecostals and Seventh-day Adventists. In October, a small Siberian Lutheran congregation became the first church to have its registration revoked under the new law.

Since 1991, the process of reforming the legal and judicial systems has been progressing slowly. In July 1993, parliament passed a law authorizing the phased introduction of a jury system. In July 1994, parliament adopted and President Yeltsin approved amendments to the Criminal Code dropping old provisions based on so-called "socialist law" and guaranteeing instead protection for all forms of property. Other new provisions included articles dealing with political terrorism and assassination, the maximum punishment for which is the death sentence. A 1996 law separated the courts from the Ministry of Justice and placed them within a separate part of the Judicial Department. President Yeltsin signed reforms to criminal procedure and the penal system that gave certain privileges to prisoners held in isolation, provided for prisoners to serve their sentences in their own regions, and separating first-time offenders from recidivists. A new Criminal Code, adopted in May 1996, went into effect on January 1, 1997, replacing the RSFSR's criminal code of 1960. Although it retains the death penalty (albeit for five rather than 18 crimes) and increases the maximum sentences for banditry and murder, it significantly reduces sentences for non-violent crimes. The code includes about 100 new articles.

A new law to improve the independence and qualifications of judges went into effect on June 27, 1995. Judges are required to have at least five years of experience in the legal profession. In addition, the law raised judges' salaries and changed retirement rules in order to attract the best jurists to the profession. Some regions and republics had demanded the right to appoint their own judges to higher courts. Under the new law local officials will be able to express their opinions before judges are appointed by the president, as the constitution requires. Lower court officials are appointed and paid by regional and local governments. Impartiality is difficult to determine, but most trials are open. The independence of the judiciary is threatened by chronic underfunding and its subordinate position in relation to the executive and the legislature. Judges on local courts have serious problems meeting their wage bills, buying equipment, paying phone bills and undertaking building repairs. In December 1996, the Federation Council passed a law on the judicial system which stipulated that judges will be appointed by the Russian president, and all courts are funded by the federal budget.

Widespread corruption and organized crime remain a key problem. In June, Interior Minister Anatoly Kulikov said there were 9,000 organized crime groups comprising 100,000 people operating in Russia. In September, President Yeltsin told the

Federation Council, the parliament's upper house, that criminals were trying to infiltrate Russia's regional and federal administration and that 2,500 officials were under investigation on suspicion of corruption. He also said that "crony capitalism" should give way to a "new economic order," a clear reference to industrial bosses, bankers and bureaucrats.

The Federal Security Service, a successor to the KGB, still enjoys extra-judicial powers, including the right to search premises without a court order. Pretrial detention centers are generally deplorable, and prisoners presumed innocent often languish for months in filthy, overcrowded cells before coming to trial.

In 1997, a new internal passport system dropped a "nationality" listing. The propiska system that controls residency and movement is still widely in force. Citizens must register to live and work in a specific area within seven days of moving.

Human rights violations included ethnic and religious discrimination, labor exploitation, attacks on the media, and violations of prisoners' rights and due process. Abuses against Russian conscripts were rampant.

The Federation of Independent Unions of Russia, a successor to the Soviet-era federation, claims 60 million members (estimates put the figure at 39 million). Newer, independent unions represent between 500,000 to one million workers, including seafarers, dockworkers, air traffic controllers, pilots and some coal miners. Unions led a massive one-day national protest against wage arrears and economic policies.

Women are entitled to the same legal rights as men, and are well represented at many levels of the general economy. However, women face discrimination in such areas as equal pay and promotions. In February, a Moscow roundtable organized by the Union of Women and the Union of Journalists called for action to provide women with the equal rights and opportunities guaranteed in the constitution. The "centuries-old patriarchal tradition" was blamed for the "second-class" status of women, according to the Union of Women's leader. Domestic violence remains a serious problem.

Rwanda

Polity: Dominant party (military-dominated) **Political Rights:** 7
Civil Liberties: 6

Economy: Mixed statist **Status:** Not Free

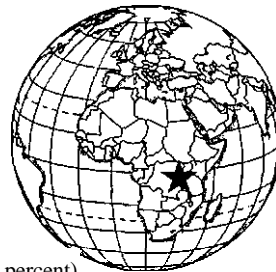
Population: 6,853,000

PPP: \$352

Life Expectancy: 22.6

Ethnic Groups: Hutu (84 percent), Tutsi (15 percent), Twa (1 percent)

Capital: Kigali



Overview:

In a September report on deteriorating human rights conditions in Rwanda, Amnesty International wrote, "Once again, death has become almost a banality in the lives of ordinary Rwandese. The population of Rwanda is living in a state of fear, knowing that whatever their ethnic origin or their perceived affiliation, they may become targets of arbitrary violence by one side or the other." Amnesty estimated that 6,000 people had been killed in the first nine months of 1997, most of them civilians and many by the

Tutsi-controlled government's Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) in its campaign to stifle a Hutu insurgency in Rwanda's northwest. Many other people were murdered by Hutu militias seeking to destabilize the government. Victims included many survivors of the 1994 genocide in which over a half million Tutsis were slaughtered before an RPA guerrilla force defeated the then Hutu-controlled regime, as well as foreign relief workers. The continuing unrest is affecting food production, already strained by the return of over a half million refugees from Zaire late in 1996, and hunger is reported in some parts of the country. About 120,000 genocide suspects are now detained in massively overcrowded Rwandan jails. Trials of alleged perpetrators continued in Rwanda and were soon to start at an international tribunal in the Tanzanian city of Arusha. The RPA has also been accused of massacring Rwanda Hutu refugees during its military campaign with rebels in the former Zaire that led to the overthrow of Mobutu Sese Seko. The U.S. has conducted training for the Rwandan army said to be aimed at improving discipline among its soldiers.

The continuing tragedy is yet another bloody chapter in the region's brutal recent history. The swift and savage genocide of April-June 1994 killed a half million or more people, mainly ethnic Tutsi but also many politically-moderate Hutu. The ethnic rivalries have deep roots. National boundaries decided by Belgian colonists obliged the two groups to vie for power in a modern state. Traditional Tutsi dominance ended with a Hutu rebellion in 1959 and independence in 1962. Hundreds of thousands of Tutsi were killed or fled the country over the next decades in recurring violence. In October, 1990, the Tutsi-led Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) launched a guerrilla war to force the Hutu regime, then led by General Juvenal Habyarimana, to accept power-sharing and return of Tutsi refugees. The Hutu chauvinists' solution to claims to land and power by Rwanda's Tutsi minority (roughly 15 percent of the eight million pre-genocide population) was their physical elimination as a people.

The spark for the genocide was the suspicious crash that killed President Habyarimana, along with Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira, as their plane approached the airport at Rwanda's capital, Kigali. The massacres had already been well-plotted, however. Piles of matches had been imported and death lists were read out over radio. A small UN force in Rwanda withdrew as the killings spread and Tutsi rebels advanced. French troops intervened in late 1994 not to halt the genocide, but in a futile effort to preserve some territory for the crumbling regime that was a close client of France.

International relief efforts that eased suffering among more than two million Hutu refugees along Rwanda's frontiers also allowed retraining and rearming of large numbers of ex-government troops. Several reports in 1997 questioned the United Nations' role in failing to prevent such activities, as well as its decision to ignore specific warnings of the 1994 genocide.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Rwandans have never been permitted to exercise their right to elect their representatives in open elections. The last elections were in 1988 under a one-party state. The current self-appointed government is dominated by the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) but includes several other political parties. A 70-member multiparty national assembly was appointed in November 1994. No schedule for elections has been set, and what form of governance Rwanda will have in the future is unclear. The RPF is highly unlikely to

accept a return to majority Hutu rule that voting on a one-person, one-vote basis would inevitably produce. The constitutional basis for government is the Fundamental Law, an amalgam of the 1991 constitution, two agreements among various parties and groups and the RPF's own 1994 declaration on governance.

The bloody guerrilla war in Rwanda saw rising abuses by all sides. Civilians, including many women and children, were murdered. Several international relief workers were also killed, including Sastra Chim Chan, a Cambodian who had survived his own country's genocide. Tutsi genocide survivors and local officials were particular militia targets.

Ethnic or religious-based parties are prohibited, and two political parties closely identified with the 1994 massacres are banned. Several other political parties are operating and participate in government. The RPF has continued high profile efforts to include Hutu representatives in government, including the appointment of President Pasteur Bizimungu.

Rwandan media are officially censored and constrained by fears of reprisals. In April, Appollos Hakizimana, a writer for the newspaper *Intego* and editor of *Umuravumba*, was killed by unidentified gunmen in Kigali. *Intego* director and editor-in-chief of *Le Partisan*, Amiel Nkuriza, was arrested in May and charged with incitement to ethnic violence. The state controls broadcast media, and the few independent newspapers publishing in Kigali reportedly exercise considerable self-censorship. The role of the media in Rwanda has become a contentious test case for media freedom and responsibility. During the genocide, 50 journalists were murdered, while others broadcast incitements to slaughter. At least three Hutu radio journalists were detained in 1996 on genocide charges.

Approximately 120,000 people accused of participation the 1994 genocide are held under overcrowded and abysmal conditions. The first genocide trials opened in December 1996, but only about 300 cases had been heard through 1997. The near destruction of Rwanda's legal system and death or exile of most of the judiciary severely limits criminal adjudication. Constitutional and legal safeguards regarding arrest procedures and detention are widely ignored.

Many clerics were among both the victims and perpetrators of the genocide. However, religious freedom is generally respected. The Collective Rwandan Leagues and Associations for the Defense of Human Rights (CLADHO) and other local non-governmental organizations operate openly. International human rights groups and relief organizations have also been very active.

Women's rights receive legal protection, but there is serious de facto discrimination. Rape by Hutu soldiers and militias was widespread in 1994. Women are being forced to take on many new roles, especially in the countryside where the dearth of males is demanding that women perform many traditionally male tasks. Constitutional provisions for labor rights include the right to form trade unions, to engage in collective bargaining and to strike. Rwanda's continuing war, however, makes early improvement in respect for and ability to exercise human rights and fundamental freedoms very unlikely.

St. Kitts-Nevis

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 41,000
PPP: \$9,436
Life Expectancy: 69.0
Ethnic Groups: Black (95 percent), mulatto
Capital: Basseterre

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Overview:

In 1997 Prime Minister Denzil L. Douglas vowed to oppose a decision by the Nevis parliament to end its federation with St. Kitts, amidst concerns that the move would give impetus to further political fragmentation in the Caribbean.

The national government is comprised of the prime minister, the cabinet and the bicameral legislative assembly. Elected assembly members, eight from St. Kitts and three from Nevis, serve five-year terms. Senators, not to exceed two-thirds of the elected members, are appointed, one by the leader of the parliamentary opposition for every two by the prime minister. The British monarch is represented by a governor-general who appoints as prime minister the leader of the party or coalition with at least a plurality of seats in the legislature. Nevis has a local assembly comprised of five elected and three appointed members and pays for all its own services except police and foreign relations. St. Kitts has no similar body. Nevis is accorded the constitutional right to secede if two-thirds of the elected legislators approve and two-thirds of voters endorse it in a referendum.

The center-right People's Action Movement (PAM) gained power in 1980 with NRP support. In 1983 the country achieved independence. The PAM-NRP coalition won majorities in the 1984 and 1989 elections.

In the 1993 elections the St. Kitts Labour Party (SKLP) and the PAM each won four seats, though the former won the popular vote. The Concerned Citizens Movement (CCM) took two Nevis seats and the NRP one. The CCM opted not to join the coalition, leaving a PAM-NRP to rule with a five-seat plurality.

SKLP leader Denzil Douglas protested the new government, calling for a government shutdown. Violence erupted, leading to a two-week state of emergency. The SKLP boycotted parliament in 1994.

In late 1994, the PAM government was shaken by a drugs-and-murder scandal in which the son of the then-deputy prime minister and his girlfriend were slain. Two of his brothers were arrested. A police official who had been investigating the murders was murdered. Prisoners rioted when the two brothers were released on bond and the troops from the Barbados-based Regional Security System had to be called in to restore order. The weakened government agreed to hold early elections.

The July 1995 elections ended 15 years of PAM rule. The SKLP won seven of eight St. Kitts seats and 60 percent of the popular vote. The PAM took the eighth St. Kitts seat and 40 percent of the popular vote. On Nevis, the CCM retained its two seats, and the NRP held on to the third. Since the elections, PAM alleges that the SKLP

is dismissing or demoting PAM supporters and filling positions with SKLP supporters.

In July 1996 Nevis premier Vance Armory, reacting to St. Kitts' unwelcome move to open a government office in Nevis, announced his intention to break the 100-year political link between the two islands. On October 13, 1997 Nevis' five-person parliament unanimously voted for succession. A referendum will allow residents to ratify or reject the measure.

The amount of cocaine passing through the Caribbean en route to the U.S. had reportedly doubled in recent years. St. Kitts is one of more than ten Caribbean islands to sign drug enforcement pacts with the United States. Nevis has about 9,000 offshore businesses operating under strict secrecy laws, and half of these have opened in the last three years. It has resisted central government efforts to impose stiffer regulations on the crime-prone industry.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens are able to change their government democratically. Constitutional guarantees regarding free expression, the free exercise of religion and the right to organize political parties, labor unions and civic organizations are generally respected.

However, drugs and money-laundering have corrupted the political system. Apart from the 1995 drug-and-murder scandal, whose three hung juries suggest jury tampering and intimidation, there are also questions regarding business relations between SKLP leaders and known drug trafficker Noel "Zambo" Heath, one of three alleged traffickers with government ties whose extradition has been sought unsuccessfully by the United States. In June 1997, despite concerns of its cost to a country of 42,000 people, parliament passed a bill designed to create a 50-member army to wage war on heavily-armed drug traffickers.

The judiciary is generally independent. However, in March 1996 when the drug-and-murder scandal came to trial, the Public Prosecutions Office failed to send a representative to present the case. The charges were dropped, raising suspicions of a government conspiracy. The highest court is the West Indies Supreme Court in St. Lucia, which includes a Court of Appeal and a High Court. Under certain circumstances there is a right of appeal to the Privy Council in London.

The traditionally strong rule of law has been tested by the increase in drug-related crime and corruption. In 1995, it appeared that the police had become divided along political lines between the two main political parties. The national prison is overcrowded, and conditions are abysmal.

The main labor union, the St. Kitts Trades and Labour Union, is associated with the ruling SKLP. The right to strike, while not specified by law, is recognized and generally respected in practice.

Television and radio on St. Kitts are government-owned, and opposition parties habitually claim the ruling party takes unfair advantage; Prime Minister Douglas has pledged to privatize St. Kitts television and radio. Each major political party publishes a weekly or fortnightly newspaper. Opposition publications freely criticize the government, and international media are available.

St. Lucia

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 145,000
PPP: \$6,182
Life Expectancy: 71.0
Ethnic Groups: Black (90 percent), mulatto
Capital: Castries

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Overview:

The biggest electoral landslide in the country's history resulted in the St. Lucia Labor Party (SLP), out of power since 1982, winning 16 of 17 seats in parliament. Prime Minister Vaughan Lewis of the United Workers Party (UWP) was replaced by a 26-year-old political newcomer. The new prime minister, Kenny Anthony, head of the SLP, owed his victory to economic distress and reports of official corruption.

St. Lucia, a member of the British Commonwealth, achieved independence in 1979. The British monarchy is represented by a governor-general. Under the 1979 constitution, a bicameral parliament consisting of a 17-member House of Assembly, which is elected for five years, and an 11-member Senate. Six senators 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 eight regions, each with its own elected council and administrative services.

The UWP was shaken by scandals over the past few years, including an alleged affair by veteran party leader Compton with a teenager. Compton was also accused of misappropriating UN funds. Soon after Compton's withdrawal from politics his deputy both as prime minister and party leader, 72-year-old George Mallet, announced his decision to retire, clearing the way for Compton's handpicked successor, former director-general of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), Vaughan Lewis. Lewis won Mallet's vacated seat in February's by-elections.

Now holding a seat, Lewis was qualified to assume the party leadership. In April, since his party won the most seats, he automatically became the prime minister. Compton had been prime minister for all but three of the past 32 years and had served in parliament for 40 years.

In June 1996, upon the retirement of Governor-General Sir Stanislaus James, Mallet was sworn in as the country's fourth governor-general over protests that the post be reserved for those outside the sphere of party politics.

Opposition leader Julian Hunte also stepped down after taking third place in the February 1996 by-elections. Former Education Minister Kenny Anthony replaced him as leader of the SLP. By the end of 1996 the SLP had merged with smaller opposition parties, and Anthony led the coalition to victory in May 23, 1997 elections.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens are able to change their government through democratic elections. Constitutional guarantees regarding the right to organize political parties, labor unions and civic groups

are generally respected, as is the free exercise of religion.

The competition among political parties and allied civic organizations is heated, particularly during election campaigns when one side invariably accuses the other of occasional violence and harassment. Opposition parties have complained intermittently of difficulties in obtaining police permission for demonstrations, charging the government with interference.

Newspapers are mostly private or sponsored by political parties. The government has been charged with trying to influence the press by withholding government advertising. Television is privately owned. Radio is both public and private. In November 1995 the government refused to reissue a license for Radyo Koulibwi, a small FM station critical of the ruling party.

Civic groups are well organized and politically active, as are labor unions, which represent a majority of wage earners. However, legislation passed in 1995 restricts the right to strike. The measure provides for a fine of about \$2,000 or two years in prison for inciting any person to cease performing any lawful activity on his property or on the property of another person. The government said the measure was aimed at curtailing strikes in the banana industry, which employs more than 30 percent of the workforce. Nonetheless, in October 1996, a 14-day strike took place in which banana industry workers demanded a greater role in management decisions. The strike resulted in violence, and the police used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse crowds, seriously injuring several people.

The judicial system is independent and includes a High Court under the West Indies Supreme Court (based in St. Lucia), with ultimate appeal under certain circumstances to the Privy Council in London. Traditionally, citizens have enjoyed a high degree of personal security. However, an escalating crime wave, much of it drug related, violent clashes during banana farmers' strikes and increased violence in schools have sparked concern among citizens. Prisons are greatly overcrowded.

Though there are no official barriers to the participation of women and minorities in government, these groups are underrepresented. A growing awareness 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.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 118,000
PPP: \$5,650
Life Expectancy: 72.0
Ethnic Groups: Black, mulatto
Capital: Kingstown

Political Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Overview:

The 1997 trial of two rich American tourists, charged with killing a West Indian boatman and released for lack of evidence, drew attention to the troubled state of justice in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Since 1984 Sir James F. Mitchell and his New Democratic Party (NDP), have dominated the Caribbean nation's politics and government.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a member of the British Commonwealth, with the British monarchy represented by a governor-general. St. Vincent achieved independence in 1979, with jurisdiction over the northern Grenadine islets of Bequia, Canouan, Mayreau, Mustique, Prune Island, Petit St. Vincent and Union Island.

The constitution provides for a 15-member unicameral House of Assembly elected for five years. Six senators are appointed, four by the government and two by the opposition. The prime minister is the leader of the party or coalition commanding a majority in the House.

In 1994, Mitchell won a third term as prime minister when his center-right NDP won 12 seats. The center-left alliance comprising the St. Vincent Labour Party (S VLP), which had held power in 1979-84, and the Movement for National Unity (MNU) won the other three seats. The opposition contested the results, charging that voter registration irregularities had occurred.

In 1995, Deputy Prime Minister Parnel Campbell faced charges of financial impropriety when, disregarding government regulations, he took a loan from an offshore bank. With the opposition parties now united into the Unity Labour Party (ULP) pressing for a parliamentary vote of no-confidence, Campbell resigned. Mitchell then announced he would postpone plans to retire at the next general election.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens can change their government democratically. However, the 1994 elections were tainted by apparent registration irregularities, as the government had failed to comply with a constitutional provision requiring a review of constituency lines prior to elections after a national census. It remains unclear to what extent irregularities caused some eligible voters to be disenfranchised, though they were not so extensive as to alter the overall outcome of the vote.

Constitutional guarantees regarding free expression, freedom of religion and the right to organize political parties, labor unions and civic organizations are generally respected. Labor unions are active and permitted to strike.

Political campaigns are hotly contested, with occasional charges from all quarters

of harassment and violence, including police brutality, as well as allegations of funding from drug traffickers. The 1994 campaign saw an ugly rock-throwing clash between supporters of the main parties that left one NDP supporter dead.

The press is independent, with two privately owned independent weeklies, the *Vincentian* and the *News*, and several smaller, partisan papers. The opposition has charged the *Vincentian* with government favoritism. The only television station is privately-owned and free from government interference. Satellite dishes and cable 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 inordinate advantage of state control over programming.

The judicial system is independent. The highest court is the West Indies Supreme Court (based in St. Lucia), which includes a Court of Appeal and a High Court. A right of ultimate appeal reports under certain circumstances to the Privy Council in London. Murder convictions carry a mandatory death sentence. In 1996 Human Rights Watch criticized St. Vincent and the Grenadines for carrying out three death sentences. In 1997 there were five people waiting on death row.

The 1997 trial of James and Penny Fletcher, tourists visiting from West Virginia, resulted in a personal appeal by President Clinton to Mitchell to ensure they received "due process." The appeal came after U.S. media questioned whether the two could receive a fair trial, pointing to weak evidence against them and a reported \$100,000 bribe request from the friend of a top police official. A U.S. diplomat was quoted as saying evidence in the case was so weak that the judge had "taken lint and created a rope with which to hang the Fletchers."

A local human rights organization has accused police of using excessive force and illegal search and seizure and of improperly informing detainees of their rights in order to extract confessions. The regional human rights organization, Caribbean Rights, estimates that 90 percent of convictions in St. Vincent are based on confessions. In 1996, a 12-year-old boy was the victim of police brutality which resulted in the dismissal of two officers and the demotion of a third.

The independent St. Vincent Human Rights Association has criticized long judicial delays and the large backlog of cases caused by personnel shortages in the local judiciary. It has also charged that the executive at times exerts inordinate influence over the courts. Prison conditions remain poor—the prison in which James Fletcher was held was built in 1872 for 90 inmates, but now holds more than 350—and there are allegations of mistreatment.

Penetration by the hemispheric drug trade is increasingly causing concern. Allegations have been made of drug-related corruption within the government and police force, and of money-laundering in St. Vincent banks. The drug trade has also caused an increase in street crime. In 1995 the U.S. government described St. Vincent as becoming a drug-trafficking center and alleged that high-level government officials are involved in drug-related corruption. Since then, St. Vincent has taken steps to cooperate with U.S. anti-drug trade efforts. An extradition treaty with the U.S. was signed in 1996.

San Marino

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Capitalist

Population: 25,000

PPP: na

Life Expectancy: na

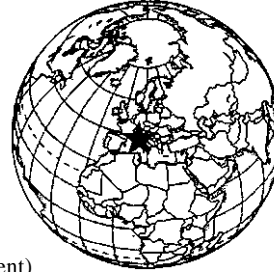
Ethnic Groups: Sanmarinese (78 percent), Italian (21 percent)

Capital: San Marino

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Overview:

San Marino, the world's oldest and second smallest republic, has been governed by a centrist Social Democratic-Socialist party coalition since 1993. Economic issues dominated the government's agenda throughout 1997. The republic has a vibrant, primarily private-enterprise economy. In addition to agriculture, principal economic activities include production of livestock, light manufacturing and tourism, which constitutes 60 percent of government revenue. Eighty-five percent of the country's external trade is with Italy.

Although the Sanmarinese are ethnically and culturally Italian, their long history of independence dates from Papal recognition in 1631. An 1862 customs union with Italy began an enduring relationship of political, economic and security cooperation. Despite substantial reliance on Italian assistance ranging from budget subsidies to news media, San Marino maintains its own political institutions and became a full member of the United Nations in 1992. It joined the International Monetary Fund in the same year.

The Grand and General Council has served as the legislature since 1600. Its 60 members are directly elected by proportional representation every five years. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs has come to assume many of the prerogatives of a prime minister. Directly elected Auxiliary Councils serve as arbiters of local government in each of the country's nine "castles." They are led by an elected captain and serve two-year terms. The legislature appoints two captains-regent — representing the city and the countryside, respectively — to exercise executive authority for six-month terms.

The government extends official recognition to 17 communities of the more than 13,000 Sanmarinese living abroad. The state funds summer education and travel programs to bring Sanmarinese students living abroad to the republic.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

San Marino's citizens can change their government democratically. The country has a long tradition of multi-party politics, with six parties represented in the current Council. Although the ruling center-left coalition maintained a substantial majority in the 1993 elections, three smaller parties emerged, including a hardline splinter group from the recently reconstituted Communist Party. Women were permitted to stand as candidates for seats in the Grand and General Council for the first time in 1974.

The country's independent judiciary is based on the Italian legal system and in-

eludes justices of the peace, a law commissioner and assistant commissioner, a criminal judge of the Primary Court of Claims and two Appeals Court judges. A Supreme Court of Appeal acts as a final court of appeal in civil cases. The judicial system delegates some of its authority to Italian magistrates in both criminal and civil cases.

Workers (including police, but not the military) are free to form and join unions under a 1961 law. Collective bargaining agreements carry the force of law. Unions may freely form domestic federations or join international labor federations. Union members constitute approximately one half of the country's workforce, which includes approximately 10,000 Sanmarinese and 2000 Italians. Trade unions are independent of the government and political parties, but they have close informal ties with the parties, which exercise strong influence on them. The right to strike is guaranteed, but no strikes have occurred in the past eight years. Freedom of association is respected.

San Marino enjoys a free press. Italian newspapers and radio and television broadcasts are readily available. The government, some political parties, and the trade unions publish periodicals, bulletins, and newspapers. There are no daily newspapers. The privately operated Radio Titano is the country's only broadcast service. An information bulletin entitled *Notizie di San Marino* is broadcast daily over Radio Televisione Italiano.

San Marino has no formal asylum policy. Instead, it has allowed a small number of refugees to reside and work in the country. Immigrants and refugees are eligible for citizenship only after 30 years' residence.

Another citizenship law grants automatic citizenship to the foreign spouses and children of male Sanmarinese, but not to those of their female counterparts. In July, the country legalized homosexuality. Earlier statutes had provided for up to one year's imprisonment for the commission of "libidinous acts with persons of the same sex."

Sao Tome and Príncipe

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Economy: Mixed statist (transitional)
Population: 144,000
PPP: \$1,704
Life Expectancy: 67.0
Ethnic Groups: Mulatto majority; Portuguese minority
Capital: Sao Tome

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Overview: The tenuous cohabitation between President Miguel dos Anjos Trovoada and rivals in the opposition-controlled parliament continued to create political friction in this small island nation lying off the coast of Central Africa. Protests against price rises in the capital, São Tomé in April led to numerous injuries and property damage in the country's worst violence since receiving independence from Portugal in 1975. In an attempt to boost external aid, the government changed Chinese partners in May by establishing diplomatic ties with the Republic of China (Taiwan) in exchange for prom-

ises of assistance reportedly valued at over \$30 million. Beijing responded by suspending relations and demanding immediate repayment of \$11 million in bilateral debt. The sums involved reflect the desperate poverty in which most of the country's 130,000 people live, with a per capita income of less than \$250 annually and an economy based on cocoa and subsistence agricultural and fishing.

President Trovoada was re-elected to a second five-year term in July 1996 after winning 52.74 percent of the roughly 40,000 votes cast in a second round run-off against former one-party leader Manuel Pinto da Costa. Despite numerous allegations of vote-buying and other irregularities, international observers declared the results free and fair. The opposition-controlled parliament's four-year term expires in October 1998, but social unrest and a weak performance by Prime Minister Raul Wagner Conceigao Bragnafa Neto may lead to early elections.

São Tomé and Príncipe are two islands about 125 miles off the coast of Gabon in the Gulf of Guinea. Seized by Portugal in 1522 and 1523, they became a Portuguese Overseas Province in 1951. Portugal granted local autonomy in 1973 and independence in 1975. The Movement for the Liberation of Sao Tome and Principe (MLSTP), formed in 1960 as the Committee for the Liberation of Sao Tome and Principe, took power upon independence in July 1975. The MLSTP was the only legal party until an August 1990 referendum established multiparty democracy. In March 1991 Trovoada, an independent candidate backed by the opposition Democratic Convergence Party, became the first democratically elected president.

An abortive and bloodless August 1995 coup nearly toppled the elected government. Junior army officers seized President Trovoada, closed parliament and suspended the constitution. The rebels' grievances included governmental corruption they said was a prime cause of São Tomé's deep poverty, as well as army pay arrears. After intense international pressure and promises of amnesty, the mutiny ended, and the president and parliament returned to office. However, many of the problems the rebels identified still pervade the country's politics, and the poor economy may continue to provoke unrest.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

São Tomé and Príncipe's 1991 presidential and legislative elections gave the country's citizens their first chance to elect their leader in an open and free and fair contest. October 1994 legislative elections and the 1996 presidential poll were also generally free and fair.

An independent judiciary headed by a Supreme Court whose members are designated by and responsible to the national assembly was created by the August 1990 referendum on multiparty rule. The court system is overburdened, understaffed and underfunded, and there are often long delays in hearing cases. Prison conditions are reportedly harsh.

Constitutionally-protected freedom of expression is respected in practice. Newspapers appear only sporadically due to economic constraints, and the state controls the only radio and television stations and a local press agency. Opposition parties receive free air time under a 1994 law, and newsletters and pamphlets criticizing the government circulate freely.

Freedom of assembly is respected. Citizens have the constitutional right to assemble and demonstrate with forty-eight hours' advance notice to the authorities. They

may also travel freely within the country and abroad. Freedom of religion is respected within the predominantly Roman Catholicism country. Women hold three of 55 national assembly seats and few other leadership positions. Most occupy domestic roles in the subsistence economy and have fewer opportunities than men for education or formal sector employment. Domestic violence against women is reportedly common.

Explosive population growth has exacerbated a long decline in production of the island's main export, cocoa. Efforts to privatize state enterprises and establish an offshore banking center have gone slowly. The country is saddled with an unpayable \$600 million foreign debt, and debt relief is unlikely unless the government agrees to public sector jobs and spending cuts prescribed by the World Bank. With unemployment at about 40 percent, austerity could cause further social unrest.

Saudi Arabia

Polity: Traditional
monarchy

Economy: Capitalist-
statist

Population: 19,354,000

PPP: \$9,338

Life Expectancy: 70.3

Ethnic Groups: Arab (90 percent), Afro-Asian (10 percent)

Capital: Riyadh

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free



Overview:

In 1997, the Saudi government continued its efforts to promote privatization of the economy and fiscal austerity in order to cope with shrinking oil revenues and a population boom.

Recent measures include an aggressive campaign to increase the number of Saudi nationals represented in the public and private work forces, and "public-private sector partnerships" which are aimed at creating new businesses to absorb younger workers.

King Abd al-Aziz Al Saud consolidated the Nejd and Hejaz regions of the Arabian peninsula into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932. His son, King Fahd Bin Abd Al-Aziz Al Saud, ascended the throne in 1982 after a number of successions within the family. The king rules by decree and serves as prime minister, appointing all other ministers. In 1992 King Fahd appointed a 60-member Consultative Council, or *Majlis ash-Shura*. The majlis is strictly advisory, and is not regarded as a significant political force in the country. The king expanded the majlis in 1997 to 90 members, including three Shi'ite Muslims. The overwhelming majority of Saudis belong to the Wahhabi sect of Sunni Islam.

King Fahd's poor health in recent years has raised concerns about an orderly transfer of power, deemed crucial to the stability of Saudi Arabia's internal and foreign affairs. A power struggle between the two top contenders, deputy prime minister Crown Prince Abdullah and defense minister Prince Sultan, was settled when the king, having suffered a stroke, appointed Abdullah temporary ruler for several months in 1995. Abdullah's success in handling diplomatic and budgetary matters secured his posi-

tion as future king. In the meantime, he takes on increasing government responsibility as the king's health deteriorates.

Recent terrorist attacks and harsh government crackdowns are the products of growing internal dissent over widespread official corruption, fiscal mismanagement, denial of basic political rights and the continuing security alliance with the United States. In 1994 the government arrested some 150 militants and fundamentalist clerics on sedition charges. Bomb attacks against American military facilities in 1995 and 1996 provoked scores of arrests of suspected Shi'ite subversives in a crackdown that pushed much of the opposition underground.

As king, Abdullah is expected to move toward greater economic diversification, less state interference in the economy and a regional system of alliances to reduce dependence on the U.S. for security. With unemployment at close to 20 percent and corruption consuming up to a third of government revenue, many question whether Saudi Arabia possesses the political stability to take steps, such as increasing political participation and enhancing government accountability for public funds, needed to move from a heavily-subsidized welfare state to a market-oriented economy without sparking political unrest.

Efforts to promote regional alliances included the visit of a Saudi minister to Teheran in July. After years of strained relations, the two largest oil producers in the Gulf apparently seek to establish political ties in addition to their past cooperation on oil issues. Perceived Israeli obstruction of the U.S.-backed peace process has created an anti-Western backlash in several Arab countries including Saudi Arabia. Another cause for concern has been Israel's military cooperation with Turkey. The election this year of a relatively moderate Iranian president provides the Saudi leadership with the opportunity to extend an olive branch in the interest of regional stability.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Saudi citizens cannot change their government democratically. Political parties are illegal, the king rules by decree, and there are no elections at any level. Majlis membership is not representative of the population.

The judiciary is not independent of the monarchy. Under the legal system, which is based on *Shari'a* (Islamic law), persons convicted of rape, murder, armed robbery, adultery, apostasy and drug trafficking face death by beheading. At least 123 people were executed in 1997. Police routinely torture detainees, particularly Islamic fundamentalists and non-Western foreigners, in order to extract confessions. Defense lawyers are not permitted in the courtroom, and trials are generally closed and conducted without procedural safeguards. Suspects arrested by the Interior Ministry's general Directorate of Intelligence may be held incommunicado for months without charge. Since 1993 hundreds of Islamic activists, Shi'ites, and Christians have been arbitrarily detained or forced into exile.

In September, two British nurses were convicted of murdering a colleague after a trial fraught with procedural irregularities. One was sentenced to eight years in prison and 500 lashes, and the other reportedly sentenced to death. Under Islamic law, the victim's family can have a death sentence commuted to a prison term by seeking clemency, generally in exchange for monetary compensation. In this case, the victim's family waived the right to a death sentence, but the fate of the convicted nurse remained unclear late in the year. If executed, she would be the first westerner put to death by the Saudi

State.

Freedom of expression is severely restricted. Criticism of the government, Islam or the ruling family is forbidden. A 1965 national security law and a 1982 media policy statement prohibit the dissemination of any literature critical of the government. The Interior Minister must approve and can remove all editors-in-chief. Journalists for private papers censor themselves, while the reporting of the government-owned radio and television is limited to official views. The government tightly restricts the entry of foreign journalists into the country. Foreign media are heavily censored. In 1994 the government outlawed private ownership of satellite dishes.

Government permission is required for the formation of professional groups and associations, which must be non-political. Islam is the official religion, and all citizens must be Muslims. The government prohibits the public practice of other religions, and conversion is punishable by death. The Shi'ite minority, concentrated in the eastern province, is subjected to officially sanctioned political and economic discrimination. Christians are arrested, flogged and otherwise harassed.

Women are segregated in workplaces, schools, restaurants and on public transportation, may not drive, and must wear the *abaya*, a black garment covering the head, face and body. *Mutawwai'in*, or officers with the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, harass women for violating conservative dress codes and for appearing in public with unrelated males. A woman may not travel domestically or abroad without being accompanied by a male. African nationals practice female genital mutilation in some areas.

Foreign-born domestic workers are subject to abuse and work long hours and are sometimes denied wages. The court system discriminates against African and Asian workers, and employers generally hold the passports of foreign employees as leverage in resolving business disputes or as a means of forcing employees to do extra work. Foreign workers constitute two-thirds of those executed in the kingdom.

The government prohibits trade unions, collective bargaining and strikes. There are no publicly active human rights groups, and the government prohibits visits by international human rights groups and independent monitors.

Senegal

Polity: Dominant party
Economy: Mixed capitalist
Population: 8,532,000
PPP: \$1,596
Life Expectancy: 49.9
Ethnic Groups: Wolof (36 percent), Mende (30 percent), Fulani (17 percent), Serer (16 percent), others
Capital: Dakar

Political Rights: 4
Civil Liberties: 4
Status: Partly Free



Overview:

Legislative polls set for May 1998 could mark the end of three years of sometimes uncomfortable cohabitation between President Abdou Diouf's ruling Socialist Party (PS) and the

main opposition Senegal Democratic Party (PDS) in a national unity government. The refusal of the PS to accept creation of an independent national election commission, demanded by the opposition coalition Collective of 19, reinforced suspicions that the party ruling Senegal since independence in 1960 is still unprepared to allow free elections. November 1996 local elections won by the PS were a fiasco, as voters' lists and voting cards were lost and manipulated. Tension over electoral conditions could inflame social unrest.

In the southern Casamance region, open warfare between secessionist rebels and government troops renewed after over four years of a broadly respected cease-fire. Hundreds of deaths are reported amidst allegations of serious abuses by both government forces and rebels of the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC). Casamance is nearly entirely cut off from the rest of Senegal by the Gambia, but is an economically crucial region. It produces most of the country's rice and is a popular destination for foreign tourists. The region has shared little in the revenue from these resources, however, and a separatist campaign, led by ex-Catholic priest Diamacoune Senghor, was launched in 1982. Senghor still heads the MFDC from Casamance's regional capital, Ziguinchor, but command of the MFDC's armed wing may have passed to younger and more radical leaders. The violence in Casamance deters tourism, disrupts rice production and harms Senegal's economic growth. It is also a test of the capacity and discipline of the country's professional and largely apolitical military, which in 1997 received U.S. military training in peacekeeping duties.

Senegal has avoided military or overtly dictatorial rule since its independence from France in 1960. President Leopold Senghor exercised *de facto* one-party rule under the PS for over a decade after independence, but three additional parties were permitted between 1974 and 1981, after which most restrictions were lifted. Through patronage and electoral manipulation, however, the PS continues to dominate the nation's political life. President Diouf succeeded Senghor in 1981 and won re-election in 1988 and 1993. Unemployment and diminished earning power are increasing social unrest and could enhance the appeal of opposition parties or Islamist groups in a country that is about 90 percent Muslim.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

The constitutional right of Senegal's citizens to choose their president and legislative representatives in multiparty elections has only been partially realized in practice. The Socialist Party's overwhelming dominance handicaps the opposition despite regular elections. Voting regulations blatantly favored the ruling party for the first three decades of independence. Changes to the 1992 Electoral Code lowered the voting age to eighteen, introduced the secret ballot and on paper created a fairer framework. However, the PS-controlled government has used state patronage and state media to protect its position. Importantly, election administration remains firmly under its control. The new National Elections Monitoring Committee (Observatoire National des Elections, or ONEL) announced in August by President Diouf is comprised entirely of his appointees and falls far short of opposition demands for a fully independent election commission. The PS won 84 of 120 seats in May 1993 National Assembly elections (and now holds 88 after opposition defections), while the main opposition PDS took 27 seats and four smaller opposition parties shared the other nine.

Independent media, often highly critical of the government and political parties,

generally operate freely. Freedom of expression is respected, although a strong element of self-censorship is instilled by the existence of laws against "discrediting the state" and disseminating "false news." Registration of publications is now only a formality. The government does not practice formal censorship and allows unrestricted circulation of foreign periodicals. Government resort to libel or defamation suits are a worrying trend, however. A \$1 million libel fine levied in 1996 against the respected daily *Sud* was upheld in June, but jail sentences against five of its journalists were suspended. Many observers believe the case was politically motivated and the harsh fine imposed by a compliant court because the articles raised fraud accusations against a French-affiliated company with close ties to the ruling party.

Freedom of association and assembly are respected except for activities by Islamist groups. Religious freedom is respected. Human rights groups that work on local and regional issues are among many nongovernmental organizations that operate without restrictions. The judiciary is by statute independent, but poor pay and lack of long-term tenure opens it to external influence and in high profile cases considerable interference from political and economic elites. Administration of justice is hindered by scarce resources. Detainees are often held for long periods without charge and without access to legal representation.

Women often do not enjoy their constitutionally-guaranteed rights. Domestic violence against women is reportedly common, despite government campaigns against it. Many elements of Islamic and local customary law are discriminatory to women, particularly regarding inheritance and marital relations. Female genital mutilation is common among some groups but is not practiced by the country's largest ethnicity, the Wolof.

Union rights to organize and to strike are legally protected and include notification requirements. Nearly all the country's small industrialized work force is unionized, and workers are an important political force. The National Confederation of Senegalese Workers (CNTS) is intertwined with and an important base for the ruling parties.

Seychelles

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy **Political Rights:** 3
Civil Liberties: 3

Economy: Mixed-statist **Status:** Partly Free

Population: 75,000

PPP: \$7,891

Life Expectancy: 72.0

Ethnic Groups: Seychellois (mixed African, South Asian, European)

Capital: Victoria



Overview: Elections set for July 1998 could provide the first real challenge to over two decades of rule by President France Albert Rene's Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF). Rene himself, who took power in a 1977 coup and won the country's first multi-party elec-

tions in 1993, is reportedly in failing health. Vice President (and minister for finance, defense, communications and environment) James Michel may be the SPPF candidate and is viewed as Rent's likely successor. Reports of official corruption and economic mismanagement persist and could erode the ruling party's support, although its control of patronage, most media and influence over the courts point to the SPPF's return to power.

Rene, designated prime minister at independence in 1976, took power the following year by ousting then president Sir James Richard Mancham. After Rene declared his SPPF the sole legal party, Mancham and other opposition leaders operated parties and human rights groups in exile. President Rene won single-party show elections in 1979, 1984 and 1989. By 1992, the SPPF had passed a constitutional amendment legalizing opposition parties, and many exiled leaders returned to participate in a constitutional commission and multiparty elections.

The country's economy remains feeble, and unrealistic exchange rates and high import tariffs disqualify the Seychelles from much international aid and membership in the World Trade Organization. Tourism to the magnificent tropical archipelago produces about three quarters of its foreign exchange earnings and may receive a boost with publicity from the "Miss World" pageant to be staged in the Seychelles in November 1998. A new Economic Citizenship Programme (ECP) allows anyone "investing" \$35,000 in the Seychelles to obtain a Seychellois passport; over 100 such documents were issued in the first half of 1997. The ECP follows the government's decision in 1996 not to implement the controversial Economic Development Act (EDA), which would have offered broad legal immunities, including protection against extradition, for people investing at least \$10 million dollars in the country, raising fears that the Seychelles could become an international money laundering haven.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Seychellois were able to choose their representatives in free elections for the first time in 1993. The SPPF control over state resources and most media gave ruling party candidates significant advantages in the polls. The president and the National Assembly are elected by universal adult suffrage. As amended in 1996, the 1993 constitution provides for a 35-member National Assembly, with 25 members directly elected and ten allocated on a proportional basis to parties with at least ten percent of the vote. Other amendments further strengthened presidential powers. These changes will likely reduce an already feeble opposition voice in national politics. Local governments comprised of district councils, abolished in 1971, were reinstated in 1991.

Government dominance and the threat of libel suits restrict media freedom. The government monopolizes nearly all media outlets, including the only daily newspaper, which rarely offer criticisms of official policy. At least two other newspapers are published by or support the SPPF. During the 1993 general election campaign, however, the government-controlled Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation offered substantial coverage to opposition as well as government candidates. Opposition parties publish several newsletters and other publications, but the weekly *Regar*, associated with the opposition United Opposition Party (UOP), has been sued repeatedly for libel under broad constitutional restrictions on free expression "for protecting the reputation, rights, and freedoms of private lives of persons" and "in the interest of defense, public safety, public order, public morality, or public health." Freedom of speech has

improved since the end of one party rule in 1993, but self-censorship lingers. Academic advancement is reportedly contingent on loyalty to the ruling party.

A supreme court, constitutional court, a court of appeal, an industrial court and magistrates' courts comprise the judiciary. Judges generally decide cases fairly, but still face interference in cases involving major economic or political actors. Almost 98 percent of all adult females are classified as "economically active," although most are engaged in subsistence agriculture. Women are less likely than men to be literate and have fewer educational opportunities. Four ministers in the present cabinet are women. Domestic violence against women is reportedly widespread, but seldom prosecuted and only lightly punished. Islanders of Creole extraction face de facto discrimination, and nearly all the Seychelles' political and economic life is dominated by people of European and Asian origin.

Various regulations inhibit the right to strike formally protected by the 1993 Industrial Relations Act. The SPPF associated National Workers' Union no longer holds a monopoly on union activity, and two independent unions are operating. The government does not restrict domestic travel but may deny passports for reasons of "national interest." Religious freedom is respected in this overwhelmingly Roman Catholic country.

The economy remains depressed, and lack of liberalization offers little hope for its early revival. High prices have cut the islands' appeal to package tourists. A much needed currency devaluation is unlikely during the coming political campaign season. There are few natural resources and little industry, and nearly one-third of the Seychelles' population has emigrated to escape the islands' economic stagnation.

Sierra Leone

Polity: Military

Economy: Capitalist

Population: 4,617,000

PPP: \$643

Life Expectancy: 33.6

Ethnic Groups: Temme (30 percent), Mende (30 percent),

Krio (2 percent), others

Capital: Freetown

Ratings Changes: Sierra Leone's political rights and civil liberties ratings changed from 4/5 to 7/6 due to an army coup and ensuing rampant repression.

Political Rights: 7*

Civil Liberties: 6*

Status: Not Free



Overview:

Sierra Leone was plunged into near anarchy and international isolation after a May 25 army coup evicted the fourteen month-old elected government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. The new Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), led by Major Johnny Paul Koroma, quickly formed an alliance with its former rebel foes of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which had waged a five-year guerrilla war that had cost over 10,000 lives and devastated much of the country. International aid was cut im-

mediately and United Nations sanctions imposed in October. Nigeria, leading a coalition of Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) forces, further pressured the junta to relinquish power through military action that included heavy bombing and fierce fighting in and around the capital, Freetown, adding to damage caused by looting and arson during the May coup. Traditional hunters known as *kamajors*, who also serve as local self-defense militia, have fought against junta forces and are reportedly receiving supplies from Nigeria.

An October peace pact calls for President Kabbah's return to office under a power-sharing arrangement by April 1998. It is by no means clear that the junta will respect the agreement or if the ill-disciplined new "People's Army" will abide by provisions calling for disarmament. Media repression has heightened amidst reports of army killings, torture and illegal detention, and political parties remain banned. The new fighting has intensified the suffering of Sierra Leone's 4.5 million people, as food stocks have been looted, highways cut and provision of even the most basic social services disrupted.

Sierra Leone was founded by Britain in 1787 as a haven for liberated slaves and became independent in 1961. The rebel RUF, launched a guerrilla campaign from neighboring Liberia in 1992 aimed at ending 23 years of increasingly corrupt one-party rule by the All Peoples Congress (APC) party. Junior army officers led by Captain Valentine Strasser seized power in 1992 in protest of poor pay and conditions. Political parties were banned and sporadic harassment of the media and other independent voices ensued. Strasser in turn was quietly deposed as head of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) by Brigadier Julius Maa Bio in January 1996, amid fears that he intended to clothe his military dictatorship in civilian guise by running for president. Elections went ahead despite military and rebel intimidation, and 60 percent of Sierra Leone's 1.6 million eligible voters cast ballots. In a second round runoff in March 1996, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), defeated John Karefa-Smart of United National People's Party (UNPP).

Since 1992, combat, disease and starvation and have claimed thousands of lives amidst massive human rights violations. The still-tenuous October agreement to reinstall the elected government would be only a first step in recreating the country's civil administration and infrastructure, which has been all but destroyed.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Sierra Leoneans today live under a military junta that lacks all legitimacy. Presidential and legislative elections in February and March 1996 were clearly far from ideal, but likely the fairest since independence. President Kabbah's return to office would reestablish an elected government, but it is hardly clear the civil authorities would have real power over the fractious armed forces.

The judiciary is not effectively operating in Sierra Leone today, and the AFRC announced in August creation of a system of "People's Revolutionary Courts." It is estimated that over two-thirds of the country's lawyers and judges fled after the May coup, and those remaining have boycotted the courts as part of a national non-cooperation campaign. A mass prison breakout was part of the May coup, and has precipitated a serious crime wave. Severe abuses against detainees are reported. Amnesty International has strongly criticized plans to give indemnity to all combatants and other accused human rights abusers.

The RUF, led by former army corporal Foday Sankoh (who has been detained in Nigeria since the coup), received assistance from Libya during the civil war and is reportedly influenced by Libyan leader Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi's amalgam of socialist-Islamic philosophies in his "Green Book." Civilians have borne the brunt of the violence. Thousands of children were recruited to fight on both sides, and many demobilized after a November 1996 peace pact have reportedly been again conscripted into the "People's Army."

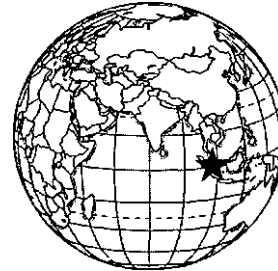
Although the AFRC claimed threats against the independent media were one reason for their coup, they have proceeded to stifle press freedom by closing newspapers and detaining and mistreating journalists. Mohamed Sesay, editor of the *Point* newspaper and Dorothy Awonoor Gordon, Pios Foray and Ibrahim Sei, editors of the *Concord Times*, the *Democrat* and the *Standard Times*, respectively, were all arrested in late November, for what the junta called "state security" interests.

Women enjoy equal rights under the constitution but face extensive legal and de facto discrimination and limited access to education and formal sector jobs. Married women have fewer property rights, especially in rural areas where customary law prevails. Female genital mutilation is widespread, and the practice has been publicly supported by the new army junta. There are also reports of ritual killings of children by animist cults.

The post-coup conflict and sanctions have dimmed hopes for economic revival in Sierra Leone, rated by the U.N. as one of the world's very poorest countries. Efforts to renew food production have faltered, and food imports and humanitarian aid have been disrupted by sanctions and widespread banditry. Hunger among displaced people and subsistence farmers is likely to be severe in 1998. Plans to resume large-scale mining of diamond, bauxite and rutile reserves have again been put on hold.

Singapore

Polity: Dominant party
Economy: Mixed capitalist
Population: 3,045,000
PPP: \$20,987
Life Expectancy: 77.1
Ethnic Groups: Chinese (77 percent), Malay (15 percent), Pakistani and Indian (7 percent)
Capital: Singapore
Political Rights: 5*
Civil Liberties: 5
Status: Partly Free
Ratings change: Singapore's political rights rating changed from 4 to 5 due to the ruling party's election manipulation and harassment of the opposition.



Overview:

Singapore's authoritarian People's Action Party (PAP) government, running on its record of economic growth and using threats to defer public housing money to precincts that voted against it, crushed the opposition in the January 1997 elections.

Singapore became a British colony in 1867. Occupied by the Japanese during World War II, the city-state became self-governing in 1959, entered the Malaysian Federa-

tion 1963 and in 1965 became fully independent under Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. The 1959 constitution provides for a unicameral parliament that is directly elected for a five year term. Two amendments authorize the appointment of additional MPs to ensure that the opposition has at least three seats. Executive power is vested in a prime minister and cabinet. Since 1993 the president has been directly elected for a six-year term, with limited veto powers over certain budgetary and financial matters and political appointments.

The PAP won every seat in every contest from 1968 to 1980 before losing a 1981 by-election. Lee stepped down in 1990 in favor of his handpicked successor, Goh Chok Tong, although he still exerts considerable influence as senior minister. The 1991 elections failed to give Goh the mandate he sought as the PAP had its worst showing since independence, despite winning 77 of 81 seats. Prior to the country's first presidential elections in 1993, a three-member committee rejected two opposition candidates for lacking proper character and the requisite financial experience. Deputy prime minister Ong Teng Cheong defeated a weak opponent but managed "only" 58 percent of the vote in what analysts viewed as a protest against the PAP's paternalistic governing style.

The nine-day campaign for the January 2, 1997 elections was vigorous even though the opposition contested only 36 seats in an expanded 83-seat parliament. Opposition calls for greater freedom of expression and criticism of rising costs of living resonated among young professionals. Goh used patronage to his advantage, warning that neighborhoods voting against the PAP would be the lowest priority for government-sponsored upgrades of public housing estates, where some 85 percent of the population live. The PAP won 81 seats, with the left-leaning Workers' Party (WP) and the moderate Singapore People's Party each winning one. The PAP's 65 percent of the vote boosted Goh's credibility as a successor to Lee.

Following the election Goh and ten other PAP leaders filed defamation suits against two defeated WP candidates, Tang Liang Hong and party secretary general J.B. Jayaretnam, over police reports Tang had filed during the campaign accusing PAP leaders of falsely calling him "anti-Christian" and a "Chinese chauvinist." Tang fled Singapore and on March 10 a court found him guilty *in absentia*, while on September 29 a judge ruled against Jayaretnam. Surprisingly, the judge in Jayaretnam's case awarded Goh only one-tenth of the \$130,000 he had asked for. In November, a landmark Appeal's Court ruling reduced what it called a "hugely disproportionate" \$5.15 million award against Tang.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

In theory, Singaporeans can change their government through elections. But although the PAP has considerable popular support as the architect of the country's transformation from a low-wage economy to an industrial and financial power with generous social benefits, the government has also chilled free expression and political dissent through civil defamation suits, its use of security laws against peaceful oppositionists and other harassment of political opponents and journalists; its tight control over the press; and its use of patronage. There are strict regulations on the constitutions and financial affairs of political parties. In addition, the opposition is divided and in disarray.

Opposition parties say they have trouble fielding viable slates for Group Repre-

sentation Constituencies (GRC), or multimember electoral districts in which at least one candidate on a slate must be an ethnic minority. In 1996 parliament increased the number of GRCs to 15, leaving only nine single-member districts, and increased the maximum number of seats in a GRC from four to six. The opposition fears this will allow the government to merge wards supporting the opposition with those backing the PAP.

The government nearly bankrupt the WP's Jeyaretnam through a series of controversial court cases, including a 1986 fraud conviction that was criticized by the Privy Council in London. In 1993 the National University dismissed Chee Soon Juan, an opposition Social Democratic Party official, for alleged petty financial irregularities and courts have since fined Chee in two other cases. In 1997, in addition to the rulings cited in the Overview, the WP agreed to pay \$130,000 to four PAP politicians and an ex-PAP member to settle a 1995 libel case.

The judiciary is not independent, although courts have acquitted or reduced monetary damages in some cases brought by the government or PAP figures against political opponents. The Legal Service Commission has discretion over the term and assignments of judicial appointments, and judges, especially Supreme Court judges, have close ties to PAP leaders. Police reportedly abuse detainees to extract confessions. Caning is used to punish approximately 30 offenses, including certain immigration violations.

The Internal Security Act (ISA) permits detention without trial for an unlimited number of two-year periods. Since 1990 there have been no ISA detentions, although authorities continue to restrict the civil liberties of a dissident who had been detained for 23 years until 1989. The government uses two other acts that permit detention without trial; one to detain several hundred people for alleged narcotic offenses or involvement in secret societies, the other to commit drug abusers to rehabilitation centers. A 1989 constitutional amendment prohibits judicial review of the substantive grounds of detentions under the ISA and anti-subversion laws, and bars the judiciary from reviewing the constitutionality of such laws. There is no right to a public trial under the ISA.

Freedom of expression is restricted by broadly drawn provisions of the constitution and the ISA, and by the government's control of the media and its use of civil defamation suits against political opponents and journalists. In 1995 courts ruled against the *International Herald Tribune* in a contempt of court case and a libel case and assessed fines totaling \$892,800. The broadly drawn Official Secrets Act bars the unauthorized release of government data to the media. In 1994 a court fined two journalists and three economists under the Act for publishing advance GDP figures.

Key "management shares" in the Singapore Press Holdings, which has close ties to the PAP and owns all general circulation newspapers, must be held by government-approved individuals. Journalists practice self-censorship and editorials and domestic news coverage strongly favor the ruling party. Nevertheless, the largest newspaper, *The Straits Times*, criticized the government's threats during the 1997 election campaign to defer housing money to opposition strongholds.

The government can legally ban the circulation of newspapers, although it has not done so in recent years. A 1986 amendment to the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act allows the government to "gazette," or restrict circulation, of any foreign publication it feels has published articles interfering in domestic politics; *Time*, the *Far East-*

ern *Economic Review*, *Economist* and other publications are, or have been, gazetted.

The government-affiliated Singapore International Media PTE, Ltd. operates all four free television stations and ten of the 15 radio stations, although foreign broadcasts are available. Movies, television, videos, music and, beginning in 1996, the Internet, are subject to censorship.

The Societies Act requires most organizations of more than ten people to be registered and restricts political activity to political parties. However, the PAP has close ties with ostensibly non-political associations such as neighborhood groups, while the opposition is not permitted to form similar groups. There are no nongovernmental human rights organizations. Approval is required for speakers at privately-organized public functions, and this is occasionally denied to opposition politicians. The police must approve any public assembly of more than five people.

Freedom of religion is generally respected, although the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Unification Church are banned under the Societies Act. The government takes measures to ensure racial harmony and equity, and minorities are well represented in government, but Malays face unofficial employment discrimination.

Most unions are affiliated with the pro-government National Trade Unions Congress. There have been no strikes since 1986, in part because labor shortages fuel wage increases.

Slovakia

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Mixed-capitalist transitional

Population: 5,386,000

PPP: \$6,182

Life Expectancy: 71.0

Ethnic Groups: Slovak (82 percent), Hungarian (11 percent), Roma (5 percent), Czech (1 percent)

Capital: Bratislava

Political Rights: 2

Civil Liberties: 4

Status: Partly Free



Overview:

In 1997, Slovakia was rebuffed in its efforts to be included in the first wave of NATO and European Union (EU) expansion, as the government of Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar faced persistent international criticism for undermining democracy and human rights. An overheated economy and a united opposition could prove a formidable challenge for the ruling Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) and its coalition partners, the extreme right Slovak National Party (SNS) and the left-wing Workers Party (ZRS), in parliamentary elections scheduled for autumn of 1998.

Slovakia was established on January 1, 1993, following Czechoslovakia's formal dissolution, which ended a seventy-four-year-old federation. Slovaks trace their ancestry to the short-lived Great Moravian Empire of the ninth century. By the tenth century, Hungarians seized control of the region and ruled repressively for 1,000 years. Interwar Czechoslovak unity ended with Nazi Germany's dismemberment of Czecho-

Slovakia, providing an opportunity for militant Slovak nationalists to seize power. The Nazi puppet state under Father Josef Tiso was tainted by its role in the deportation of Jews and Roma (Gypsies). Communists ruled reunited Czechoslovakia from 1948 to 89.

Meciar and his HZDS won elections in 1992, but in 1994 his government was forced to resign amid political bickering and accusations by President Michal Kovac that the government was undemocratic and manipulating privatization and the state media. Former Foreign Minister Jozef Moravcik headed a caretaker government and stepped up economic reform and privatization. But the HZDS's popularity, reinforced by Meciar's anti-reform and anti-Hungarian rhetoric, among pensioners, the unemployed and peasants saw the party win 61 of 150 seats in the parliamentary elections in September-October 1994. The leftist Common Cause coalition led by the Party of the Democratic left (SDL), made up of former Communists, got 18 seats; a coalition of Hungarian parties won 17 seats; the Democratic Union, 15, the left-wing Workers Association (ZRS), 13; and the ultra-nationalist Slovak National party (SNS), nine. A coalition government was announced in December consisting of the HZDS, the ZRS and the SNS.

In 1995, Meciar pushed through a series of parliamentary measures aimed at reducing the president's powers and slashing the presidential budget and staff. The ruling coalition also passed a no-confidence vote against Kovac, a symbolic move without constitutional validity. Meciar tried in vain to secure the three-fifths majority needed to oust the president. In September, after a bizarre kidnapping of Kovac's son, allegedly by security forces, the government demanded the president "abdicate" because he was "betraying our nation."

In 1996, the prime minister tried to use the constitution to expel an opposition party from parliament and sought to curb registration of charities for fear that they would be too independent. Parliament passed a law that redrew the boundaries of Slovakia's administrative regions and districts in a way that diluted the influence of the Hungarian minority, estimated at 570,000. The prime minister also moved to change the country's electoral system from one based on proportional representation to one that includes "first-past-the-post," a move vetoed by the smaller parties in the ruling coalition. Under the new system, the HZDS would not have needed coalition partners. Opposition parties—the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), Democratic Union (DU), Democratic Party and the Hungarian coalition—organized a series of "Save Slovakia" rallies around the country to protest government policies. The post-Communist Party of the Democratic Left (SDL) also opposed the government. A version of the penal code "on the protection of the republic" submitted by the rightist Slovak National Party was vetoed by President Kovac for placing too many restrictions on freedom of assembly and free speech.

In February 1997, parliament failed to pass a milder version of the "protection of the republic" measure. Political tensions heightened in March when President Kovac announced a May referendum on Slovakia's NATO membership and direct presidential elections. The latter, called after the opposition collected over 350,000 signatures as required by the constitution, was a direct challenge to the prime minister, whose three-party coalition defeated an opposition attempt to change the constitution in favor of direct presidential elections. A direct election would have given President Kovac a chance to win another term when his term expires in March 1998. When the Consti-

tutional Court ruled that the referendum was constitutional, the government at the last minute removed the presidential question from the ballots. Only about 10 percent of voters took part in the two-day referendum, a reflection of public anger over the government's altering ballots in defiance of the court. The ballot was ruled invalid. The prime minister's maneuvering led to a wave of international criticism and contributed in July to the twin rejections of Slovakia's application for membership in NATO and the EU, which said the country did not satisfy the political criteria for membership. It cited the "instability of its institutions, their lack of rootedness in political life and the shortcomings in the functioning of its democracies." It also urged that the rights of the opposition parties to have their representatives on parliamentary committees and oversight boards be recognized.

Slovakia also came under international censure in October after parliament ignored an August Constitutional Court ruling and voted not to reinstate Frantisek Gaulieder, a HZDS defector who was stripped of his mandate in December 1996.

In the summer, five leading opposition parties—the Christian Democrats, the Democratic Union, the Democratic Party, the Social Democrats and the Green Party—formed the center-right Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK) in preparation for the 1998 elections. The SDK's 15-point program called for "renewing, developing and protecting parliamentary democracy" and a state "based on the rule of law." A July roundtable between eight opposition and the three coalition parties failed to agree on changes to the electoral system, presidential elections, and opposition representation on supervisory boards overseeing the intelligence service (SIS). In December, the SDK and the Hungarian Coalition (MK) issued a joint statement of cooperation.

Public opinion polls in December showed the SDK getting 29.4 percent, with the HZDS trailing with 18.8 percent. The ex-Communist SDL was third with 8.5 percent. Nevertheless, Prime Minister Meciar remained the most popular politician in Slovakia, particularly in rural areas. The opposition lacks a strong prime ministerial candidate. Its cooperation with Hungarian parties could play into the hands of the populist-nationalist prime minister. The HZDS remains well-funded by industrial leaders who amassed great wealth due to a privatization policy that favored government-linked insiders and Meciar allies and controls regional governments. With neither President Kovac nor a government nominee likely to get the three-fifths majority to be installed as president, Prime Minister Meciar is in a position to blame the opposition for a constitutional impasse and assume presidential duties.

In other issues, relations with Hungary worsened in 1997. Hungary accused Slovakia of not honoring a 1995 friendship treaty by failing to pass laws that would grant the Hungarian minority the right to use their language for official business and school reports. At a meeting with Hungarian Prime Minister Gyula Horn in August, Prime Minister Meciar suggested the "voluntary" repatriation of Slovak Hungarians to Hungary and of Hungarian Slovaks to Slovakia. In September, the International Court of Justice in the Hague, mediating a dispute over the Gabcikovo hydroelectric dam, ordered both sides to negotiate for six months before a final ruling.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens have the means to change the government democratically under a 1992 constitution; the 1994 elections were deemed "free and fair." The president is elected by a three-fifths majority of parliament. In 1998, the electoral system is likely to change from

proportional representation to a mixed or a national list system.

About 50 parties have emerged since 1989, and 20 parties registered for the 1994 elections. Opposition parties have charged intimidation and surveillance by government security forces. Freedom of assembly is generally respected. In March, students held several demonstrations in support of striking actors and theater workers protesting reorganization of cultural institutions that cut funding and gave government appointees "supervisory" powers.

The media have come under pressure from the government. In 1995, the SIS confirmed that the secret services had been pressured by state authorities to discredit and "screen" journalists. The majority of print media is privately owned. The government controls state-run television and radio through appointments to oversight commissions and editorial boards. By 1996, the government had gained indirect control over several national and regional newspapers bought by companies connected to Alexander Rezes, the communications minister, and Vladimir Lexa, a former top Communist official and the father of Slovakia's intelligence chief. VSZ, a steel manufacturer and the country's largest company, emerged as the dominant owner of the national daily *Narodna Obroda*. Entrepreneur Jozef Majsky gained major control of Radio Twist and *Sme*, which have become bastions of the anti-government media in Slovakia. In October, parliament approved a four-fold increase in the value-added tax on newspapers and magazines, except for publications in which less than a tenth of pages carry advertisements. This would exempt *Slovenska Republica*, which is owned by the HZDS. The chairman of the publishers' club called the VAT "an attack on the pluralism of the press." TV Markiza, the privately owned terrestrial TV station with a larger market-share in areas it covered than the state channels, STV1 and STV2, came under pressure in 1997. In September, *Slovenska Republica* said that the station is a hub of "anti-Meciarite propaganda" that "operates in the service of foreigners." In December, the station was threatened with having its license revoked for "the broadcasting of hidden and unclassified advertisements during programs." A media monitoring organization reported in December that the government and coalition parties get disproportionately receive more air time on STV than the parliamentary opposition, which is supposed to be allotted an equal one-third of air time. In September, the government launched a campaign against Radio Twist, forcing it off the air for 24 hours after the state-owned telecommunications company cut transmission. The government has also proposed a journalistic code of ethics and has imposed fines for violations.

Freedom of expression has been eroded, and the language law curtails the use of minority languages. In February, the EU chided the cabinet's failure to submit a minority language law despite the government's promise to do so following the state language law's approval in 1995 that put limits on minority languages. The Hungarian minority has faced discrimination and laws aimed at undermining Hungarian culture. Roma (Gypsies) have been the targets of discrimination and violence often ignored by the courts and police. In December a SNS parliamentarian, speaking on television, painted Roma as criminals whose social benefits should be curbed. The Romani Civic Initiative said the pronouncements "contained fascistic undertones." Though freedom of religion in this overwhelmingly Roman Catholic country is respected, in 1995 police searched the residence of Bishop of Rudolf Balaz of Banska Bystrica, an outspoken critic of the prime minister and supporter of President Kovac, ostensibly to investigate allegations that the cleric was illegally trading in religious antiques. A trip-

tych, not classified as a "protected monument, was seized along with the money paid for it by a Swiss dealer. The bishop said the triptych was legally sold to raise money to build a seminary and its seizure was a form of harassment.

The judiciary is not wholly free from political interference, and the government has strained the constitution by eroding presidential power and ignoring edicts of the Constitutional Court. There have been persistent reports of corruption at lower courts and prosecutors by organized crime. In Zlina, police released seven suspected blackmailers after the prosecutor's office refused to take them into custody.

Workers have the right to form unions and strike. The Slovak Confederation of Trade Unions (KOZ) is the main labor confederation, claiming 1.2 million members. The unions have openly opposed government laws curtailing rights and imposing wage regulations. Women nominally have the same rights as men, but are underrepresented in managerial posts.

Slovenia

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 2

Economy: Mixed-statist (transitional)
Status: Free

Population: 1,994,000

PPP: \$10,404

Life Expectancy: 73.1

Ethnic Groups: Slovene (91 percent), Croat, Serb, Muslim, Hungarian, Italian

Capital: Ljubljana



Overview:

In February 1997, Prime Minister Janez Drnovsek ended a three-month post-election political stalemate by forging a coalition with his center-left Liberal Democratic Party (LDS), which won the most seats in the November 1996 parliamentary elections, the center-right Slovenian People's Party (SLS) and the small Democratic Party of Pensioners (DeSus). In November, incumbent President Milan Kucan easily won re-election.

In other key issues, Slovenia—along with the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland—was recommended for membership in the European Union (EU) early next century. The invitation necessitated changes in the penal code and commercial legislation.

Slovenia was controlled for centuries by the Hapsburg empire before being incorporated into the newly created Yugoslavia after World War I. After World War II, Yugoslav forces fought their way to the Italian city of Trieste, pushing the Yugoslav-Italian frontier 50 kilometers west of its pre-war position. A series of treaties culminating in the 1975 Treaty of Osimo eventually allotted part of the Istrian territory to Italy and part to Yugoslavia (it is currently split between Slovenia and Croatia). After it declared independence from a Yugoslavia in June 1991, Slovenia's territorial defense forces secured the nation's sovereignty by beating back an invasion by the Yugoslav People's Army.

In 1996, the LDS coalition lost its absolute majority in parliament when the ZLSD, with its 14 seats, went into opposition, leaving the two remaining partners, the LDS and the Slovenian Christian Democrats (SKD) with 45 seats. Strains over economic policy and the need for tighter budget restraint and for urgent reform of the country's under-funded pension system led to the ZLSD split. In the November vote for the 90-member National Assembly, the LDS won 25 seats, five fewer than before. The SKD won 10 seats, five fewer than in 1992. The rightist SLS won 19 seats, and the ultra-conservative Social Democrats (SDS), led by controversial former defense minister Janez Jansa, took 16 seats. The former Communist United List of Social Democrats won nine; the Democratic Party of Pensioners, five; and the National Party, four. Janez Podobnik of the SLS was elected parliamentary speaker. Negotiations over a new government stalled by year's end.

In 1997 negotiations for the formation of a new government pitted the LDS, a direct successor to the youth wing of the Yugoslav-era Slovenian League of Communists made up of free-market technocrats, and the so-called "Slovenian Spring" bloc of right and center-right parties—the SLS, SDS, and the SKD. The three parties were mainly united by their opposition to what they alleged was a network of former Communists still controlling many areas of Slovenian life. In January, a defection from the SKD allowed Drnovsek to remain as prime minister. His proposal for a coalition of left-wing parties was rejected by parliament on February 6 by one vote. Following negotiations with SLS leader Marjan Podobnik (brother of Janez), the new government was approved, controlling 52 of 90 votes. Nearly 60 percent of respondents to an opinion poll published after its appointment approved of the coalition, while a similar number thought it would last the full term.

The key task of the government was harmonizing Slovenian legislation with that of the EU. The agenda included new legislation on the banking sector, takeover codes and privatization, and a new law on property ownership as well as laws on the privatization of utilities including telecommunications. In all, some 80 laws, ranging from social welfare to tax policy, needed amending before Slovenia would be in compliance with EU standards. In May, the government announced it was preparing legislation to address EU concerns.

An important constitutional issue that had to be resolved was amending Article 68, which states that no foreigner can own land in Slovenia. Under the EU association accord of 1996 any foreigner who has lived in Slovenia for over three years should be allowed to own land. The Constitutional Court ruled in June that the constitution had to be amended before the association accord could be ratified. After tough negotiation, all parties agreed that Article 68 had to be changed. The debate reflected longstanding anxieties over foreign investment and losing control over key sectors of industry and commerce to non-Slovenians.

In November's presidential election, incumbent Milan Kucan defeated Janez Podobnik, 55.4 percent to 18.39 percent. Six other candidates contested the race. Turnout was 68 percent. President Kucan, a respected figure who wielded his influence in breaking the political deadlock earlier in the year, said this would be his last term. The president opposed a controversial screening law proposed by the opposition led by the "Slovenian Spring" parties that would set up a lustration process to screen officials for past connections to the Communists. The draft law will be considered in 1998.

In economic issues, the IMF in October called for rapid acceleration of economic reform over the next few years. IMF representatives pointed to the urgent need to reform public finances, particularly the expensive pension system. They also said long-planned tax and labor law changes should be implemented and privatization of state-owned companies should begin. Slovenia remained the most prosperous of the former Communist states in East-Central Europe, with GDP per head of around \$9,300.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Slovenes can change their government democratically. The 1996 parliamentary elections were contested by many parties and candidates and were judged "free and fair," as were the 1997 presidential elections.

Slovenia is a multiparty democracy, and there are at least 30 political parties from the far-left to the far-right, and over a dozen are represented in parliament. Of the 40 members of the upper house, 22 are directly elected and 18 are designated by electoral colleges of professional and other interest groups. In the 90-member lower house, 40 members are elected by constituency-based majority voting and 50 by proportional representation of party lists that secure a minimum of three percent of the vote, with one seat each reserved for Hungarian and Italian ethnic minorities.

Legal penalties do exist for libeling and defamation of officials. Newspapers, several affiliated with political parties, print diverse views. There are six major dailies, 20 weeklies and numerous magazines and journals. Though the state controls most radio and television, there are private stations, among them Pop TV, founded in 1995, and Kanal A TV in Ljubljana, the capital. Journalists have faced limited suspension for commentary on statements by government officials, and self-censorship remains an issue. An April roundtable on "The Public Media in Transition" raised such issues as political influence over state-owned Slovene RTV, lack of professionalism and a reluctance to air opposition views.

Freedom of assembly is guaranteed and respected. There are no restrictions on freedom of religion. In July, the Slovene Roman Catholic Metropolitan and the prime minister signed an agreement on the return of church property to be enacted after October 31.

Though minority rights are guaranteed by law, the Supreme Court banned an Italian group in Istria from becoming a political party. The judiciary is independent. Judges are elected by the National Assembly on the recommendation of an eleven-member Judicial Council, five of whose members are selected by parliament on the nomination of the president, and six of whom are sitting judges selected by their peers. In November, the government announced changes to the Penal Code to comply with the EU and conform with the requirements of a market economy. New commercial laws, as well as statutes dealing with corruption, money laundering, organized crime, and computer hacking, were enacted. Journalists will no longer be punished for betraying state or military secrets if they are investigating illegal or corrupt practices by government officials. The Law on Criminal Procedures contained provisions for house arrest, parole, and interrogation of minors.

There are three main labor federations, and most workers are free to join unions that are formally independent from government and political parties, though members may and do hold positions in the legislature. In December, 100 air traffic controllers went on strike over overtime and work schedules. Women are guaranteed equal-

ity under the law and have opportunities in business, education and politics.

Solomon Islands

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Capitalist
Population: 382,000

PPP: \$2,118

Life Expectancy: 70.8

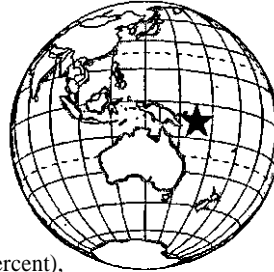
Ethnic Groups: Melanesian (93 percent), Polynesian (4 percent), Micronesian, European minorities

Capital: Honiara

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Overview:

Following elections in August 1997, new Solomon Islands Premier Bartholomew Ulufa'alu worked to contain a financial crisis that has drained money from healthcare and education and left infrastructure crumbling.

The Solomon Islands, a predominantly Melanesian country in the western Pacific, became an independent member of the British Commonwealth in 1978. Under the 1977 constitution the unicameral parliament is directly elected for a four-year term. Executive power is vested in a prime minister and cabinet. The British monarchy is represented by a governor general.

Politics in this parliamentary democracy are characterized by frequently shifting partisan loyalties. In 1990 Solomon Mamaloni, a fixture in politics since 1970 who was then serving his second term as premier, quit his ruling party and formed a "national unity" government that included opposition politicians. Mamaloni later formalized this as the Group for National Unity and Reconciliation (GNUR), which led the field with 21 of 47 seats in the May 1993 elections. However, in June an opposition alliance formed in parliament to elect Francis Billy Hilly, a businessman who ran as an independent, as prime minister.

Hilly's decision to declare a moratorium on logging, which accounts for 55 percent of export earnings but threatened to deplete forests in a decade, cost him political support. Opponents also criticized his handling of relations with neighboring Papua New Guinea (PNG), which accused Honiara of supporting the secessionist Bougainville Revolutionary Army in PNG's Bougainville Province. Since 1992, PNG soldiers have launched several cross-border raids into the Solomons, allegedly in "hot pursuit" of rebels.

In October 1994 Governor General Moses Pitakaka sacked Hilly after the premier lost his majority, touching off a brief constitutional crisis that was resolved after the High Court ruled Pitakaka had overstepped his authority. In November parliament elected Mamaloni as premier.

Mamaloni immediately ended the logging moratorium, partially in response to a financial crisis that by 1995 had the economy near bankruptcy. Critics blamed years of financial mismanagement, corruption, and a failure by successive governments to develop sustainable development strategies.

Heading into the August 6, 1997 elections Ulufa'alu, a former labor leader who headed the opposition Alliance for Change and its dominant Solomon Islands Liberal Party, pledged to end corruption and mismanagement. The GNUR won 25 seats in an expanded 50-seat parliament and the Alliance, 24, with one seat vacant. Mamaloni unexpectedly decided not to seek a fourth term. On August 27 parliament elected Ulufa'alu as prime minister over the GNUR's Danny Philip. In November Ulufa'alu said his government would privatize some services to cut expenses.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Citizens of the Solomon Islands can change their government democratically. Party affiliations are weak and are based largely on personal loyalties. There are periodic tensions between Honiara and the five provincial governments, which increased in 1996 after parliament transferred powers held by provincial assemblies to the 75 local assemblies and councils. Traditional chiefs wield formal authority in local government.

The judiciary is independent, and procedural safeguards are adequate, with a right of ultimate appeal in certain circumstances to the Privy Council in London. Police occasionally abuse suspects, although courts generally discipline offending officers.

The PNG Defense Forces have launched periodic cross border raids (see above), including one that killed two people in 1992. In 1996, a suspected pro-PNG militia raided a village on Choiseul Island and fired on seven Bougainvilleans.

The three regular private newspapers vigorously critique government policies, but have limited circulation outside the towns. The state-owned Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation's (SIBC) radio service is the most important source of information and generally offers diverse viewpoints. However, in 1996 Mamaloni banned SIBC from broadcasting statements by the Honiara-based spokesman of the BRA. Separately, SIBC's own governing board ordered news shows to be vetted following the broadcast of an allegedly false news item. According to the Pacific Islands News Agency, in August 1997 Mamaloni forced SIBC to stop a live talk show in progress while speakers and callers were discussing the recent elections. There is a private FM station.

Freedom of assembly is subject to a permit requirement but is generally respected. However, in spring 1995 police on Pavuvu Island arrested 56 landowners protesting against government plans to resettle several thousand residents, with compensation, to make way for logging operations worth \$130 million. Nongovernmental organizations are active on women's and environmental issues.

Religious freedom is respected in this predominantly Christian country. Due to traditional norms, women face discrimination in education and employment opportunities, and authorities generally do not protect women facing domestic violence or enforce relevant laws.

Although some 85 percent of the population is in subsistence agriculture, trade unions are vigorous and engage in collective bargaining. The law recognizes the right of private sector workers to strike, and a 1989 walkout by teachers established a de facto right to strike in the public sector.

Somalia

Polity: Rival ethnic-based militias; unrecognized de facto state in north

Economy: Mixed-statist

Population: 9,484,000

PPP: na

Life Expectancy: na

Ethnic Groups: Somali (Hawiye, Darod, Isaq, Isa, others), Gosha, Bajun

Capital: Mogadishu

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free



Overview:

Somali faction leaders met several times in 1997 in efforts to reestablish central government in a country that has been wracked for nearly a decade by civil war, clan fighting and natural disasters from drought to flood to famine. Meetings in Egypt late in the year bought broad agreement on a new peace plan between the main faction leaders in the country's south, Ali Madhi Mohamed of the Somalia Salvation Alliance (SSA) and the Somali National Alliance (SNA) leader Hussein Aideed. Twenty-six clan-based factions, not including the SNA, had already signed a peace pact in January, and the two main factions another in May, but scattered fighting continued throughout the year. In the north, the Somaliland Republic, covering territory once held as British Somaliland, continued to assert its independence in relative calm for a sixth year, but still enjoyed no official international recognition.

A massive American-led international intervention began in Somalia in December 1992, prompted by extensive television coverage of famine and civil strife that in 1991-92 took about 300,000 lives. The humanitarian mission succeeded in quelling clan combat long enough to end the famine, but slowly turned into a nightmare of urban guerrilla war against Somali militia. The last international forces withdrew in March 1995 after battles with local militia caused thousands of casualties, including 20 American soldiers among the 100 peacekeepers slain. The \$4 billion United Nations 1993-95 peacekeeping effort had little lasting effect. Today, the international community has abandoned Somalia. International relief agencies operate only sporadically and have repeatedly been forced to suspend operations for security reasons. Many relief workers have been kidnapped for ransom and some murdered.

Somalia gained independence in July 1960 with the union of British Somaliland and territories to the south that had been an Italian colony. Other Somali-inhabited lands are now part of Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. In 1969, General Mohammed Siad Barre seized power and increasingly relied on divisive clan politics to maintain power. Civil war, starvation and widespread banditry and brutality have wracked Somalia since the struggle to topple dictator Barre began in the late 1980s. When he was deposed in January 1991, power was claimed and contested by heavily armed guerrilla movements and militias based on traditional ethnic, clan or sub-clan loyalties. Savage combat among the various factions—largely over economic assets such as ports, airfields and banana plantations—led to anarchy and famine. Rebuilding the

country will be an enormous task. Severe flooding ravaged the south of the country in late 1997. Central authority has disappeared, and traditional clan authorities have reclaimed state powers, including administration of justice and control of external commerce. Somalia can be well-described as a "failed state."

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Somalis cannot choose their government. Elections have not been held since 1969, and rival warlords with clan backing rule by force of arms. One faction of the United Somali Congress/Somalia National Alliance (USC/NSA) is now led by its late leader's son, Hussein Mohamed Aideed. His main rivals for "national" power are the leader of another USC/NSA faction, Osman Hassan Ali "Ato," and Ali Madhi Mohamed of the Somalia Salvation Alliance. Several smaller armed factions, including the Rahawayn Resistance Army, also control various bits of territory in southern Somalia.

Factions reportedly receive weapons and other aid from as far afield as Libya and Afghanistan. Ethiopian troops struck into Somali territory again in 1997 to attack ethnic Somalia rebels who had mounted cross-border raids into the Somali-inhabited Ogaden region of Ethiopia.

Ascriptive ties such as clan loyalties are the basis for most civil organization in the vacuum left by an absence of central authority. In some areas, harsh Islamic law has returned a semblance of order, including areas of Mogadishu long plagued by lawlessness. Islamic courts are imposing sentences that include executions and amputations according to *shari'a* law. Rights to free expression and association are simply ignored. Autonomous civic or political groups cannot organize or operate safely. There are few independent journalists in the country, and international correspondents visit only at great risk. There are no free domestic media, with a few photocopied newsletters circulating and highly partisan radio stations operated by various factions.

Women experience intense societal discrimination under customary practices and variants of Koranic law. Infibulation, the most severe form of female genital mutilation, is widespread. Various armed factions have recruited children into their militia.

In northern Somalia, where resistance to the Siad Barre dictatorship in the 1980s was most intense, the Republic of Somaliland, whose capital is Hargeisa, has exercised de facto independence since May 1991, without the benefit of international recognition. President Mohammed Ibrahim Egal was re-elected by a congress of clan representatives in February. The congress also adopted a constitution which is scheduled to be put to a referendum in 2000. While also facing internal clan divisions, Somaliland is far more cohesive than the rest of the country, although reports of some human rights abuses and corruption persist. Aid agencies are able to operate more effectively and safely in the Somaliland Republic than elsewhere in Somalia. Government revenues are derived mostly through duties levied on traffic through the excellent port at Berbera, which includes large amounts of livestock exported to Gulf states. If Somaliland maintains its internal unity, it is unlikely to rejoin the rest of the country, either by choice or by force.

South Africa

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy
Economy: Capitalist-statist
Population: 44,485,000
PPP: \$4,291
Life Expectancy: 63.7

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Ethnic Groups: Black (Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi, Sotho, others) (75 percent), European (Afrikaner, English) (14 percent), Coloured (9 percent), Indian (2 percent)

Capital: Cape Town (legislative), Pretoria (executive), Bloemfontien (judicial)

Overview:

South Africa's democratic consolidation continued in 1997 with institutions that protect and promote basic liberties taking hold under the new constitution signed into law by President Nelson Mandela in December 1996. A strongly-independent judiciary does not hesitate to dispute the government, and freedom of expression and association are honored. Yet the viability of these democratic structures in a society sharply divided by ethnicity and class is cause for long-term worry. Political violence, mainly centered in the Zulu areas of KwaZulu/Natal Province, claimed hundreds of lives. A sustained crime wave is further cause for concern.

Political stability after 80-year old President Mandela retires at the conclusion of his five year term in 1999 will be seriously tested. Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) party can be expected to comfortably return to power with Deputy President Thabo Mbeki becoming the country's leader. Whether the current government of national unity (GNU), which includes the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), will remain in place is unclear. The Afrikaner-dominated National Party (NP) withdrew from the GNU in July 1996, but few white South Africans appear to support the option of armed resistance urged by some extremist groups. IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi remains in the national cabinet.

The country also continued to face ugly realities regarding its recent past. Killings by government agents of numerous anti-apartheid activists were admitted and sometimes described in gruesome detail by perpetrators seeking amnesty from the official Truth and Reconciliation Commission, headed by retired Archbishop and Nobel peace laureate Desmond Tutu. In widely-publicized hearings, the commission also heard testimony on the involvement of President Mandela's former wife, Winnie Madikizela Mandela, in the murder of several people in the black township of Soweto near Johannesburg.

Spurring economic growth for the entire country and expanding opportunity for the country's black majority are crucial for South Africa's social peace as well as its prosperity. Free market economic policies are encouraging new investment, but unemployment among blacks is near 60 percent. It is unlikely that the ANC, which is seeking to transform itself from an anti-apartheid coalition to an issues-based political party, can maintain its popularity if it does not deliver visible social and economic improvements to voters.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

South Africans elected their government on a non-racial basis of universal suffrage for the first time in presidential and parliamentary elections in April 1994, in balloting viewed as free and fair by local and international observers. Local council elections in 1995 and 1996 brought non-racial local governance for the first time. The electoral process has worked well, undergirded by extensive civic and voter education, well-run voter registration, balanced official media coverage and reliable vote counting—with the notable exception of KwaZulu/Natal, where reports of vote-rigging and political violence have marred electoral credibility. Elections for the 400 seat National Assembly and 90-seat National Council of Provinces are by proportional representation based on a party list system. The National Assembly (whose current composition is 252 ANC, 82 NP, and 43 IFP) elects the president to serve concurrently with its five year term.

The main opposition contenders in the 1999 presidential and parliamentary elections will be the Afrikaner-dominated NP and the Zulu IFP, which controls the provincial government of KwaZulu/Natal. Neither party has a strong national base, and their racial and ethnic bases represent the most dangerous schism in South African politics. Another new party launched in 1997, the United Democratic Front, headed by former top NP leader Rolf Meyer and ex-ANC official Bantu Holomisa will also contest the election, as will a grouping of 13 small parties, the Justice and Freedom Alliance (Jafa), which separately found little support among voters during the 1994 general elections.

A constitutionally-mandated Human Rights Commission is appointed by parliament "to promote the observance of, respect for and the protection of fundamental rights...and develop an awareness of fundamental rights among all people of the republic." The eleven-member Constitutional Court has already demonstrated its strong independence. Lower courts generally respect legal provisions regarding arrest and detention, although courts remain understaffed. The national police force continues to undergo broad retraining and reorganization and has been supplemented in crime-fighting duties by thousands of soldiers. Complaints of abuses by police continue, although a civilian Independent Complaints Directorate (ICD) has been established to investigate allegations of police misconduct. The availability of an estimated four million illegal firearms and (a similar number of licensed weapons) has contributed to rising levels of violent crime.

The constitutionally-mandated Office of Public Protector plays an ombudsman's role in investigating governmental corruption. A Commission on Restitution of Land Rights and the superior Constitutional Land Court have been granted authority to adjudicate matters related to forced evictions and expropriation of non-whites' lands under apartheid.

Free expression in media and public discourse is respected, and new "freedom of information" laws were enacted to improve governmental transparency. South Africa's media has suffered little overt interference from government or politicians since the end of apartheid. A variety of newspapers and magazines publish reporting, analysis and opinion sharply critical of the government, political parties and other elements of society. The concentration of media ownership is a concern, however, especially by conglomerates with other extensive business interests which may appear to conflict with open reporting free media require. Radio broadcasting has been dramatically lib-

eralized, with scores of small community radio stations now in operation. However, television and most national radio broadcasting remains in the hands of the state-owned South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). While today far more independent than during its days as a pro-apartheid propaganda tool, the SABC still suffers self-censorship.

Equal rights for women are guaranteed by the constitution. A constitutionally-mandated Commission on Gender Equality is intended "to promote gender equality and to advise and make recommendations to parliament [regarding] any laws or proposed legislation which affects gender equality and the status of women." Yet discriminatory practices in customary law remain prevalent. Almost one-third of National Assembly members are women, but just three serve in the 28-member cabinet. Women occupy less than five percent of judgeships. Both in townships and rural areas, much violence against women is reported, including frequent rape. Violence against children is also reported to be common.

Labor rights codified under the 1995 Labor Relations Act (LRA) are respected, and there are over 250 trade unions. The right to strike exists after reconciliation efforts, which can be assisted by the official Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA). The LRA allows employers to hire replacement workers. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COATSU), the country's largest union federation, is formally linked to both the ANC and the South African Communist Party, and helped lead the anti-apartheid struggle. It renewed its ties to the government in 1997, despite dissatisfaction with many ANC political compromises and economic decisions. Other more radical unions have demanded quick redistribution of the national wealth. Over three-quarters of South Africa's 39 million people are black, but they share only about 30 percent of total income. Most economic power remains solidly with the 5.3 million white minority, who receive nearly 60 percent of national income.

The government's Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) envisions major improvements for rural areas and townships where South Africa's poorest reside, but seeks to do so without alienating the economically crucial white elite. The country's economy is still mostly controlled by several large interlocking corporations which during the apartheid era were shielded from international competition by sanctions and government design. Economic liberalization is slowly taking hold, although a sharp fall in the gold price and possible drops in agricultural production due to climate changes caused by *el Niño* could hinder growth in 1998. Many large international corporations that left South Africa in the 1980s have now returned, and South African exports are developing new markets in the region and across Africa. High labor costs compared to other developing economies are disincentives to low-tech, labor intensive investment.

Spain

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Capitalist

Population: 39,250,000

PPP: \$14,324

Life Expectancy: 776

Ethnic Groups: Spanish (72 percent), Catalan (16 percent), Galician (8 percent), Basque (2 percent), others

Capital: Madrid

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Overview:

Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar's key policy goals are to reduce the country's unemployment and fiscal deficit. The government has been aided in both pursuits by a booming economy. Aznar's Partido Popular (PP) and its parliamentary partners share a commitment to entry into the European Monetary Union in its first stage in 1999. The PP came to power after winning a plurality in the country's 1996 elections, which ended 14 years of socialist (PSOE) rule.

Spain's Basques were the first group known to have occupied the Iberian Peninsula. The country's current language, religion, and laws are based on those of the Romans, who arrived several centuries later. The unification of present-day Spain dates to 1512. After a period of colonial influence and wealth, the country declined as a European power and was occupied by France in the early 1800s. Subsequent wars and revolts led to Spain's loss of its colonies in the Americas by century's end.

Francisco Franco began a long period of nationalist rule after the victory of his forces in the 1936-39 civil war. In spite of the country's official neutrality, Franco followed Axis policies during World War II. Even with its closed economy, the country was transformed into a modern industrial nation in the post-war years. After a transitional period upon Franco's death in 1975, the country emerged as a parliamentary democracy. It joined the European Union (EU) in 1986.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Spanish citizens can change their government democratically. Spain has been governed democratically since 1977, following nearly 40 years of dictatorship under Franco and a brief transitional government under Adolfo Suarez.

The country is divided into 17 autonomous regions with limited powers, including control over such areas as health, tourism, local police agencies and instruction in regional languages. The bicameral federal legislature includes a territorially-elected Senate and a Congress of Deputies elected on the basis of proportional representation and universal suffrage. Although the Socialist party has ruled that women must occupy 25 percent of senior party posts and a feminist party has been officially registered since 1981, female participation in government remains minimal.

A Supreme Tribunal heads the judiciary, which includes territorial, provincial, regional and municipal courts. The post-Franco constitution and 1996 parliamentary legislation established the right to trial by jury. The process came under strong attack,

however, in March, with a jury's acquittal of a man who confessed to killing two policemen and who belonged to a group with links to the Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) terrorist movement. The government vowed to review the new system and seek a ban on juries in cases in which intimidation was possible.

Freedom of speech and a free press are guaranteed. The press has been particularly influential in setting the political agenda in recent years, with national dailies such as *El Mundo*, *ABC*, and *El Pais* covering corruption and other issues. In addition to the state-controlled television station, which has been accused of pro-government bias, there are three independent commercial television stations.

The rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining are constitutionally guaranteed. The country has one of the lowest levels of trade union membership in the EU, and unions have failed to prevent passage of new labor laws facilitating dismissals and encouraging short-term contracting.

In 1978, the constitution disestablished Roman Catholicism as the state religion, but directed Spanish authorities to "keep in mind the religious beliefs of Spanish society." Freedom of worship and the separation of church and state are respected in practice. Spain is home to many cultural and linguistic groups, some with strong regional identities. Although popular support for the ETA and its political wing, Herri Batasuna, has significantly declined, ETA remains the most active terrorist group in Western Europe. It has claimed approximately 800 lives. Since 1970, it has kidnapped 76 people and obtained an estimated \$33 million in ransom payments. In July, an estimated six million people took to the streets in country-wide protests against the group's kidnapping and execution of a town councilor who also served as an official in the country's ruling party.

Spain lacks anti-discrimination laws, and ethnic minorities, particularly immigrants, continue to report bias and mistreatment. In particular, North African immigrants report physical abuse and discrimination by authorities.

Sri Lanka

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy (insurgency)

Economy: Mixed capitalist-statist

Population: 18,396,000

PPP: \$3,277

Life Expectancy: 72.2

Ethnic Groups: Sinhalese (74 percent), Tamil (18 percent), Moor (7 percent), others

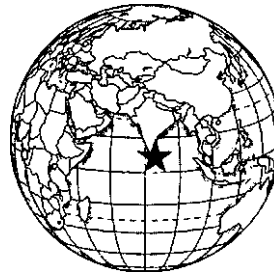
Capital: Colombo

Ratings Change: Sri Lanka's civil liberties rating changed from 5 to 4 because, although human rights abuses continue the government continues to consolidate areas under its control.

Political Rights: 3

Civil Liberties: 4*

Status: Partly Free



Overview:

In a year marked by political violence and a major army offensive against Tamil separatists, in 1997 President Chandrika Kumaratunga proposed political reforms aimed at ending Sri Lanka's 14-year civil war.

Sri Lanka achieved independence from Britain in 1948. Political power has alternated between the conservative United National Party (UNP) and the leftist Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). Colonial-era language policies allegedly favoring Tamils and other minorities over the Sinhala-speaking majority contributed to communal tensions that continued after independence.

The 1978 constitution provides for a directly elected president with broad executive powers who can serve two six-year terms and dissolve parliament. The 225-member parliament is directly elected for a six-year term.

Tamil claims of discrimination in education and employment opportunities and a high overall unemployment rate continued to inflame communal tensions in the early 1980s. A Tamil guerrilla attack on an army patrol and subsequent anti-Tamil riots led to civil war in 1983. By 1986 the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which called for an independent Tamil homeland in the north and east, controlled much of Jaffna Peninsula in the north. The UNP government brought in an Indian peacekeeping force between 1987-90 that only temporarily halted the fighting. Its presence sparked an anti-government insurgency in the south by the Marxist, Sinhalese-based People's Liberation Front (JVP). The army and military-backed death squads crushed the JVP by 1990, with total deaths estimated at 60,000.

In May 1993, a suspected LTTE suicide bomber assassinated President Ranasinghe Premadasa of the UNP. In the August 1994 elections, held with a 76 percent turnout, the People's Alliance (PA), an SLFP-dominated coalition led by Kumaratunga that promised to end the war won 105 seats to oust the UNP (94 seats) after 17 years. In the November 9 presidential elections Kumaratunga won 62 percent of the vote against the widow of the UNP's original candidate, who was assassinated in October.

Kumaratunga initiated negotiations with the LTTE, but in April 1995 the rebels broke a ceasefire. Between late 1995 and spring 1996, army offensives recaptured

Jaffna Peninsula.

The PA won 194 of 238 local councils, but only received 7 percent more of the popular vote than the UNP in elections on March 21, 1997. On May 13 the army launched a massive operation to capture a land route to Jaffna through the rebel-held Vanni region. On October 15, as the campaign dragged into its fifth month with heavy losses on both sides, a truck bombing and the ensuing shootout between soldiers and suspected LTTE guerrillas in downtown Colombo killed 18 people. Kumaratunga formally unveiled proposed constitutional amendments that would devolve power to new regional councils to grant greater autonomy to Tamils and other minorities. The plan was rejected by the UNP, which said it would lead to a Tamil state, and by the LTTE and moderate Tamil groups, which called it inadequate. With her PA 12 seats short of the two-thirds parliamentary majority required for amendments, Kumaratunga pledged to hold a non-binding referendum on the proposals in 1998.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Sri Lankans can change their government democratically, but institutions have been severely tested by civil war, communal tensions and partisan violence. The 1997 local elections were marred by the February shooting death of a PA MP by UNP agents at the start of the campaign, threats and assaults against opposition members and other partisan violence, intimidation of voters and UNP poll monitors and other irregularities. Local elections in the north and east, the first voting of any kind there in 15 years, are scheduled for January 1998. In July suspected LTTE gunmen assassinated two MPs in separate incidents.

The judiciary is independent. Kumaratunga's controversial 1996 appointment to the Supreme Court of a law professor with no bench experience raised new criticism over the president's sole discretion over judicial appointments.

Government security forces, the LTTE and state-backed Sinhalese, Muslim and anti-LTTE Tamil "home guards" are responsible for considerable human rights abuses related to the civil war, which has killed more than 60,000 people. Soldiers continue to commit extrajudicial killings in the north and east, mainly against LTTE guerrillas but also against civilians.

In July Kumaratunga lifted a nationwide state of emergency, in force since April 1996, except in the north and east and in and around Colombo. The Emergency Regulations (ER) allow authorities to detain suspects for up to one year without charge and ban political meetings. Under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), authorities can detain suspects for 18 months without charge. These detention laws, and poor implementation of safeguards for detainees, are blamed in part for the continuing problem of "disappearances." According to Amnesty International (AI), in 1996 there were more than 600 disappearances on Jaffna Peninsula, often by security forces in reprisal for LTTE attacks. AI reported that known disappearances on Jaffna dropped to 41 in the first seven months of 1997. Observers attributed this improvement to a new local army chief, and to charges brought against nine soldiers accused in the 1996 murders of schoolgirl Krishanthi Kumarasamy and three others on Jaffna. The government also established a Board of Investigation in November 1996 that has initiated investigations into 760 recent disappearances.

Activists criticized the government's decision to wind down an official Human Rights Task Force on June 30 and transfer its mandate to monitor arrests and deten-

tions under emergency regulations to a new, barely operational Human Rights Commission. In September three commissions investigating disappearances by non-state agents between 1988-94 presented final reports to Kumaratunga, who announced the government would make the reports public, prosecute where there was *prima facie* evidence of transgression and establish a new commission to look into outstanding complaints.

Despite this activity, few security personnel have been convicted for rights abuses. Security forces continue to be implicated in torture and rape of civilians and abuse of ordinary criminal detainees. Sinhalese prisoners reportedly killed three Tamil detainees at Kalutara prison in December in what AI said appeared to be a premeditated attack.

The armed forces have indiscriminately bombed and shelled populated areas during its prosecution of the war. The LTTE, which rules its shrinking territory in an arbitrary and brutal manner, continues to indiscriminately kill and summarily execute civilians, commit abductions and arbitrary detentions, deny basic rights and forcibly conscript children. The LTTE is apparently responsible for major urban terrorism attacks, including the 1996 Central Bank bombing in Colombo that killed 91 people, and the 1997 Colombo bombing (see above). Authorities detained and sometimes tortured thousands of young Tamils in security sweeps for LTTE suspects. In 1996 and 1997, hundreds of thousands of internally displaced civilians returned home.

Kumaratunga has been hostile to the press. In July a court handed down suspended sentences to the editor of the *Sunday Times* on charges of criminal defamation for a 1995 article critical of Kumaratunga. According to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, editors of three other papers face criminal defamation charges over articles critical of Kumaratunga. In 1997 authorities harassed and threatened Tamil journalists on several occasions. The government periodically censored domestic war coverage prior to 1997 and continues to limit journalists' access to the conflict. In May the Supreme Court ruled against a government attempt to establish a government-controlled broadcasting authority. In September parliament repealed an act that had allowed parliament to try and punish journalists for allegedly defaming MPs. Other restrictive legislation remains on the books.

Print media are both public and private. The government controls Lake House Group, the largest newspaper chain. Radio and television are predominantly government-owned. The state media's political coverage favors the party in power.

Rape and domestic violence remain serious problems. Many of the thousands of child domestic servants are physically and sexually abused. Enforcement of laws against child prostitution is weak, and Sri Lanka has become a destination for foreign pedophiles. Conditions in asylums are often inhumane.

Human rights and social welfare nongovernmental organizations are active. Partisan violence on campuses has periodically led to university closings. Religious freedom is respected.

Trade unions are independent, and collective bargaining is practiced. State workers cannot strike. Kumartunga used the 1989 Essential Services Act, which allows the president to declare a strike in any industry illegal, to end one 1996 strike.

Sudan

Polity: Military-civilian
Economy: Mixed capitalist
Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 7
Status: Not Free

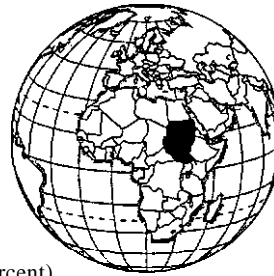
Population: 28,855,000

PPP: \$1,084

Life Expectancy: 51.1

Ethnic Groups: Sudanese Arab (40 percent), Dinka (11 percent)
 Nuba (8 percent), Neur, Shilluk, Fur, some 600 other groups

Capital: Khartoum (executive), Omdurman (legislative)



Overview:

Sudan's civil war continued into its sixteenth bloody year as peace talks in Kenya collapsed in November and Sudan's hard-line Islamist government battled rebel forces of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the south and east of the country. Severe human rights abuses by various contestants to power persisted, and government forces raided for slaves in the country's south. Genocidal scorched earth attacks were conducted against Nuba people in southwestern Sudan, and deep divisions between the country's Arab Muslim north and black African animist and Christian south seemed as wide as ever. In April, some southern Sudanese rebels grouped as the United Democratic Salvation Front (UDSF) signed a peace pact with the government. However, the main southern rebel force, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), continued fighting, and the government began a general conscription of males graduating from high school to replenish battlefield losses. The regime's campaign against secular and democratic forces in the Arab north also continued with arrests, detention without trial and severe pressure against media and the country's few remaining independent institutions. In November, the U.S. imposed stiff new economic sanctions against the Khartoum regime, adding to those in place because Sudan has been designated a sponsor of international terrorism. Sudan still faces U.N. sanctions as punishment for official Sudanese involvement in a June 1995 assassination attempt against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa.

Africa's largest country has been embroiled in devastating civil wars for 20 of the 30 years since regaining independence in 1956 after nearly eight decades of British rule. The Anya Nya movement, representing mainly Christian and animist Black Africans in southern Sudan, battled government forces from 1956-72. The south gained extensive autonomy under a 1972 accord and an uneasy peace prevailed for a decade. In 1983, General Jafar Numeiri, who had toppled an elected government in 1969, sought to restrict southern autonomy and to introduce *shari'a* law. Added to pervasive racial and religious discrimination and fears of economic exploitation raised by government plans to pipe oil discovered in the south to northern Sudan, these actions sparked renewed civil war. Numeiri was overthrown in 1985 and civilian rule restored in 1986, but the war went on. Lt.-General Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir toppled the freely-elected government in 1989, and has ruled since through a military-civilian regime. It is strongly backed by senior Muslim clerics, particularly National Assembly speaker Hassan al-Turabi, who wields considerable power from this position and as leader of

the National Islamic Front, the de facto but undeclared ruling party. There is little prospect for peace as long as the Islamist regime continues its efforts to impose fundamentalist values on a diverse and multicultural society.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Sudanese cannot choose or change their government democratically. Sudanese President and Prime Minister al-Bashir claims electoral legitimacy from heavily manipulated March 1996 elections which cannot be said to reflect the will of the Sudanese people. Elections were also held for 264 members of the National Assembly, whose remaining 136 seats are filled by presidential appointment. National Assembly speaker al-Turabi has ruled out a multi-party system for Sudan. However, in August, regime-supported candidates failed to win the governorship in five of 15 elections by local councils in Sudan's northern provinces. A new constitution is being drafted, without broad participation, and under the current regime is unlikely to protect basic civil and political rights.

The hard-line Islamist-backed junta that deposed a democratically-elected government in 1989 has zealously pursued military solutions to the civil war. Sudan is officially an Islamic state. There is little autonomous civil society and few independent voices in media. Trade unions were suppressed following the 1989 coup and exist today under tight regime control. The entire judiciary and the security apparatus are controlled by the NIF, and officials and security forces act with impunity. Civil law has been supplanted by *shari'a* law which discriminates against women and provides severe punishments including floggings, limb amputations, crucifixion and the death penalty. Four women were sentenced to death for prostitution in November.

Serious human rights abuses by nearly every faction involved in the war have been reported. Accounts of particularly savage excesses by government forces against 1.5 million Nuba people in western Sudan continued in 1997, documented by the London-based Africa Rights group, which said the abuses include "the burning of villages, slaughter of civilians, and creation of famine." In the mostly Arab north of the country, repression against political opponents of the regime continued. "Ghost houses," secret detention and torture centers are reported to be operated by secret police in several cities. Thousands of southern Sudanese have been enslaved after being seized in raids by Arab militia and other government forces. Relief agencies have liberated numerous captives by purchasing slaves' freedom. The Sudan government has both denied and denounced slavery, but has taken no action to end it and apparently condones the practice.

The war's devastation has been compounded by repeated famine among the displaced populace who cannot carry on traditional subsistence farming, and over a million people may have died in the last dozen years of conflict. In southern Sudan the conflict is complicated by ethnic clashes within rebel ranks. In 1991, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), led by Colonel John Garang, was split when ethnic Nuer troops joined dissident Riak Machar in the Southern Sudan Independence Movement in protest over alleged ethnic Dinka domination of the SPLA. Machar defected to the government in April 1996. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a broad coalition of secular and religious groups from both northern and southern Sudan, enjoys support from Ethiopia, Uganda, and most importantly Eritrea, where it is headquartered. The rebels also receive indirect American assistance.

The once vigorous print media have been tamed by the closure of publications and harassment of journalists. A November 1996 press law further eroded media freedom. The regime has tightened controls on international and domestic communication by confiscating fax and telex machines, typewriters and copiers. Broadcast media are entirely state-controlled.

Women face extensive societal discrimination and the unequal treatment stipulated by shari'a law. Despite its legal prohibition, female genital mutilation is routine, although U.N. and government programs are campaigning against it. Rape is reportedly routine in war zones.

Sudan's 29 million people are mostly agriculturists, and trade, investment and development have been severely limited by the long-running civil war. Oilfields in the country's southwest could provide sizable revenues, but their exploitation will be difficult as long as the war goes on.

Suriname

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist-statist

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

Population: 428,000

PPP: \$4,711

Life Expectancy: 70.7

Ethnic Groups: East Indian (37 percent), Creole (31 percent), Javanese (15 percent), Bush Negro, Indian, Chinese, European

Capital: Paramaribo



Overview: A foiled plot to overthrow the government of President Jules Wijdenbosch, already under fire for alleged incompetence, particularly in managing Suriname's failing economy, added to concerns about the future political plans of Wijdenbosch's patron, former military strongman Desi Bourterse, himself on the run from an international warrant on drug charges.

The Republic of Suriname achieved independence from the Netherlands in 1975. Five years later, a military coup brought strongman Bourterse to power as the head of a regime that brutally suppressed civic and political opposition and initiated a decade of military intervention in politics. In 1987, Bourterse permitted elections under a constitution providing for a directly-elected, 51-seat National Assembly, which serves a five-year term and selects the state president. If the Assembly is unable to select a president with the required two-thirds vote, a People's Assembly, comprised of parliament and regional and local officials, chooses the president. The Front for Democracy and Development, a three-party coalition, handily won the 1987 elections. The military-organized National Democratic Party (NDP) won just three seats.

In 1990, the army ousted President Ramsewak Shankar, and Bourterse again took power. International pressure led to new elections in 1991. The New Front, a coalition of mainly East Indian, Creole and Javanese parties, won a majority, although the

NDP increased its share to 12. The Assembly selected the Front's candidate, Ronald Venetiaan, as president.

Bouterse quit the army in 1992 in order to lead the NDP. The Venetiaan government took some constitutional steps to curb military influence and in late 1995 and early 1996 purged several high-ranking pro-Bouterse military officials. The government's economic structural adjustment program led to social and labor unrest amidst an inflationary spiral and a collapse of the Surinamese guilder.

During the campaign for the May 23, 1996 parliamentary elections, the NDP pledged to reverse many of the economic programs of the Venetiaan government. The four-party New Front lost seats, winning 24, and entered into a coalition with the smaller Central Bloc, consisting of two opposition groups. The alliance proved insufficient to gain the necessary two-thirds parliamentary majority to return Venetiaan to office.

Bouterse's NDP, with 16 seats, joined with the Javanese-based Party of National Unity and Solidarity and dissident members of the East Indian-based United Reform Party, to press for the convening in September of the constitutionally-mandated 869-member People's Assembly. The deadlock was broken when Wijdenbosch, a former deputy party leader under Bouterse, was elected president. A political crisis left Wijdenbosch without a cabinet for the first half of September 1997. Two of the three new ministers had been political prisoners during Bouterse's reign. The Netherlands has sought international help in tracking down Bouterse, who it charges was involved in drug trafficking and money laundering.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Suriname can change their government democratically. The May 1996 elections were generally free and fair and marked the first time since independence that one elected government transferred power to another. Political parties mostly reflect the cleavages of Suriname's ethnically-complex society, a factor contributing to parliamentary gridlock. Civic institutions are weak, and Bouterse's considerable influence seemed bolstered by his recent appointment to a newly-created position, that of Advisor of State, an effort to insulate him from the reach of Dutch justice.

The government generally respects freedom of expression. Radio is both public and private. A number of small commercial radio stations compete with the government-owned radio and television broadcasting system. State broadcast media generally offer pluralistic viewpoints. The private press practices some self-censorship, particularly concerning news about Bouterse.

Indigenous groups, although 15 percent of the population, are geographically isolated and face social discrimination, political marginalization, and denial of land rights, including the dislocation from their lands by foreign mining interests.

The judiciary, including the Attorney General's office and that of the public prosecutor, is weak and reluctant to handle cases involving human rights issues, the military and supporters of Bouterse. A 1992 law granting amnesty to former rebels and soldiers for rights violations committed between 1985 and mid-1992 was upheld by a lower court in 1996. In January, responding to the demands of human rights organizations, Wijdenbosch promised the imminent creation of a commission to create an institute to investigate the murders of more than 140 people during the 1980s. In October, the Organization for Justice and Peace (Organisatie voor Gerechtigheid en Vrede, OGV) initiated a campaign for the establishment of a "truth commission" to investi-

gate events of that period. Police abuse of detainees is a problem, and prisons are dangerously overcrowded.

Constitutional guarantees on gender equality are not enforced, and the Asian Marriage Act allows parents to arrange marriages. Human rights organizations function relatively freely. Workers can join independent trade unions, and the labor movement is active in politics. Collective bargaining is legal and practiced fairly widely. Civil servants have no legal right to strike but in practice do so.

Swaziland

Polity: Traditional
monarchy

Economy: Capitalist

Population: 999,000

PPP: \$2,821

Life Expectancy: 58.3

Ethnic Groups: Swazi, Zulu, European

Capital: Mbabane

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Overview:

An oasis of regional calm for decades as war and turmoil raged in neighboring Mozambique and South Africa, Swaziland is now the only southern Africa country with an unelected government. A Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) appointed in July 1996 has made little apparent progress in formulating a new charter that would extend democratic rights and limit the power of King Mswati III and the ruling Dlamini clan, who dominate the landlocked country. Officials have promised a new constitution would be in place before elections scheduled for 1998. Several strikes and demonstrations kept pressure on the government and royal family to honor pledges of significant constitutional revisions. While trade unionists and others are active despite a ban on political activity since 1973, prospects for early change remain dim, as traditional chiefs are unlikely to quickly accept reform. The government also increased pressure on independent media and was criticized for restrictive labor practices.

King Mswati III is the latest monarch of the nearly two and one half century-old Dlamini dynasty. During that time, the Swazi kingdom expanded and contracted in conflicts with neighboring groups. Britain declared the kingdom a protectorate to prevent Boer expansion in the 1880s and took administrative power in 1903. Swaziland regained its independence in 1968, with an elected parliament added to the traditional kingship and chieftancies. Mswati's predecessor, Sobhuza II, who died in 1983, scrapped the multiparty system in favor of *tinkhundla* (regional councils) in 1973, and there have been no representative elections since.

The ban on political activity is largely ignored and only sporadically enforced. The Swaziland Democratic Alliance (SDA) comprises trade unionists, and banned political groups have united to press for democratization. Mswati's promise to create a constitution to replace that suspended in 1968 is regarded with great skepticism. The CRC has conducted a series of *vusela* (public consultations) among Swaziland's people ostensibly to determine popular opinion regarding constitutional changes. It is

unclear whether the meetings are merely pro forma or will provide serious input to creation of a new charter; critics claim they are more an exercise to defuse public opinion than to heed it. Most opposition activists recognize the strong unifying role of the Swazi monarchy and seek to restrict its power and not its abolition. However, revelations of corruption and other official malfeasance are increasing popular anger, and the palace's intransigence could contribute to its own demise.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Swazis are unable to exercise the right to freely elect their representatives or change their government. All Swaziland's citizens are subjects of absolute monarch Mswati III. The king rejected an official 1993 report suggesting multiparty elections, and local chiefs voted that year through the *tinkhundla* system for 55 of 65 members of the House of Assembly. Ten more members are appointed by the King, who also names 20 of 30 members of the Senate, whose other ten members are selected by the House of Assembly. Royal decrees carry the full force of law, and the bicameral legislature of indirectly elected and appointed members is mostly window dressing to royal rule.

The judiciary is independent in most civil cases, although the royal family and government can influence the courts. Traditional courts hear many cases. Prison conditions are poor, and overcrowding has increased since the adoption of the 1993 Non-Bailable Offences Order. The decree covers serious crimes, including murder, robbery, rape, weapons offenses and poaching, but requires only charges and not evidence for indefinite detention. The Swazi Law Society and international groups have protested that the decree effectively denies the presumption of innocence and convicts people without trial.

A controversial new press law considered by parliament in November was strongly condemned by journalists in Swaziland and media watchdog groups in southern Africa and elsewhere. The bill would create a government-sponsored press council with regulatory and punitive powers, including licensing of journalists. Violations of as yet undrafted media "code of ethics" could draw \$3,500 fines for journalists and almost \$30,000 fines for publishing houses. Freedom of expression is already seriously restricted in Swaziland, especially regarding political issues or matters regarding the royal family. 1995 Legislation bans publication of any criticism of the monarchy. The CRC has broad authority to prosecute people who "belittle" or "insult" it, including power to impose fines of \$1000 and/or imprisonment up to five years. Although the early 1990s saw increased openness, self-censorship still prevails in the kingdom. Only one independent newspaper, the *Times of Swaziland*, now publishes, and it is routinely harassed by the government. State-run television and radio stations are the country's most important media and remain closely-controlled by the government. However, a wide range of broadcast and print media from South Africa are received in the country, but the government stopped re-broadcasting South African news reports after they covered labor unrest in October.

Freedom of religion is respected, and a variety of Christian sects operate freely. Non-governmental organizations not involved in politics are also permitted. Several political groupings, including the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) and the Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO) operate openly despite their official prohibition, but members are routinely harassed and sometimes detained.

Swazi women are treated unequally in both formal and customary law. Married

women are considered minors, and require spousal permission to enter into almost any form of economic activity, from borrowing money to opening a bank account. They also enjoy limited inheritance rights. Employment regulations requiring equal pay for equal work are only sometimes obeyed. Wife-beating and other violence against women is common, and traditional values still carry weight even in modernized settings.

Union rights are recognized in the 1980 Industrial Relations Act, and unions are able to operate independently, although the International Labor Organization sharply criticized the government's labor policies in a June report. The Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) mounted several strikes in 1997 and has been a leader in demands for democratization. Wage agreements are often reached by collective bargaining, and 75 percent of the private work force is unionized.

Swaziland's free market sector operates with little government interference, but most Swazis remain engaged in subsistence agriculture. Government plans to privatize parastatal concerns proceeded at a glacial pace in 1997. Foreign investment is deterred by a lack of transparency in governance and by continuing reports of corruption.

Sweden

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Mixed capitalist

Population: 8,842,000

PPP: \$18,540

Life Expectancy: 78.3

Ethnic Groups: Swede (88 percent), Finn (2 percent), Lappic (Saami), immigrant groups

Capital: Stockholm

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 1

Status: Free



Overview:

Reform of Sweden's social welfare system, reduction of high unemployment levels and membership in the European Monetary Union (EMU) dominated the agenda of Sweden's minority Social Democratic (SDP) government during the year. Although the country is close to meeting the criteria for EMU membership, all political parties support a national referendum on the issue. Prime Minister Goran Persson, who assumed office when fellow SDP-member Ingvar Carlson resigned in 1996, prefers to hold the vote after the EMU takes effect in 1999. Opposition parties seek an earlier vote. In a referendum in 1994, Swedes voted in favor of membership in the European Union.

Sweden is a constitutional monarchy and a multiparty parliamentary democracy. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) won 45 percent of the votes in the 1994 election. An informal agreement with the Left Party, which won six percent of the vote, enabled the SDP to form a one-party minority government. Seven parties won parliamentary seats.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Swedes can change their government democratically. The 310-member, unicameral Riksdag (parliament) is elected every four years through universal suffrage. To ensure absolute proportionality for all parties that secure more than four percent of the vote, an additional 39 representatives are selected from a national pool of candidates. Single-party majority governments are rare.

Citizens abroad are entitled to absentee votes in national elections, and non-nationals in residence for three years can vote in local elections. The Saami (Lappic) community elects its own local parliament with significant powers over educational and cultural issues. It serves as an advisory body to the government.

The role of King Carl Gustaf XVI is ceremonial. The prime minister is appointed by the speaker of the house and confirmed by the Riksdag. The country's independent judiciary includes six Courts of Appeal, 100 district courts, a Supreme Court and a parallel system of administrative courts. Freedom of assembly and association is guaranteed, as are the rights to strike and participate in unions. Strong and well-organized trade union federations represent 90 percent of the labor force. Despite historic ties with the SDP, the labor movement has become increasingly independent.

The media are independent. Most newspapers and periodicals are privately owned. The government subsidizes daily newspapers regardless of their political affiliation. In recent years, new satellite and ground-based commercial television channels and radio stations have ended the government's monopoly over broadcasting.

Citizens can freely express their ideas and criticize their government. The government can prevent publication of information related to national security. A quasi-governmental body censors extremely graphic violence from film, video and television.

Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed. Approximately 90 percent of the population is Lutheran. In 1945, the government and the Lutheran church agreed to disestablish the state religion. By the year 2000, baptism will be required for membership in the church, and only baptized members will be required to pay the three percent income or "church" tax. Roman Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, and Mormons are represented among the population. Compulsory religion classes in schools now include surveys of various religious beliefs.

International human rights groups have criticized Sweden for its strict immigration policies, which have severely limited the number of refugees admitted annually. The country does not systematically provide asylum-seekers with adequate legal counsel or access to the appeals process. Some asylum-seekers continue to be detained with criminals.

Dozens of violent incidents with anti-immigrant or racist overtones are reported annually. The government supports volunteer groups that oppose racism. Human rights monitors operate without government restrictions.

Although the country's 17,000 Saami enjoy some political autonomy, Sweden was the last Nordic country to approve a parliament for its Lappic population. In 1994, the government ended the Saamis' control of hunting and fishing on their lands. Reports of housing and employment discrimination against Saami continue.

In a 1994 effort to promote gender-based equality, the Riksdag passed a law requiring working fathers to take at least one month of state-subsidized leave for child care or lose one month's employment benefits. Women constitute approximately 45

percent of the labor force, but their wage levels lag behind those of men. They are well represented in government, including approximately 40 percent of the parliament — in part due to the SDP's pledge to appoint equal numbers of men and women to government positions at all levels.

In a U.N. study of countries' provision of equal rights for women, Sweden received the highest rating. The country's reputation was tarnished in August, however, with the revelation that, under leftist governments from 1935 to 1975, 62,000 Swedes, 90 percent of whom were women, were forcibly sterilized. The current government has pledged to compensate victims and pass a law to ensure that the practice is permanently banned.

Switzerland

Polity: Federal parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 7,101,000
PPP: \$24,967
Life Expectancy: 78.1
Ethnic Groups: German, French, Italian, Romansch
Capital: Bern (administrative), Lausanne (judicial)

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Overview: Switzerland's foreign relations were shaken throughout 1997 by ongoing fallout from revelations that, during and after World War II, Swiss banks traded in gold looted by the Nazis and did little to help Holocaust survivors retrieve their bank deposits. The U.S. government concluded that these policies prolonged the war and shielded Nazi assets in the years thereafter.

In referenda in June, Swiss citizens rejected a ban on arms exports and a measure to require voters' advance approval of European Union (EU) proposals affecting Switzerland. In a 1992 referendum, a narrow majority of voters had rejected joining the European Economic Area, a grouping that is seen as a step toward EU membership. With more than 20 percent of the population comprised of foreigners, citizens feared a massive influx of EU immigrants. Recent polls suggest that voters would now approve EU membership. A referendum on a new constitution is expected in 1998 or 1999. In 1996, Switzerland joined NATO's Partnership for Peace program, through which it can participate in non-military humanitarian and training missions.

With the exception of a brief period of centralized power under Napoleonic rule, Switzerland has remained a confederation of local communities as established in the Pact of 1291. Most responsibility for public affairs rests at the local and cantonal levels. The 1815 Congress of Vienna formalized the country's borders and recognized its perpetual neutrality.

Switzerland is often cited as a rare example of peaceful coexistence in a multi-ethnic state. The republic is divided into 20 cantons and six half-cantons and includes German, French, Italian and Romansch communities.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

The Swiss can change their government democratically. Free and fair elections are held at regular intervals. Initiatives and referenda give citizens an additional degree of involvement in the legislative process. The cantonal system allows considerable local autonomy. Localities' linguistic and cultural heritages are zealously preserved.

At the national level, both houses of the Federal Assembly have equal authority. After legislation has been passed in both the directly-elected, 200-member National Council and the Council of States, which includes two members from each canton, it cannot be vetoed by the executive or reviewed by the judiciary. The seven members of the Federal Council (Bundesrat) exercise executive authority. They are chosen from the Federal Assembly according to a "magic formula" that ensures representation of each party, region and language group. Each year, one member serves as president.

The judicial system functions primarily at the cantonal level, with the exception of a federal Supreme Court that reviews cantonal court decisions involving federal law. Switzerland's judiciary is independent. The government's postal ministry operates broadcasting services, and the broadcast media enjoy editorial autonomy. Foreign broadcast media are readily accessible. In addition, there are many private television and radio stations. Privately-owned daily, weekly and monthly publications are available in each of the most common languages and are free from government interference.

Freedoms of speech, assembly, association and religion are observed. While no single state church exists, many cantons support one or several churches. Taxpayers may opt not to contribute to church funds, yet, in many instances, companies cannot. The country's anti-racist law prohibits racist or anti-Semitic speech and actions and is strictly enforced by the government. Human rights monitors operate freely.

A 1994 Amnesty International report cited excessive police force used against persons—particularly foreigners—in custody. The report was issued shortly after the National Council increased police powers of search and detention of foreigners lacking identification, in an effort to curb the drug trade.

In 1995, federal laws aimed at dissuading drug traffickers from entering Switzerland authorized pretrial detention of legal residents for as long as nine months. With 33,000 drug addicts in a population of seven million, the use of hard drugs has become one of the country's most pernicious social ailments.

Although a law on gender equality entered effect in 1996, women still face some barriers to political and social advancement. Some studies estimate women's earnings to be 15 percent lower than men's for equal work. Some charge that the army, from which women are excluded, creates networking opportunities for men, thus producing an economic disadvantage for women. Women were not granted federal suffrage until 1971, and not until 1990 did the half-canton, Appenzell-Innerrhoden, relinquish its status as the last bastion of all-male suffrage in Europe. Until the mid-1980s, women were prohibited from participating in the Federal Council. In August, journalists revealed that hundreds of women had been forcibly sterilized under a cantonal law passed in 1928. A government critic demanded an official investigation after a historian claimed that the practice continued to this day.

Workers may organize and participate in unions and enjoy the right to strike and bargain collectively. Unions are independent of the government and political parties. Approximately one third of the workforce belongs to unions.

Syria

Polity: Dominant party (military-dominated)
Economy: Mixed statist
Population: 15,609,000
PPP: \$5,397
Life Expectancy: 67.8
Ethnic Groups: Arab (90 percent), Kurd, Armenian, others
Capital: Damascus

Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 7
Status: Not Free



Overview:

In 1997 Syria took steps to strengthen Arab ranks against Israel, whose current hardline government is seen by many in the region as a threat to Arab peace and security. President Hafez al-Assad continued to appear firmly entrenched as leader of one of the world's most repressive regimes.

Following four centuries of rule under the Ottoman Empire, Syria came under French control after World War I and gained independence in 1944. A 1963 military coup brought the pan-Arab, socialist *Ba'ath* party to power. As head of the Ba'ath military wing, Assad took power in a 1970 coup and formally became president of the secular regime in 1971. Members of his Alawite Muslim minority, which constitutes 12 percent of the population, were installed in most key military and intelligence positions.

The 1973 constitution vests executive power in the president, who must be a Muslim and who is nominated by the Ba'ath party to be elected through popular referendum. The 250-member, directly-elected People's Assembly holds little independent legislative power.

In the late 1970s the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood, drawn from the Sunni majority, carried out anti-government attacks in several northern and central towns. In 1982 the government sent the army into the northern city of Hama to crush a Muslim Brotherhood rebellion. As many as 20,000 militants and civilians died in the resulting bloodshed, which decisively ended active opposition to the regime.

Assad last won re-election in December 1991, running unopposed in a tightly-controlled vote. The death of Major Basil al-Assad, the president's son and heir apparent, in a 1994 auto accident left the question of Assad's successor unclear. However, the president's firm grip on the political apparatus was evident at the late-1994 parliamentary elections, in which the ruling National Progressive Front, dominated by the Ba'ath party, took all 167 seats it contested, with pro-regime "independents" winning the remaining 83 seats.

With his domestic credibility reliant on his hard line against Israel, Assad is in no rush to negotiate a settlement leading to the return of the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights, as this would likely require establishing full diplomatic relations with Jerusalem. Prior to losing the Golan in 1967, Syria had used the territory to shell northern Israeli towns.

Uneasiness over the stalled Middle East peace process and the strengthening of an Israeli-Turkish alliance has prompted Syria to engage its Arab and Iranian neighbors in unified opposition to the Israeli government. Syrian officials mediated a rap-

prochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran during the first half of the year, and in May Syria took steps to end its long-standing rift with Iraq by opening three border posts between the countries. The opening allows Syria to profit from the oil-for-food deal under which Iraq may sell a restricted amount of oil in exchange for food and medicine. In addition, Syria has contracted with China and North Korea to improve its weapons capabilities, thus joining the regional race for military security as political stability recedes.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Syrians cannot change their government democratically, though they ostensibly vote for the president and the People's Assembly. President Assad maintains absolute authority in the military-backed regime. Political dissent is not tolerated, but dealt with through arbitrary arrest, torture, "disappearance" and other forms of intimidation. Opposition parties are not permitted.

The Emergency Law, in effect almost continuously since 1963, allows authorities to carry out preventive arrests and to supersede due process safeguards in searches, arrests, detentions, interrogation and trials in the military-controlled State Security Courts, which handle political and security cases. Several internal security services operate independently of each other and without judicial oversight. Authorities monitor personal communications and conduct surveillance of suspected security threats.

The judiciary is subservient to the government. Defendants in ordinary civil and criminal cases have some due process rights, though there are no jury trials. In State Security Courts confessions obtained through torture are generally admitted as evidence. Nevertheless, acquittals have recently been granted in political cases. Trials in the Economic Security Court, which hears cases involving currency violations and other financial offenses, are also conducted without procedural safeguards. The government released a number of political prisoners in 1997, including members of banned Communist and left-wing parties and several men affiliated with the Committee for the Defense of Democratic Freedoms and Human Rights.

Freedom of expression is sharply restricted. All media are owned and operated by the government and the Ba'ath party, and thus serve as government mouthpieces. Citizens may not legally own satellite dishes. In 1997, the media increased reporting on regional issues, including the Middle East peace process, and a number of articles criticized official corruption and government inefficiency.

Freedom of assembly is nonexistent. The Interior Ministry must grant citizens permission to hold meetings, and most public demonstrations are organized by the government or Ba'ath party. A demonstration in June by some 160 students against a new education policy was peacefully dispersed by security agents. Freedom of association is restricted. Private associations must be registered with the government, which usually grants registration to groups which are non-political.

The state forbids Jehovah's Witnesses and Seventh-Day Adventists to worship as a community or to own property. The security apparatus closely monitors the Jewish community, and Jews are generally barred from government employment. They are also the only minority group required to have their religion noted on passports and identity cards. Religious instruction is mandatory in schools, with government-approved teachers and curricula. Separate classes are provided for Christian and Muslim students.

The Kurdish minority faces cultural and linguistic restrictions, and suspected Kurdish activists are routinely dismissed from schools and jobs. Some 200,000 Syrian Kurds are stateless and unable to obtain passports, identity cards or birth certificates as a result of a policy some years ago under which Kurds were stripped of their Syrian nationality. The government never restored this nationality, though the policy ended after the 1960s. As a result, these Kurds are unable to own land, gain government employment or vote.

Traditional norms place Syrian women at a disadvantage in marriage, divorce, and inheritance matters. Women also face legal restrictions on passing citizenship to children.

All unions must belong to the government-controlled General Federation of Trade Unions. By law the government can nullify any private sector collective bargaining agreement. Strikes are prohibited in the agricultural sector, and rarely occur in other sectors because of previous government crackdowns.

Taiwan (Rep. of China)

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy **Political Rights:** 2
Civil Liberties: 2

Economy: Mixed capitalist **Status:** Free

Population: 21,421,000

PPP: na

Life Expectancy: na

Ethnic Groups: Taiwanese (84 percent), mainland Chinese (14 percent), aboriginal (2 percent)

Capital: Taipei

Overview: After winning 12 of 23 administrative posts at the November 1997 local elections, Taiwan's opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) predicted it would break the Nationalist's (KMT) hold on power in the 1998 legislative elections.

Following the Communist victory on the mainland in 1949, KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek established a government-in-exile on Taiwan, located 100 miles off China. Both Beijing and Taipei officially consider Taiwan a province of China, although Taipei has abandoned its longstanding claim to be the legitimate government of mainland China. Native Taiwanese make up 85 percent of the population, while mainlanders or their descendants are a minority.

The 1947 constitution vests executive power in a president, who serves a four-year term. The National Assembly can amend the constitution and, until 1994, elected the president and vice-president. The government has five specialized yuan (branches), including a legislature that, since 1992, is directly elected for a three year term.

After four decades of authoritarian KMT rule, Taiwan's democratic transition began with the lifting of martial law in 1987. Lee Teng-hui became the first native Taiwanese president in 1988 and has since asserted native Taiwanese control of the KMT, marginalized its mainlander faction and de-emphasized the party's commit-

ment to eventual reunification with China.

Taiwan's first multiparty elections, in 1991, maintained the KMT's control of the National Assembly, but also established the DPP, which officially favors formal independence from China, as a viable opposition. In the 1992 legislative elections the KMT won 96 of 161 seats.

In 1993 Lien Chan became the first native Taiwanese prime minister. But as the political space widened, the KMT faced increasing criticism for its factionalism, corruption and alleged organized crime links. In the 1995 elections for an expanded, 164-seat legislature, the KMT won just 85 seats; the DPP, 54; the pro-reunification New Party, 21; and independents, four.

On March 23, 1996 Lee won the first direct presidential election with 54.0 percent of the vote against the DPP's Peng Ming-min (21.1 percent) and two other candidates. Days earlier, China had held missile tests near the island to underscore its longstanding threat to invade if Taiwan declared independence.

On July 18, 1997 the National Assembly amended the constitution to expand presidential power. The president now selects the premier without needing parliamentary confirmation and can dissolve the legislature. The Assembly also reduced the powers of the provincial government, which had been maintained to support Taiwan's nominal status as a province of China, in a move widely interpreted as a step toward formal independence.

Premier Lien, who in May had been the target of massive demonstrations protesting rising violent crime rates and calling for greater government accountability, resigned in August. On September 1 the KMT's Vincent Siew became premier. At the November 29 local elections, the DPP downplayed its independence platform, promised clean, responsive government and defeated the KMT in the popular vote, at 43 percent versus 42 percent, and in terms of administrative posts, both firsts. The KMT dropped from 15 posts to eight.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Taiwan's March 1996 presidential elections consolidated its democratic transition. The KMT maintains political advantages through its hold over the broadcast media and its considerable business interests in Taiwan's industrial economy.

Elections are marred by vote-buying. Organized crime has penetrated politics to the extent that gangsters have reportedly been elected at all levels of government. The DPP accuses local KMT politicians of bid-rigging and other illegal collusion with business. Most observers suspect that the still-unsolved November 1996 murder of the Taoyuan county chief magistrate and seven associates involved illicit business transactions. However, since the mid-1990s hundreds of politicians, judges and businessmen have been convicted of election fraud, bid-rigging and other crimes in an unprecedented anti-corruption campaign.

The judiciary is not fully independent, due to occasional corruption and because judges tend to favor the KMT's interests. However, judges are increasingly being drawn from outside the KMT. Police continue to abuse suspects. Prisons are overcrowded, and conditions are harsh in detention camps for illegal immigrants. The Anti-Hoodlum Law allows police to detain alleged "hoodlums" on the basis of testimony by unidentified informants. Suspects can be sent for reformatory education through administrative procedure rather than a trial.

Taiwanese law prohibits advocacy of formal independence from China or of Communism and allows police to censor or ban publications considered seditious or treasonous, although these provisions are no longer applied. Courts occasionally convict journalists for criminal libel in cases brought by the government or politicians, although fines are usually substituted for jail sentences. In April a judge acquitted two journalists of criminal libel over a 1996 story in the Hong Kong-based *Asiaweek* alleging that the KMT had offered a donation to United States President Bill Clinton's re-election campaign. According to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, in August the top intelligence agency brought a criminal libel case against the daily *Independence Morning Post* over an article alleging that the agency had ordered phone tapping of certain Assembly deputies. Journalists practice some self-censorship, although newspapers publish articles on corruption and other sensitive issues.

The KMT, the Taiwan provincial government and the military maintain controlling shares in the three main television stations, and political coverage favors the government. Private cable television provides diverse viewpoints and now reaches over 70 percent of households. In 1993 the government initiated procedures for licensing new radio stations, but only for stations with limited ranges.

Although the Parade and Assembly Law (PAL) bars demonstrations that advocate independence or Communism, pro-independence demonstrations are permitted. Under the PAL some opposition leaders have been charged with holding unauthorized demonstrations or for allegedly failing to maintain public order at demonstrations. Authorities have refused to register nongovernmental organizations (NGO) with "Taiwan" in their titles, which is equated with advocating independence, although such groups operate freely. Religious freedom is respected.

Women face employment discrimination, and rape and domestic violence are problems. Child prostitution is a continuing concern. The 357,000 aborigines suffer from social and economic alienation and have limited influence over policy decisions regarding their land and natural resources. NGOs are working to end the sale of aboriginal girls into prostitution by their parents.

The labor law maintains the pro-KMT Chinese Federation of Labor's monopoly by allowing only one labor federation and limits the right to strike and bargain collectively by allowing authorities to impose mandatory dispute mediation and other restrictions. The lack of effective anti-union discrimination legislation has facilitated the dismissal of scores of trade union activists in recent years.

Tajikistan

Polity: Dominant party (presidential-dominated)
Economy: Statist
Population: 5,935,000
PPP: \$1,117
Life Expectancy: 76.8

Political Rights: 6*
Civil Liberties: 6*
Status: Not Free



Ethnic Groups: Tajik (65 percent), Uzbek (25 percent), Russian (4 percent), others
Capital: Dushanbe

Ratings Change: Tajikistan's political rights and civil liberties ratings changed from 7/7 to 6/6 due to a peace agreement that curbed hostilities

Overview: Tajik President Emomali Rakhmonov and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) leader Said Abdullo Nuri signed a peace agreement in Moscow on June 27, 1997 aimed at ending nearly five years of a bloody civil war that killed tens of thousands and forced tens of thousands more into exile, primarily in Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan. By year's end, progress was made on repatriation of refugees, reining in some of the renegade warlords, the formation of a joint army and setting aside a percentage of government posts for the opposition. But despite the accord, violence continued at year's end.

Among the poorest of the former Soviet republics, Tajikistan was carved out of the Uzbek Soviet Republic on Stalin's orders in 1929. Leaving Samarkand and Bukhara, the two main centers of Tajik culture, inside Uzbekistan, angered Tajiks, who trace their origins to Persia. The four leading regionally based tribes are the Leninabad, the Kulyab, the Gharm and the Badakhshan.

In December 1992, after months of ethnic and political conflict, a governing coalition of Muslim activists from the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), secular democrats and nationalists who had replaced the Communists was overthrown by former Communist hard-liners backed by the Russians. Rakhmonov, a Communist, was named head of state (he was directly elected in November 1994) and launched a war in the Gharm, Badakhshan and Pamiri regions, where the democratic-Islamic opposition had its principal bases. The terror drove some 60,000 people across the Armu Daray River into Afghanistan, from which the opposition's armed wings began to launch raids. Some 25,000 Russian troops were stationed along the Afghan border to discourage rebel incursions.

The February 1995 parliamentary vote was boycotted by the opposition, including the Party of Popular Unity led by former presidential candidate Abdumalik Abdulladjanov. Opponents blamed violations of election law and official pressure on their candidates. Of the handful of legal political parties, the Communists were the strongest, but even they fielded only 46 of 345 registered candidates; more than 40 percent of seats were uncontested. Most new deputies were not formally affiliated with any party but were firmly pro-Rakhmonov.

In early 1996, three former prime ministers, including Abdumalik Abdulladjanov, established the National Revival Movement, which was courted by the government and the UTO. All three ex-prime ministers are from the Leninabad region in northern

Tajikistan, home to 40 percent of Tajikistan's population and where more than half the republic's Tajiks live. After months of intense negotiations, a National Reconciliation Commission was created, the first step to the June accord. On April 30, President Rakhmonov survived an assassination attempt after a hand grenade exploded at his feet. The UTO denied any connection to the attack.

In August, the central government strengthened its position when the army moved against renegade commanders who had been operating as war-lords.

By September, Islamic opposition forces began returning from Afghanistan. In December, the National Reconciliation Commission announced that the government had no problems with assigning one-third of government posts to UTO representatives. Steps were also launched to integrate the various fighting forces.

Years of war devastated the economy. Monthly income was about \$2.50 per person. In October, the government announced plans to implement a second phase of privatization that had been interrupted by the war, but most enterprises went to a newly emerged elite consisting of government officials and their relatives, and leaders of armed groups who amassed enormous wealth during the fighting. Regional and tribal animosities were also a factor, as the Tajiks in the north (largely untouched by the civil war) accused the Kulyabis of taking over the shops and houses of displaced persons. The country remained an important trade route from drug-smuggling. Russian border guards and drug traffickers skirmished frequently along the Afghan border.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens cannot change their government democratically. The constitution, adopted by referendum in 1994, provides for a strong executive, who serves as head of parliament and has broad powers to appoint and dismiss officials. Parliamentary elections in 1995 were boycotted by the in-country quasi-opposition parties and were not "free and fair." The reconciliation government said parliamentary elections would likely be held in 1998.

While political parties are nominally allowed, there are only five officially recognized groups—the Communist Party, the Party of Political and Economic Revival, the Popular Party, the Party of Popular (People's) Unity and the National Revival Movement. The IRP, the Democratic Party and the Lali Badakhshan are banned, and most of their top leaders reside outside the country.

The government retains control of most Tajik major electronic media. But 13 independent TV studios and three radio stations operate in the country. A media law is on the agenda of the National Reconciliation Commission. Under the current press law, there are legal penalties for libeling officials, and Soviet-era restrictions on criticism of government bureaucrats apply, which have led to self-censorship. There are 202 newspapers and magazines published in Tajikistan, including eight independent and 41 non-governmental newspapers. In April, the opposition launched a weekly newspaper. More than 40 journalists have been murdered since 1992.

Islam was revived after many decades, though the regime has intruded into religious life to preclude fundamentalism and anti-government activities. It is widely believed that the peace accord was partly the product of Russian-Iranian cooperation aimed at halting pressure from the purist Afghan Islamic Taliban.

Pervasive security forces and a Soviet-era judiciary subservient to the regime effectively curtail freedom of expression, assembly and association. Despite the peace

accords, political kidnapping and hostage-taking were common in 1997. Inmates in the country's prisons faced appalling conditions. In April, a prison uprising in the northern city of Khujand resulted in the death of 17 inmates who were protesting overcrowding and plans to move them to a facility where conditions were worse.

There are no independent trade unions. All workers belong to the official Confederation of Trade Unions, an umbrella organization of 20 separate labor unions, which controls access to pension funds, health-care benefits and other social services. The separate, but also state-controlled Trade Unions of Private Enterprise Workers reportedly functions at over 3,400 smaller enterprises and claims a membership of 60,000. The rights of women are circumscribed by custom.

Tanzania

Polity: Dominant party **Political Rights:** 5

Economy: Statist **Civil Liberties:** 5

Population: 29,058,000 **Status:** Partly Free

PPP: \$656

Life Expectancy: 50.3

Ethnic Groups: African, Asian and Arab minorities

Capital: Dar-es-Salaam



Overview:

Tanzania's transition to a more open political and economic system continued to be hindered by doubts over the legitimacy of the deeply flawed 1995 election victory of President Benjamin Mkapa and his long-ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM, Party for the Revolution) and the clearly fraudulent CCM victory in the semi-autonomous isles of Zanzibar. Lingering authoritarianism on the mainland and outright repression in Zanzibar are redolent of the CCM's decades as the sole legal party. Failure to act forcefully against the corruption that the CCM's long unaccountability engendered and that helped reduce Tanzania's economy to shambles is also eroding confidence in the current administration.

Some progress is evident. President Mkapa's economic reforms are helping revive the country's moribund economy and gaining financial support from the international donor community. More open dissent is tolerated, but the unexplained death of several political figures and opposition demands for constitutional changes before the next scheduled elections in 2000 challenge the government's commitment to a genuine democratic transition. On Zanzibar and Pemba islands, occasional violence flared as serious human rights abuses persisted. Most international aid to Zanzibar remained suspended after the CCM's fraudulent election victory there.

Under President Julius Nyerere's authoritarian rule, the CCM dominated Tanzania's political life after the country gained independence from Britain in 1961. The Arab sultans who had long ruled Zanzibar and Pemba Islands were deposed in a bloody 1964 revolution, and the islands merged with then-Tanganyika to become the Union of Tanzania. The union agreement guaranteed the islanders (who now number over 700,000 and are 90 percent Muslim, compared to the mainland's nearly 30 million population who are mostly Christians and animist) limited autonomy. Nyerere's

socialist policies gradually impoverished his country, accompanied by quiet but thorough repression that was little remarked in the shadows of far more flamboyant and brutal dictators in central Africa and the long struggles against colonial and white minority rule in southern Africa.

Nyerere officially retired in 1985, but retained strong influence over the subsequent regime. Opposition parties were legalized in 1992, but the one-party parliament was allowed to complete its five-year life in October 1995. The CCM continues to dominate the country's political life, and a genuine democratic transition and strong economic growth are unlikely until the party reforms itself.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The 1995 presidential elections were mainland Tanzania's freest since independence, but were marred by administrative chaos and irregularities, and in Zanzibar by outright fraud. The CCM's landslide legislative victory is less credible. The ruling party tilted the electoral playing field even before ballots were cast through its extensive use of state broadcasting and other government resources during the campaign. The CCM took 80 percent of the 232 parliamentary seats, leaving the legislature as a weak forum for political debate. The CCM—still with government subsidies based on parliamentary representation it awarded itself during its long reign as the sole legal party—has yet to abandon its long tradition of authoritarian, largely incompetent and corrupt rule.

In Zanzibar, election results were rigged. On both Zanzibar and Pemba islands, balloting went smoothly with very high turnout. The election was apparently quite literally stolen in the night during vote counting and reporting. The official Zanzibar Election Commission (ZEC) announced after four days that the ruling CCM's candidate for the isles' presidency was victorious by a margin of only about one percent of nearly 330,000 votes counted. Local legislative elections produced a similar narrow CCM victory over the opposition Civic United Front (CUF). According to independent observers, the CCM kept power only because the ZEC miscounted or reversed results in several constituencies. The High Court summarily rejected opposition demands for fresh polls.

After decades of subservience to the one-party CCM regime, Tanzania's judiciary has displayed signs of autonomy, but remains subject to considerable political influence. Constitutional protections for the right to free assembly are generally but not always respected in practice. Laws allow rallies only by officially registered political parties, which may not be formed on religious, ethnic or regional bases and cannot oppose the union of Zanzibar and the mainland. Freedom of religion is respected. Fundamentalist groups on Zanzibar are pressing for a stricter application of *Shari'a* law there.

Laws regarding arrest and pre-trial detention are often ignored. Prison conditions in Tanzania are harsh, and beatings and other abuses by police are said to be common. Many non-governmental organizations are active, but some concerned with human rights issues have had difficulty in receiving required official registration. While the broad distribution of Tanzania's population among many ethnic groups has diffused potential ethnic rivalries that have wracked its neighbors, resentment against the small but prosperous South Asian minority could become a serious flashpoint, especially if manipulated by political factions.

Since political opposition was legalized in 1992, media freedom has expanded markedly, although instances of media repression continue, especially in Zanzibar, where the government controls all electronic media. Some private radio and television stations operate on the mainland, but state broadcasting remains predominant. Numerous independent newspapers and magazines appear with various degrees of regularity, but their circulation is mostly in the major cities and their impact is limited in a country with high illiteracy.

Domestic violence against women is reportedly common but rarely prosecuted. Women's rights guaranteed by the constitution and other laws are not seriously enforced. Opportunities for women in formal sector employment are restricted by both custom and statute. Especially in rural areas and in Zanzibar, traditional or Islamic customary law discriminatory toward women prevails in family law, and they receive fewer educational and economic opportunities.

Workers do not have the right to freely organize and join trade unions. About 500,000 workers in the two-million strong formal sector are unionized. The Tanzania Federation of Trade Unions (TFTU), formerly the Organization of Tanzania Trade Unions (OTTU) is the official and only labor federation and remains loosely linked to the ruling CCM. "Essential workers" are barred from striking, and others' right to strike is restricted by complex notification and mediation requirements. Collective bargaining effectively exists only in the small private sector.

Privatization of state enterprises is continuing, and inflation has been sharply reduced as the government seeks to adhere to targets set by international lenders. Yet deeply embedded corruption and remnants of statist policies remain as obstacles. Thousands of state jobs have been cut, and wholesale dismissals made from the customs department on corruption charges. Positive signs are dimmed by the political turmoil and economic decline in Zanzibar that is dragging down the entire country's prospects. Continuing efforts to revive East African economic cooperation with wealthier neighbors Kenya and Uganda that began in 1996 could boost Tanzania's growth.

Thailand

Polity: Parliamentary democracy (military-influenced)
Political Rights: 3
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Partly Free
Economy: Capitalist-statist
Population: 60,657,000
PPP: \$7,104
Life Expectancy: 69.5
Ethnic Groups: Thai (75 percent), Chinese (14 percent), Malay, Indian, Khmer, Vietnamese
Capital: Bangkok



Overview:

Thailand's worst economic crisis in five decades galvanized the urban middle class into challenging the country's political elite, as street protests pressured parliament into approv-

ing, in September 1997, a new constitution aimed at rooting out corruption and establishing greater transparency and accountability. Authorities forcibly repatriated or denied entry to several thousand Burmese refugees.

Thailand is the only Southeast Asian nation never colonized by a European power. In 1932 a bloodless coup, the first of 17 coups or coup attempts this century, led to new constitution curbing the monarch's powers. Today, King Bhumibol Adulyadej's duties are limited to approving the premier, but he is widely revered and exerts informal political influence.

A February 1991 coup deposed a hugely corrupt, elected government that had tried to limit the military's powers. The army rammed through parliament a constitution that allowed parliament to appoint a premier who is not an elected MP. Pro-military parties won a majority of seats in the March 1992 elections. Parliament appointed coup leader General Suchinda Kraprayoon, who had not stood in the elections, as premier, leading to demonstrations in Bangkok in May. Soldiers killed more than 50 protesters. Suchinda ultimately resigned, the country returned to civilian rule and parliament amended the constitution to require premiers to be MPs.

Elections in 1992 and 1995 led to weak coalition governments that collapsed over corruption allegations. The November 1996 elections brought to power a coalition headed by Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, a former army commander. Chavalit inherited an economy on the downturn after recording the world's fastest growth between 1984 and 1995, with exports slowing, banks and corporations saddled with \$63 billion in foreign debt and the poorly supervised banking system burdened by bad property loans. Rural Thais despaired of having missed out on the boom. The middle class blamed the economic troubles on a system in which patronage-oriented politicians buy rural votes to get elected and in 1997 backed a reform constitution being drafted by a parliamentary-appointed assembly.

The government floated the currency, the baht, on July 2, and in August agreed to a \$17.2 billion IMF-led loan package in return for financial austerity. But as the markets plunged further, Bangkok's middle class staged protests supporting the draft constitution. Fearing unrest, military and business leaders urged parliament to approve the constitution, which won passage on September 27. The constitution created a directly elected House of Representatives with 400 single-member constituencies and 100 party-list seats; authorized the first direct elections for a 200-seat Senate; placed elections under an independent commission; required cabinet ministers to relinquish parliamentary seats; and created an anti-corruption commission.

Further street protests forced Chavalit to resign on November 6. Three days later Chuan Leekpai, a former premier, took office as head of an eight-party coalition. Workers braced for mass layoffs in 1998.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Thai citizens can change their government through elections, but institutions are weakened by widespread corruption. In the 1996 elections candidates spent an estimated \$1 billion buying votes and reportedly hired off-duty police and soldiers to intimidate voters. According to Amnesty International the campaign was the most violent ever, with partisan attacks killing seven people and wounded several others. Observers reported incidences of ballot-stuffing. Several politicians have been implicated in land and banking scandals and drug trafficking schemes. Despite the institutional guarantees

in the 1997 constitution, some observers doubt it will reform this patronage-based political culture.

In 1997 the military remained influential in politics, albeit generally in support of democratic institutions. Military leaders, ostensibly in their capacity as senators, advocated passage of the reformist constitution, and, according to the *Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER)*, mooted then-premier Chavalit's October proposals for a curfew and media censorship.

The judiciary is independent but is undermined by corruption. Courts may order closed trials in certain situations, although procedural safeguards are generally adequate. The police force is rife with corruption, inadequately trained and operates with relative impunity in a culture where criminal suspects are presumed guilty. Hundreds of detainees have died in custody in recent years. According to *FEER*, prison inmates die at the rate of 100 per month, largely under unknown circumstances. In an increasing trend, security forces kill dozens of well-armed drug traffickers and other criminal suspects each year, many of whom reportedly had surrendered. Convictions of police are rare. Conditions at immigration detention centers, where female detainees say rape is common, worsened in 1997 as the economic crisis resulted in an immigration crackdown. An amnesty protects soldiers responsible for killing 52 people (with 39 others missing and presumed dead) in the 1992 pro-democracy demonstrations.

Freedom of expression is restricted in specific areas, including advocating a Communist government and inciting disturbances. Laws against defaming the monarchy (*lese majeste*) are strictly enforced. The press criticizes government policies and publicizes human rights abuses, but journalists face occasional intimidation and exercise self-censorship regarding the military, judiciary and other sensitive subjects. In June the Chavalit government established a News Analysis Center to monitor coverage of the economic crisis the incoming Chuan government abolished the center. The 1997 constitution ends courts' powers to close newspapers. The government licenses radio and television (radio stations must renew licenses annually) and censors and occasionally deletes politically-sensitive material. The government or military control all five national television networks, and news coverage favors the government.

Rural officials occasionally falsely charge peaceful demonstrators with inciting unrest and intent to commit violence. Nongovernmental organizations (NGO) are active in human rights, and social and environmental affairs, but are sometimes harassed by authorities. The 1997 constitution authorizes the establishment of an independent National Human Rights Commission, with powers to be set by implementing legislation due by September 1999.

NGOs estimate that at least 250,000 female prostitutes work in Thailand: up to one-fifth are under age eighteen. Many are trafficked from hill tribes and from neighboring Burma. Girls sold into prostitution by their families become bonded laborers. Police and local officials are often complicitous in prostitution schemes. The government has extended compulsory education and expanded an awareness campaign, but has barely enforced a 1996 law that further criminalized trafficking. Domestic violence is a problem. Women are frequently denied the minimum wage and are underrepresented in parliament.

Religious freedom is respected, although Muslims face societal and employment discrimination, and several activists are reportedly imprisoned for political views. Roughly half of the 500 to 700,000 members of hill tribes are not registered citizens,

and thus cannot vote or own land and have difficulty in obtaining social services.

Thailand has for years sheltered hundreds of thousands of Southeast Asian refugees, including currently some 125,000 Burmese refugees. Yet in 1997 the army forcibly returned or refused entry to several thousand refugees fleeing armed conflict and extrajudicial killings, rape and other abuses by the Burmese army. A militia allied to the Burmese government carried out several cross-border raids and attacked refugees and burned camps inside Thailand. Burmese refugees outside of camps are considered illegal immigrants and are frequently arrested and deported. Some 22,000 Cambodian refugees entered Thailand to escape fighting after a July coup in Phnom Penh.

Unions are independent, although there is no anti-discrimination protection for workers seeking to organize. State workers can only join associations which cannot negotiate wages or hold strikes. Child labor is widespread. Safety regulations are flouted at many factories, and enforcement is lax.

Togo

Polity: Military

Dominant party

Economy: Mixed statist

Population: 4,571,000

PPP: \$1,109

Life Expectancy: 50.6

Ethnic Groups: Aja, Ewe, Gurensi, Kabye, Krachi, Mina, Tem, others

Capital: Lome

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Overview:

Togo's brief democratic opening narrowed further in 1997 as President Gnassingbe Eyadema continued to resume the grip over the country he has ruled for three decades. Eyadema, preparing to run for re-election in August 1998, retains strong control over the country's security forces and judiciary. The Presidential contest will be supervised by a National Election Commission which was elected in November by the National Assembly, and whose competence and neutrality are untested. The opposition has made some moves towards presenting a unified front, and Action Committee for Renewal (CAR) leader Maitre Yaovi Agboyibo is a likely candidate, although his Togolese Union for Democracy (UTD) rival Edem Kodjo might also stand. Abuses by security forces and sporadic media harassment continued. Eyadema has ruled Togo since seizing power in a 1967 military coup. Members of his Kabye ethnicity overwhelmingly dominate the security forces, and, along with other northerners, Togo's civil administration. The reversal of the country's democratic transition has been sanctioned by Togo's main foreign backer, France, in the form of loans and high-level diplomatic visits, although a European Union aid ban on has been in effect since 1993.

Once part of the Togoland colony seized from Germany in 1914, Togo was held as French territory until its 1960 independence. Its first post-independence leader, Sylvannus Olympio, was assassinated in 1963, and his successor was deposed by Eyadema's 1967 coup. Eyadema suspended the constitution and extended his repres-

sive rule through mock elections.

Many West and Central African autocrats were briefly pressured to liberalize their political systems by France in 1989-1990, among them Eyadema, who also faced mounting internal unrest. Political parties were legalized in 1991, and multiparty elections promised. The transition faltered as soldiers and secret police harassed, attacked and killed oppositionists. Gilchrist Olympio, son of the country's slain founding president and the strongest opposition candidate, was himself victim of an attempted assassination and then banned from contesting the August 1993 election. Other opposition candidates boycotted to protest unfair electoral conditions. American and German observers quit the country on the eve of polling after stating that conditions for a free and fair election did not exist. Unsurprisingly, Eyadema was victorious with a reported 96 percent of the vote.

Violence and intimidation also marred the February 1994 legislative elections. The opposition CAR party won 36 seats, and its ally, the UTD, party took seven seats in the 81-seat national assembly. Post-election bickering gave Eyadema the opportunity to split the opposition and co-opt the smaller UTD, whose leader, Edem Kodjo, was named prime minister. Flawed 1996 by-elections allowed Eyadema's Rally of the Togolese People (RPT) party to take control of the National Assembly. A new prime minister, Kwassi Klutse, was appointed in August 1997. Eyadema's blatant ethnic politics and subversion of democracy has increased chances of renewed serious ethnic and political violence. About 100,000 Togolese are refugees, and there are reports of nascent guerrilla activity.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Togolese cannot change their government democratically. Eyadema's 1993 re-election was blatantly fraudulent. Opposition parties took a majority of parliamentary seats in 1994 despite violence, intimidation and irregularities, but their victory would likely have been far larger in a genuinely open election. Manipulated 1996 by-elections (run by the interior ministry in violation of earlier agreements and so boycotted by the main opposition party) and the defection of several opposition deputies to the RPT ended the opposition's control of parliament. The overwhelming concentration of power in the hands of the president offers few constraints on his behavior. The judiciary is still heavily influenced by the president; all three constitutional court justices were appointed by Eyadema.

Human rights groups report that killings, arbitrary arrest and torture continued in Togo despite its multiparty facade. Security forces act with impunity in political repression and in their treatment of common criminals. Togo's criminal courts generally respect legal procedures, and traditional courts handle many minor matters. Prison conditions are reportedly sometimes life-threatening. Understaffed, underfunded, slow-moving courts result in long incarceration for pre-trial detainees and worsen severe prison overcrowding.

A number of private newspapers publish in Lome, some strongly critical of the government, ruling party and other politicians, but independent journalists are subject to harassment and the perpetual threat of various criminal charges. In February, Abass Dermane and Augustin Assiobo, senior editors at the weeklies *Le Regard* and *Tingo-Tingo*, respectively, were jailed. Later the same month, the independent weekly *Forum Hebdo* was banned from publishing for six months, and its editor, Gabriel Agah,

sentenced to a year in prison in absentia after he fled to exile. A half dozen private radio and television stations now broadcast, but offer little independent local coverage. The government controls nationwide broadcast media to which it allows the opposition very limited access.

Constitutionally-protected religious freedom is generally respected, but the regime ignores similar protection of the right to assembly. Demonstrations are often banned or dispersed. Political parties operate openly since being legalized in 1991, but are under constant menace. Non-governmental organizations are broadly tolerated, but those engaged in human rights work, including the Togolese League for Human Rights and the Association for the Promotion of the Rule of Law, are closely monitored and sometimes harassed by government agents.

Ethnic discrimination is prevalent. Most political power is held by members of a few ethnic groups from northern Togo. Southerners dominate the country's commerce, and violence occasionally flares between the two groups. The historical ethnic divide is a constant potential flashpoint which is amplified by the competition for state power within the political boundaries of modern Togo.

Women's opportunities for education and employment are limited, despite constitutional guarantees of equality. A husband may legally bar his wife from working and receive her earnings. Customary law denies any rights to women in case of divorce or inheritance rights to widows. Wife-beating and other violence against women is widespread. Female genital mutilation is widely practiced, especially among the country's northern ethnic groups.

Health care workers may not strike and other "essential workers" are excluded entirely from the constitutional right to form and join unions. The 15 percent of the labor force that is unionized is from the small formal sector. Most people work in rural subsistence agriculture. Unions have the right to bargain collectively, but most labor agreements are actually brokered by the government in tripartite talks involving unions and management. Several labor federations are divided roughly along political lines.

Economic reforms have led to lowered inflation, faster growth and increased support from external lenders. Some state enterprises have been privatized. Larger international investment will likely await greater socio-political stability.

Tonga

Polity: Monarchy and partly elected legislature
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 106,000
PPP: na
Life Expectancy: na
Ethnic Groups: Tongan (98 percent), other Pacific islander, European
Capital: Nuku'alofa

Political Rights: 5
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Partly Free



Overview:

In 1997 the Tongan government continued its attempts to intimidate journalists and opposition politicians.

These 169 South Pacific islands, with a predominantly Polynesian population, became a unified kingdom in 1845. Following 70 years of British influence, Tonga became an independent member of the Commonwealth in 1970. King Taufa Ahau Tupou IV has reigned since 1965.

The 1875 constitution is the product of an era in which chiefs had unlimited powers over the so-called commoners, referred to as "eaters of the soil." The king has broad executive powers, appoints the prime minister, currently Baron Vaea, and appoints and heads the privy council (cabinet). The 30-seat Legislative Assembly serves a three-year term and consists of 12 ministers from the privy council, nine nobles selected by and from among Tonga's 33 noble families and only nine "People's Representatives" (commoners) elected by universal suffrage.

The 1990 legislative elections saw the emergence of a pro-democracy bloc that won five commoner seats. In August 1992, reform-oriented commoner representatives, led by Akilisi Pohiva, formed the Pro-Democracy Movement (PDM). The PDM favored holding direct elections for all 30 parliamentary seats and having parliament rather than the king select the privy council, while retaining the king as a figurehead. In November the PDM organized a seminal public conference on amending the constitution to introduce democratic reforms that was backed by the influential Roman Catholic and Free Wesleyan churches.

At the 1993 elections pro-democracy candidates won six commoner seats. In 1994 the PDM organized Tonga's first political party, the Tonga Democratic Party, subsequently renamed the People's Party. In the January 1996 elections pro-democracy candidates swept all nine commoner seats.

According to the Pacific Islands News Association, on June 18, 1997 authorities detained and interrogated Filokalafi 'Akau'ola, deputy editor of the weekly *Times of Tonga*, and charged him with sedition for publishing a letter critical of the government.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Tongans cannot change their government democratically. The constitution grants the king and hereditary nobles a perpetual super majority in parliament with 21 of 30 seats. This allows legislation to be passed without the assent of the popularly-elected People's

Representatives, whose nine seats represent roughly 95 percent of the population. Nevertheless, the commoner representatives have managed on occasion to reject legislation and the budget when joined by some noble representatives. The king and the nobility also hold a pre-eminent societal position through substantial land holdings.

The king appoints all judges, and the lower levels of the judiciary are not independent. The Supreme Court uses expatriate judges and is independent.

Since 1985, when he was fired from a government post for disclosing that assemblymen had granted themselves pay increases, authorities have harassed commoner MP 'Akilisi Pohiva. In the early 1990s a court fined him \$26,000 for allegedly defaming the crown prince. As the democracy movement gained strength, the government began a broader campaign against freedom of expression. A 1994 law increased penalties under the Defamation Act, which has had a chilling effect on journalists.

In February 1996 police raided the *Times of Tonga*, a strong advocate of democratic reform, and briefly detained deputy editor Filokalafi 'Akau'ola, a staffer and a man who had recently written a letter to the paper criticizing Clive Edwards, the hardline police minister. In September the Legislative Assembly found Pohiva, *Times* editor Kalafi Moala and 'Akau'ola in contempt of parliament and sentenced them to 30 days in jail. The *Times* had published a parliamentary impeachment notice against the justice minister, for allegedly going to the Atlanta Olympics without proper authorization, that the government claimed had not yet been tabled in parliament. In October the Supreme Court ordered the three released on procedural grounds after 26 days in prison, the first time the judiciary had reversed a legislative order. In November 1996 authorities detained Pohiva and Tesina Fuko, another pro-democracy MP, overnight and warned that they were being investigated for sedition and defamation.

Besides the government weekly *Tonga Chronicle*, which carries some opposition views, there are several private newspapers, including Pohiva's bimonthly newsletter, *Kele'a* (Conch Shell), the *Times* (which is published in New Zealand) and an outspoken Roman Catholic Church newspaper. Political coverage on the Tonga Broadcast Commission's Radio Tonga favors the government, particularly prior to elections. There is a private television service.

Consistent with traditional practice, few women participate in the formal labor force and almost none in government. Women cannot own land or hold noble titles. Several female-based nongovernmental organizations actively work on women's rights and development issues. Religious freedom is respected in this predominately Christian society. The 1964 Trade Union Act recognizes the right of workers to form independent unions. Most Tongans are engaged in subsistence agriculture and no unions have formed.

Trinidad and Tobago

Polity: Parliamentary
democracy

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 1,272,000

PPP: \$9,124

Life Expectancy: 72.9

Ethnic Groups: Black (43 percent), East Indian (40 percent),
mixed (14 percent), European

Capital: Port-of-Spain

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Overview:

Prime Minister Basdeo Panday and his pro-business United National Congress (UNC) government are praised for having brought economic growth to a country that now has the highest per capita U.S. investment in the world, and for cooperation in fighting the region's growing drug trade. Panday, who was often questioned for his strident condemnations of the press, appeared to soften his stance when he called for less conflict with the media.

Trinidad and Tobago, a member of the British Commonwealth, achieved independence in 1962. The 1976 constitution established the two-island nation as a republic with a president, elected by a majority of both houses of parliament, replacing the former governor-general. Executive authority remains vested in the prime minister. The bicameral parliament consists of a 36-member House of Representatives elected for five years, and a 31-member Senate, with 25 senators appointed by the prime minister and six by the opposition.

In the 1986 elections the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR), a coalition that bridges traditional political differences between black and East Indian communities, led by A.N.R. Robinson, soundly defeated the black-based People's National Movement (PNM), which had ruled for 30 years. The coalition unraveled when Basdeo Panday, the country's most prominent East Indian politician, was expelled and then formed the East Indian-based UNC.

In July 1991 a radical black Muslim group briefly seized parliament. Tensions increased between black and East Indian communities, each of which comprises roughly 40 percent of the population, as the latter edged towards numeric, and thus political, advantage. In December Patrick Manning led the PNM to victory by taking 21 of 36 parliamentary seats. Manning's government deregulated the economy and floated the currency, but the social costs of these economic reforms caused the PNM's popularity to decline. Manning called snap elections for November 6, 1995.

The election campaign focused on unemployment and the effects of the structural adjustment program. Voting ran largely on ethnic lines, with East Indians voting overwhelmingly for the UNC and blacks for the PNM. Each party won 17 seats on Trinidad. The NAR retained its two seats on Tobago. The NAR entered into a coalition with the UNC in exchange for a ministerial position for former premier Robinson and a promise of greater autonomy for Tobago. UNC leader Panday became Trinidad's first prime minister of East Indian descent.

In March 1996 Robinson was elected president. A series of incidents with Ven-

ezeuela involving maritime rights—revolving around oil exploration and fishing rights and Venezuelan drug interdiction efforts—dominated the news. Internal divisions within the NAR, caused by strains of being the minority member of a governing coalition, threatened to cause it to disappear. In the second quarter of 1997, unemployment fell to 14.4 percent, the lowest level in 13 years.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Trinidad and Tobago can change their government democratically. Politics and party affiliations are largely polarized along ethnic lines.

High levels of drug-related violence and common crime continue to undermine the protection of civil liberties, with some 80 percent of all crimes believed to be drug-related. The country's geographic location has made it an important transshipment point for cocaine, and there have been more than a two-dozen drug related killings in recent years, including the still unsolved murder of former Attorney General Selwyn Richardson. Successive governments have also failed to enforce certain criminal laws. For example, although parliament passed laws in the mid-1980s to deal with the problem of money-laundering, to date no prosecutions have occurred. In June 1996 the attorney general conceded that the problems of drugs and crime, which have received considerable media attention, are actually underestimated. Corruption in the police force, often drug-related, is endemic.

The Panday government has won some points for its anti-drug efforts and has been a principal proponent of a regional witness protection program. It has also signed several anti-narcotics accords with the United States. In 1996, Dole Chadee, one of the region's biggest drug runners, and eight associates were convicted of the murders of a family of four.

The judiciary is independent. There is a right to obtain ultimate appeal to the United Kingdom's Privy Council, although there is talk among the 12 Caribbean countries whose final court of appeal is the council, about setting up their own supreme courts and thus cutting an important tie with Britain. Due to rising crime rates the court system is severely backlogged, in some cases up to five years. Prisons are seriously overcrowded.

In 1994, the government resumed capital punishment and hanged a convicted murderer as his lawyers were still arguing in the Appeals Court and after the Privy Council in London had granted a stay of execution.

The press is privately owned, vigorous and offers pluralistic views; however, in May 1997 the government floated a restrictive journalistic code of conduct that the Media Association of Trinidad and Tobago said led to instances in which reporters and other press workers were physically attacked. The state-owned International Communications Network, made up of a television station and four radios, also attempted to instigate a news blackout of Anthony Garcia, head of the teachers' union, the country's second largest labor organization. The broadcast media are both private and public. Freedom of association and assembly are respected.

Domestic violence and other violence against women remains a problem; particularly so given its low priority for police and prosecutors. Labor unions are well organized, powerful and politically active. Strikes are legal and occur frequently.

↓ Tunisia

Polity: Dominant party
Economy: Mixed capitalist
Population: 9,163,000
PPP: \$5,319
Life Expectancy: 68.4
Ethnic Groups: Arab-Berber (98 percent)
Capital: Tunis

Political Rights: 6
Civil Liberties: 5
Status: Not Free



Trend Arrow: Tunisia receives a downward trend arrow due to intensified repression by the government.

Overview:

Tunisian President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali celebrated a decade in power in November by further consolidating his personal power in anticipation of the March 1999 presidential elections and intensifying repression against political opponents, human rights activists, trade unionists and media. Islamist groups have been specially targeted, but tolerance for any dissent has steadily diminished. There are over 2,000 political prisoners in Tunisian jails, and torture and other security force abuses are reportedly routine. There are reports of harassment, arrests, beatings and sometimes sexual abuse of wives and other family members of dissidents already jailed or in exile, and retributions against people who sought legal redress for alleged illegal actions by government agents. Despite his deteriorating human rights record detailed by Amnesty international and other groups, President Ben Ali has escaped harsh criticism from Western powers, partially because many of the worst abuses are aimed at Islamic fundamentalist groups, and because his country is an important trading partner for several European countries. He has also maintained considerable domestic support through strong economic growth and promotion of social benefits and women's rights. In an appalling commentary on United Nations politics, Tunisia was unanimously elected to the U.N. Human Rights Commission in May, a move trumpeted by Ben-Ali as international endorsement of his regime's human rights record.

President Habib Bourguiba led Tunisia for three decades after its independence from France in 1956, pursuing secular pro-Western policies and tolerating little dissent. In 1987, then-General Ben Ali ousted Bourguiba on grounds of senility, promising an open, multiparty political system. However, opposition parties have been crippled by arrests and harassment or banned outright, as was the Islamist En-Nadha (Renaissance) party in 1992. In May 1994, Ben-Ali was re-elected to a second five year term with 99.9 percent of the vote in an election that barred all credible challengers and defied credibility. Ben-Ali announced in November that opposition parties would be granted at least 20 percent of seats in parliament and local councils, but did not announce details of his proposal. Faced with little media access and the ruling party's use of state media and other resources, as well as direct harassment and probable electoral manipulation, opposition parties have scored few gains in recent elections. Ben-Ali will almost surely win a huge or even uncontested re-election victory and continue to apply his formula of fierce repression and economic growth to maintain the status quo.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Tunisia's nine million people have never been able to exercise their constitutional right to freely choose or change their government. The ruling Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD) party is the successor to parties that have controlled Tunisia since its independence. Presidential and legislative elections in 1994 were neither open nor competitive. The RCD used considerable state resources for campaigning, and opposition leaders were disqualified as candidates. The RCD won all 144 single member districts in the legislative polls, although the facade of multipartyism and a forum for protected debate was maintained by the allotment of 19 seats to other parties on a proportional basis. The RCD lost only six of 4,090 seats contested in May 1996 municipal elections. Elections due before March 1999 may see implementation of President Ben-Ali's proposed reservation of one-fifth of parliamentary seats for oppositionists.

Without vastly increased respect for freedom of expression and association and supervision by a neutral electoral administration, however, it will be impossible to determine if Ben-Ali's very likely election to his third (and, according to a 1987 constitutional amendment, final) five-year term represents the will of the Tunisian people. No political party based on religion or region is permitted, and all require a license. Any party that could effectively challenge the RCD stands little chance of being allowed to register. The judiciary is controlled by the executive, and legal limits on detention without trial are flouted. There is little hope for redress in the courts, especially for political matters. Torture and other forms of ill-treatment by police are reportedly commonplace, and security forces act with impunity.

Ben-Ali has denounced foreign criticisms of his regime's abuses and made a few high-profile gestures to deflect it. The regime announced it would cooperate with the previously-vilified Tunisian Human Rights League (LTDH), and Social Democrats Movement (MDS) leader Mohammed Moadia, sentenced to eleven years imprisonment in January 1996 on what many observers believe were trumped-up charges, was released from house arrest in August. MDS party headquarters were closed in August 1996, and the party has been hurt by internal divisions. Many other human rights activists have been harassed and briefly detained.

The right to free information and expression is not respected. The government tightly controls domestic broadcast media and has restricted rebroadcast of foreign programming. Severe new regulations and a stiff tax have limited ownership of satellite receiving dishes. Considerable self-censorship pervades the independent print media, and the Press Code, as amended in 1993, includes vaguely-defined and threatening prohibitions against defamation and subversion. Official news guidelines shape coverage, and pre-publication submission requirements allow the government to seize without compensation any publication it deems has transgressed its rules. Human rights groups rarely find printers willing to risk government retribution to print their statements or reports. All foreign publications are censored. Visiting foreign journalists have been barred from meeting dissidents, and many people are unwilling to speak with journalists or foreign academics or activists for fear of official reprisals.

Independent nongovernmental organizations must abide by complicated 1992 legislation and suffer official harassment if they delve into human rights or other sensitive matters. Some human rights groups continue to operate, including notably the Tunisian Human Rights League. A series of new reporting requirements announced

in February demand that full details of all meetings and conferences in the country, including agendas and papers, be provided to the interior ministry in advance and that hotel managers report on all gatherings on their premises. Meetings by human rights groups are routinely blocked.

Islam is the official state religion. Muslim clergy are state employees, mosques closely monitored and prayer leaders appointed by the regime. The practice of other religions is tolerated, with the exception of Baha'i, whose adherents are sometimes harassed, but proselytizing by all non-Muslims is forbidden.

While Tunisians' rights are broadly restricted, general equality for women has advanced more in Tunisia than elsewhere in the Arab world. Educational and employment opportunities have grown, and job rights are legally protected. The increasing role for women is seen both as a challenge to radical Islamists.

Tunisia's sole labor federation, the Tunisian General Federation of Labor (UGTT) is nominally independent but operates under severe restrictions. Several trade unionists were detained in 1997 for publishing appeals for respect of human rights. The rights to strike and bargain collectively are nominally protected, though labor settlements can be imposed by arbitration panels. Tourism earnings and industrial exports continued to grow, and a broad privatization plan continued, although international lenders pressed for faster liberalization.

↓ Turkey

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy (military-influenced) (insurgency) **Political Rights:** 4
Civil Liberties: 5
Status: Partly Free

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 63,898,000

PPP: \$5,193

Life Expectancy: 68.2

Ethnic Groups: Turk (80 percent), Kurd, Armenian, Jewish

Capital: Ankara

Trend Arrow: Turkey receives a downward trend arrow due to excessive military influence, which led to a "soft coup" of the democratically elected government in June.



Overview:

Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan resigned on June 18 under intense pressure from the military-led National Security Council (NSC), which accused his year-old, Islamist-led government of fueling Islamic fundamentalism and threatening Turkey's secular foundations. Mesut Yilmaz, leader of the conservative Motherland party, was appointed Prime Minister on June 20 and by the end of the month had assembled a diverse governing coalition including the social democratic Democratic Left and the conservative Democratic Turkey parties. Meanwhile, a bid to outlaw Erbakan's Islamist Welfare party on the grounds that it engaged in illegal anti-secularist activity awaits a decision by the Constitutional Court.

Mustapha Kemal Ataturk, who launched a reform program under which Turkey

abandoned much of its Ottoman and Islamic heritage, proclaimed Turkey a republic in 1923. His secular, nationalistic legacy has had a profound influence on Turkish politics through most of this century, notably in the post-World War II period. The doctrine of "Kemalism" was used by the military to justify three coups in 20 years.

Turkey returned to civilian rule in 1983, with the Motherland party taking a majority in November elections. Under the 1982 constitution, the Grand National Assembly (currently 550 seats) is directly elected to a five-year term. The Assembly elects the president, whose office is largely ceremonial, to a seven-year term. Suleyman Demirel led the conservative True Path party (DYP) to a 178-seat plurality victory in 1991 elections and was elected president following the death of Motherland's Turgut Ozal in 1993. True Path's Tansu Ciller became Turkey's first female prime minister.

The governing coalition collapsed in September 1995 after the small center-left Republican People's Party (CHP) withdrew its support. In December elections, Welfare took advantage of discontent over high inflation and unemployment to take 158 Assembly seats; DYP took 135; Motherland, 132; Democratic Left, 76, and CHP, 49. A shaky coalition between DYP and Motherland collapsed in May 1996, and in June Welfare and DYP formed Turkey's first Islamist-led coalition government, with Erbakan as prime minister and Ciller in charge of foreign affairs.

The Erbakan government soon found itself increasingly at odds with the military, which perceives itself as the guardian of Turkish secularism. Government proposals to allow female civil servants to wear traditional headscarves and to adjust work hours to coincide with fasting hours during Ramadan were among moves which the military denounced as attempts to undermine Turkey's secularist foundations. In February 1997 the NSC issued the government an ultimatum in the form of a broad plan to crack down on Islamic activism, mainly by imposing restrictions on Islamist education. The military set an April deadline for the plan and promised unspecified "sanctions" if the government failed to implement its directives.

While Erbakan stalled on anti-Islamist reforms, True Path legislators responded to military pressure by launching a rebellion to force Ciller to dissolve the governing coalition. Several lawmakers resigned, and in June True Path announced that it would quit the government unless Ciller was appointed prime minister. Erbakan resigned on June 18, leaving president Demirel to appoint a successor. Ciller lobbied for the mandate on the basis that her 116-seat party had the backing of the 156-seat Welfare, but the military-led secularists evidently considered any ruling coalition including the Islamists unacceptable.

Yilmaz's coalition won a slim majority in a vote of confidence on July 12. The government successfully implemented the education reform demanded by the military earlier in the year, but is expected to have little success with much-needed economic reforms. The ideologically diverse coalition lacks the cohesion and the parliamentary majority necessary to tackle 90 percent inflation, a massive budget deficit and corruption.

Turkey's 34 year-old effort to join the European Union was crushed in December when an EU summit meeting failed to produce a formal invitation for Turkish membership, placing Turkey's application behind those of several former communist states. An infuriated Yilmaz rejected an invitation to attend a 1998 EU conference.

The violent 13 year-old conflict in southeastern Turkey between the military and the Marxist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) saw a reduction of fighting within the

country in 1997. However, in May, September and December, the army launched offensives into northern Iraq to eradicate PKK bases along the border. The PKK took up arms against the government in 1984 with the goal of establishing an independent state for some 12 million Turkish Kurds. Since then, the conflict has taken over 28,000 lives. Brutal military repression has destroyed over 3,000 villages and created thousands of refugees in order to cut off potential support for the guerrillas. Citing a diminished rebel threat, the government in October lifted a ten-year state of emergency in three of nine southeastern provinces, and promised that the remaining six would gradually follow.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Turkish citizens can change their government democratically, though the military wields considerable influence in political matters.

In May, a state prosecutor began legal proceedings to ban Welfare, Turkey's largest political party, for conspiring against the secular republic. Human Rights Watch condemned the motion, adding that there have been no attempts to close Welfare since the 1980 coup, despite little change in its ideology. If the party is banned, Erbakan and other party leaders could be banned from politics for up to five years.

Efforts to establish a political party representing the Kurds have failed several times. Thirty-one leaders of the People's Democratic Party were convicted in June of subversive activities and sentenced to prison terms of up to six years after tearing down a Turkish flag at the party's 1996 convention.

Turkey is beset by considerable human rights abuses, mostly related to the PKK insurgency. Security forces carry out extrajudicial killings of suspected PKK terrorists and are believed to be responsible for dozens of unsolved killings and disappearances of journalists, Kurdish activists and suspected PKK members, either directly or through state-backed death squads. Under emergency law in the southeastern provinces, the army has forcibly depopulated more than half the 5,000 villages and hamlets in the region, in some cases killing and torturing villagers. Though the state of emergency was lifted in three of the provinces, the civil governors of those provinces retain many emergency-type powers, including the power to authorize military operations, expel citizens suspected of Kurdish sympathy, ban demonstrations and confiscate publications.

The PKK and some smaller Kurdish groups also commit human rights abuses such as extrajudicial killings and kidnapping. These groups target individuals believed to be state sympathizers, such as government-sponsored Kurdish "village guards" or civil defense forces, their families, local officials and teachers who teach Turkish rather than Kurdish.

The judiciary is independent of the government. However, in the 18 State Security Courts, which try terrorist offenses, procedural safeguards are inadequate, and the right to appeal is limited. The Erbakan government enacted detention procedures in March to reduce the maximum prison sentences for political detainees and to permit legal counsel after four days for suspected offenders in the jurisdiction of State Security Courts.

Prison conditions in Turkey are abysmal, characterized by widespread torture, sexual abuse and denial of medical attention to inmates. Reports of such abuses continued in 1997, though the government ordered increased oversight of police in an

attempt to combat maltreatment. Human Rights Watch reported increased prosecution of abusive police, notably in the cases of the 1996 death of journalist Metin Goktepe in police custody and the deaths of ten inmates in a 1996 riot in Diyarbakir prison. However, the court trying officers accused of torturing 14 youths in custody in 1995 did not order the officers to appear in court to be identified by their accusers. Amnesty International reported that five prisoners were beaten to death in July when gendarmes were brought in to quell disturbances in Istanbul's Metris prison.

Freedom of expression in Turkey is limited by the Criminal Code, which forbids insulting the president, the parliament and the army, and incitement to racial or ethnic hatred. The Anti-Terror Law (ATL) provides penalties for the dissemination of separatist propaganda. A 1995 amendment to Article 8 of the ATL requires prosecutors to show harmful motive or intent. Nevertheless, dozens of writers, journalists and others have been jailed under the amended Article, and hundreds more have been jailed under similarly restrictive measures. In 1997, at least 250 journalists were detained or imprisoned, while the offices of several news outlets were bombed, burned, censored or shut down, and countless journalists were beaten or harassed. In recent years numerous newspapers, mostly leftist, pro-Kurdish and Islamist publications, have been suspended or shut down permanently. In July the government passed an amnesty which led to the release of six newspaper editors imprisoned for terrorist-related offenses. Over 70 journalists remain in prison.

Political coverage on the state-run broadcast media favors the government. However, in the early 1990s the government eased restrictions on private broadcast media, and according to the U.S. State Department 259 television stations and 1,202 radio stations were registered. Kurdish-language broadcasts and the use of the Kurdish language at political gatherings are banned. Authorities frequently use the ATL to seize publications on Kurdish culture and history.

Authorities may deny permission for gatherings or demonstrations on the grounds of maintaining public order. Prior notification of gatherings is required, and the authorities may restrict meetings to designated sites. Demonstrations against the government's policy of education reform in July and August led to clashes with riot police which produced numerous injuries and hundreds of arrests.

Several branches of the Turkish Human Rights Association were shut down by city governors this year in southeast Turkey, and their presidents arrested for criticizing Turkey's military operations against Kurds in Iraq. In May, the Kurdish Cultural and Research Foundation, established in 1991 and given legal status in 1996, was shut down for offering Kurdish language classes. Criminal charges were filed against the head of the Foundation. In September, Esber Yagmurdereli, a lawyer who supported civil rights for Kurds, was imprisoned for a 1991 speech deemed favorable to separatism. Due to pressure on the government from the European Union, he was released three weeks into a 23-year sentence for one year pending legal review.

Roughly 99 percent of Turks are Muslim. Religious freedom is generally respected, though religious worship is restricted to designated sites, and legal restrictions exist for certain minority religions on building houses of worship. Authorities monitor Armenian and Greek Orthodox churches. In October, officials ordered some 500 mosques to broadcast a government-approved sermon during Friday prayers and promised to enforce similar measures throughout Turkey in the future. Women who wear headscarves may not work as teachers, civil servants or judges, and may not appear as

lawyers or witnesses in court. They may also be banned from university.

Mandatory secular education for children was increased from five to eight years in July in order to stem the influence of increasingly popular Islamic schools. The move has resulted in the closure of Islamic middle schools, which secularists called "breeding grounds" for Islamic fundamentalism. Some 800,000 students will thus remain for another three years in a secular school system which is already suffering from overcrowding and lack of funding.

Workers, except for members of security forces, can join independent trade unions. The government must grant unions approval to hold meetings, and can send police to monitor and record the proceedings. There are legal restrictions on the rights to bargain collectively and to strike.

Turkmenistan

Polity: Dominant party (presidential-dominated)
Economy: Statist
Population: 4,624,000
PPP: \$3,496
Life Expectancy: 64.7
Ethnic Groups: Turkmen (73 percent), Russian (10 percent), Uzbek (9 percent), Kazakh (3 percent), others
Capital: Ashgabat

Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 7
Status: Not Free



Overview:

President Saparmurad Niyazov, former first secretary of the Turkmen Communist Party who renamed himself Turkmenbashi, or Head of the Turkmen, in 1991, continued his oppressive one-man rule in this impoverished country. Niyazov, who underwent heart surgery in Germany in September, has established a cult of personality and micromanages everything from the economy to the authorization of doctoral dissertations.

Turkmenistan, the former Soviet Central Asian republic bordering Afghanistan and Iran, was ruled by various local leaders until the 13th century, when the Mongols conquered it. In the late 19th century, Tsarist Russia seized the country. In 1924, after the Bolsheviks ousted the Khan of Merv, the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic was declared.

Turkmenistan declared independence after a national referendum in October 1991; Niyazov won a one-man election in December. In 1992, after the adoption of a new constitution, Niyazov was re-elected, claiming 99.5 percent of the vote. The main opposition group, Agzybirlik, formed in 1989 by leading intellectuals, was banned and its leaders harassed. The country has two parliamentary bodies, the 50-member *Majlis* (Assembly) and the *Khalk Maslakhaty* (People's Council), which includes the members of the Assembly, 50 directly elected members, and leading executive and judicial officials. Niyazov is president of the People's Council.

In December 1994 parliamentary elections, only Niyazov's Democratic Party of

Turkmenistan (DPT) was permitted to field candidates. The president has extensive powers. He can prorogue the parliament if it has passed two no-confidence motions within an 18-month period. In addition, he issues edicts that have the force of law, appoints and removes all judges and names the state prosecutor. He is also prime minister and commander-in-chief. Parliament extended his term to the year 2002.

Despite having an estimated 700 million tons of oil and 8,000 billion cubic meters of natural gas, Niyazov's failure to implement economic reforms has led to abject poverty, hyperinflation and shortages of basic foodstuffs. In 1997, there was a crack down on prostitution, police corruption and drug smuggling, activities related to economic desperation. Agriculture remained in crisis, which the president in October blamed on poor management. The education system is in complete collapse, and all secondary technical education institutions have been shut down.

In December, the European Union signed a memorandum allotting 2.3 million ECU to finance reconstruction of a container terminal at Turkmenbashi seaport. In October, Iran and Turkmenistan signed a memorandum of understanding to exploit oil and gas in the Caspian Sea. Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and President Niyazov were scheduled to meet on December 23-24 to discuss the resumption of Turkmen natural gas exports via Russian pipelines, the only export outlets for Turkmeni gas. Exports were interrupted in March due to the poor financial performance of Turkmenrosgaz, a joint venture set up in November 1996. In 1996 a strategic rail link was opened between Turkmenistan and Iran, providing Central Asian states access to Iran's warm-water ports. An Iranian-Turkmen gas pipeline is expected to be completed in 1998.

Throughout 1997, President Niyazov reshuffled his cabinet, dismissing and reassigning several ministers and officials. Turkmen opposition leaders in Moscow said Niyazov routinely changes officials so no one can develop a power base from which to challenge the president's authority.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of Turkmenistan do not have the means to change their government democratically. Power remains concentrated in the hands of the president. The one-party, single party elections to a rubber-stamp parliament in 1994 were undemocratic.

The DPT is the only legal party. Opposition parties have been banned, and most leaders of Agzybirlik have fled, many to Moscow, Sweden, Norway and the Czech Republic. Those still in the country face harassment and detention by the Committee on National Security (KNB), the successor to the Soviet-era KGB.

The judiciary is subservient to the regime; the president appoints all judges for a term of five years without legislative review. Eight people—the Ashgabat Eight—involved with a July 1995 protest against severe economic hardships are believed to be imprisoned. In August 1997, Amnesty International demanded full disclosure about the fate of the protesters. Political prisoners have reportedly been detained in a psychiatric hospital (in Geok-Tepe), and prison conditions are atrocious. In November 1997, the U.S. delegation to the OSCE human rights conference in Warsaw said that Durdymurad Khojimuhammad, leader of the Democratic Development Party, was placed in a mental institution for criticizing President Niyazov.

The government controls and funds all electronic and print media. According to a prominent staff member of the state-owned newspaper *Turkmenskaya Iskra*, the paper

exercises self-censorship. Newspapers mostly adhere to the old Communist style of publishing verbatim legislative texts, congratulatory speeches, letters flattering the president and reports of successful harvests. In 1997, a correspondent from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty was detained for two weeks after the station broadcast interviews with Turkmeni opposition leaders living in Moscow.

Local ordinances effectively ban freedom of assembly and public demonstrations. Although the population is overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim, the government has kept a rein on religion to avert the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Religious congregations are required to register with the government. Muslims have a free hand if they do not interfere in politics, and the government has built several mosques.

There are no independent trade unions. Women face discrimination in education, and other social-religious limitations restrict women's freedom.

Tuvalu

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 10,000
PPP: na
Life Expectancy: na
Ethnic Groups: Polynesian (96 percent)
Capital: Fongafale

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free



Overview: This tiny, predominantly Polynesian country in the western Pacific, formerly the Ellice Islands, became an independent member of the British Commonwealth in 1978. The 1978 constitution vests executive power in a prime minister and a cabinet of up to four ministers. The 12-member *Fale I Fono* (parliament) is directly-elected for a four-year term. The prime minister appoints and can dismiss the governor general, who is a Tuvalu citizen and represents the Queen of England, who is head of state, for a four-year term. The governor general, currently Sir Tulaga Manuella, can name a chief executive or dissolve the fono if its members cannot agree on a premier, and appoints the cabinet members.

Tuvalu has functioned as a parliamentary democracy since independence. Following the September 1993 elections, the fono was deadlocked between two candidates for premier after two rounds of voting. Then-Governor General Sir Toalipi Lauti used his constitutional powers to dissolve this new fono, and the country held fresh elections in November. In December parliament elected Kamuta Laatasi, a former general manager of BP Oil in Tuvalu, as prime minister.

Laatasi lost a vote of confidence on December 17, 1996, and on December 23 parliament elected Bikenibeu Paeniu, a former premier, into the top spot again. The instability in the tiny parliament has been cited by citizens who favor ending the country's link to the monarchy and adopting republican status under an ostensibly more stable presidential form of government.

In November 1997 Paeniu told Radio New Zealand that industrial countries must

cut greenhouse gas emissions, which could cause global warming, raise sea levels and place Tuvalu and other low-lying island countries at risk. In the last parliamentary session of the year, during which a fist-fight broke out, Laatasi brought up old allegations that Paeniu sexually assaulted a youth in 1993. Analysts forecasted a tough campaign for the March 1998 parliamentary elections.

The primarily subsistence economy consists mainly of coconuts, taros and fishing. Much of the country's revenue comes from remittances by some 1,500 countrymen living abroad and from the sale of stamps and coins. Interest from the Tuvalu Trust Fund, established in 1987 by major aid donors, covers one-fourth of the annual budget.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Tuvalu can change their government democratically. Political parties are legal, but only one loosely-organized group has formed, Prime Minister Paeniu's Tuvalu United Party. Most elections hinge on village-based allegiances rather than policy issues. Power is decentralized on the nine islands through directly-elected, six-person island councils. These councils are influenced by village-based hereditary elders who wield considerable traditional authority.

The judiciary is independent. Citizens receive fair public trials with procedural safeguards based on English common law, with a right of ultimate appeal under certain circumstances to the Privy Council in London. Freedoms of assembly and expression are respected. State-run Radio Tuvalu and *Tuvalu Echoes*, a government-owned fortnightly, are the only media and offer pluralistic viewpoints. A monthly religious newsletter is also published. There are no restrictions on freedom of association, although few nongovernmental organizations have formed.

All religious faiths practice freely. Some 70 percent of the population belongs to the Protestant Church of Tuvalu. Traditional social restrictions limit employment opportunities for women, though many are securing jobs in education and healthcare. Few women participate in government, although Paeniu-led governments have brought some women into the cabinet and other senior positions.

Workers are free to join independent unions, bargain collectively and stage strikes. Only the Tuvalu Seamen's Union has been organized and registered, and no strikes have ever occurred, largely because much of the population is engaged outside the wage economy. Civil servants have formed associations which do not yet have union status.

Uganda

Polity: Dominant party (military-influenced) **Political Rights:** 4
Civil Liberties: 4
Economy: Capitalist-statist **Status:** Partly Free
Population: 21,963,000
PPP: \$1,370
Life Expectancy: 40.2
Ethnic Groups: Acholi, Baganda, Kakwa, Lango, Nkole, Soga, Teso, others
Capital: Kampala



Overview: Uganda's steady economic growth continued in 1997, benefiting from both pragmatic open market policies and the largesse of donors who hold the country and its president, Yoweri Museveni, as a model for a new generation of African development and leadership. Rebel activity and serious human rights abuses on the country's northern and western frontiers continued, however, and scarce resources were diverted to increased military spending. The government launched an anti-corruption campaign amidst growing complaints of graft and other official malfeasance, which critics contend is inherent in the "non-party democracy" under which Uganda held its first elections in 15 years in 1996. Museveni took 74 percent of the vote for president, and his National Resistance Movement (NRM) dominated legislative elections. Only 20 oppositionists won seats in the 276-seat parliament, most of them members of the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) party, still nominally led from exile by Milton Obote, under whose rule hundreds of thousands of Ugandans were murdered in the early 1980s. Uganda's profile in regional affairs has also risen. Uganda gave military and political support to the rebel forces that overthrew Zairean dictator Mobutu in May and supports the war against Sudan's Islamist regime.

A one and a half decade national nightmare began in Uganda with Idi Amin's 1971 coup against Milton Obote. World headlines highlighted Amin's buffoonery and brutality as hundreds of thousands of people were killed. But only his 1978 invasion of Tanzania prompted effective action against him. Tanzanian forces and Ugandan exiles routed Amin's army and allowed Obote's return to power in fraudulent December 1980 elections. Obote and his backers from northern Uganda savagely repressed their critics, who were comprised mostly of southern Uganda ethnic groups. Political opponents were tortured and murdered and soldiers terrorized the countryside. A July 1985 army coup ousted Obote for a second time, but conditions only worsened.

A quarter million people were likely killed, most massacred by government soldiers, before Museveni led his National Resistance Army (NRA) into the capital, Kampala, in February 1986. Museveni formed a broad-based government under the NRM, with extensive local consultations with "Resistance Committees" first set up during the guerrilla war. The NRM government has been strongly influenced by the army (Museveni himself still carries the rank of Lieutenant-General and is Minister of Defense) and has faced a series of lingering insurgencies. Remnants of the defeated government army were quelled by 1988, but millennialist Christians of the Lord's

Resistance Army (LRA) still raid along the Sudanese frontier. That conflict is entangled with Sudan's war of annihilation against southern Sudanese rebels and threatens to flare into a major confrontation between Uganda and Sudan. Another guerrilla group, the Allied Democratic Forces, has mounted attacks in western Uganda, and troops trained by American special forces for peacekeeping duties in 1997 were deployed to fight the rebels.

The gravest threat to Uganda's long-term peace is manipulation and exploitation of ethnic divisions. Baganda in the country's south demand more recognition of their traditional kingdom, and northern ethnic groups complain of government neglect. Uganda today is safer and more stable and has a stronger economy than at any time since the mid-1960s. However, it is not clear whether Uganda's progress is being institutionalized to ensure that future political stability and economic growth are not jeopardized by poor leadership.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Uganda's sole competitive multiparty elections were in 1961 before independence from Britain. Uganda's 1995 constitution extended Museveni's 1986 formal ban on political party activities for five years until 2000, when a referendum on a multiparty system is scheduled. Despite these legal strictures, both the Democratic Party and the Uganda People's Congress party, main rivals for power since independence in 1962, maintain offices and unofficially field candidates.

In 1996, Ugandans voted for their president and parliamentarians in elections without open party competition. The NRM mobilized state resources and state media to support Museveni's candidacy, and the ban on formal party activities barred his opponents from organizing effectively. Poll watchers described the electoral process as transparent, despite minor irregularities, and most observers believe Museveni would have won handily even with party participation. Local council elections were conducted in November except in the war-affected districts in northern Uganda.

Uganda's judicial system is increasingly autonomous but is still influenced by the executive, who appoints with parliamentary approval a judicial commission that oversees judicial appointments. It is also hampered by inadequate resources and the army's failure to always respect civilian court authority. However, the army accepted a High court decision against it regarding a dispute with a senior officer in May. Local courts are more subject to bribery and corruption. Prison conditions are difficult, and those in local jails are especially harsh. Serious human rights violations by the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) were reported in conflict zones. Far more egregious abuses were committed by Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) guerrillas. An estimated 10,000 children have been abducted by the LRA, and many of them horribly mistreated. Freedom of assembly for banned political parties is formally proscribed, but they have held many meetings without interference. Many non-governmental organizations are active, and required registration has not been used as an obstacle to their operation. Groups directly involved with human rights issues include the Uganda Human Rights Activists, the Uganda Law Society and the Foundation for Human Rights Initiatives. 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.

Freedom of expression and of the media is generally respected, and there is broad

public debate. The opposition print media include over two dozen daily and weekly newspapers and is often highly critical of the government and offers a full range of opposition viewpoints. Several private radio stations and two private television stations report openly on local political developments. However, the largest newspapers and broadcasting facilities that reach rural areas are state-owned. While governmental corruption is reported and opposition positions presented, coverage is often not balanced. The Uganda Journalists Safety Committee has complained that provisions of 1995 and 1996 press laws have barred journalists from working by imposing educational and training requirements, and has sued the government for alleged use of sedition laws to arrest or intimidate journalists, which leads to actual imprisonment of some individuals and wide self-censorship. There is uncensored, albeit expensive Internet access available in the larger centers and at least daily two newspapers are available on the World Wide Web.

Discrimination against women based on traditional law is prevalent, particularly in the countryside. Unequal standards for men and for women exist in inheritance, divorce and citizenship laws. Women must receive their husband's permission to obtain a passport. Domestic violence against women is widespread, and numerous beatings were reported in November by irate husbands whose wives were said not to have obeyed their voting instructions.

The country's largest labor federation, the National Organization of Trade Unions (NOTU), is independent of the government and political parties. An array of "essential workers" is barred from forming unions, and strikes are permitted only after a lengthy reconciliation process.

Uganda boasts one of Africa's most open economies, which has grown at 8.1 percent annually over the past three years with big boosts in agricultural production, although poor 1997 harvest may cut growth. A broad privatization of state enterprises continues, and since 1993 over 60 parastatals have been divested, including the Uganda Commercial Bank, the country's largest, the Coffee Marketing Board and Uganda Airlines. Liberalized exchange policies have also helped encourage strong growth over the last five years, but remaining legal and administrative impediments still discourage foreign investment.

↓ Ukraine

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Economy: Statist-transitional
Population: 51,148,000
PPP: \$2,718
Life Expectancy: 68.4
Ethnic Groups: Ukrainian (73 percent), Russian (22 percent), others
Capital: Kiev

Political Rights: 3
Civil Liberties: 4
Status: Partly Free



Trend Arrow: Ukraine receives a downward trend arrow due to stalled economic reforms and rampant corruption.

Overview:

Prime Minister Pavlo Lazarenko stepped down in July amid stalled economic reforms and persistent allegations of cronyism and corruption. He was replaced by Valery Pustovoitenko, a former minister of the Cabinet of Ministers and a close ally of President Leonid Kuchma, who came under increased pressure from international lending organizations and aid donors to weed out graft and accelerate reforms in the face of a recalcitrant, left-dominated parliament.

In other issues, political parties began preparations for parliamentary elections in March 1998, a Russia-Ukraine friendship treaty was signed in May, and Ukraine inaugurated a special partnership with NATO in July.

Ukraine, the major agricultural-industrial center of the former Soviet Union, was the site of the medieval Kievan Rus' realm that reached its height in the tenth and 11th centuries. Russia dominated the large eastern part of the country for over 300 years, while Poland and Austria-Hungary ruled the west. Ukraine enjoyed a brief period of independent statehood between 1917 and 1920, after which Soviet rule was extended over most Ukrainian lands with the creation of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Western Ukraine was forcibly annexed from Poland in 1940 under the Hitler-Stalin Pact. Ukraine declared independence from a crumbling Soviet Union in 1991, and Leonid Kravchuk was elected president by direct vote.

Legislative elections in 1994 for the 450-member Verkhovna Rada (parliament) were conducted under an entirely majoritarian system clearly biased against political parties (only 11 percent of candidates had party affiliations), making it difficult for them to register candidates while any "group of electors" (minimum membership of ten) or "worker collectives" (no minimum membership) could easily nominate whomever they wanted. The election law led to a series of run-offs, but by year's end some ten percent of seats had not been filled, and parliament suspended further balloting. While 18 parties were represented in the new parliament, the deputies coalesced around 11 major blocs. The leftist Communist, Socialist, Peasant and Agrarian parties accounted for 169 seats; the centrists, represented by the Inter-Regional Bloc, Yednist (Unity), the Constitutional Center, Liberals and Independents, 173; the rightists, consisting of the Reform Bloc, Democratic National Rukh bloc, the Statehood bloc and non-faction members, 76. These numbers shifted often as new factions were formed and deputies changed sides in 1996-97.

In the 1994 presidential race, incumbent President Kravchuk beat Kuchma, an industrialist and former prime minister, 37.72 percent to 31.27 percent in the first round. Neither polled over 50 percent, forcing a run-off. Turnout was 68 percent. In the July run-off, Kuchma won, 52 percent to 45 percent, with over 71 percent of eligible voters taking part. In 1995, Kuchma wrested new political power from the legislature, which amended the constitution, giving up its power to name Ukraine's cabinet and its claim to authority over provincial and local governments. In early 1996, Kuchma pressed a reluctant parliament to adopt a new national charter. The constitutional debate pitted Kuchma against the Communists and Socialists, who opposed strong presidential authority, provisions on the state language and a free land market. The president warned that he would call for a popular referendum if parliament failed to pass the document. On June 28, parliament voted 315 to 36 in favor of the constitution. By the end of 1996, the government of Prime Minister Lazarenko, who had replaced Yevhen Marchuk in May, proposed an economic program that continued to subsidize key state sectors and failed to include much-needed reforms.

In early 1997, President Kuchma reshuffled the cabinet, appointing reformers as economics and finance ministers to push for a realistic budget and a structural reform program to sustain financial stabilization. He criticized the government for failing to back a deregulatory legislative package. In a March broadcast carried live on national television, he attacked the prime minister for failing to pass a budget. Allegations of corruption surrounding the prime minister centered on his alleged involvement with United Energy Systems, an energy wholesaler to which Lazarenko awarded a lucrative monopoly on natural gas sales in 1996. In April, Deputy Prime Minister Viktor Pynzenyk, a leading economic reformer, resigned after parliament failed to pass legislation on tax and pension reform. Motorola canceled a \$500-million joint venture to provide cellular phone service, citing "ever-changing terms and conditions."

In May, Prime Minister Lazarenko tried to quell increased unease among lenders and aid donors, particularly the U.S., by blaming negative Western media coverage for the perception that corruption was a key factor in faltering internal reforms. U.S. officials told Congress that the U.S. would re-evaluate its aid program (Ukraine was the number three recipient of American aid behind Israel and Egypt) if Ukraine did not adapt reforms demanded by foreign creditors and investors. With the economy plagued by ubiquitous corruption, a capricious tax system, negligible foreign investment and wage and pension arrears, the IMF hinted that it would hold up a \$2.5 billion loan.

While the 1997 budget was finally passed on June 27, in July Prime Minister Lazarenko resigned, ostensibly for health reasons. Parliament confirmed Valery Pustovoitenko, a former mayor of Dnipropetrovsk, as the new prime minister. In August, the IMF approved a \$542 million standby loan, but deferred consideration of a longer and larger \$2.5 billion loan because it felt Ukraine's economic reforms were not moving fast enough.

Corruption and the lack of reform remained an issue throughout the year. Serhiy Holovaty, a reformer who was dismissed as justice minister after attempting to launch an anti-corruption campaign, said that the Cabinet apparatus and presidential administration were tightly connected to the old Communist Party nomenklatura who had blocked attempts to create a legal basis for market restructuring. In September, a World Bank official said the body was leery of further loans to Ukraine until additional re-

forms are implemented.

In domestic politics, the key issues were the 1998 parliamentary elections and the presidential vote in 1999. By the December cut-off, over 13 party lists were registered for the parliamentary vote. Unlike the 1994 vote, the elections will use a mixed election law, where 50 percent of candidates will be elected by majority vote and 50 percent of the seats will be allocated in proportion to the percentage of votes a political party receives above the four percent minimum barrier. Key political groupings included Hromada, led by former Prime Minister Lazarenko, which gathered 1.3 million signatures; Prime Minister Pustovoitenko's "party of power," the People's Democratic Party; the new Social-Liberal Bloc consisting of the centrist Interregional Reform Bloc and the Constitutional-Democratic Party; the nationalist National Front; as well as the Communist, Socialist and Agrarian parties. With year-end polls showing that only ten percent of the population completely trust President Kuchma, declared candidates included former prime ministers Marchuk and Lazarenko and Parliamentary Speaker Oleksandr Moroz of the Socialist Party.

The economy continued to sputter in 1997 despite macro-economic stabilization, low inflation and a stable currency. The IMF estimated that GDP declined by three percent in 1997. The slow pace of privatization and restructuring of industry, a growing trade deficit, budget deficits and service payments on international debts, and high unemployment hampered growth.

In May, President Kuchma and Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed an interstate friendship treaty in Kiev, the Kremlin's first formal acknowledgment of the independence and borders of Ukraine. On July 9, President Kuchma signed a charter on the special partnership between Ukraine and NATO during the alliance's Madrid summit.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Ukrainians can change their government democratically. Presidential and parliamentary elections in 1994 were deemed generally "free and fair" by international observers, though there were reports of irregularities and pre-election intimidation and violence directed at democratic organizations and activists. In June 1995, a new electoral law was drawn up to eliminate the 50 percent threshold, and changes adopted in 1997 instituted a mixed system, where 50 percent of candidates will be elected by majority vote and 50 by proportional representation.

The 1996 constitution replaced a 1991 charter that was a hybrid of the 1978 Constitution of the Ukrainian Soviet republic, modified since independence. Citizens are free to organize, and there are some 50 national political parties representing the political spectrum from far-left to far-right.

A 1991 press law purports to protect freedom of speech and press, but it only covers print media. The Constitution, the Law on Information (1992) and the Television and Radio Broadcasting Law (1994) protect freedom of speech, but there are laws banning attacks on the president's "honor and dignity." There are over 5,000 Ukrainian- and Russian-language newspapers, periodicals and journals. Many receive some state subsidies, a form of indirect control. The price and availability of newsprint and print facilities, as well as an inadequate state-owned distribution system, have hampered publications. Some independent newspapers are mailed through the post office and distributed by vendors or privately-owned kiosks. In 1994, President

Kuchma signed the Law on State Support for the Press exempting state-owned media from paying high taxes, thus making it difficult for independent media to compete.

There are several private local TV and radio stations throughout the country. Satellite dishes are available. As in Russia, however, the media often reflect rivalries among ruling factions. Studio 1+1, a production company that won most of the air-time on one of Ukraine's two nationwide channels, has close links with President Kuchma, who ignored an earlier contract with another American company for the broadcast rights. Studio 1+1 promptly canceled "Vikna," the last independent news program on the second channel. Parliament has tried in vain to curb government influence over media, sometimes to enlarge its own power centers. When it won the power to dismiss the head of state television, Zinoviy Kulyk, a Kuchma ally, the president made him minister of information. Other companies that control media were run by friends of Prime Minister Lazarenko. Privatbank, the biggest commercial bank, owns *Kievskiyе Vedomosti*, the capital's largest daily, and a regional television network. A 1997 law banned television and radio companies established with foreign investment from running political advertising and election campaigns. In December, one of the nation's most popular TV political affairs and analysis programs, "Pislyamova," announced it would go off the air to avoid severe political pressure from assorted forces that would undermine objectivity during the election campaign.

Freedom of assembly is recognized and generally respected. Although the previously outlawed Ukrainian (Uniate) Catholic and Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox churches are legal, conflicts between the two churches and the old Russian Orthodox Church continue over property and churches. There are three Ukrainian Orthodox churches, two with allegiances to patriarchs in Kiev and one with allegiance to Moscow. The Orthodox schism has led to violent flare-ups. In October 1996, a conflict among hierarchies threatened to split the Orthodox Church into a fourth faction. In July, 13 Christian church leaders representing Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Uniate and Protestant churches, signed a memorandum on inter-faith relations pledging not to use force in resolving inter-faith problems. Ukraine's estimated 600,000 Jews have over 300 organizations and four national umbrella groups that maintain schools and social services. More than 30 percent of Jewish children in Ukraine receive some sort of Jewish education. The large Russian minority enjoys full rights and protections. Hungarians in Subcarpathia have pressed for greater cultural rights.

The judiciary is not fully free from government and political interference. Investigation, interrogation and prosecution remain, in reality, within the scope of the executive. There have been modifications of Soviet-era laws that have enhanced defendant's rights in such areas as pre-trial detention and appealing arrests.

The National Federation of Trade Unions, a successor to the former official Soviet body, claims 21 million workers. In 1992, five independent unions united under the umbrella of the Consultative (Advisory) Council of Free Trade Unions, which interacts freely with international labor groups. Estimates of membership in independent unions range from 100,000-200,000; over 80 percent of the workforce is unionized. There were several strikes in 1997, particularly in the mining sector.

Women are represented in education, government and in the professional classes. Independent women's organizations have raised such issues as spousal abuse and alcoholism.

United Arab Emirates

Polity: Federation of traditional monarchies
Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 1,946,000

PPP: \$16,000

Life Expectancy: 74.2

Ethnic Groups: Native and other Arab, Persian, Pakistani, Indian

Capital: Abu Dhabi

Political Rights: 6

Civil Liberties: 5

Status: Not Free



Overview:

Under a recently completed Dubai Strategic Development Plan, the tiny emirate of Dubai continues to seek preeminence as the leading financial center in the Persian Gulf. Through heavy domestic investment, less reliance on foreign workers, looser trading and banking rules and investment in new infrastructure, Dubai hopes to raise annual non-oil per-capita income to \$20,000 by 2010 and to have non-oil revenues comprise 90 percent of GDP. A traditional trading center, Dubai is situated at the edge of the Gulf, linking large markets in oil-producing countries like Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia to the rest of the world.

The seven emirates which constitute the United Arab Emirates formed a unified federation after gaining independence from Britain in 1971. Under the 1971 provisional constitution, the emirate rulers make up the Federal Supreme Council, the highest legislative and executive body. The Council elects a state president and vice-president from among its membership, and the president appoints the prime minister and cabinet. A 40-member consultative Federal National Council, composed of delegates appointed by the seven rulers, holds no legislative power. While there are separate consultative councils in several emirates, there are no political parties or popular elections.

Sheikh Zayed ibn Sultan al Nuhayyan of Abu Dhabi, the largest emirate and capital of the UAE, has served as president since independence and is considered largely responsible for the country's unification and economic success. The UAE has a free market economy based on oil and gas production, trade and light manufacturing. The economy provides citizens with a high per capita income, but is heavily dependent on foreign workers, who comprise some 80 percent of the population.

In 1996, the government set a November 1 deadline for all illegal migrants—between 15 and 20 percent of the workforce—to leave the country or face prison and/or fines. Some 200,000 illegal workers, mostly from the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, left the UAE, producing a labor vacuum which resulted in an economic downturn.

The UAE has maintained a pro-Western foreign policy since the Persian Gulf War and continues to cooperate militarily with the United States, Great Britain and France. Iran controls three islands near the Strait of Hormuz in defiance of UAE claims to the territory. Although the islands had been ruled jointly by Iran and the emirate of Sharjah for two decades, the Iranian government expelled the emirate's citizens in 1992. In

response to this and other Iranian threats, such as recent Iranian naval maneuvers in the Gulf, the UAE has spent over \$60 million on arms purchases since the war.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of the UAE cannot change their government democratically. There are no elections at any level, political parties are illegal, and executive and legislative authority is in the hands of the Federal Supreme Council. The seven emirate rulers, their extended families and their allies by marriage or common interest wield political control in their respective emirates. Citizens may voice concerns to their leaders through such traditional mechanisms as open *majlis* (gatherings) held by the emirate rulers.

The judiciary is generally independent of the government, though its decisions are subject to review by the political leadership. There is a dual system of *Shari'a* (Islamic) and civil (secular) courts. Most of the courts, except those in Dubai and Ras al-Khaimah, are accountable to the Federal Supreme Court in Abu Dhabi. There are no jury trials. Military tribunals try only military personnel, and there is no separate state security court system. Police may enter homes without a warrant or probable cause, but their actions are subject to review and disciplinary action. The government investigates reports of maltreatment during detention. Authorities generally bring detainees to trial within reasonable time, and there is an appeals process.

Journalists routinely practice self-censorship when reporting on government policy, national security and religion and refrain from criticizing the ruling families. The print media are largely privately owned but receive government subsidies. Under Federal Law 15 of 1988, all publications must be licensed by the ministry of education. Foreign publications are censored before distribution. Broadcast media are all government-owned and present only government views. Satellite dishes are widely owned and provide foreign broadcasting without censorship.

The government significantly restricts freedom of assembly and association. Permits are required for public organized gatherings. Some emirates permit conferences where government policies are discussed, but all private associations must be non-political. Islam is the official religion in the UAE, and most citizens are Sunni Muslim. Shi'ite Muslims are free to maintain mosques, and non-Muslims are free to practice their religions. Major cities have Christian churches and Hindu and Sikh temples, some built on land donated by the ruling families.

There are no restrictions on internal travel, except near oil and defense facilities. The small, stateless Bedouin population are prohibited from receiving passports. Women must have permission from husbands or male relatives to leave the country. They also face discrimination in employment benefits. Women are free to hold government positions, though tradition has limited their political role. Under Shari'a law, Muslim women are forbidden to marry non-Muslims.

Unions, strikes and collective bargaining are illegal and do not occur.

United Kingdom

Polity: Parliamentary democracy
Economy: Mixed capitalist

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free

Population: 57,134,000

PPP: \$18,620

Life Expectancy: 76.7

Ethnic Groups: English (82 percent), Scottish (10 percent), Irish (2 percent), Welsh (2 percent), Asian, African and Caribbean immigrants

Capital: London



Overview: Tony Blair's Labor party swept general elections on May 1, taking 419 seats in the 659-member parliament for a 179-seat majority. John Major's Conservative party suffered its greatest defeat in over 150 years, losing 178 seats to retain 165. Paddy Ashdown's Liberal Democrats recorded a major electoral success, nearly doubling their representation to 46 seats. Sinn Fein, the political arm of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), won two seats. Other smaller parties took 27 seats.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland encompasses the two formerly separate kingdoms of England and Scotland, the ancient principality of Wales and the six counties of the Irish province of Ulster (see *Northern Ireland* under Related Territories). The British Parliament has an elected House of Commons with 659 members chosen by plurality vote from single-member districts, and a House of Lords with over 1,000 hereditary and appointed members. A cabinet of ministers appointed from the majority party exercises executive power on behalf of the mainly ceremonial sovereign. Queen Elizabeth II nominates the party leader with the highest support in the House of Commons to form a government.

This year's election of a Labor government marks the end of 18 years of Conservative rule. After taking over the Tory party leadership from Margaret Thatcher in 1990, Major abandoned her unpopular poll tax, continued to privatize state industries and worked toward closer European integration. However, political infighting, petty corruption and a series of sex scandals in recent years have left the party in a state of disarray. Tony Blair's "New Labor," so named because of its recent radical shift away from its socialist past, adopted Conservative-like positions on a number of issues, such as spending and tax limits, to assure voters of its fiscal responsibility. The last Labor government mismanaged the British economy to near bankruptcy in 1976.

With such a sizable parliamentary majority, Blair has been successful in pushing through promised reforms, such as devolution of power to Scotland and Wales. In a referendum on September 11, Scots overwhelmingly endorsed plans for a 129-member parliament, elected by proportional representation, with authority over healthcare, education, local government, transportation and limited taxation. A week later, the Welsh narrowly voted for their own 60-member assembly with limited authority. The government also fulfilled its pledge to publish a Human Rights Bill and presented a

White Paper in October with proposals to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into British law.

The Labor majority also gave Blair room to make some important concessions to Sinn Fein and thus restart the stalled Northern Ireland peace process. Talks began in September with the participation of Sinn Fein, whose leaders formally renounced violence and renewed a ceasefire broken in February 1996. However, the failure of parties to agree on key issues to be addressed when talks restart in January caused a deadlock, and a crisis ensued at year's end with a wave of reprisal killings by splinter groups.

Other planned reforms include stripping hereditary peers in the House of Lords of the right to vote, and directly electing a mayor and assembly for the city of London. A referendum on the latter is set for May, 1998.

The government suffered a setback over contradictory statements about joining the single European currency. Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown asserted in October that Britain was unlikely to join at the currency's inception in 1999, though the *Financial Times* had reported a month earlier that Brown favored joining soon after the first wave. Apparent divisions within the government over European Monetary Union caused fluctuations in the British stock market and shook the government's reputation in the financial community. The government finally decided at the end of October that Britain would not join before the end of the current parliamentary term in 2002.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of the United Kingdom can change their government democratically. Voters are registered by a government survey and include both Irish and Commonwealth (former British Empire) citizens resident in Britain. British subjects abroad retain voting rights for 20 years after emigration. Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland currently have no regional legislatures, but elect members to the House of Commons.

Britain does not have a written constitution, and civil libertarians have criticized legal attempts to combat crime and terrorism as dangerous to basic freedoms. Under the 1989 Prevention of Terrorism Act, suspects can be detained without charge for up to eight days. The 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act drastically curtails the right to silence in interrogation and in court. It also gives police the authority to stop and search individuals without grounds for suspicion and to ban demonstrations. The 1997 Police Act allows police to enter houses and plant listening devices without prior authorization from judges in "urgent cases." It also proposes the abolition of trial by jury for certain offenses and creates a "criminal conviction certificate," which details an individual's criminal record and is accessible to potential employers.

In August, the government announced new guidelines requiring sex offenders to inform authorities of their whereabouts and changes of name or address. Police will be permitted to pass along such information to employers, community organizations and the public if the offender is considered to be a genuine threat to children. The guidelines follow the adoption of similar legislation in the United States—the controversial "Megan's Law"—and respond to increased incidence of harassment against offenders. In some communities, offenders have been driven from their homes by angry neighbors.

The government published a Human Rights Bill in October, along with a White

Paper proposing to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into British law. The Bill would effectively establish a Bill of Rights, which Britain has lacked so far. For the first time, citizens who believe that their rights have been violated will be able to seek redress against the government or other public bodies through the courts. Previously, aggrieved citizens had to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Though uncensored and mostly private, the British press is subject to strict libel laws. The BBC is an autonomous public body that responds to governmental pressures yet provides balanced reporting and commentary. Private radio and television are subject to some government control on issues such as terrorism and national security. In November, three editors of *Green Anarchist* magazine were sentenced to three years in jail each for conspiring to incite criminal damage. The charges stem from the editors' dissemination of animal rights literature.

The threat of a parliamentary crackdown on the print press has hovered over the British media for several years, the result of sensational coverage of the royal family, and security issues such as terrorism associated with Northern Ireland. In September, the Press Complaints Commission presented new guidelines to be voluntarily adopted by editors in the wake Princess Diana's death, which was blamed by some on overzealous paparazzi. The guidelines would ban the publication of photographs obtained illegally or through "persistent pursuit," obliging editors to keep tabs on how photos are obtained. A more binding legal code is expected, though no timetable has been set.

In December, the government unveiled plans for a long-awaited freedom of information law. The law would require government agencies to release official documents and information to the public upon request and for a fee. Several agencies, such as those dealing with national security, law enforcement and intelligence, would be exempt, as would the parliament, whose deliberations are already a matter of public record. No agency would be required to release information deemed capable of causing "substantial harm."

Freedom of movement is generally respected, though the Criminal Justice Act bars Roma (Gypsies) caravans from stopping at campsites. In February, British Home secretary Michael Howard agreed to grant full citizenship to up to 8,000 Indian and Pakistani citizens from Hong Kong. Much concern has been raised about ethnic minorities becoming stateless after Hong Kong's handover to China in July.

Trade unions remain active despite years of restrictive labor legislation under Conservative governments, which weakened them financially and politically. Labor has promised not to repeal any labor law passed since 1980. With union power much reduced, membership has plummeted.

The existence of two established churches, the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, does not restrict religious freedom. State-financed schools' mandatory daily worship sessions are meant to be "broadly Christian" by law.

United States of America

Polity: Federal presidential-legislative democracy

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 1
Status: Free

Economy: Capitalist

Population: 265,182,000

PPP: \$26,397

Life Expectancy: 76.2

Ethnic Groups: European (73 percent), black (13 percent), Hispanic (10 percent), Asian-Pacific (3 percent), native American (Indian, Eskimo/Inuit, Aleut) (1 percent), others

Capital: Washington, D.C.



Overview:

The U.S. experienced a political stalemate during 1997, with neither President Bill Clinton nor the Republican-dominated Congress able to achieve adoption of major items on their respective agendas. Indeed, aside from the adoption of a plan to balance the federal budget, the major item of political importance was the seemingly endless controversies over ethics issues, ranging from accusations that the President was involved in sexual misconduct to the campaign finance scandals. Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, arguably the party's most powerful figure, was censured by the House of Representatives for violations of tax laws in connection with a college course he taught.

Since 1789, America has had elected civilian rule under a constitution providing for a president, bicameral legislature and independent judiciary headed by a Supreme Court. The 100-member Senate (upper house) consists of two members from each state, elected to staggered, six-year terms. Each state is guaranteed one seat in the House of Representatives (lower house), with the remainder apportioned according to the state's population. There are currently 435 representatives, who are elected biannually.

The president and vice-president are elected to four-year terms via an electoral college. Voters in each state and the federal district, Washington, D.C., vote for slates of electors, who usually unanimously support the candidate winning the popular vote in their jurisdiction. In the 1996 presidential election, Clinton won 379 electoral votes to 159 for Bob Dole, his Republican opponent, and 49.2 percent of the popular vote to Dole's 40.7 percent. Billionaire independent H. Ross Perot won no electoral votes but did attain 8.4 percent of the popular vote, an impressive showing for a third-party candidate in the United States.

Although Republican nominee Dole lost the presidential contest, his party retained control of both the House and Senate in 1996. The Republicans also control most of the country's governorships and state houses. Republicans currently control 227 of the House seats; the Democrats hold 206, with one seat held by an independent socialist. In the Senate, the Republican margin is 55 to 45.

In their 1994 campaign manifesto, "Contract with America," Republican House candidates put forward an ambitious conservative legislative agenda ranging from a constitutional amendment mandating congressional term limits to a major reduction

in government regulation. The party's 1997 agenda was much more modest. Much the same can be said for President Clinton. He advanced no sweeping proposals for change; his major achievement was the blueprint for achieving a balanced budget, which the president reached through a bipartisan agreement with the Republican leadership.

In international affairs, a major innovation was the appointment of the first woman Secretary of State, Madeleine K. Albright. However, Clinton's nominee for director of central intelligence, Anthony Lake, withdrew his name from consideration in the face of mounting opposition from Republicans. Another Clinton foreign policy nominee, William Weld, withdrew his name from consideration for the post of ambassador to Mexico after it became clear that he faced strong opposition from leading Republicans, most notably Senator Jesse Helms, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Weld, ironically, was also a Republican and resigned as governor of Massachusetts to conduct his fight for the ambassador's post. The administration won ratification of the Chemical Weapons convention, making the U.S. the seventy-fifth country to approve a treaty which calls for the elimination of all stocks of chemical weapons by the year 2007. Although many Republicans opposed the treaty, Senate Majority leader Trent Lott was persuaded to support the measure, which passed by a 74-26 margin, seven votes more than the two-thirds required for ratification.

The year was marked by investigations into a variety of scandals. The most important involved allegations that the Democratic National Committee and the Clinton presidential campaign had made improper fund-raising solicitations during the 1996 presidential campaign. The most serious charges related to fund-raising efforts carried out by party officials among business sources in various Asian countries. Both the President and Vice President Al Gore were linked to questionable fund-raising practices, although no formal complaints were brought against either man. These charges were the focus of special hearings before Congress, and were also the target of investigation by the Justice Department. Ultimately, Attorney General Janet Reno decided against the appointment of an independent counsel to investigate the campaign finance issues, a move which drew a torrent of criticism from Republican sources. Meanwhile, an investigation of the Whitewater scandal, involving the collapse of an Arkansas savings-and-loan firm in which the President and Mrs. Clinton had a financial stake during Clinton's term as governor, continued under the direction of Special Prosecutor Kenneth Starr. In another case, Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt was accused of having improperly intervened in a decision involving the establishment of a casino on an Indian reservation.

If a trend could be discerned in local and statewide contests, it was the continuing strength of the Republican Party. In New York City, Republican incumbent Rudolph Giuliani won his second term as mayor in a landslide victory. Despite New York's overwhelming Democratic majority, Giuliani won by stressing his tough stance on law-and-order issues, his fiscal responsibility, the reduction in welfare spending and his support for the rights of immigrants. Republican Richard Riordan won reelection as mayor of Los Angeles. Republicans also won governorships in New Jersey and Virginia.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Americans can change their government democratically. Voter turnout for presidential elections has hovered around the 50 percent mark in recent elections. U.S. citizens abroad can vote, as can resident aliens in some localities. The party system is competitive. In recent years, until the 1994 Republican sweep, incumbent legislators won in overwhelming numbers. Legislators spend increasing amounts of time raising campaign funds from wealthy individuals and interest groups. Numerous states and municipalities have limited the terms of elected officials, usually to no more than two consecutive terms. The Supreme Court, however, has ruled that the states could not limit terms for federal offices.

In presidential elections, major party nominees are selected through a debilitating series of primary elections and local party caucuses. The primaries are also extremely costly, placing yet another hurdle in the way of insurgent candidates. Nevertheless, those candidates selected as presidential nominees in recent years are generally judged to reflect the preponderant views among the party rank-and-file.

In recent years, Americans have come increasingly to make use of initiatives or referenda in an effort to win through direct, popular vote what seemingly cannot be achieved through the legislative process. Some states allow referenda on a wide range of issues; others restrict their use. The state best-known for the use of referenda is California; in recent years, initiatives have been adopted in that state which eliminate preferential treatment for racial minorities or women and restrict access of illegal immigrants to educational and social services.

The media are generally free and competitive. In recent years, there has been a trend towards the ownership of major press outlets by major corporations as well as the merger of media corporations and the purchase of independent media by chain operations. At the same time, cable television and the Internet have given rise to a number of new public affairs television networks and on-line publications.

The past year saw the continuation of a trend towards a reduction in crime, especially violent crime. America has one of the largest prison populations in the world, and there is serious overcrowding in many penal institutions. One of the most controversial aspects of the criminal justice system is the large number of Americans incarcerated for the possession of illegal drugs. Charges of police brutality, especially directed at racial minorities, continued to plague the police departments of major cities. Yet despite a number of high-profile brutality cases, there is evidence that police misconduct against civilians is declining in many cities.

Organized labor, which has suffered declining membership for several decades, registered some modest gains. The American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations reported a small increase in the number of unionized workers in the private sector, the first such gain in many years. A strike by the Teamsters against the United Parcel Service was won by the union when the company agreed to most of the union demands. But the labor movement suffered a major setback when it was revealed that the campaign of Teamsters' president Ron Carey had employed illegal methods in raising funds for his 1996 reelection campaign, which he won by a narrow margin over James Hoffa. As a result of the fund-raising abuses, the election was invalidated, and a federal judge ruled Carey ineligible to participate in the election re-run. The Teamsters scandal threatened to involve other prominent labor officials as well as officials from the Democratic National Committee who were said to have

participated in a scheme to persuade prominent political contributors to give money to the Carey effort.

Although race relations controversies continued to figure prominently in the news, there was evidence of a modest narrowing of the racial gap in income and standard-of-living. The President launched a major race relations initiative involving a series of meetings in different cities to discuss racial matters and the creation of a special commission to formulate plans to enhance ties between the races. Americans also continued to debate affirmative action programs which give preferences to minority groups and sometimes women in jobs, contracts and university admissions. New evidence emerged suggesting that these programs, initially established to compensate for the lingering effect on blacks of slavery and discrimination, were primarily benefiting Asian-Americans and white women.

Women continued to achieve economic, professional and educational gains. The year was marked by a series of sexual misconduct and sexual harassment controversies in the military, which resulted in the dismissal from military service of several officers and legal actions against others. A special panel recommended that the military adopt a policy of largely segregating men and women during basic training and toughening physical standards for female enlistees.

Although immigration remained controversial, there were signs that anti-immigrant sentiments were declining somewhat. The administration decided against the deportation of immigrants from Central America who had been given special status during the time of civil war in their countries. America also reversed a decision made as part of the 1996 welfare reform legislation to deny certain welfare benefits to legal immigrants. A special commission on immigration policies issued a report which urged more attention to policies which encourage the assimilation of new immigrants into American political and cultural life.

The government restricts freedom of movement to a few countries, notably Cuba.

Uruguay

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 3,186,000

PPP: \$6,752

Life Expectancy: 72.6

Ethnic Groups: European (88 percent), mestizo (8 percent), black and mulatto (4 percent)

Capital: Montevideo

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 2

Status: Free



Overview:

In 1997 President Julio Sanguinetti found that atrocities committed by a previous military regime had again come back to haunt his second government, while a crime wave and scandals involving both the armed forces and the police left Uruguayans questioning their country's rule of law. At the same time, Sanguinetti's decision to restore service records

of 41 military officials was hailed as a principled reparation of a historical wrong.

After gaining independence from Spain, the Oriental Republic of Uruguay was established in 1830. The Colorado Party dominated a relatively democratic political system throughout the 1960s. The 1967 constitution established a bicameral congress consisting of a 99-member Chamber of Deputies and a 31-member Senate, with every member serving a five-year term. The president is also directly elected for a five-year term.

An economic crisis, social unrest and the activities of the Tupumaro urban guerrilla movement led to a right-wing military takeover in 1973, even though the Tupumaros had been largely crushed a year earlier. During the period of military rule, Uruguay had the largest number per capita of political prisoners in the world and was known as "the torture chamber of Latin America." Civilian rule was restored through negotiations between the regime and civilian politicians. Julio Sanguinetti won the presidential elections in 1984. In 1989 Luis Alberto Lacalle of the centrist National Party was elected president. His popularity plummeted, however, as he attempted to liberalize one of Latin America's most statist economies.

In the 1994 campaign Sanguinetti ran as a social democrat. The other main contenders were the leftist Broad Front's Tabare Vasquez, the popular mayor of Montevideo, and the National Party's Alberto Volante. The 1994 election was the closest ever. The Colorado Party won 31.4 percent of the vote, the National Party 30.2 percent and the Broad Front, 30 percent. In the Chamber of Deputies, the Colorado Party won 32 seats; the Nationals, 31; and the Broad Front, 28. In the Senate, the Colorados won 11 seats; the National Party, ten; and the Broad Front nine.

Sanguinetti took office in March 1995 and enjoyed considerable congressional support, in part due to the inclusion of numerous National Party members in his cabinet. He won legislative support for an austerity package that partially dismantled the country's welfare state. A series of labor stoppages and a sharp decline in Sanguinetti's popularity followed.

In 1997 the Broad Front was racked by internal divisions that threatened its viability as a third national electoral option. Violent crime increased dramatically. An attempt to reopen the cases of scores of people "disappeared" by the former military regime was blocked by the government, which supported an appeals court decision to overrule a Montevideo judge who had sought to investigate the existence of clandestine cemeteries on two army bases.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Uruguay can change their government democratically. Constitutional guarantees regarding free expression, freedom of religion and the right to form political parties, labor unions and civic organizations are generally respected. The former Tupumaro guerrillas now participate in the system as part of the Broad Front.

The press is privately owned, and broadcasting is both commercial and public. Numerous daily newspapers publish, many associated with political parties; there are also a number of weeklies. In 1996 a number of publications ceased production because of a government suspension of tax exemptions on the import of newsprint. In addition, a June 1996 decree requires government authorization to import newsprint. In a positive development in 1997 an appeals court threw out the conviction of a publisher and a reporter of the leftist tabloid *La Republica* for accusing Juan Carlos

Wasmosy, the president of Paraguay, of corruption. Despite the fact the accusation had previously been repeatedly published in Paraguay, with no legal action having prospered, Wasmosy had sued the Montevideo journalists by using a legal anachronism in the Uruguayan penal code that prevents "insulting the honor" of a foreign head of state.

The judiciary is relatively independent, but has become increasingly inefficient in the face of escalating crime. The court system is severely backlogged, and prisoners often spend more time in jail than they would were they to serve the maximum sentence for their alleged crime. Allegations of mistreatment, particularly of youthful offenders, have increased. Prison conditions do not meet international standards.

In 1997 Uruguay found that its poorly trained, equipped and paid police were no match for "super bands" of criminals using state-of-the-art technology and armament in daring assaults on businesses and banks. A number of active duty and retired officers were found to be working closely with these criminal elements. In September Interior Minister Didier Operti dismissed five ranking officers and initiated proceedings against 179 agents accused of corruption. The government authorized \$1 million for new police equipment and more intensive anti-crime activity in Montevideo. The military's role in internal security also came in for increasing scrutiny after it decided to investigate a bomb threat against the president and proceeded to raid a home and arrest a suspect—a soldier. Except in time of war, the jurisdiction of military courts is limited to military offenses; however, when a local judge sought to intervene in the case, the defense ministry handed the case over to a military court.

In 1991, a decision by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States ruled that the 1985 law which granted the military amnesty from rights violations during the years of dictatorship violated key provisions of the American Convention on Human Rights. The Amnesty Law authorizes the government to carry out investigations but the armed forces firmly opposed such action. The issue was revisited in 1997 when center-left Senator Rafael Michelini, whose father was assassinated in 1976 by a joint Uruguayan-Argentine security task force in Buenos Aires, called for an investigation into "Operation Carrot," in which victims were buried upright on military installations after being tortured and killed. The government ignored the Amnesty Law provision requiring an investigation and refused to act.

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. The small black minority continues to face discrimination.

Workers exercise their rights to join unions, bargain collectively and hold strikes. Unions are well-organized and politically powerful. Strikes are often marked by violent clashes and sabotage.

Uzbekistan

Polity: Dominant party (presidential-dominated)
Economy: Statist-transitional

Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 6
Status: Not Free

Population: 23,188,000

PPP: \$2,438

Life Expectancy: 67.5

Ethnic Groups: Uzbek (71 percent), Russian (8 percent), Tajik, Ukrainian, Turk, others

Capital: Tashkent



Overview:

In 1997, President Islam Karimov continued to curtail basic political rights and civil liberties while trying to improve the country's human rights image by adopting laws on media rights and signing an agreement with the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on ten projects intended to develop democracy. Meanwhile, the government tried to extradite a political opponent from Moscow who ultimately sought asylum in Finland, and the official press continued its attacks on political opponents, particularly those exiled in Turkey and Russia.

Among the world's oldest civilized regions, Uzbekistan became part of the Russian empire in the 19th century. In 1920, it became part of the Turkistan Soviet Socialist Republic. Separated from Turkmenia in 1924, it entered the USSR as a constituent republic in 1925. In 1929 its eastern Tajik region was detached and also made a constituent Soviet republic.

Karimov, former first secretary of the Communist Party, was elected president on December 29, 1991 as head of the People's Democratic Party, the former Communist Party. He received 86 percent of the vote, defeating well-known poet Mohammed Salih of the *Erk* Democratic Party, who got 12 percent. The largest opposition group, the nationalist *Birlik* (Unity), was barred from registering as a party, and the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) was banned entirely, as was the Islamic Adolat group.

The 1992 constitution called for 1994 elections for a new, 250-member legislature, the *Ulu Majilis*, to replace the communist-era, 500-member Supreme Soviet. Throughout 1993 the regime curtailed all opposition. The December 1994 elections were marred by irregularities even with no real opposition to the government party. The PDP took 179 seats, nominally non-party but pro-government candidates gained 20 seats, and the *Vatan Taraqioti* (Fatherland Progress Party), nominally oppositionist but created by the government as a businesspersons' party, six. In 1995, the PDP and its allies filled the remainder in by-elections.

A February 1995 national referendum Karimov ordered to extend his term to coincide with that of parliament's was allegedly approved by 99 percent of 11 million voters. Karimov personally controls everything from industrial production to garbage pick-up in Tashkent, the capital.

Key issues in 1997 were a deteriorating economy and currency instability caused by a second year's poor cotton harvest. Cotton accounts for 40 percent of exports and more than half the country's GDP. The government expropriates as much as 80 to 90

percent of the revenues from the country's annual cotton crop as the main source of budget revenue. The government owns all of the country's cotton gins and pays farmers only one-third of the world price at the official exchange rate. In February, with the IMF withholding \$185 million in stand-by credits until key market reforms are implemented, President Karimov vowed changes, but by year's end no serious initiatives had been taken.

In August, the government raised the possibility of exploring oil and gas reserves in the Aral Sea, depleted and poisoned by Soviet-era irrigation schemes. The same month, the World Bank granted a \$75 million loan to support water supply and sewage projects and health care necessitated by the degradation of the inland sea.

The government maintained pressure on political opponents. In February, Uzbek human rights activist Albert Musim (or Mousin) was detained by Moscow police at the request of Uzbek authorities, who had charged him with "intentionally spreading falsehoods undermining the state and society" under Article 191 of the Uzbek legal code. He was to be extradited but after international pressure and claims that he was a citizen of Kazakhstan, he was released in March and emigrated to Finland, where he was granted political asylum. The government continued its campaign against Shukurullo Misaidov, a former high-ranking official and founder of the Adolat Party, accusing him of past abuses of office and reviling him in the press. In June, the head of state television attacked the Moscow-based opposition and Uzbek dissident Namoz Normomin, exiled in Istanbul.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Uzbekistan is de facto a one-party state dominated by the former Communists, who have put severe restrictions on opposition political activity. The 1994 parliamentary elections were not free and fair, with only pro-government parties taking part.

The constitution, while enshrining a multi-party system, contains articles which undermine the rights of parties to organize. Article 62 forbids "organized activities leading to participation in anti-government organizations." In 1997, a new law on political parties went into effect prohibiting parties based on ethnic or religious lines and those advocating war or subversion of the constitutional order. Prospective parties must submit a detailed list of at least 5,000 members, register with the Justice Ministry and may be banned by the Supreme Court if they are found guilty of persistent legal violations.

Most media remain controlled by the government. Despite a new media law that purports to facilitate press freedom, censorship and other pressures remain. Libel, public defamation of the president and irresponsible journalism (spreading "falsehoods") are subject to financial penalties and possible imprisonment. An independent TV station operating in Samarkand came under increased criticism. The government accused the station of broadcasting foreign films "that propagandize villainy and immorality." There are 515 publications, including some in Korean and Russian, but all are controlled and distributed by national, regional or local governments. Independent political papers such as *Erk* and *Mustaqil hafatlik* (Independent Weekly) are banned. In July, Human Rights Watch issued a report outlining rampant violations of press freedom, including the intimidation and dismissals of journalists and editors, the harassment of Russian journalists and censorship.

Freedoms of assembly, association and free public discussion are seriously cir-

cumscribed. Freedom of religion is nominally respected in this largely Sunni Muslim nation, but the government controls the Muslim Religious Board. In August, President Karimov recalled 2,000 Uzbek students from Turkey, allegedly for involvement with fundamentalists. German Lutherans, concentrated in Tashkent, have complained about the failure of the government to return properties confiscated under Stalin. In March, customs officials confiscated 25,000 copies of the New Testament sent by the Russian Bible Society. Nina Shea, director of the Center for Religious Freedom at Freedom House, included Uzbekistan in a list of 11 countries that persecute Christians.

Ethnic Russians, along with Ukrainians, Tatars and Kurds, continued to leave, citing fears of persecution.

The judiciary is subservient to the regime, with the president appointing all judges with no mechanisms to ensure their independence. The penal code contains many statutes intended to limit free expression and association. Article 60 bans "anti-state activities," and Article 204, aimed at "malicious delinquency," has been used to stifle opposition activity.

While trade unions are legal, their overall structure has been retained from the Soviet era, and there are no independent unions. The Ministry of Labor controls the only trade union confederation. Many foreign joint ventures prohibit independent union activity. Women are underrepresented in high-level positions throughout society. Islamic traditions also undermine the rights of women.

Vanuatu

Polity: Parliamentary democracy

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 170,000

PPP: \$2,276

Life Expectancy: 65.9

Ethnic Groups: Indigenous Melanesian (90 percent), European, Vietnamese, Chinese, other Pacific islander

Capital: Port Vila

Political Rights: 1

Civil Liberties: 3

Status: Free



Overview:

Located in the southwestern Pacific, this predominantly Melanesian archipelago, formerly the New Hebrides, was an Anglo-French condominium until achieving independence in 1980. A number of islands initially faced brief secessionist movements. The independence constitution vests executive power in a prime minister. The unicameral parliament is directly elected for a four-year term. A largely ceremonial president is elected for a five-year term by an electoral college consisting of the parliament and the six provincial council presidents.

The condominium arrangement divided the islands into English and French speaking communities, creating rifts that continue today. The first post-independence government, led by Prime Minister Father Walter Lini's anglophone, center-left Party of

Our Land (VP), largely excluded francophones from key posts. In 1991 a divided VP ousted premier Lini, who formed the National Unity Party. This split the anglophone vote and allowed the francophone Union of Moderate Parties (UMP) to win a plurality in the December elections and form a government under Maxime Carlot.

At the November 30, 1995 elections for an expanded 50 seat parliament a four-party opposition coalition headed by VP leader Donald Kalpokas won a plurality with 20 seats. But the UMP, itself now divided, formed a coalition government with the NUP headed by new UMP leader Serge Vohor.

In February 1996 Carlot formed a government that fell after seven months in the wake of a report by Vanuatu's ombudsman, Marie-Noelle Patterson, implicating Carlot in a banking scandal. The new Vohor government faced a crisis in October as striking members of the paramilitary Vanuatu Mobile Force briefly abducted President Jean-Marie Leye over \$980,000 in unpaid allowances. Courts later tried and sentenced the mutiny leaders, but the crisis raised serious questions about civilian control of security forces.

In May 1997 Vohor reunited the UMP and formed the fourth government since the 1995 elections. In August, the Pacific Islands News Agency awarded its annual Pacific Freedom of Information Award to Ombudsman Patterson, who continued to expose alleged corruption, mismanagement and abuse of power by senior officials. In November parliament repealed the Ombudsman's Act that gave Patterson her mandate. Leye refused to sign the repeal bill pending a Supreme Court review. On November 27 Leye dissolved parliament, citing continued instability and corruption allegations, and called for elections in March 1998. However, at year's end courts were still reviewing the constitutionality of the parliamentary dissolution, as well as the bill repealing the Ombudsman's Act. Undaunted, on December 10 Patterson called on Vohor to resign over a scandal involving the illegal sale of passports to Asian nationals.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Vanuatu can change their government democratically, although elections are not entirely fair due to the government's partisan use of state media.

Judges are mainly expatriates and have been subjected to pressure by successive governments. In 1996 the incoming Carlot government declared a Mauritian judge, whom the Vohor government had appointed to the Supreme Court, and an Australian lawyer, who had represented Vohor in a challenge to Carlot's recent election, as "undesirable immigrants." Both later left Vanuatu. The subsequent Vohor government reportedly threatened to fire the Supreme Court chief justice for issuing warrants against leaders of the VMF mutiny (see above).

Recent UMP-led governments have restricted broadcast coverage of specific political events or issues, and on at least two occasions threatened to revoke the publishing licenses of two newspapers. In fall 1997 the Supreme Court banned the media from publishing or broadcasting information about the cashiered members of the VMF. The state run media consist of the AM Radio Vanuatu, an FM station, the *Vanuatu Weekly* newspaper and a television station serving the capital, Port Vila, all of which offer limited coverage of opposition views. The smaller private press includes several newspapers and party newsletters.

The independent Human Rights Forum, a nongovernmental organization, oper-

ates openly. Traditional norms discriminate against women and limit their opportunities for education and to hold land, which perpetuates their generally inferior status in society. Few women participate in government. Domestic violence is reportedly common. Religious freedom is respected in this predominantly Christian country.

The first Carlot government set a precedent by politicizing the civil service at the middle level. Although more than 80 percent of the population is engaged in agriculture and fishing, there are five active, independent trade unions that are under the Vanuatu Council of Trade Unions (VCTU). Collective bargaining is practiced. The government's dismissal of more than 1,200 striking civil servants during a 1994 general strike and a Supreme Court ruling declaring the strike illegal have caused overall union membership to drop sharply. The 1994 events and a 1995 law requiring unions to give 30 days notice of intent to strike and to provide a list of proposed participants may also have an inhibiting effect on strikes. Vanuatu's tax haven status and banking secrecy laws have made it a regional money laundering center.

Venezuela

Polity: Presidential-legislative democracy
Economy: Capitalist-statist

Political Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Free

Population: 22,311,000

PPP: \$8,120

Life Expectancy: 72.1

Ethnic Groups: Mestizo (67 percent), European (21 percent), black (10 percent), Indian (2 percent)

Capital: Caracas



Overview:

With Venezuela posting record foreign exchange reserves, inflation at less than half of 1996's 103 percent and a newly surging economy, President Rafael Caldera, Latin America's oldest leader, appears close to leaving a legacy of economic reform that is not matched by progress against the country's systemic public corruption, violence, social unrest and an uneven record on human rights. Presidential elections are scheduled for December 1998.

The Republic of Venezuela was established in 1830, nine years after independence from Spain. Long periods of instability and military rule ended with the establishment in 1961 of civilian rule. Under the 1961 constitution, the president and a bicameral Congress are elected for five years. The Senate has at least two members from each of the 21 states and the federal district of Caracas. The Chamber of Deputies has 189 seats.

Until 1993, the social democratic Democratic Action (AD) party and the Social Christian Party (COPEI) dominated politics. Former President Carlos Andres Perez (1989-93) of the AD was nearly overthrown by nationalist military officers in two 1992 coup attempts. In 1993 he was charged with corruption and removed from office by Congress.

Rafael Caldera, a former president (1969-1974) and populist who had broken with COPEI and railed against Perez's market reforms, was elected president in late 1993 at the head of the 16-party National Convergence, which included Communists, other leftists and right wing groups. Amid coup rumors, Caldera was first past the post with 31 percent of the vote in a field of 17 candidates.

The 81-year-old Caldera's term has been marked by a national banking collapse (in 1994), the suspension of a number of civil liberties, mounting violent crime and social unrest and intermittent rumors of a military coup.

In 1995, Caldera's reputation for honesty was tarnished by allegations of corruption among his inner circle, including his sons and other relatives. With crime soaring, oil wealth drying up and the country in the worst economic crisis in 50 years, popular disillusionment with politics continued to deepen. In December state and local elections that saw pro-Caldera candidates crushed, 60 percent of voters stayed away from the polls, even though voting is mandatory.

In April 1996, the government launched "Agenda Venezuela," "a sweeping austerity-stabilization program to secure a \$ 1.4 million IMF stand-by loan, removing many price and foreign exchange controls. In early autumn, the World Bank launched a \$30 million program to reform Venezuela's notoriously corrupt, politicized and inefficient judiciary. The Bank's emphasis on better management and training was scored as insufficient by human rights groups, which pointed out that the program ignored the influence of political parties and corruption.

In September 1997, the government admitted that it had made little progress in streamlining the notoriously corrupt and inefficient public sector, which employs one-sixth of the workforce, due to an "unfavorable political climate." Caldera's privatization initiatives were similarly stalled in a divided congress in which his party holds only one-fifth of the seats. Incursions by Colombia's Marxist guerrillas, particularly in the western border state of Apure, is ruining one of the country's richest agricultural areas, with residents fleeing an alarming rise in kidnappings and extortion. Problems with Colombia dominated the private discussions between Caldera and President Clinton during the American leader's visit in October. Venezuela now exports more oil to the U.S. than any other country.

In the 1998 presidential contest, a growing public aversion to political parties was evidenced by the fact that the 35-year-old mayor of the affluent Caracas suburb of Chacao, Irene Saez, an independent and a former Miss Universe, led the public opinion polls for most of 1997. In October a leading presidential candidate, reformer Claudio Fermin, abandoned the AD, saying it was "unrepresentative."

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens can change their government democratically. However, Venezuela's institutions have been significantly eroded by decades of corruption and drug-trade penetration and also by two 1992 coup attempts. Trust in the political system has been in steep decline since the late 1980s. Voter abstention reached 60 percent in the 1995 state and local elections, the highest since the establishment of elected government. The elections themselves were marked by disorganization and allegations of fraud, which led to numerous riots.

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion and the right to organize political parties, civic organizations and labor unions. However, political expression and civil

liberties were undermined from mid-1994 to mid-1995 by the suspension of constitutional guarantees regarding arbitrary arrest, property rights and freedom of expression, movement and financial activity. Citizen security in general remains threatened by a drug-fueled crime wave that has resulted in hundreds of killings monthly in major cities and vigilante mob killings of alleged criminals. In 1997 there were up to 25 murders recorded in Caracas every weekend. A study published by Caracas' Central University said that Venezuela ranked second of the ten most violent nations in the Americas and Europe.

Widespread arbitrary detentions and torture of suspects, as well as dozens of extrajudicial killings by military security forces and the notoriously corrupt police continue. Since the 1992 coup attempts, weakened civilian governments have had less authority over the military and the police, and rights abuses overall are committed with impunity. Police brutality and murder are rampant as crime increases. Government plans to use the armed forces in the fight against narcotics are worrisome as efforts to involve the military in internal security tend to politicize the generals and demoralize the police. A separate system of armed forces courts retains jurisdiction over members of the military accused of rights violations and common criminal crimes, and decisions by these cannot be appealed in civilian court.

The judicial system is headed by a Supreme Court and is nominally independent. However, it is highly politicized, undermined by the chronic corruption—including the growing influence of narcotics traffickers—that permeates the entire political system and unresponsive to charges of rights abuses. The continued lack of independent courts has dampened the enthusiasm of foreign investors. In November more than 555 prisoners were freed when the magistrates threw out a decades-old Vagrants and Ruffians law, which gave police broad powers to detain people without trial and which was frequently used against the poor, homosexuals and prostitutes.

Venezuela's 31 prisons hold some 25,000 inmates—of whom less than one-third have been convicted of a crime—even though they were designed to hold no more than 14,000. On March 16, Caldera presided over the demolition of the notorious Reten de Catia prison in Caracas. Some observers pointed out that, despite the dramatic gesture, razing the institution only compounded overcrowding at the prisons where Catia inmates were incarcerated. Two days earlier, Human Rights Watch had scored the Venezuelan prison system as medieval. In August at least 29 people died in a clash between Guajiro Indian inmates from Maracaibo in western Venezuela and other prisoners from nearby Ciudad Bolivar at a remote jungle prison that once held the celebrated French jailbreak artist Papillon. The incident revealed the striking degree of control inmate gangs have over the prisons.

Indigenous communities trying to defend their legal land rights are subject to abuses, including killings, by gold miners and corrupt rural police. In a rare sign of independence, in November the Supreme Court temporarily banned new gold-mine concessions by the Caldera government in the immense, ecologically delicate Imataca forest reserve. The lush forest is the home of 10,000 Indians from five tribes—Warao, Arawako, Karina, Akawaio and Pemón—who, as in the case of Venezuela's congress, were not consulted by the government as required by law before promulgation of a decree granting development rights to mining companies to more than half the reserve's 8.6 million acres.

The press is mostly privately owned, although the practice of journalism is super-

vised by an association of broadcasters under the government communication industry. Since 1994 the media in general have faced a pattern of intimidation. Congress has passed a series of restrictive laws involving the rights of reply and journalistic conduct.

On June 27, 1997 Caldera pardoned journalist William Ojeda, who had served five months and one day of a one-year sentence, after being convicted in 1996 of defamation for writing a book, *How Much Is a Judge Worth*, a scathing indictment of corruption in the legal system. At the Seventh Ibero-American Summit hosted by Venezuela in November and attended by leaders from 19 Latin American countries and Spain and Portugal, Caldera unsuccessfully launched a proposal, the "Right to Truthful Information," that critics charged was tantamount to media censorship. In September, the Justice Ministry decertified the Unification Church led by Korea's Sun Myung Moon, saying its activities violated Venezuelan laws and customs.

Labor unions are well-organized but highly politicized and prone to corruption. Security forces frequently break up strikes and arrest trade unionists.

Vietnam

Polity: Communist
one-party

Economy: Statist

Population: 76,580,000

PPP: \$1,208

Life Expectancy: 66.0

Ethnic Groups: Vietnamese (85 to 90 percent), Chinese (3 percent), Muong, Thai, Meo, Khmer, Man, Cham

Capital: Hanoi

Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 7
Status: Not Free



Overview:

In 1997, as severe unrest hit Vietnam's impoverished countryside and the regime's human rights abuses continued, hardliners intent on crushing political dissent and slowing economic reforms gained ascendancy in the ruling Vietnam Communist Party (VCP).

The French colonized Vietnam between 1862 and 1884. During World War II a resistance movement led by Ho Chi Minh fought the occupying Japanese and later battled the returning French. Vietnam won independence in 1954 and was divided between a Communist government in the north and a French-installed one in the south. After years of fighting, North Vietnam overtook the United States-backed South in 1975, and reunited the country in 1976.

The VCP's centralized planning produced economic stagnation, causing widespread hardship and threatening the party's hold on power. In 1986 the government began decentralizing economic decision-making, encouraging small-scale private enterprises and dismantling collectivized agriculture through a program called *doi moi* (renovation).

The 1992 constitution codified many economic reforms. However, it maintained the VCP as the only legal party and retained the party-controlled "People's Committees," which monitor rural affairs. A collective state council was replaced by a presi-

dent who is nominally elected by the National Assembly, although in reality the VCP makes all key decisions. In 1992 hardline General Le Due Anh became state president, forming a ruling troika along with premier Vo Van Kiet and VCP secretary general Do Muoi.

At the VCP's Eighth Congress in June 1996, the party appeared deadlocked on the pace of economic reforms. Le Due Anh and other hardliners favored continued rule through party decree and a commitment to central planning and state-owned enterprises. Rivals advocated a market-oriented, authoritarian regime with power centralized in government institutions.

In 1997 the costs of the party's foundering mounted. The economy slowed after six years of growth averaging 8.5 percent. Continued state control over rice exports meant that, according to the United Nations, farmers received only 16 percent of the profits from production. In May farmers in northern Thai Binh province began demonstrations against corruption, bureaucratic abuse of authority, falling prices for rice crops, and, according to the Paris-based Free Vietnam Alliance (FVA), a crippling burden of 21 taxes. Protests and some violence continued in Thai Binh and nearby provinces for several months, and according to the New York-based Human Rights Watch, authorities arrested at least 100 people under new detention laws. In November several thousand mainly Catholic demonstrators clashed with police in southern Dong Nai province after authorities tried to break up protests against corruption and the confiscation of church land.

The unrest and the financial turmoil that swept other Southeast Asian countries in 1997 strengthened the hand of hardliners and military figures adverse to economic reform. The tightly-controlled Assembly elections of July 20, 1997 gave the VCP 384 seats and "independents," 66. On September 17 the VCP named Tran Due Luong, 60, and Phan Van Khai, 63, both deputy premiers, as state president and prime minister, respectively. Neither appeared capable of advancing a reformist agenda. On December 30, General Le Kha Phieu, the army's hardline political commissar, replaced Do Muoi as party leader.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Vietnamese cannot change their government democratically. The VCP rules Vietnam as a Leninist state and maintains tight control of all political, economic, religious and social affairs. Policy and leadership issues are decided by the Politburo and its five-member Standing Committee. The Fatherland Front, a VCP mass organization, controls candidate selection for the National Assembly and vets true independents.

The judiciary is not independent. The president appoints judges based on political reliability, and the VCP instructs judges on rulings. Authorities routinely ignore limits on pre-trial detention and other legal safeguards. Police and security forces carry out arbitrary arrests and often beat detainees. Prison conditions are harsh, and officials reportedly use some prisoners as forced labor for commercial ventures.

Civil liberties are denied arbitrarily. In 1996 the government established courts to address abuse and corruption by officials, but, as with a civil code introduced in 1995 to cover commercial matters, the VCP's control of the courts subordinates enforcement to political whim. According to the FVA, Directive 31/CP of April 1997 allows local officials to detain citizens without trial for up to two years for activities against national security laws, "but not serious enough to be prosecuted as a crime." Authori-

ties continue to monitor the population, though somewhat less aggressively than in past years, through mandatory household registrations, block wardens, surveillance of communications, informants and official peasant associations and religions.

Vietnamese have some latitude to criticize government corruption and inefficiency, but advocating political reform is illegal. There are an estimated 70 to 200 political prisoners. In April, Human Rights Watch warned that authorities were subjecting dissident intellectuals to increased interrogations, threats and harassment. In August, the government freed dissident Pham Due Kham, although seven of his colleagues, who were also arrested in 1990 and sentenced in 1993 to up to 20 years in jail for circulating a democracy newsletter, remained imprisoned.

The media are state owned, and in recent years the government has shut down several newspapers for violating the tight limits on permissible reporting. According to the Paris-based Reporters Sans Frontières, as of December five journalists were imprisoned. They included the editor of a state-run newspaper who authorities arrested in October on charges of revealing state secrets in articles alleging corruption in the purchase of Ukrainian naval boats. In March the government announced plans to regulate local Internet use, though an October announcement that Internet access would be unrestricted left the situation unclear. Assemblies require a permit, and are limited to occasional small demonstrations over non-political issues.

In 1981 the regime banned the independent Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV). Since then authorities have arrested or placed under house arrest much of the UBCV's leadership, including Patriarch Thich Huyen Quang and numerous monks. All clergy must belong to the official Vietnam Buddhist Church and must obtain government permission to hold meetings or training seminars, operate religious schools, appoint clergy and repair places of worship. Buddhist temples are under government surveillance or control, are occasionally raided by police and are sometimes razed.

The government similarly uses the state-organized Catholic Patriotic Association to control Catholic religious affairs. The government must approve seminary students and occasionally prevents Catholic clergy from being ordained. Numerous Catholic priests remain imprisoned. In the central highlands, the government tightly controls Protestant religious affairs of the ethnic Montagnards and has arrested clergy and ordinary worshippers. The southern-based Cao Dai religious movement also faces restrictions. Authorities reportedly restrict exit permits for Muslims seeking to make the Hajj.

Local authorities impose internal travel, education and employment restrictions on ethnic minorities. Women face violence and social and employment discrimination. Child prostitution and international trafficking of minors is increasing.

The VCP uses trade unions to control workers. Union leaders are VCP members, and all unions must belong to the state-controlled Vietnam General Confederation of Labor. Unions in private enterprises are generally allied with management. The 1994 Labor Code recognizes only a limited right to strike. Nevertheless, strikes do occur, often at foreign-owned factories where managers frequently violate minimum wage and overtime laws and physically abuse and sexually harass workers. According to *The New York Times*, the accounting firm Ernst and Young, in a report for Nike on one of its factories near Ho Chi Minh City, found levels of carcinogens that exceeded local standards by up to 177 times, excessive heat and noise and violations of overtime laws.

The VCP has tried to cultivate a tough image against business corruption. On January 31 a court sentenced four people to death and 16 others to lengthy prison terms in a major corruption trial involving the largest bank and other companies.

Western Samoa

Polity: Parliamentary democracy and family heads
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 179,000
PPP: \$2,726
Life Expectancy: 68.1
Ethnic Groups: Samoan (93 percent), mixed, European, other Pacific islander
Capital: Apia

Political Rights: 2
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Overview:

Located in the south-central Pacific, the predominantly-Polynesian western Samoan islands became a German protectorate in 1899. New Zealand controlled the islands from World War I until 1962, when Western Samoa became the first Pacific state to achieve independence.

The 1960 constitution combines parliamentary democracy with traditional authority. Only the 25,000 *matai*, or chiefs of extended families, can sit in the unicameral *Fono Aoafo Faitulafono* (parliament), except for two seats reserved for citizens of non-Samoan descent. In a 1990 referendum voters narrowly approved universal suffrage for parliament. Previously only *matai* could vote. In 1991 parliament increased its term from three to five years. The head of state, who is traditionally drawn from the four paramount chiefs, appoints the premier and must approve legislation. Malietoa Tanumafali is head of state for life, although his successors will be elected by parliament for five-year terms.

The ruling Human Rights Protection Party (HRPP) has won a plurality in every election since 1982. At the first direct elections in 1991, Prime Minister Tofilau Eti Alesana won a third term after the HRPP won 30 of the 47 parliamentary seats. In 1994 a new ten percent Goods and Services Tax provoked demonstrations and cost the government support, as did the continuing problem of limited official transparency and accountability. In June Chief Auditor Su'a Rimoni Ah Chong tabled a report that alleged corruption among several cabinet ministers and other officials and cited mismanagement in the state-owned Polynesian Airlines. In 1995 the government suspended Ah Chong.

At the April 26, 1996 elections for a 49 seat parliament, the HRPP won just 22 seats, the Samoan National Development Party (SNDP), 13; and independents, 14. Several independents joined the HRPP and in May parliament re-elected Tofilau as premier over the SNDP's Tuiatua Tupua Tamasese Efi.

In May 1997 parliament cut the chief auditor's term to three years and curbed certain powers. The Samoa Civil Liberties Organization warned that the auditor's watchdog role would be compromised. On October 30 5,000 people marched through

the capital demanding the government's resignation over corruption allegations and higher costs of living.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Western Samoans can change their government democratically. Only matai can sit in parliament (except for two seats reserved for non-Samoans), and village high chiefs generally select candidates. Following the 1996 elections the Supreme Court overturned results in four districts for vote-buying and other irregularities, and by-elections were held. In rural areas the government has limited influence, and the 360 village fonos are the main authority.

The judiciary is independent, and defendants receive fair trials. However, many civil and criminal matters are handled by village fonos according to traditional law. The 1990 Village Fono Law provides some right of appeal in such cases to the Lands and Titles Courts and to the Supreme Court. Village fonos occasionally order houses burned, persons banned from villages and other harsh punishments.

The press is both public and private. The 1993 Newspapers and Printers Act requires journalists to reveal sources in libel cases. The 1993 Defamation Act forbids newspapers from publishing certain statements made in court. Neither law has been applied, but their existence, and the Tofilau government's hostile attitude toward the media, contribute to some self-censorship. The controversial *Samoa Observer*, the only daily newspaper, faces several criminal and civil defamation suits brought in recent years by the premier and other officials. In June the paper's publisher and editor were charged with defamatory libel under the Crimes Ordinance over a published letter regarding Tofilau. According to the Pacific Islands News Agency (PINA), the paper had recently reported on a passports-for sale scandal and on Polynesian Airlines's debt. On December 24 the chief justice referred the defense's challenge to the constitutionality of the criminal libel law to the appeals court.

The state-owned broadcast media, consisting of Radio 2AP, a leading source of information, and the sole domestic television station, rarely cover the opposition and anti-government protesters and are banned from covering opposition leader Tuitua. The only independent station, Radio Polynesia, airs diverse views but lack's 2AP's national reach. In 1997 PINA reported that Tofilau threatened to change the law to revoke the *Samoa Observer's* license, and the government discussed revoking Radio Polynesia's license. The government only places advertising in state-owned media.

According to PINA the government instructed civil servants not to participate in an October demonstration (see above). In 1995 the government charged two former MPs with sedition over statements at a 1994 rally. A magistrate dismissed all charges. There are several active human rights groups. Matai often choose the religious denomination of their extended family in this predominantly Christian country.

A New Zealand-funded study of sexual abuse and domestic violence reported in 1996 that nearly 30 percent of women surveyed were victims of battery or sexual abuse. Traditional norms tolerate domestic violence and discourage women from going to police. When abuses are reported, formal charges are sometimes dropped after the perpetrator's family offers an apology to the victim's family. Women face discrimination and are underrepresented in politics since only matai can sit in parliament and the village fonos, and 95 percent of matai are men.

Most Samoans are engaged in subsistence agriculture or fishing. There are two

independent trade unions, plus the Public Service Association which represents government workers. Strikes are legal but occur infrequently. Collective bargaining is mainly practiced in the public sector.

↑ Yemen

Polity: Dominant coalition (military-influenced) **Political Rights:** 5
Civil Liberties: 6
Economy: Capitalist-statist **Status:** Not Free
Population: 14,661,000
PPP: \$805
Life Expectancy: 56.2
Ethnic Groups: Arab majority, African, Asian
Capital: Sanaa



Trend Arrow: Yemen receives an upward trend arrow due to April's generally free and fair parliamentary elections and a trend toward political stability.

Overview: President Ali Abdullah Saleh's ruling General People's Congress (GPC) won an absolute majority of 187 seats in April 27 parliamentary elections. Islah, the government's Islamist junior coalition partner, took 54 seats in the 301-seat parliament, while independent parties took 54. Five seats went to two opposition parties. Despite some irregularities and an opposition boycott led by the Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP), international observers called the elections reasonably free and fair.

After hundreds of years of rule by autocratic *Imams*, or religious leaders, the northern Yemen Arab Republic came under military control in 1962. Saleh was elected president by a Constituent Assembly in 1978. The southern People's Democratic Republic of Yemen was under British control from 1839-1967. After the British withdrawal, hardline Marxist nationalists seized power in the southern capital of Aden. Through the unification of the north and south, the Republic of Yemen was formed in 1990, with Saleh as president and southern YSP leader Ali Salim al-Biedh as vice-president.

In April 1993 parliamentary elections were held after a five-month delay due to civil unrest. The GPC won the most seats and formed a coalition with Islah and the YSP. The parliament formally elected Saleh president and al-Biedh vice-president in October. However, al-Biedh boycotted the new government, calling for demilitarization of the former north/south border, decentralization of authority, and investigation into dozens of pre-election killings of YSP activists.

The south attempted to secede in April 1994, sparking a 70-day civil war. Northern troops triumphed, and al-Biedh and other secessionist leaders fled the country.

In September, parliament revised the 1991 constitution, broadening the powers of the chief executive and empowering itself to elect the next president. It elected Saleh to a fresh five-year term, after which the president will be directly elected. In October, the GPC and Islah formed a governing coalition. Thirteen opposition groups led by the YSP formed the Democratic Opposition Coalition in 1995.

With the help of the IMF and the World Bank, Saleh launched an economic re-

structuring program in 1995. A poor country, Yemen is a small oil producer with per-capita annual income estimated at \$325. In two years, the government has nearly eliminated its budget deficit, brought inflation from over 100 percent to seven percent and fostered growth in the fledgling non-oil sector. April's elections were vital to Saleh's economic program; his hopes of attracting foreign investment hinge on his ability to demonstrate a commitment to political stability. The next challenge will be to implement crucial civil service reforms and cut subsidies in order to stem endemic corruption.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The right of citizens to change their government is limited by concentration of political power in the hands of a few leaders, particularly the president. The parliament is not an effective lawmaking body; it does little more than debate issues, and its power is subjugated by the president's de facto authority to rule by decree. The 24-member cabinet is government-appointed, and currently consists of only GPC officials. After the April elections, the president announced the creation of an appointed Consultative Council to advise the president on certain policy matters.

Reports of fraud in April elections were few and came mostly from opposition members who denounced the elections as the government's attempt to legitimize the "unfair" outcome of the 1994 civil war. There was less violence than expected; the only major incident occurred when a soldier opened fire on a polling station, killing eight people. Other irregularities involved widespread public illiteracy and balloting mistakes.

Central government authority is weak in some rural areas, which are governed by tribal leaders who command heavily armed militias. On occasion, tribal leaders take foreign hostages in order to gain leverage over the government when negotiating over matters such as infrastructure development. These hostages are rarely harmed. In the period just prior to elections, incidence of kidnappings escalated.

The judiciary is not independent. Judges are susceptible to bribes and government influence. All courts are governed by *Shari'a* (Islamic law). There are no jury trials. Local tribal leaders adjudicate land disputes and criminal cases in areas under their authority. Arbitrary arrest and prolonged detention without charge are common practice. Enforcement of due process rights is arbitrary and often nonexistent in cases involving security offenses. More than 200 people were arrested following a series of bombings in Aden this year. Of these, 58 were formally charged and brought to trial in November. Their trials reportedly did not meet international standards of due process.

Authorities reportedly use force during interrogation, though torture is not systematic. At least one man accused of the Aden bombings died in police custody. In 1997 the government banned the use of heavy leg-irons and shackles. Prisons are overcrowded and sanitary conditions poor. The government does not allow access to political prisoners. Security forces monitor personal communications and search homes and offices without warrants.

The government continued to obstruct freedom of the press by arresting journalists, confiscating publications and closing newspapers critical of official policy. A reporter convicted of libel in May was sentenced to 80 lashes and banned from journalism for one year. The ministry of information closed a weekly in September after

it ran an interview with an exiled opposition leader. In April, police raided the home of another journalist, threatening to harm him and his wife if he continued his work. The printing presses, radio and television are all government-owned.

Associations must register with the government. The independent Yemeni Human Rights Organization operates openly, and international human rights observers are allowed broad access. The government arbitrarily cracks down on demonstrations. At least three people were killed in gun battles between security forces and tribesmen protesting a rise in diesel fuel prices in October. However, several thousand people demonstrated against the holding of detainees in September without incident.

Islam is the state religion. The tiny Jewish population in the north faces discrimination in employment opportunities. There are several churches and Hindu temples in the south, but no non-Muslim places of worship in the north. Church services are regularly held without harassment in private homes or public facilities such as schools for the predominantly foreign Christian population.

Citizens with a non-Yemeni parent, and members of the tiny *Akhdam* (servant) minority face discrimination in employment. Women face legal discrimination in marriage and divorce matters. An estimated 80 percent of Yemeni women are illiterate, compared with 35 percent of men. Women enjoy the right to vote, though only 20 percent of those eligible are registered. Women were active participants in this year's parliamentary elections, organizing voter registration drives and education programs and fielding candidates. Most of the 17 women candidates ran as independents because the major parties refused to back them. Female genital mutilation is practiced in some areas; the government has not outlawed this practice.

The 1996 labor law permits only one union per enterprise and only one trade union confederation. State employees are prohibited from joining unions. Workers may bargain collectively and have the right to strike. In 1997 there were two brief strikes by employees of Yemenia, the national airline.

Yugoslavia (Serbia & Montenegro)

Polity: Dominant party **Political Rights:** 6

Economy: Mixed statist **Civil Liberties:** 6

Population: 8,162,000 **Status:** Not Free

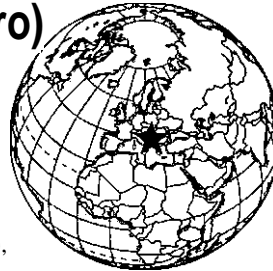
PPP: na

Life Expectancy: na

Ethnic Groups: Serb (80 percent), Montenegrin (7 percent),

Sanjak Muslim (4 percent), Roma, Albanian, others

Capital: Belgrade



Overview:

In 1997, Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic survived the most serious challenge to his political dominance. The massive anti-government demonstrations, launched after his government nullified opposition victories in November 1996 local elections, petered out as the three-party Zajedno (Unity) opposition disintegrated amid political squabbling. In October, Zajedno leader Zoran Djindjic was ousted as mayor of Belgrade. Barred by the constitution from serving another term as Serb president, Milosevic was elected

president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in July by the federal parliament dominated by members of his Socialist Party. His arch-rival, ultra-nationalist Vojislav Seselj of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), lost his bid for the Serb presidency in a fourth-round election in December widely viewed as fraudulent. The winner was Milan Milutanovic, the Yugoslav foreign minister and a Milosevic ally.

Milosevic did suffer some setbacks. In September, the Socialists lost their majority in the 250-seat Serbian parliament, and Milosevic foe Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic was elected president of Montenegro, the other constituent republic of the FRY which controls half the seats in parliament's upper chamber. Several close associates with suspected ties to war-profiteering criminal gangs were assassinated. The economy remained in tatters after a decade of old-style socialist controls, acute corruption, hyperinflation and financial sanctions.

The reconstituted Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, formed in 1992 after Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina seceded, left Serbia—which had seized control of the autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina—and Montenegro as the only republics. The Serbian and Montenegrin legislatures accepted a constitution declaring the FRY a "sovereign federal state based on the principles of equality of its citizens and member republics."

The bicameral Federal Assembly (parliament) consists of the 42-member Chamber of Republics (divided evenly between Serbia and Montenegro) and the 138-seat Chamber of Citizens. In November 3, 1996 elections, despite growing public discontent, a media blockade of the opposition and a highly unfavorable election law fragmentation among the opposition helped the Socialists and the United Left, led by Milosevic's wife, win 64 seats and the Democratic Socialist Party (Montenegro's ruling party), win 20. The Zajedno coalition, consisting of Vuk Draskovic's Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO), the Democratic Party led by Zoran Djindjic, and the Civic Alliance headed by Vesna Pesic, took 22 seats, with 16 going to the nationalist SRS. The remainder were parceled out among six minor parties and coalitions. But the results of the local run-off elections on November 17 came as a shock to the government and the opposition, as the Zajedno alliance won 15 of 18 major cities, including Belgrade. After the government nullified the results, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators poured into the streets of Belgrade, Nis and other major cities. The pro-government local election commissions ignored court decisions ordering them to turn control over to the opposition in several cities. As the crisis escalated, the government closed the independent radio station, B-92. It was allowed back on the air against a background of international criticism. Eventually, Belgrade, Nis and other cities were turned over to the opposition, but the central authorities often denied these municipalities funding and services.

In early 1997, the massive demonstrations began to wane as the opposition coalition was riven by political infighting, particularly over who would run to replace Milosevic as Serb president, with Djindjic sharply criticizing Draskovic's candidacy. Meanwhile, Milosevic dismissed the head of state television, reshuffled the cabinet and proposed legislation on the media that would make it possible for the government to impose heavy fines on its critics. In July, Milosevic was elected president of the FRY by parliament.

In September 21 elections to the Serb parliament, Milosevic's leftist Socialist-United Left alliance won 110 of 250 seats, failing to secure a majority. Seselj's SRS

took 81 seats, and Draskovic's SPO won 46. Five smaller groups mustered a total of 123 seats among them. In December, Dragan Tomic of the SPS, and a close Milosevic ally, was appointed parliamentary speaker.

In the October contest for Serbia's presidency, which was boycotted by Djindjic's Democratic Party and Kosovo's Albanian majority, Seselj—whom human rights groups accused of carrying out "ethnic cleansing" of non-Serbs as mayor of the Belgrade municipality of Zemun—defeated Zoran Lilac, the Socialist candidate and former Yugoslav president, but the vote was invalidated because turnout was allegedly under 50 percent. Lilac was subsequently dropped in favor of Milutanovic. In a fourth run-off on December 21, Milutanovic was declared the winner. The SRS accused the Socialists of "stealing" 100,000 votes to inflate the turnout figures to ensure they exceeded 50 percent. Milutanovic was sworn in on December 30 as the ultra-nationalists boycotted the parliamentary session.

The Montenegrin elections were more problematic for Milosevic. His supporter, incumbent Momir Bulatovic, was defeated in an October 19 run-off by Prime Minister Djukanovic, who pledged to remove the federal prime minister, Radoje Kontic, a Montenegrin loyal to Milosevic (under law the prime minister, who has greater power than the president, must be a Montenegrin if the president is a Serb). Djukanovic vowed to use his votes in the federal parliament to prevent Milosevic from changing the constitution and vesting the largely ceremonial post of Yugoslav president with illegal powers. By year's end, Milosevic had not recognized Djukanovic's victory, and Bulatovic loyalists threatened to disrupt the seating on January 15, 1998. More than politics is at stake; unlike land-locked Serbia, Montenegro controls lucrative smuggling routes whose profits have been siphoned off by Belgrade.

In other issues, pro-Milosevic forces on Belgrade's City Council voted to oust Mayor Djindjic while his own Democrats and smaller parties were absent. By year's end Milosevic faced escalating violence and protests in the Albanian enclave of Kosovo (*See article under Related Territories*). The sanctions barring Yugoslavia access to the IMF, World Bank and membership in the United Nations have had a deleterious impact on a vitiated economy. Per capita GDP was half what it was in 1989, unemployment was over 40 percent, and the value of the dinar plunged. In Bosnia, Milosevic appeared to abandon long-time hard-line ally Radovan Karadzic, supporting more moderate leaders who were openly backed by the U.S. and NATO for her support of the 1995 Dayton Accords.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of the rump-Yugoslavia can elect representatives to the federal and regional parliaments; both the federal president and prime minister are appointed by a parliament dominated by former Communists loyal to Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic. The 1996 federal and local elections were marred by the government's refusal to provide opposition air-time on state-run radio and television. In 1997 Serbian presidential elections were marred by irregularities, including ballot-stuffing, leading to four rounds before a president was elected. The Serb parliamentary elections were generally "free and fair," and irregularities were reported in both rounds of Montenegro's presidential vote.

Political parties are allowed to organize, but their activities are closely monitored by the government.

Freedom of assembly and expression is curtailed. In late 1996 and early 1997, the massive demonstrations were not interfered with, but on several occasions police beat and roughed up protesters. Permits for the protest marches were denied.

The government-controlled radio and television are subservient to Milosevic and the SPS and are staffed by Milosevic loyalists. With independent newspapers expensive or unavailable outside Belgrade, television is the main source of news and commentary. In March, the Serbian government dropped proposed restrictions on an independent press. Legislation presented by President Milosevic would have mandated that no more than 20 percent of all daily newspapers could be privately owned. It also would have restricted the audience of independent TV and radio stations to no more than 25 percent of Serbia's 10 million people. In 1994, the government launched an insidious campaign to silence the independent press by moving to buy controlling interest in leading publications. In this way it took over *Borba*, the last newspaper critical of Milosevic. In 1995, *ex-Borba* journalists launched an independent *Nas* (Our) *Borba*, but the government cut-off access to newsprint, distribution and printing facilities. In 1997, independent TV station Studio B was temporarily taken off the air. Milosevic regained control of the station by packing its board of directors, who then voted to fire reformist directors.

Ethnic Muslims in the Sandzak region between Serbia and Montenegro have faced repression and persecution. In July, the government ordered "temporary measures" to quell political dissent and detain Muslim activists. Kosovo's two-million-strong Albanian majority faces severe persecution and oppression. In October and December, riot police used violence to disperse a peaceful protest by students. On October 28, 17 ethnic Albanians accused of terrorism went on trial in Kosovo. Defense lawyers claim most of the defendants were beaten and tortured. Serbs and Montenegrins are overwhelmingly Eastern Orthodox and free to practice their religion. In December, the government told the World Jewish Congress that it would take up the issue of restoration of Jewish property confiscated during World War II. The country's 150,000 Gypsies (Roma) face violence and discrimination. Neo-Nazi skinhead groups have staged attacks on Roma areas and in Belgrade.

The federal judiciary, headed by a Constitutional and a Federal Court, are subordinate to Serbia and staffed by Milosevic loyalists. The government has openly flouted the rule of law, ignoring statutes that barred the forced mobilization of refugees into military units and decisions mandating that the government recognize election results.

The independent Nezavisimost trade union has faced harassment and persecution, and most trade unions are directly or indirectly controlled by the government or the SPS. Despite restrictions and intimidation, workers have gone out on strike in several sectors over the last four years.

Federal and republican laws prohibit discrimination against women, but women remain underrepresented in high-level government and business sectors.

↓ Zambia

Polity: Dominant party **Political Rights:** 5
Economy: Mixed statist **Civil Liberties:** 4
Population: 9,159,000 **Status:** Partly Free
PPP: \$962

Life Expectancy: 42.6

Ethnic Groups: Bemba, Lozi, Lunda, Ngoni, others

Capital: Lusaka

Trend Arrow: Zambia receives a downward trend arrow due an abortive October coup and an assassination attempt on the former president.



Overview:

Zambia suffered an abortive and nearly bloodless October coup against a government whose leaders' increasingly authoritarian tendencies were only tenuously checked by a combination of a strongly independent but harassed print media, partially autonomous courts and international donor pressure. Dialogue between President Frederick Chiluba's ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) and the main opposition parties faltered at mid-year. Relations among the main political parties remain tense. An apparent August assassination attempt against former president Kenneth Kaunda, still leader of the United National Independence Party (UNIP), which ruled Zambia as a one party state for over a quarter century after achieving independence from Britain in 1964, remains unresolved. Kaunda's detention, and the alleged torture of Zambia Democratic Congress (ZDC) President Dean Mung'omba and others among at least 84 people detained after the botched coup in October and the government's imposition of sweeping emergency power, have been denounced by civil liberties groups.

President Chiluba's November 1996 election to a second five-year term continued to be challenged in court hearings which heard official testimony that over a half million people may have received voter registration cards with identical numbers. The election also renewed MMD dominance of parliament as most opposition parties boycotted the polls, which were rejected by independent monitors and opposition parties as neither free nor fair. The election was conducted under a new June 1996 constitution shaped to bar former president Kaunda, the most credible opposition candidate. State resources and state media were mobilized extensively to support Chiluba and the MMD, and grave irregularities plagued election preparations. Several international observer groups refused to monitor the polls.

Zambia was effectively ruled by President Kaunda and the UNIP from its 1964 independence until the transition to a multi-party 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 (now Zimbabwe) and Portuguese-controlled Mozambique. UNIP's socialist policies stifled free enterprise; combined with a crash in copper prices, Zambia's main export, they impoverished the once-strong economy.

Under international pressure and facing domestic unrest, Kaunda permitted free elections in 1991. Former union leader Chiluba won convincingly, and his MMD party took 125 of 150 seats in the National Assembly. A broad program of economic liber-

alization and privatization of the state-controlled economy has enhanced economic opportunity. However, rampant corruption and narcotics trafficking discourage foreign investment. The country is also hard hit by the AIDS pandemic.

In June, international donors which had frozen aid following the disputed 1996 elections announced a \$400 million package of new assistance to Zambia after the regime pledged a series of reforms, including strong anti-corruption efforts. It is as yet unclear whether these actions and a major government shake-up in December are genuine signs of change or merely camouflage for Zambia's slide back towards authoritarianism.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Zambians' constitutional right to change their government freely was honored through free and fair elections by universal suffrage in 1991, but the victorious President Chiluba and ruling MMD steadily eroded the trust granted them. The 1996 presidential and parliamentary polls failed to meet credible standards as free and fair elections. Extensive use of state funds and state media to promote the government party created an uneven playing field. Who among Zambia's roughly nine million people was eligible to vote was never answered before the election, and independent monitors claim that over two million people were effectively disenfranchised. The government responded to allegations of fraud by attacking domestic and international critics of the electoral process and ordering court seizure of assets of both the *Zambian Independent Monitoring Team* and the *Clean Campaign Committee*. In January, President Chiluba threatened new laws to restrict non-governmental organizations.

Zambia's judiciary has shown autonomy in some cases but appeared strongly influenced by the executive in others. The court system is severely overburdened. Pre-trial detainees are sometimes held for years under harsh conditions before their cases come to trial. Malnourishment and poor health care in Zambia's prisons have caused well over 1,000 prisoner deaths since 1991. Criminal cases are heard in government courts, but many civil matters are decided by customary courts whose quality and consistency vary greatly, and whose decisions are often at variance with both national law and constitutional protections. The state of emergency imposed in October suspends many constitutional protections. The official Permanent Human Rights Commission in December demanded investigation of police officers alleged to have tortured people detained after the coup attempt. Wiretapping by some police and intelligence agencies is legal and is reportedly widely practiced by others.

The government dominates broadcasting and the few independent radio stations offer little political reporting. President Chiluba has retreated from pledges to privatize state media, which are closely controlled by his government. The regime dropped proposals to create a government Media Council to oversee and discipline journalists only after fierce domestic and international protests. After the failed October coup, writer and journalist Frederick Mwanza was detained under the Preservation of Public Security Act of 1960, and several broadcast journalists were dismissed for allegedly expressing sympathy to the would-be putschists. Government pressure on the independent press includes surveillance and denial of printing facilities as well as harassment through criminal libel suits and defamation suits brought by MMD leaders in response to stories on corruption. The independent *Zambia Post* is the government's most persistent critic; its editor, Fred M'membe, continues to publish

while facing over 100 years' imprisonment on various charges. Both the *Post* and the government's *Times of Zambia* are easily accessible on the World Wide Web. In 1996, the government may have made history by ordering Zambia's national server to delete an edition of the *Post*, perhaps the first formal censorship of an Internet newspaper.

Religious freedom is constitutionally-protected and respected. Many non-governmental organizations operate openly, including groups engaged in human rights such as the Zambian Civic Education Association and the Law Association of Zambia. The government human rights commission investigated frequent complaints about police brutality, but has no power to bring charges against alleged perpetrators.

Women do not have the right to full economic participation and are disfavored in rural lands allocation. Married women must have their husband's permission to obtain contraceptives. Women's rights advocates have also demanded concerted government action to curb spousal abuse and other violence against women. Societal discrimination remains a serious obstacle to realization of women's rights even when fair legislation exists. Discrimination against women is especially prevalent in traditional courts that are courts of first instance in most rural areas.

Zambia has one of Africa's strongest trade union movements, and union rights are constitutionally guaranteed. About two-thirds of the country's 300,000 formal sector employees are union members. The Zambia Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), an umbrella for Zambia's 19 largest unions, operates democratically without government interference. Collective bargaining rights are protected by the 1993 Industrial and Labor Relations Act (ILRA), and unions negotiate directly with employers.

Privatization of state enterprises continued through 1997, but development is obstructed by high levels of corruption and inflation. The effectiveness of the new Anti-Corruption Commission is yet to be proved, and some economists believe large amounts of drug money circulating in the underground economy are distorting the money supply. The prospects for new businesses are limited by the country's overall economic weakness and a scarcity of investment capital.

Zimbabwe

Polity: Dominant party
Economy: Capitalist-statist
Population: 11,515,000
PPP: \$2,196
Life Expectancy: 49.6
Ethnic Groups: Shona (71 percent), Ndebele (16 percent), European, others
Capital: Harare

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



Overview: Zimbabwe faced increasing unrest in 1997. Claims to popular legitimacy by President Robert Mugabe and his Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party wore thin. Economic mismanagement and corruption 17 years after independence have left over 60 percent of Zimbabwe's 12 million people mired in poverty.

Mugabe holds only a tarnished electoral mandate. His March 1996 presidential election victory reflected state patronage and repression, and electoral laws favored the ruling party. The country is a de facto one-party state, reflecting ZANU-PF's firm grip on parliament, the security forces and much of the economy. ZANU-PF has dominated Zimbabwe since independence, enacting numerous laws and constitutional amendments to strengthen its grip on power, including awarding itself millions of dollars in annual state subsidies for which no other party qualifies. A still strongly independent judiciary and the power of popular protest are perhaps all that still stand between Mugabe and outright dictatorship.

Zimbabwe achieved independence in 1980 after a bloody guerrilla war against a white minority regime that had declared unilateral independence from Britain in 1965 in what was then Southern Rhodesia. From 1983-87, a civil war suppressed resistance by the country's largest minority group, the Ndebele, against dominance by Mugabe's majority ethnic Shona group. Severe human rights abuses accompanied the strife, which ended with an accord that brought Ndebele leaders into the government, although several senior Ndebele figures have since died under suspicious circumstances. A report distributed at mid-year, "Breaking the Silence, Building True Peace - A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands, 1980 to 1988," which was prepared by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and the Legal Resources Foundation, detailed the officially-sanctioned brutality of the period, in which thousands of people were murdered by government forces.

Seventy-seven-year old Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, president of ZANU-Ndonga party and for 30 years Mugabe's political rival, was in December convicted of a hardly-credible 1995 plot to assassinate Mugabe. The alleged head of Chimwenje, a guerrilla force reportedly aligned with ZANU-Ndonga, was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment in December 1995 as part of the plot. Chimwenje fighters along the Zimbabwe-Mozambique border have not garnered significant public support and are not a serious threat to the government.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The constitutional right of Zimbabwe's citizens to elect their representatives and change their government through democratic means has not been honored. After his only two opponents announced their withdrawal from the race to protest what they called harassment and intimidation of their supporters, President Robert Mugabe won another six-year term of office in 1996, tallying nearly 93 percent of votes cast. Less than one third of those eligible voted in an uncompetitive contest. Voters have been intimidated in opposition strongholds and voter registration and identification procedures and tabulation of results have sometimes been highly irregular. ZANU-PF swept nearly all the seats contested in parliamentary elections and local polls in April and October 1995, entrenching its de facto one-party rule. There is very limited coverage of opposition viewpoints in the heavily state-controlled or influenced media, and ZANU-PF makes heavy use of state resources in its campaigning. Twenty of the National Assembly's 150 members are presidential appointees, and ten others are traditional chiefs also beholden to the government. Only three oppositionists won seats in the 1995 parliament, and one, the Reverend Sithole, has since been jailed. What remains is the form but little of the substance of representative government, despite some signs of parliamentary unease in 1997 over growing corruption and awarding of govern-

ment contracts to members of the president's family.

The judiciary remains largely independent and has repeatedly struck down or disputed government actions. Its protection of basic rights, however, has been subverted by 13 constitutional amendments since 1980 that easily pass the ZANU-PF-controlled National Assembly. Civil society groups have strongly protested several provisions of the proposed Public Order and Security Bill which would restrict rights of assembly and allow police officials to impose arbitrary curfews. Especially troubling is the inclusion of intelligence agencies among law enforcement agencies empowered to disperse "illegal" assemblies or arrest participants. Another clause establishes as a criminal offense for any individual or media to utter, publish or distribute news deemed by the state to be subversive, without defining what would be considered subversive. Security forces, particularly the Central Intelligence Organization, often ignore basic rights regarding detention, search and seizure and sometimes appear to act as an extension of the president's office or ZANU-PF. Prison conditions are reportedly harsh.

The right of free assembly is constitutionally-guaranteed but generally respected only for groups the government deems non-political. Union demonstrations against income tax increases were violently dispersed in December and led to widespread rioting in the capital, Harare. Several groups focus on human rights, including the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, the Zimbabwe Human Rights Organization (Zimrights), the Legal Relief Fund and the Southern African Human Rights Foundation. Religious practice is not interfered with.

The small independent print media are thoroughly overshadowed by state-run media, and election media coverage especially has been heavily slanted in favor of the government. The government directly controls all broadcasting and several newspapers, including all dailies, and indirectly controls most others. Extensive self-censorship is promoted by government control over editorial policy and appointments in most media, and in the small independent press by threat of anti-defamation statutes and a wide-ranging Official Secrets Act. Defamation suits helped force the independent *Gazette* newspaper to close in 1995. The Parliamentary Privileges and Immunities Act has been used to compel journalists to reveal their sources regarding reports on corruption before the courts and parliament.

Women's rights are afforded extensive legal protection, although married women still cannot hold property jointly with their husbands. Especially in rural areas, access to education and employment for women is difficult, and few women are fully aware of their legal rights or have the ability to pursue them. Domestic violence against women is common, and a 1997 survey by a women's organization found that over 80 percent of women had been subjected to some form of physical abuse.

The Labor Relations Act (LRA) broadly protects private sector workers' rights, but public sector workers are barred from joining unions. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) is highly critical of government economic policies and has organized numerous strikes and demonstrations. After massive demonstrations by trade unionists in December, union leader Morgan Tsvangirai was assaulted in an attack that union members blamed on the government. A series of sometime violent strikes won pay increases of 30 percent or more for many workers in 1997.

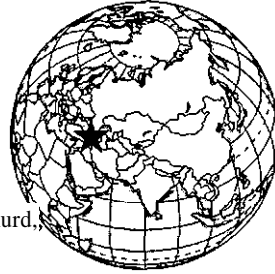
Zimbabwe's 1996 economic revival, marked by improved harvests following a long drought and expanded mining activities, has foundered as the country's fledgling

stock market and currency both plunged late in 1997. Plans to expropriate about 1,500 white-owned farms could hurt agricultural production. The government's proposed land redistribution, through seizure of white-owned properties, has been challenged in the courts, but Mugabe pledged again in December that the program would soon be carried out to provide land for the 60 percent of Zimbabweans who practice subsistence agriculture. Under existing laws, lands may be seized but not confiscated, and the government has lacked resources to make large-scale purchases. The government has yet to privatize numerous loss-making state enterprises, and the structural adjustment program fashioned by international donors and creditors has been undermined by heavy government borrowing and a fast-growing money supply. Real and perceived corruption is also considered a serious obstacle to business development.

Armenia/Azerbaijan

Nagorno-Karabakh

Polity: Armenian-occupied **Political Rights:** 5*
Economy: Mixed statist **Civil Liberties:** 6
Population: 150,000 **Status:** Not Free
Ethnic Groups: Armenian (95 percent), Assyrian, Greek, Kurd,
 others



Ratings Change: Nagorno-Karabakh's political rights rating changed from 6 to 5 due to increased mediation in the crisis.

Overview:

Foreign Minister Arkady Gukasyan was elected president of the break-away predominantly Armenian enclave of Azerbaijan in September, replacing Robert Kocharian, who was named prime minister of Armenia in March. The United States joined Russia and France as co-chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Minsk Group in trying to mediate the nearly decade-long crisis, but by year's end the Karabakh leadership rejected an incremental, step-by-step approach to the political and military solution agreed upon earlier by Azerbaijan and Armenia.

In 1921, Nagorno-Karabakh was transferred from Armenia and placed under Soviet Azerbaijani jurisdiction by Josef Stalin. Subsequently, the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (region) was created, with a narrow strip of land bordering Armenia proper. In 1930, Moscow permitted Azerbaijan to establish and resettle the border areas between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia.

In 1988, Azeri militia and special forces launched violent repression in response to Karabakh Armenians' call for greater autonomy. In 1991, the legislatures of Nagorno-Karabakh and Shahumyan voted for secession. Multi-party elections were held, and on January 6, 1992 parliament's inaugural session adopted a declaration of independence and elected Artur Mkrtchian president. Following his assassination in April, Vice President Georgi Petrosian became president; he resigned in June 1993 and was replaced by Garen Baburian. In much of 1993-94, parliament did not meet, as many parliamentarians were fighting on the front lines. At the end of 1993, which saw military gains by the Karabakh Armenians, Azeri forces launched offensives in the northern, southern and eastern parts of the enclave. Before a cease-fire was reached in 1994, Karabakh Armenian forces had established military control over Karabakh and six Azerbaijan districts.

In December 1994, the Karabakh Supreme Council—the executive body of parliament—elected Robert Kocharian, head of the state defense committee, to the post of president for a five-year term. The president appointed parliamentarian Leonard Petrossian as prime minister. In January 1995, President Kocharian created a governmental structure consisting of nine ministries, seven state departments and five state enterprises. Elections to a 33-member parliament were held in April and May, with an 80 percent voter turnout. Prior to the vote, a public organization, Democratia, was formed to assist all political parties, unions and other groups in preparation for the elections, which were generally free and fair.

In early 1997, the Karabakh leadership rejected a draft of a Minsk Group pro-

posal that envisaged autonomy for Karabakh within Azerbaijan, the withdrawal of Armenian forces from occupied Azerbaijan territory beyond the formal borders of the enclave, the demilitarization of the Karabakh town of Shusha—strategically located overlooking Stepanakert, the capital—the deployment of international peacekeeping forces in the so-called Lachin corridor (the only overland link between Karabakh and Armenia) and the downgrading of the Karabakh army to a local militia.

In September presidential elections, Gukasyan defeated two other candidates, winning 89.3 percent of the vote. The poll was deemed free and fair by 40 international observers, though the election was considered invalid by most of the international community.

In October, leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, attending the Strasbourg summit, agreed to a phased approach to resolving the conflict, beginning with demilitarization of the territory and some autonomy within Azerbaijan. In rejecting the plan, Karabakh officials said it failed to address the legitimate security concerns of the Nagorno-Karabakh population and that a comprehensive "package" solution was preferable.

No progress was reported after a meeting of the Copenhagen conference of OSCE foreign ministers in December.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Residents of Nagorno-Karabakh technically have the means to change their government democratically. Parliamentary elections in the 1995 were generally free and fair, as were the 1996 and 1997 presidential elections. With the exception of Armenia, most of the international community does not recognize Nagorno-Karabakh as independent from Azerbaijan.

Years of war have constrained rights and civil liberties. A state of emergency is still in force. Border regions have been subjected to sporadic attacks. Freedom of movement has been curtailed by war, and there are restrictions on assembly and association, as well as self-censorship in the press. With Armenians making up over 95 percent of the country, the Armenian Apostolic Church is the main religion, and the ethnic aspect of the war has constrained the religious rights of the very few Muslims still left in the region. Although international efforts still include discussions about the return of Azeri refugees, Azeri homes and businesses have been expropriated, confiscated or destroyed, mosques have been leveled or remain abandoned and Muslim graves have been desecrated. Armenians occupying Azeri territory have prevented the return of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced Azeris.

China

Hong Kong

Polity: Appointed governor and partly elected legislature
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 5,847,000
Ethnic Groups: Chinese (98 percent)

Political Rights: 6*
Civil Liberties: 3*
Status: Partly Free



Ratings Change: Hong Kong's ratings changed from 4/2 to 6/3 due to the dismantling of the elected legislature and civil liberties restrictions.

Overview: After 156 years of British rule, Hong Kong returned to Chinese sovereignty on July 1, 1997 amid fears that the freedoms which underpinned its emergence as one of the world's great cities would be undermined by a conservative business elite, which dominated a new Beijing-appointed government after seeing its traditional political influence eroded under a now-dismantled elected legislature. While political demonstrations, dissent and debate all continued, the new government rolled back the legal basis for many freedoms.

Hong Kong consists of Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula, both ceded in perpetuity by China to Britain in the mid-1800s following the Opium Wars, and the mainland New Territories, "leased" for 99 years in 1898. As a colony, executive power rested with a British-appointed governor. The Legislative Council (Legco) consisted of 60 gubernatorial appointees, senior civil servants and members chosen by "functional constituencies" representing bankers, industrialists and trading houses. A strong rule of law, a free press and the entrepreneurial spirit of mainland refugees and their children contributed to a post-War economic boom.

Under the 1984 Joint Declaration, Britain agreed to transfer sovereignty over the colony to China in 1997. China would maintain Hong Kong's political, legal and economic autonomy for 50 years. Britain and China's 1990 agreement to introduce the first-ever direct elections for 18 Legco seats in 1991, followed by 20 in 1995, 24 in 1999 and 30 in 2003, won support from residents whose political consciousness had been raised by the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in Beijing.

Electoral reforms proposed by governor Christopher Patten after taking office in 1992 made the 1995 Legco elections the first in which all seats were either directly or indirectly elected. Most importantly, the reforms granted nearly 2.7 million workers a second vote for the 30 functional constituency seats. Pro-democracy candidates won 16 of the 20 directly-elected seats, led by Martin Lee's Democratic Party with 12. China had rejected the proposals, and after 17 rounds of inconclusive Sino-British talks had announced, in December 1994, that it would dissolve all elected bodies after the handover.

In December 1996 a Beijing-organized selection committee chose shipping tycoon Tung Chee-Hwa, China's preferred candidate, as the post-handover chief executive. The committee also appointed a 60-member, post-colonial Provisional Legislative Council (PLC) composed of pro-business and pro-China representatives. No Democratic Party legislators and few independents sought seats in the PLC.

In February 1997 China's rubber stamp National People's Congress (NPC) ap-

proved plans to repeal or amend 24 Hong Kong laws which allegedly contravened the 1990 Basic Law, Hong Kong's Beijing-drawn, post-colonial constitution. They included several provisions of Hong Kong's 1991 Bill of Rights, including one placing the bill above other laws, and two laws, the Societies and Public Order Ordinances (POO), that Legco had amended in 1992 and 1995, respectively, to conform with the Bill of Rights. Public pressure forced Tung to somewhat modify the plans before the PLC approved them on June 14 (see below).

Immediately after the handover China dismantled Legco as well as the elected district boards and municipal councils. On September 28 the PLC approved arrangements for Legco elections scheduled for May 1998. As in 1995, 20 seats will be directly-elected, but the "first-past-the-post" system for single-member districts will be scrapped in favor of proportional balloting for five four-seat districts, which critics say will help smaller pro-business and pro-China parties at the expense of pro-democracy parties. Further, the PLC reduced the franchise for the 30 functional constituency seats to 180,000 business and professional leaders. An appointed electoral college will choose ten seats.

The financial crisis that battered regional currencies eroded the competitiveness of the Hong Kong dollar, which since 1983 has been pegged to the U.S. dollar. Fears that the high interest rates needed to maintain the peg would harm the property and banking sectors sent the stock market plunging 40 percent in October and had it reeling through December.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Hong Kong citizens cannot change their government democratically. Under the British, Legco became fully elected by 1995, albeit under a powerful, appointed governor. The current appointed legislature offers even fewer institutional checks against the appointed chief executive. Although the Basic Law allows for all legislative seats and the chief executive to be elected by universal suffrage after 2007, this would have to be approved by two-thirds of the legislature (only half of which would be directly elected by then), and by the chief executive and China's NPC. Under the Basic Law the NPC can repeal Hong Kong laws which conflict with the Basic Law.

In July an appeals court ruling held that although the Basic Law made no provisions for the appointed PLC to replace the elected Legco, the body was legal because it had been authorized by China's NPC. The nongovernmental Human Rights Monitor (HRM) noted that the appeals court's ruling that Hong Kong courts cannot review decisions or bodies authorized by the NPC, and that the NPC and the bodies it creates have complete authority over Hong Kong, ran counter to Basic Law guarantees.

The judiciary is independent, and trials are fair. An independent commission nominates judges. After the handover a Court of Final Appeal replaced the Privy Council in London as the court of last resort. The Court is prohibited from hearing cases broadly involving "acts of state such as defense and foreign affairs," and under the Basic Law matters before the Court that affect the Chinese government must be referred to the NPC for interpretation, both of which critics say limit the Court's jurisdiction. Tung boosted confidence in the Court by appointing a respected barrister as its first chief justice. Police abuse of suspects is a continuing problem.

The last Legco amended and liberalized laws on treason and sedition and passed a controversial Official Secrets Ordinance in order to comply with Basic Law require-

ments and pre-empt harsher post-handover legislation. Tung said the recent laws were not sufficient and that additional laws against subversion and secession, also required under Article 23 of the Basic Law and which Chinese authorities have used to imprison mainland dissidents and journalists, will be enacted after the 1998 elections.

With the exception of the outspoken *Apple Daily*, in the waning years of British rule most newspapers practiced some self-censorship regarding Chinese leaders, Hong Kong's business elite and the territory's future political arrangements. Mainland and local companies rarely advertised in the *Hong Kong Economic Journal* and other occasionally critical newspapers. After the handover there was no overt press censorship, but some self-censorship continued.

On June 14 the PLC approved amendments to the Societies Ordinance requiring all nongovernmental organizations (NGO) be registered (previously NGOs only had to inform authorities of their existence), allowing authorities to deny registration on broad "national security" grounds and barring political parties from receiving funds from foreign political organizations. The PLC also amended the POO to require police permission to hold demonstrations (previously organizers only had to notify police of a demonstration), which now can be banned on national security grounds. In July authorities listed advocacy of Taiwanese or Tibetan independence as grounds for banning demonstrations. After the handover, demonstrations on human rights, labor and other issues continued, although according to Human Rights Watch/Asia organizers sometimes faced difficulties in having venues approved. In October police removed Taiwanese flags in Hong Kong marking National Day in Taiwan.

In recent years education bureaucrats have deleted references to the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre and otherwise revised textbooks to conform with Beijing's version of history. In July the government said textbooks should avoid any judgment on the pro-democracy protests that preceded the Tiananmen crackdown.

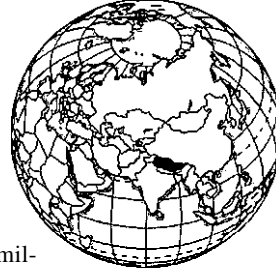
China had insisted that all Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong be repatriated before the handover. Thousands returned voluntarily, although British officials forcibly repatriated several thousand refugees. Some 1,300 Vietnamese refugees and 1,000 others considered "economic migrants" remained by June 30.

Unions are independent. The Trade Union Ordinance places some restrictions on organizing and allows authorities to monitor union administration. On October 29 the PLC repealed laws on collective bargaining, anti-union discrimination and the right to associate internationally without notifying the government, which Legco had passed to bring labor laws in line with international standards. The amendments also prohibit the use of trade union funds for political purposes. Workplace anti-discrimination legislation is inadequate, and women are discriminated against in employment matters. Violence against women continues to be a problem.

Tibet

Polity: Communist one-party
Economy: Statist
Population: 4,590,000*
Ethnic Groups: Tibetan, Han Chinese

Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 7
Status: Not Free



*This figure from China's 1990 census includes 2.096 million Tibetans living in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and 2.494 million Tibetans living in areas of eastern Tibet that beginning in 1950 were incorporated into four Chinese provinces. Independent observers estimate there are at least six million Tibetans under Chinese rule.

Overview:

Prior to the Chinese invasion in 1949 Tibet had been a sovereign state for the better part of 2,000 years, coming under modest foreign influence only during brief periods in the 13th and 18th centuries. China invaded Tibet with 100,000 troops in late 1949 and in 1951 formally annexed the country.

In 1959 popular uprisings against Chinese rule culminated in mass pro-independence demonstrations in Lhasa, the capital. Over the next several months China crushed the uprisings, killing an estimated 87,000 Tibetans in the Lhasa region alone. The Tibetan spiritual and temporal leader, the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, fled to Dharamsala, India, with 80,000 supporters.

In 1960 the International Commission of Jurists called the Chinese occupation genocidal and ruled that prior to the 1949 invasion Tibet had possessed all the attributes of statehood as defined under international law. In 1965 China created a Tibet Autonomous Region encompassing only half the territory of pre-invasion Tibet. The rest of Tibet had, since 1950, been incorporated into four southwestern Chinese provinces. During the Cultural Revolution, China imprisoned thousands of monks and nuns, destroyed all but 11 of Tibet's 6,200 monasteries and burned sacred texts in an effort to obliterate Tibetan culture. By the late 1970s 1.2 million Tibetans had died as a result of the occupation.

Between 1987 and 1990 Chinese soldiers forcibly broke up peaceful demonstrations throughout Tibet, killing hundreds and arresting thousands more. In May 1995 the Dalai Lama identified six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, Tibetan Buddhism's second highest religious figure. Chinese authorities immediately arrested Chadrel Rinpoche, the director of a Beijing-appointed search committee for the Panchen Lama reincarnate, on suspicion of having communicated the candidates' names to the Dalai Lama and detained the child and his family. Beijing also rejected the Dalai Lama's authority in the selection process, and in November Chinese authorities orchestrated the selection of another six-year-old boy as the 11th Panchen Lama. Since the Panchen Lama identifies the reincarnate Dalai Lama, Beijing will be able to control the identification of the 15th Dalai Lama.

In April 1997 a Shigatse court sentenced Chadrel Rinpoche to six years impris-

onment for "plotting to split the country" and "leaking state secrets," and sentenced an assistant and a business associate to four- and two-year prison terms, respectively.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Tibetans lack the right of self-determination and cannot change their government democratically. In a December report the International Commission of Jurists called for a United Nations-supervised referendum on self-determination. China appoints compliant Tibetan officials to some largely ceremonial posts to provide a veneer of self-rule, but in reality controls all major policy decisions and sharply restricts basic rights and liberties. According to the London-based Tibet Information Network (TIN), only 44 percent of regional or higher level government department heads are Tibetan, and 62 of 72 county-level deputy heads are Chinese, who wield actual power behind Tibetan figureheads. Chinese officials also dominate the military and police.

Arrests of political dissidents and torture in prisons have increased since July 1994, when the Chinese government decided at a high-level Third Work Forum on Tibet in Beijing to tighten political control over the region. In December 1997 the Dharamsala-based Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy said there are 1,216 known Tibetan political prisoners, many of them monks and nuns, held for displaying Tibetan flags or symbols of cultural identity, holding peaceful demonstrations, possessing a photograph of the Dalai Lama, forming prisoner lists, making political posters or other non-violent activities. They include Ngawang Choephel, arrested in 1995 while on a Fulbright scholarship and sentenced in December 1996 to 18 years in prison for alleged espionage.

According to the Office of Tibet in New York, in 1996 and 1997 at least ten Tibetans died from police torture and mistreatment. An October 1997 report by the Boston-based Physicians for Human Rights found that of 258 Tibetan refugees surveyed in Dharamsala, India, in 1996, 15 percent said they had been tortured in Tibet, including 94 percent of those who had been detained for political activities. Security forces routinely rape imprisoned nuns. Political prisoners are reportedly subjected to forced labor.

In 1996 Chinese-organized "re-education" teams began conducting forcible political indoctrination sessions in Lhasa's three main monasteries and several smaller ones aimed at discrediting the Dalai Lama and his selection of the reincarnate Panchen Lama. An October 1997 report by Human Rights Watch/Asia found that the refusal of monks and nuns to renounce their beliefs had resulted in more than 150 arrests, two known deaths and 1,300 expulsions in a campaign that had reached 900 monasteries and nunneries by September 1997. Authorities replaced many purged monks and nuns with pro-China counterparts.

Authorities continue to monitor and control monasteries and nunneries through state-organized "management committees." In 1995 authorities placed a near total moratorium on the building of new monasteries and nunneries, tightened limits on the number of monks and nuns permitted in monasteries and limited the total number of clerics permitted in Tibet. Authorities have closed several monasteries and nunneries on political grounds. Religious figures are generally banned from giving large public teachings. Some politically active monks face internal travel restrictions. In 1996 China banned all photographs of the Dalai Lama from monasteries and residences, extending a 1994 ban on the sale of the Dalai Lama's photograph and on displaying such

photographs in state offices.

In April 1996 China launched its "Strike Hard" campaign in Tibet which targeted "splittists" who support Tibetan independence and the Dalai Lama's leadership. According to Amnesty International police executed an undetermined number of Tibetans for "counter-revolution" or "subversion" following summary trials.

Although Beijing's draconian family planning policy ostensibly does not extend to Tibetans and other minorities, the one-child rule is generally enforced in Tibet. Authorities often use the threat of fines to coerce women into undergoing abortions and sterilizations.

Beijing's Sinification policy includes granting employment, education, healthcare and housing incentives to lure ethnic Chinese into migrating to Tibet. This has altered the demographic composition of the region, displaced Tibetan businesses, reduced employment opportunities for the Tibetans, and further marginalized Tibetan cultural identity. Since 1992 Beijing has expanded Tibet's road and air links with China, further facilitating the mass settlement of Han Chinese into Tibet.

Beijing's attempts to indoctrinate Tibetan primary and middle school students include daily ceremonies to raise the Chinese flag and sing the Chinese national anthem. According to TIN, authorities have announced they will end Tibetan's status as the sole language of instruction in primary schools and introduce Mandarin, and Tibet University has mandated that Mandarin be used in history courses. Tibetans are whipsawed between seeing their cultural autonomy undermined by the increasing use of Mandarin and needing to learn Mandarin for preferences in government and factory employment and university admission. In 1996 there were at least four bombings of Chinese government buildings, Chinese-owned shops and the residence of a Chinese sympathizer, which observers attributed to rising unrest over China's repressive rule.

Georgia

Abkhazia

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary
Economy: Mixed-statist

Political Rights: 6
Civil Liberties: 5
Status: Not Free

Population: 380,000 (1990)

Ethnic Groups: Pre-war: Georgians, Abkhaz, Russian, Ukrainian, Armenian and others. Since 1993, most Georgians fled or were expelled.



Overview: In 1997, international efforts continued to mediate the status of Abkhazia, which violently ceded from the Republic of Georgia in 1993. In November, Abkhaz and Georgian negotiators established the Georgia-Abkhazia Coordination Council, which included representatives from Georgia, Abkhazia, the United Nations, Russia, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and several observer countries. The agenda of the Council, which scheduled a working meeting for February 1998, in-

cluded cease-fire and security issues, the return of 200,000 ethnic Georgian refugees and economic and social problems. Abkhazia's self-proclaimed independence is not recognized by Georgia, which considers the region an integral part of its territory.

Abkhazia, strategically located on Georgia's Black Sea coast, was an "autonomous" administrative unit during the Soviet period. Its borders were drawn to include not only Abkhaz who were native to the region but also a large ethnic Georgian population. In 1990, ethnic Abkhaz, 30 percent of whom are Muslims, made up 17.8 percent of the population of 380,000, while Christian Georgians comprised 45.7 percent. In 1978, while current Georgian President Eduard Shevardnadze was Communist Party first-secretary in Georgia, Abkhaz literary and political figures launched a protest over cultural, linguistic, political and economic conditions in the region. Under pressure from Moscow, Shevardnadze implemented a number of concessions, including an affirmative action program that increased the role of Abkhaz elites in governing the region. In 1990, the party and state apparatus as well as most of the local economy were firmly in control of the ethnic Abkhaz minority; Abkhaz made up 67 percent of government ministers and 71 percent of regional department heads.

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, Abkhaz officials pressed for greater autonomy with then-President Zviad Gamsakhurdia of Georgia, demanding guaranteed representation of not less than 50 percent of the seats in the 65-seat Abkhaz Supreme Soviet (parliament). Gamsakhurdia agreed to a compromise that gave greater representation to predominantly Abkhaz regions: 28 seats were reserved for the Abkhaz, 26 for Georgians and 11 for other nationalities. Conflicts between Abkhaz and Georgian deputies arose over appointments to government posts.

After Shevardnadze took over from the ousted Gamsakhurdia during the 1992 civil war, he sent troops into the Abkhazian capital of Sukhumi to free hostages being held by Gamsakhurdia loyalists. After they came under attack, Georgian troops took over the capital. In 1993, with the help of Russian units, Chechens and other North Caucasian peoples, Abkhaz insurgents launched an assault on Georgian forces in Sukhumi. In July, with more than half of Abkhazia in rebel hands, the Abkhazian parliament approved a Georgian-Russian compromise cease-fire that called for the withdrawal of all forces from Sukhumi. But in September, Abkhaz forces launched a ferocious attack near Sukhumi with the help of Russian air support. Shevardnadze, who went to Sukhumi in a last-ditch effort to encourage his forces, accused Russia of betraying the cease-fire agreement. After rebels captured Sukhumi and drove Georgian forces from Abkhazia, they launched a campaign of "ethnic cleansing" that spurred an exodus by 200,000 Georgian refugees. An estimated 20,000 civilians were killed in the fighting.

In early 1994, Georgian and Abkhaz diplomats signed an agreement in Moscow that called for a cease-fire. Subsequent UN- and Russian-sponsored negotiations led to some repatriation of refugees under UN supervision. Some 1,500 mostly Russian peace-keepers patrol the border between western Georgia and Abkhazia. The Abkhazians claim that a deteriorating economy prevents further repatriation. Paramilitary groups such as the "White Legion," comprised of Georgian refugees, have launched attacks on Russian troops and Abkhaz targets.

In September 1996, Vladislav Ardzinba, president of Abkhazia, formally announced a referendum on independence and elections for a new 35-member parliament. Georgia's parliament denounced the election plan as illegal given that the 200,000

ethnic Georgians displaced by the war would not be able to participate. The elections were judged free and fair by international observers and returned a pro-independence majority. Ethnic Georgians voted in the Gali region, where there were several bomb explosions, allegedly the work of Georgian paramilitary units that infiltrated the area. The first session of the new assembly convened on December 12. Prime Minister Gennady Gagulia was reconfirmed, and Sokrat Jinjolia was elected parliamentary speaker.

Abkhazia's economy has been virtually strangled by a blockade imposed by Russia in 1995.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Residents of Abkhazia can elect government officials, but the 200,000 displaced Georgians could not vote in the 1996 parliamentary elections for a 35-member National Assembly. Observers from Russia and the Caucasus deemed the vote "free and fair," though in Gali, populated by ethnic Georgians, there were reports that there were no voting booths in some polling places in the areas.

An Abkhazian constitution was approved in November 1994, establishing a presidential-parliamentary system. There are several political parties and public organizations, including the pro-government Popular Front of Abkhazia (*Aydylara*). The 1996 parliamentary elections were officially non-party. Of the 30 deputies elected in the first-round there were 19 Abkhaz, four Russians, three Armenians, two Georgians, one Greek and one Kabardian.

There are a handful of independent newspapers; electronic media are controlled by the government and generally reflect government positions.

Clan and regional loyalties also play an important role in politics. As many as 400 to 500 people were killed in clan violence that often pitted Abkhazians from Ochamchire, who are perceived as less hostile to Georgians, and those from Gudauta. There have been reports of repressions against Ochamchirian and Tkvarchelian Abkhaz in the city of Gagra. Criminal gangs, comprised of Abkhaz and ethnic Georgians, are a serious problem, as is corruption.

Ethnic relations remain tense. Georgians in the Gali region have complained of harassment by Abkhaz militia. Attacks against Armenians have also been reported, and many Armenians have left.

The constitution enshrines an independent judiciary, but the judicial system still includes Soviet-era practices. Georgian groups report there are 350 political prisoners in Abkhazia, but there is no independent confirmation of that figure. Most judges are nominated by the president and require parliamentary approval. There are no legal encumbrances to freedom of religion. Trade union structures are former affiliates of the Georgian Confederation of Trade Unions.

India

Kashmir

Polity: Indian-administered

Economy: Capitalist-statist
Population: 7,719,000

Ethnic Groups: Muslim majority, Hindu minority

Political Rights: 7

Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free



Overview:

In 1997, the first full year in office for a state government elected in hugely flawed elections in October 1996, the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir improved marginally in the cities, but widespread human rights violations continued, as did fighting between militants and security forces in the countryside.

Following centuries of rule by Afghan, Sikh and local strongmen, in 1846 the British seized control of the Himalayan region of Kashmir and sold it to the Hindu maharajah of the neighboring principality of Jammu. The maharajah subsequently incorporated other distinct Himalayan areas into a new princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. At the partition of British India in August 1947, Maharajah Hari Singh attempted to preserve Jammu and Kashmir's independence. Pakistani tribesmen invaded, and in October the maharajah agreed to Jammu and Kashmir's accession to India in return for autonomy and a promise of eventual self-determination. Indian Premier Jawaharlal Nehru immediately appointed Sheik Abdullah of the secular National Conference as head of the Jammu and Kashmir government, and Indian troops engaged Pakistani forces in the first of three wars between the two countries.

A United Nations-brokered cease-fire in 1949 established the present-day boundaries. Pakistan retained control of roughly one-third of Jammu and Kashmir, including the western third of Kashmir. India's share of Jammu and Kashmir included two-thirds of Kashmir, predominantly-Hindu Jammu and Buddhist-majority Ladakh.

The present conflict centers around Kashmir, a Muslim-majority land with a distinct language and culture. The conflict has been exacerbated by New Delhi's failure to honor pledges of self-determination for the territory, which India claims it cannot do until Pakistan withdraws its troops from territory under Islamabad's control. Article 370 of India's 1950 constitution and a 1952 accord granted the territory substantial autonomy. But in 1953 Nehru dismissed Abdullah's government. Successive Indian-backed governments passed legislation largely annulling the autonomy guarantees, and in 1957 New Delhi formally annexed Jammu and Kashmir as India's only Muslim-majority state.

In 1959 China occupied a portion of Jammu and Kashmir, which it continues to hold. India and Pakistan fought a second, inconclusive war over the territory in 1965.

Mounting unrest over a rigged state election in 1987, continuing high unemployment and persistent abuses by Indian security forces triggered an insurgency in December 1989. Militant groups divided into two broad camps—the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and other secular, pro-independence groups and Islamist groups seeking incorporation into Pakistan and backed by Islamabad, which more recently have gained control of the insurgency. In 1990 New Delhi placed the state

under federal rule.

Violence continued throughout the mid-1990s. In 1995 a two month standoff between Indian troops and militants holed up in a shrine in Charar-i-Sharif ended after a fire destroyed the shrine and nearby houses.

The October 1996 state elections were held amidst calls for a boycott by militants and moderate groups, violence and reports of soldiers coercing Kashmiris to vote. The National Conference, the only Kashmir-based party to contest the elections, won a majority in the 87-seat assembly behind Farooq Abdullah, the son of Sheikh Abdullah, who returned for a second term as chief minister.

In October 1997, India announced gradual troop withdrawals from Srinagar, the state capital, and two other cities, although it is not yet clear whether this will improve the human rights situation.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

India has never held a referendum on Kashmiri self-determination as called for in a 1948 United Nations resolution. Violence by militants and security forces has killed more than 20,000 people since 1989.

Prior to and during both the 1996 national and state elections, militants urging a boycott threatened election officials and candidates, and carried out terrorist attacks against candidates, their family members, campaign workers and Hindus and other ordinary civilians, killing at least 20 people during the state vote. Soldiers and state-backed militias coerced Kashmiris into voting, authorities placed restrictions on press coverage in an apparent effort to preclude articles calling for a boycott and security forces detained leaders of the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), a coalition of some 30 groups opposed to Kashmir's status as an Indian state, which had advocated a boycott.

The judiciary barely functions. Militants routinely threaten judges, witnesses and the families of defendants, security forces frequently ignore court orders regarding detainees and human rights petitions and judges often tolerate abuses by security forces. In March 1997, a year after human rights activist Jalil Andrabi's body was found in a river after being taken into custody by soldiers, Amnesty International reported that state and army officials had repeatedly ignored the Jammu and Kashmir High Court's orders to cooperate with an inquiry into Andrabi's death. Although an army major is in custody, no charges have been filed.

The 1990 Jammu and Kashmir Disturbed Areas Act and the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act allow security forces to search homes and arrest suspects without a warrant, shoot suspects on sight and destroy structures believed to house militants or arms. The latter act requires any prosecution of security forces to be approved by the central government. There have been few investigations and prosecutions of security forces for human rights violations, contributing to a climate of impunity. In August the state government established an official human rights commission, although it will not be empowered to investigate alleged human rights abuses by the army or paramilitary forces.

The more than 350,000 Indian soldiers and paramilitary troops in the territory carry out arbitrary arrests and detentions of suspected militants and civilians, and in recent years have been reportedly responsible for hundreds of "disappearances," deaths in custody and extrajudicial killings, which they often claim occurred during armed

encounters with militants. Authorities acknowledge detaining some 1,600 suspected militants. Local human rights groups say hundreds more are held in unacknowledged detention. According to Amnesty International, in January the Jammu and Kashmir Bar Association filed criminal charges against the state government and the Indian army relating to 218 custodial deaths in 1996, including 113 civilians. In May Amnesty International reported a sharp increase in custodial deaths and allegations of rape of Kashmiri women by armed forces. The U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture reported that security forces systematically practice torture to extract confessions or information or as punishment. Since 1995 the International Committee of the Red Cross has been permitted to visit prisons in the state.

Indian troops occasionally cordon off entire neighborhoods and conduct house-to-house searches and in recent years have destroyed hundreds of homes of suspected militants and family members. In past years soldiers have fired into crowds on several occasions, killing scores of civilians. More recently, the number of civilian deaths directly attributed to security forces appears to be decreasing.

Some two dozen Kashmiri militant groups are responsible for kidnappings of government officials, politicians and businessmen and the torture and killings of politicians party workers, public employees, suspected informers, members of rival factions, and civilians refusing to shelter militants. In 1997, in an apparent effort to discredit the Abdullah government, militants killed an increased number of civilians, often through indiscriminate attacks including a March 29 bombing in Jammu that killed 16 people.

Since 1995 pro-government militias, composed of former militants and operating with limited accountability, have carried out counterinsurgency operations and extrajudicial executions in the countryside against pro-Pakistani militants. These so-called "renegades" are also responsible for human rights violations against alleged militant sympathizers, journalists and human rights monitors.

Authorities pressure the private press through occasional beatings, detentions and other harassment of journalists. Under India's 1971 Newspapers Incitements to Offenses Act (in effect only in Jammu and Kashmir) a district magistrate can order censorship in certain circumstances. Nevertheless, newspapers continue to publish accounts of alleged human rights abuses by security forces. An even more serious threat comes from militant groups, which have briefly kidnapped, tortured, killed or otherwise harassed and threatened journalists and occasionally coerce newspapers into suspending publication. According to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists, eight journalists have been murdered in Kashmir since 1989; four were specifically targeted because of their work with the state-owned broadcast media, including two journalists killed in 1997. In June, as the APHC prepared to protest against authorities', refusal to sanction a demonstration in a park, police brutally beat a journalist who had asked his photographer to photograph police beating three women who had chanted independence slogans. Police subsequently tear-gassed some 50 journalists protesting the assault on their colleague.

Security forces and "renegades" threaten and occasionally attack human rights workers, and have killed several since 1989. In July Amnesty International reported that authorities were increasingly subjecting APHC leaders to brief, arbitrary arrests either before or during peaceful protests.

Since 1990 militants have committed rape, dozens of killings and other atrocities

against the Pandits, or Kashmiri Hindus, including the March 21 killing of seven villagers. More than 250,000 Pandits have fled the Kashmir Valley.

Indonesia

East Timor

Polity: Dominant party
(military-dominated) **Political Rights:** 7
Economy: Capitalist-statist **Civil Liberties:** 7
Population: 778,000 **Status:** Not Free
Ethnic Groups: Timorese, Javanese, others



Overview: The Portuguese arrived on Timor around 1520, and in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries took formal control of the island's eastern half. In 1974 Portugal agreed to hold a referendum on self-determination. In November 1975 the leftist Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretelin) declared an independent republic. Indonesia invaded on December 7, and in 1976 formally annexed East Timor as its 27th province. By 1979 Indonesian soldiers had killed up to 200,000 Timorese. Skirmishes between Indonesian forces and the poorly-equipped armed resistance have since continued.

On November 12, 1991 Indonesian soldiers fired on a peaceful pro-independence march to the Santa Cruz Cemetery in the territorial capital of Dili. Between 150 and 270 civilians were killed. In a series of courts-martial in 1992, ten soldiers received light terms ranging from eight to 18 months on charges of assault or disobeying orders during the Dili massacre. Separately, 18 East Timorese received terms ranging from six months to life imprisonment for allegedly organizing the Santa Cruz march. In November Indonesian soldiers captured resistance leader Jose "Xanana" Gusmao. In 1993 a court sentenced Gusmao to life imprisonment, subsequently reduced to 20 years, in a sham trial.

The October 1996 award of the Nobel Peace prize to East Timor Roman Catholic Bishop Caslos Felipe Ximenes Belo and Jose Ramos Horta, the leading East Timorese exile activist, brought renewed international attention to Indonesian abuses in the territory. On December 24, as crowds greeted Bishop Belo upon his return from receiving the award, East Timorese beat several suspected intelligence agents, leading to a security crackdown continuing into early 1997.

On March 23, 1997 security forces forcibly dispersed a peaceful pro-independence demonstration by youths at a Dili hotel where the representative of the United Nations secretary general was staying and subsequently tortured detainees. Of 33 arrests, courts convicted 19 youths of "hate-sowing" charges by September.

During and after the May Indonesian parliamentary election period, intensified attacks by East Timorese National Liberation Army (Falintil) guerrillas on military and civilian targets killed, according to the Associated Press, at least nine suspected collaborators and other civilians, as well as 33 soldiers, police and guerrillas. Unidentified persons attacked election officials and polling stations. The army responded by

arbitrarily detaining and often torturing hundreds of civilians, and there were reports of killings and "disappearances."

A September report by Human Rights Watch/Asia linked the recent violence to tensions caused by the army's effort, since mid-1995, to "Timorize" the security forces by creating paramilitary groups and counterinsurgency forces that rely heavily on unemployed East Timorese youths as informers, buttressing an already heavy military presence; the continued influx of Indonesians to East Timor; a high unemployment rate; and development policies considered to favor non-Timorese.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The United Nations does not recognize Indonesia's 1976 annexation of East Timor. A referendum on self-determination, promised by Portugal in 1974, has never been held.

The judiciary is not independent, particularly for trials of dissidents. The trial of Jose "Xanana" Gusmao (see above) fell well short of international standards. The court refused to allow Gusmao to choose his own attorney and instead appointed a defense attorney close to police and prosecutors; several witnesses against Gusmao were themselves detainees and were apparently coerced; and the court refused to allow Gusmao to read most of his defense statement. According to Amnesty International (AI) there are dozens of East Timorese political prisoners. Many are held for peaceful activities including participating in demonstrations advocating East Timorese independence or criticizing the Indonesian government.

The army and police commit arbitrary arrests, detention, torture, "disappearances," extrajudicial killings, rape and other abuses with near impunity. Soldiers and police are generally not prosecuted for rights violations against civilians. The few that have been tried and convicted received lenient sentences. During security crackdowns civilians are arbitrarily detained and often tortured to extract information, a pattern that continued following guerrilla attacks in 1997 (see above). Indonesia's official National Commission on Human Rights criticized security personnel's brutal treatment of 37 protesters following a March demonstration. On November 14 security forces entered the East Timor University campus, shot and wounded several students, and beat others following an argument between students and soldiers.

The armed resistance is responsible for extrajudicial executions and other abuses against suspected civilian collaborators and informants. According to AI, Falintil guerrillas admitted to some of the civilian deaths during the 1997 elections, and Falintil was implicated in other civilian killings during the year. In recent years army-organized gangs have harassed and intimidated the local population and kidnapped and beaten dozens of pro-independence East Timorese. In 1997 a paramilitary youth group, Gadapaksi, participated in army operations and committed abuses against civilians.

Authorities restrict freedoms of speech, press, assembly and association, and have closed schools that refuse to use the official Bahasa Indonesia as the language of instruction. The population is predominantly Roman Catholic, and the Catholic Church-based Commission on Justice and Peace plays a leading role in monitoring human rights conditions. Authorities restrict access by foreign journalists and human rights organizations to East Timor.

The Indonesian government's controversial transmigration program continues to settle Indonesians in the territory despite charges that it reduces economic opportunities for East Timorese. In 1995 and 1996 tensions between East Timorese and infor-

mal migrants from South Sulawesi led to violent conflicts.

West Papua (Irian Jaya)

Polity: Dominant party (military-dominated)
Economy: Capitalist-statist
Population: 1,700,000
Ethnic Groups: Mainly Papuan

Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 7
Status: Not Free



Overview:

By 1848 the Dutch controlled the entire western half of the island of New Guinea. In 1963 Indonesia assumed administrative responsibility for the territory under a United Nations agreement mandating that a referendum on self-determination be held by 1969.

In the mid-1960s the guerrilla Free Papua Movement (OPM) began fighting for independence. Rather than hold a popular referendum, in the summer of 1969 Indonesia convened eight hand-picked regional councils for a sham "Act of Free Choice." The predominantly Melanesian population apparently favored independence, but the councils voted unanimously for annexation by Indonesia. The Indonesian military had a heavy presence in the territory, and the U.N. special observer reported that "the administration exercised at all times a tight political control over the population." Nevertheless, the U.N. accepted the referendum. In 1973 Indonesia renamed the land, known locally as West Papua, as Irian Jaya.

In 1984 an army offensive against the OPM drove hundreds of villagers into neighboring Papua New Guinea, and security forces murdered prominent intellectual Arnold Ap. In 1989 the army conducted further anti-OPM offensives.

In recent years the army has committed human rights violations in the area around the giant Grasberg copper and gold mine in the central highlands owned by Freeport Indonesia, the local subsidiary of the United States-based Freeport McMoRan. In April 1995 the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACOA) reported that soldiers had killed or caused the disappearance of several civilians since the 1994 killing of a Freeport employee by suspected OPM guerrillas and attributed some responsibility to Freeport for allowing the army use of its vehicles and facilities. The Roman Catholic Church of Jayapura, the territorial capital, also charged the army with abuses. In September Indonesia's official National Commission on Human Rights confirmed the army had killed 16 civilians and caused four "disappearances" in the area since October 1994.

In 1996 residents rioted in the mining town of Timika and nearby Tembagapura after a vehicle driven by a Freeport employee injured a man. Freeport drew up a plan to contribute one percent of its annual gross revenues from the mine to a trust fund for community works. Several tribes protested that the money would be disbursed through the government. Separately, in March rioting broke out in Jayapura after the body of Thomas Wanggai, an independence activist, was returned for burial following his death in prison in Jakarta. Police detained 130 people, most of whom were reportedly mistreated. During the year OPM guerrillas abducted and killed several civilian hostages.

On August 22, 1997 security forces near Timika fired rubber bullets at Ekari tribes-

men, some of whom were allegedly armed with traditional weapons, killing two. According to Agence France-Presse (AFP), the tribesmen were protesting the deaths of two youths whom they alleged had fallen from a Freeport company truck, a charge Freeport denied. On August 27 Freeport agreed to postpone and review a second disbursement from the trust fund after church groups said payments to the Amungme and Kamoro tribes were insufficient, and warned the disbursement process could inflame communal tensions.

The territory's worst drought in 50 years caused more than 640 deaths through famine and disease by early December.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: West Papuans lack the right to self-determination. As Indonesia's 26th province, residents can participate in Indonesia's tightly controlled political process. *The Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER)* reported that prior to the May 29 Indonesian parliamentary elections, the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) halted its campaign in the territory after clan chiefs close to the ruling Golkar party banned PDI rallies.

The judiciary is not independent. Several OPM guerrillas and suspected supporters are incarcerated under Indonesia's harsh anti-subversion laws. Indonesian authorities sharply restrict freedoms of speech, press, assembly and association in the territory.

In 1995 Indonesia's official National Commission on Human Rights accused the Indonesian military of extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrest and detentions, "disappearances," widespread surveillance of the local population and destruction of property in the territory, often around Timika, near Freeport's Grasberg mine (see Overview). Most violations have gone unpunished, and the few sentences and convictions have been relatively lenient. In February 1996 a military court sentenced four soldiers to up to three years imprisonment for the 1995 deaths of three civilians.

The U.S. State Department reported that beginning in late 1996 and continuing throughout 1997 authorities closed certain areas in the central highlands to nonresidents due to army counterinsurgency operations. Soldiers reportedly occupied villages and restricted internal movement, and in some cases beat and raped villagers, destroyed homes and crops, and were responsible for forced labor.

According to *FEER*, Freeport is paying \$35 million for barracks and other facilities for an 800-strong military task force the government brought in following the 1996 Timika-Tembagapura riots. Despite the enhanced military presence, in March 1997 AFP reported that police and soldiers failed to intervene during tribal clashes near Timika that killed at least six people. Earlier, communal clashes around Timika in January killed six people.

The population follows either indigenous beliefs or Christianity, and residents can generally worship freely. Since the 1970s Indonesian authorities have resettled more than 170,000 residents of Java and other overcrowded islands into West Papua under a controversial transmigration program that critics charge jeopardizes local employment opportunities, expropriates traditional lands and threatens to marginalize the indigenous culture. Other migrants have arrived on their own. In 1996 violent clashes erupted between the economically-dominant migrants and indigenous groups. Special permits are required to visit certain areas, and the government limits access to West Papua for foreign journalists.

Iraq

Kurdistan

Polity: Dual leadership
Economy: Capitalist-statist
Population: 4,000,000
Ethnic Groups: Kurdish majority

Political Rights: 6
Civil Liberties: 6
Status: Not Free



Overview: Fighting resumed in October between members of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) after a year-long Western-brokered ceasefire. Hostilities ensued over PUK demands for a share of KDP-controlled revenues from trade with Turkey, the demilitarization of Arbil and other cities, and the formation of a coalition government to prepare for elections. In addition, the Turkish army launched offensives into Kurdish northern Iraq throughout the year to eradicate Turkish Kurd bases along the Iraq/Turkey border. The conflicts converged in November when Turkish troops joined the KDP to force the PUK and the Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to return to the established intra-Kurdish buffer zone. At least a thousand people died, and thousands more were displaced before a November 24 ceasefire ended the fighting .

In April 1991, the United States, Britain, France and Turkey established a secure region with a U.S.-enforced no-fly zone north of the 36^h parallel in Iraq. The Iraqi Kurdistan National Assembly was created following the collapse of an autonomy agreement with the Iraqi government in 1991. The unicameral Assembly contains 105 seats, five of which are reserved for Christian Assyrians. After a 1992 vote, the KDP and the PUK agreed to fill 50 seats each. No elections have taken place since, as disputes between the two militias over territory and revenue erupted into a full-scale civil war in 1994.

The conflict escalated in 1996, primarily over the PUK's demand for a share of the customs duties—as much as \$250,000 per day—levied by the KDP on trucks crossing to and from Turkey. In August 1996, Iraqi forces entered the region at the invitation of KDP leader Massoud Barzani and helped push PUK forces out of Arbil, Kurdistan's capital. In October, the PUK re-established control over its previously held territory, except for Arbil. The peace agreement fell short of planning for new elections, establishing a coalition government or settling the revenue issue.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The Kurdish people cannot change their government democratically. Though reasonably free and fair elections were held in 1992, the post of president was never filled, and no future elections are in sight. Fighting between the KDP and the PUK prevent the normal activity of the parliament, which last met in 1995.

No independent judiciary exists in Kurdistan. Hearings are conducted, adjudicated and enforced by local officials of the KDP and PUK. The two groups run separate prisons and detention centers where human rights violations occur. The Kurdish administration of northern Iraq has been accused of arbitrary arrest and detention, tor-

ture of detainees, summary trials and extrajudicial executions of POWs, political opponents and demonstrators. Iraqi laws passed prior to 1991 remain in effect in Kurdistan, save for those judged to be "against Kurdish interests."

The fundamentalist Islamic Movement (IMIK) has maintained independent control of some territory within Kurdistan. IMIK operates independent legal and judiciary systems as well as education, health, and social services. It has also been accused of human rights violations similar to those perpetrated by the administration.

The current political chaos has allowed the Turkish PKK to further its goal of establishing a separate Kurdish state in southeastern Turkey by using northern Iraq as a base for military operations against Turkey. Turkish operations against the PKK in northern Iraq resulted this year in some civilian deaths and destruction of residences, though exact numbers are not known.

Observers report a generally open climate for dialogue on political issues. Numerous newspapers are available. The two major parties run television stations with biased coverage. Traditional practices curtail the role of women in politics, education and the private sector. Religious groups practice freely.

Freedom of association is arbitrary; in October, 120,000 people reportedly participated in a protest to demand that the PUK restore electrical power in Arbil. However, both the KDP and the PUK intimidated, seized the property of and forcibly expelled members and alleged supporters of each other's organizations from their territory. Tens of thousands of people were internally displaced in 1997 due to expulsion by competing Kurd groups and intra-Kurdish fighting.

The underfunded, understaffed Kurdistan Human Rights Organization operates openly despite harassment. Several of its members have fled Kurdistan following threats. Each of the political parties established its own human rights committee in 1994-95 to monitor abuses against its own party members. Outside human rights organizations are not permitted into Kurdistan.

Israel

Israeli-Administered Territories^a & Palestinian Authority-Administered Territories^b



Polity: Military and PLO administered

Economy: Capitalist

Population: 2,184,000

Ethnic Groups: Palestinian, Jewish

Political Rights: 6^a

Civil Liberties: 5^a

Status: Not Free

Political Rights: 5^b

Civil Liberties: 6^b

Status: Not Free

Overview:

The Arab-Israeli peace process stalled in March, when Palestinian Authority (PA) leader Yassir Arafat suspended talks in protest against Israeli construction of a Jewish settlement in disputed East Jerusalem. Crisis ensued as a series of suicide bombings by Hamas militants prompted Israeli economic sanctions against the PA and a blockade on the movement of people and goods between and among Israel and Palestinian autonomous areas in the West Bank and Gaza. International efforts to bring the two sides to the negotiating table produced little progress as Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanded that Arafat control terrorism, while Arafat refused to negotiate as long as settlement building continued. Scheduled talks on the future of Jerusalem, the fate of refugees, and borders had not begun by year's end.

The West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem came under the British Mandate in 1920. Jordan seized East Jerusalem and the West Bank in 1948, while Egypt took control of Gaza. During the 1967 Six Day War, Israel took the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, which had been used by Syria to shell towns in northern Israel. Israel annexed East Jerusalem in 1967, and the Golan Heights in 1981.

In 1987 Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza began attacking mainly military targets in protest against Israeli rule in what became known as the *intifada* (uprising). A series of secret negotiations between Israel and the PLO yielded an agreement in August 1993 for a five-year interim period of Palestinian autonomy in the territories, beginning with Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho.

By the end of 1994 Israel had transferred authority over education, health and other local services in the West Bank and Gaza to the New Palestinian Authority. A September 1995 agreement provided for Palestinian self-rule in most Palestinian population centers in the West Bank; a redeployment by March 1996 of Israeli troops in Hebron, a West Bank town with Jewish and Muslim holy sites; and a phased withdrawal of Israeli troops from most areas of the West Bank by September 1997. A January 1997 agreement between the PA and the Israeli administration provided for Palestinian control of 80 percent of Hebron and further Israeli withdrawal from the villages already under Palestinian civic administration by mid-1998.

Elections were held in January 1996 for a new Legislative Council and for the head of the Council's executive authority. Independents won 35 of the Council's 88

seats, with Arafat's Fatah movement taking most of the remainder. Arafat won the leadership of the executive authority with 88 percent of the vote and announced the formation of his cabinet in May. The Council approved the government with a vote of confidence in July.

All twenty-two PA cabinet ministers resigned in August 1997 after a parliamentary commission issued a report detailing widespread corruption and abuse of power in almost all government ministries. The commission assembled to investigate government corruption following an audit of PA finances which found that 40 percent of the 1996 budget had been squandered or mismanaged. The July report recommended the dissolution of the cabinet, the further investigation of several ministers and legal action against one for alleged wrongdoing. Arafat accepted the resignations in December, but asked his ministers to hold their positions until he completes a reshuffle.

Economic conditions in Palestinian self-rule areas have deteriorated sharply since 1993. Unemployment in Gaza is estimated at 60 percent and in the West Bank at 24 percent. The Israeli blockade in August prevented tens of thousands of Palestinians from reaching their jobs, costing them some \$1.35 million per day in earnings. Under economic sanctions, Israel withheld some \$62 million in tax revenues and customs duties during August and September. Trade suffers while political instability deters private investment. A lack of official financial accountability compounds the situation, creating a hostile climate for economic development.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Palestinian residents of the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem chose their first popularly elected government in 1996. Despite some irregularities, international observers regarded the vote as reasonably reflective of the will of the voters. Members of the Legislative Council have complained of its lack of power in relation to executive authority, though it debated numerous draft laws and over 150 resolutions in 1997. In August, the government heeded a Council commission's call for the dissolution of the cabinet due to widespread corruption. Passage of a "Basic Law" outlining the separation between legislative and executive powers has been held up by Arafat, presumably because it would curtail his authority.

The PA judiciary, consisting of criminal, civil and state security courts, is not independent, and due process safeguards are largely ignored. Judges lack proper training and experience. State security courts are generally used to try suspected Islamic militants. Trials are conducted in secret, often on short notice, and usually last only a few hours. There is no right of appeal, though Arafat may repeal verdicts. Prison conditions fall far short of international standards.

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 the right of appeal does not apply in all cases. Most convictions in military courts are based on confessions, which are often extracted through torture during interrogation. Confessions are usually spoken in Arabic and translated into Hebrew for official records. Palestinian detainees seldom read Hebrew and thus sign confessions that they cannot read. Palestinians are rarely acquitted of security offenses. The 150,000 Jewish settlers living in the West Bank and Gaza are subject to Israeli law in Israeli civil courts.

Arbitrary arrest, detention without trial and torture under interrogation are wide-

spread in both the Israeli and PA systems. Israeli district military commanders may order detention without charge or trial for up to 12 months, and such orders are renewable. Human Rights Watch reported that some 500 Palestinian prisoners were held in Israeli administrative detention as of late 1997, at least 200 of these arrested after a Hamas suicide bombing in July. The PA was holding 200 to 300 Palestinians without charge or trial in late 1997. Another 80 suspected Hamas members were rounded up in September in response to Israeli-U.S. pressure to crack down on militants after another bombing. At least five Palestinians died in PA police custody in 1997.

Israeli soldiers destroyed over 100 Palestinian homes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem this year, ostensibly because they were built without permits or belonged to militants suspected of killing Israelis. In May, the PA announced that any Palestinians convicted of selling land to Jews would incur the death penalty. At least three Arab land dealers were killed without trial following the decision, and another 16 set to be tried. The PA has yet to carry out the death penalty.

Clashes between Palestinian youths throwing stones and Israeli soldiers firing rubber coated bullets occurred throughout the year, resulting in 14 Palestinian deaths and hundreds of injuries. In July, the Israeli parliament approved a draft law limiting the right of Palestinians to receive compensation for wrongful injury or death caused by Israeli soldiers. In December, the Israeli parliament rushed to enact a broadly-worded ban on PLO activity in East Jerusalem. The ban widens the authority of officials to prevent "all activities of the PLO or the PA inconsistent with the sovereignty of the state of Israel."

Under a 1995 PA press law, journalists may be fined and jailed and newspapers closed for the publication of "secret information" on Palestinian security forces or news that might harm national unity or incite violence. Several small private radio and television stations are pressured by authorities to provide favorable coverage of Arafat and the PA. Official Palestinian radio and television are government mouthpieces. In 1997, numerous journalists were harassed or arrested. Daoud Kuttab, a Palestinian-American journalist was detained without charge for one week in May for broadcasting live legislative sessions, during which Arafat is often criticized. A reporter for *Saut Al Haq Wa'l Hureya* newspaper was arrested in October for reporting on torture of Hamas detainees.

Newspapers are subject to Israeli military censorship on security matters, though such controls have eased since 1993. Israeli authorities prohibit expressions of support for Hamas and other extremist Islamic groups that call for the destruction of Israel.

In recent years Israeli authorities have imposed often prolonged closures of the West Bank and Gaza, prohibiting entry into Israel from these areas, following Palestinian terrorist attacks. This summer's closures restricted movement not only between Israel and Palestinian areas, but among Palestinian enclaves, thus confining Palestinians to their hometowns. Severe economic hardship has resulted from this policy.

Palestinian women are underrepresented in most professions, and tend to encounter discrimination in employment. Under *Shari'a* (Islamic) law, they face disadvantages in marriage, divorce and inheritance matters. Rape, domestic abuse and "family honor" violence are still problems, as societal pressures prevent women from reporting such incidents.

Labor affairs in the West Bank and Gaza are governed by a combination of Jorda-

nian law and PA decisions pending new PA labor codes. Workers may establish and join unions without government authorization. Palestinian unions seeking to strike must submit to arbitration by the PA Ministry of Labor. There are no laws in the self-rule areas to protect the rights of striking workers. In April, armed security officers surrounded a Ramallah school where teachers were meeting during a strike for higher wages. About thirty strike leaders were jailed for several days. Palestinian workers in Jerusalem are subject to Israeli labor law.

Moldova

Transdniester

Polity: Presidential-parliamentary
Economy: Mixed-statist
Population: 700,000
Ethnic Groups: Ukrainian, Russian (60 percent);
 Moldovan-Romanian (40 percent)

Political Rights: 6
Civil Liberties: 6
Status: Not Free



Overview:

In November 1997, the president of the self-proclaimed Transdniester republic in Moldova Igor Smirnov and Moldovan Prime Minister Ion Ciubuc signed an agreement "On the Organizational Framework of Socio-Economic Cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and Dniester" as a means of improving relations.

In 1990, Slavs in the Transdniester region, a sliver of land that was part of Ukraine until 1940 and joined to Moldova after Soviet annexation, proclaimed the Dniester Moldovan Republic (DMR). Fighting in Transdniester, where local Slavs were supported by Russian Cossacks, mercenaries and elements of Russia's 14th Army, ended with a cease-fire in mid-1992. In 1994, Russia and Moldova agreed to a three-year timetable for withdrawing the 14th Army. In March 1995 local elections, 91 percent of Transdniester voters approved a referendum calling for the approximately 8,000-man 14th Army to stay in Moldova. But Russia told the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) that it planned to honor its commitment to a three-year withdrawal process, regardless of the referendum. In 1996, President Smirnov was re-elected to another five-year term.

In May, leaders of the two signed a memorandum in Moscow to improve economic cooperation and "to build their relationship in the context of a single state, within the border of the Moldovan Soviet republic as it was in January 1990." A poll indicated that 80 percent of Dniester residents approved of the memorandum. In July, negotiations for a political settlement bogged down over the sovereignty rights of Transdniester. During the summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) held in Chisinau, Moldova's capital, Moldovan President Petru Lucinschi met with President Smirnov and leaders of Ukraine and Russia. A final power-sharing agreement could not be reached, but all sides pledged to continue negotiations, which resumed in November. At a December 23 press conference, President Smirnov said progress had been made in 1997, but that a final settlement depended on Moldova's recognition of Transdniester's "statehood."

In November, Russia reiterated its pledge to remove its army, while Transdniester

officials stressed the importance of first withdrawing combat machinery and armaments.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Residents of Transdnierster can elect their leaders democratically. In the 1996 presidential elections incumbent Igor Smirnov defeated challenger Vladimir Malakhov, a businessman, 72 percent to 20 percent. Turnout was 57 percent, the lowest for the republic since its proclamation of sovereignty. In 1994, local authorities forbade residents from voting in Moldova's parliamentary elections.

The media is pro-government, and the free press is muzzled. The 40 percent of Transdnierster's 700,000 people who are not Russian or Ukrainian face repression and have been prevented from voting in Moldova's elections. In 1995 parliamentary elections for the 67-seat bicameral legislature, parties coalesced around the left-wing Bloc of Patriotic Forces and the moderate Movement for the Development of Dniester, which united centrist politicians and industrial bosses and backed the ruling Labor Movement of Dniester. Ballots did not refer to party affiliations.

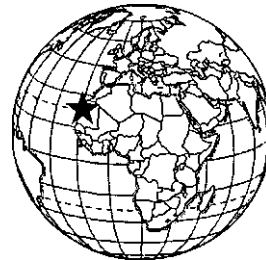
The local judiciary is based on the Soviet-era model and is not independent. Unions are remnants of Soviet-era labor organizations. The United Council of Labor Collectives is influential in the government. Religious rights are generally respected, but freedom of movement and assembly have been circumscribed. Women nominally have the same rights as men, but are underrepresented in leadership positions in government and business.

Morocco

Western Sahara

Polity: Appointed governors
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 212,000
Ethnic Groups: Arab, Sahrawi

Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 6
Status: Not Free



Overview: A United Nations team visited the disputed and sparsely-populated territory of Western Sahara in October to begin preparations for a proposed December 1998 referendum on its future agreed in September after several rounds of U.N. sponsored talks between the Moroccan government and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (Polisario). The former Spanish Sahara was seized by Morocco after Spain withdrew in 1975. The United Nations Mission for a Referendum in Western Sahara (Minurso) has been seeking to conduct a referendum on nationhood or integration with Morocco for the territory since a 1991 peace pact ended 15 years of guerilla war, but Moroccan obstruction has continually blocked its efforts.

Negotiations for the new agreement were led by U.N. special envoy and former U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and attended by Algerian and Mauritanian observers. It provides a timetable for release of political detainees and prisoners of war, and the return of tens of thousands of Sahrawi refugees from Algeria. Dispute over

modalities for the main point of contention—who is entitled to Sahrawi citizenship and will be allowed vote in the referendum—are as yet unresolved, however, and could upset the entire plan. A Spanish colonial census of 1974 will be the base for voter registration rolls, but intense arguments over additions to that list could yet derail the process and raise fears of a return to the costly 1975-1991 desert war.

The coastal strip of the Western Sahara was claimed by Spain in 1888. The nomadic residents of the "Spanish Sahara" who ranged over its vast desert interior were only gradually subdued over the next five decades. Both Morocco and Mauritania laid claim to parts of the region after achieving their own independence from French rule in 1956 and 1960 respectively. When Spain withdrew from the colony in early 1976, local Sahrawis in the Polisario Front proclaimed the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic and launched a war against Moroccan and Mauritanian occupiers with support and sanctuary provided by neighboring Algeria.

Morocco has ignored the International Court of Justice's 1975 opinion against its claim to the territory and affirmation of the Sahrawi people's right to self determination. Mauritania abandoned the costly conflict in 1979, leaving Morocco its third of the disputed territory. Moroccan security forces responded to Polisario's hit-and-run attacks with ferocity and quelled political opposition through arbitrary detention, torture and extrajudicial killings. In 1984, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) recognized the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic, provoking Morocco's withdrawal from the OAU.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

Sahrawis do not have the right to elect their own government. Since Spain's withdrawal, the territory has been under military occupation. Western Sahara residents elect representatives to Morocco's nearly powerless parliament, but integration into Morocco is rejected by Polisario.

Civil liberties in the 85 percent of Western Sahara controlled by Morocco are severely restricted, and widespread human rights abuses have been reported. Several hundred Sahrawis detained by Moroccan security forces were released in 1994, but a similar number are unaccounted for. Many may have been murdered, and sporadic arrests continue. There are also reports of torture and other abuses by Polisario forces, but lack of access to areas they control makes verification difficult. Polisario released nearly 200 Moroccan prisoners-of-war in 1995, but reportedly still holds over 1,000.

Portugal

Macao

Polity: Appointed governor and partially elected legislature
Political Rights: 6
Civil Liberties: 4
Status: Partly Free

Economy: Capitalist-statist

Population: 447,000

Ethnic Groups: Chinese, Macanese, Portuguese



Overview:

Located at the mouth of the Canton River, Macao has been an entrepot for trade with China and more recently a gambling Mecca since the first Portuguese traders settled here in 1557. Since 1974 Portugal and China have officially considered Macao a Chinese territory under Portuguese administration. The 1976 Organic Statute vests executive power in a governor appointed by Lisbon and grants legislative power to both the Portuguese government (acting through the governor) and Macao's legislative assembly. The assembly has eight directly-elected members, eight members named by businesses and other interest groups, and seven appointed by the governor, all for a four-year term.

The 1987 Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration calls for China to assume sovereignty over Macao on December 20, 1999, with the enclave maintaining its legal system and capitalist economy for 50 years. More recently, Beijing has agreed that the legislature elected in 1996 will serve through the handover. In 1990 governor Carlos Melancia resigned over bribery charges. The current governor, General Vasco Rocha Viera, took office in 1991. In 1993 China finalized the Basic Law, Macao's post-1999 constitution.

A depressed property market, the need to secure a regional role for an economy dominated by gambling, real estate and tourism and other economic concerns dominated the last election before the handover, which 12 groups contested on September 22, 1996. Pro-Chinese businessmen defeated leftist unions and neighborhood associations to win seven directly-elected seats, with democratic activist Ng Kuok-cheong winning the eighth.

In 1997 organized crime violence rocked the territory. A triple murder in May brought gang-related deaths to 14 on the year. On November 4 police arrested 100 people following fresh violence between rival gangs battling for control of gambling, prostitution and extortion schemes.

There are continuing concerns that mechanisms to safeguard Macao's autonomy after the handover are inadequate. The "localization" of the 17,000-member civil service, which involves replacing Portuguese expatriates and Macanese (people of mixed Chinese and Portuguese descent) with ethnic Chinese, has proceeded slowly. According to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, by May 1996 ethnic Chinese were found in just half of the top 951 posts and none of the top 30. Moreover, the status of the Macanese, who also play a leading economic role, remains uncertain; most hold Portuguese passports, but Chinese law forbids dual nationality. An exodus of experienced Macanese and expatriate judges and civil servants is expected. There has also been

limited progress in adapting and translating Portuguese court procedures and other statutes.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: Citizens of Macao lack the democratic means to change their government and had no voice in the 1987 Joint Declaration ceding control to China in 1999. The governor is appointed by Portugal, and only one third of the legislature is directly-elected. Due to the dearth of legal and political experience among MPs and Portugal's practice of deferring to China on key policy decisions, the legislature holds little power. The governor initiates most laws, which the legislature rarely contest. China maintains a dominant influence through its business interests and control of two key entities: the General Association of Workers and the General Association of Residences, a civic group.

The legal system is based on Portuguese Metropolitan Law, and citizens are extended the rights granted by the Portuguese constitution. In 1993 the government initiated reforms to bring the judicial system in line with the post-handover Basic Law. The governor now appoints judges and prosecutors for three-year terms. The U.S. State Department notes that the Judiciary Council, which recommends lower court judges and prosecutors to the governor, has strong ties to the executive and to China. Critics charge that judges and prosecutors might have to compromise their independence to win support from the Council for renewal of their terms. The right of ultimate appeal to Portugal is being phased out in favor of a new local Superior Court.

The government owns a controlling interest in the television and radio stations, although opposition views are generally aired. The press is private. As the handover approaches self-censorship regarding China and the territory's future is increasing. Most newspapers are in any case pro-Chinese, including Beijing's *Macau Daily*, meaning that alternative views receive limited coverage.

Women increasingly hold administrative posts but are underrepresented in politics. The territory enacted equal employment opportunity legislation in 1995. The United Nations has raised concern over the trafficking of women from China, often by criminal gangs, into Macao for prostitution.

Nearly all private sector unionized workers belong to the pro-Beijing General Association of Workers, a confederation which is more a political organization than labor advocate. A few private sector unions are independent of Beijing, as are two of the four public sector unions. Legislation protecting workers who stage strikes from dismissal is inadequate. Foreign workers often work for less than half the wages of Macao citizens, live in controlled dormitories, and owe substantial money to proxies for the purchase of their jobs.

Turkey

Cyprus (T)

Polity: Presidential parliamentary democracy (Turkish-occupied)
Economy: Mixed capitalist
Population: 178,000

Political Rights: 4
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Partly Free



Ethnic Groups: Turkish Cypriot, Turk, Greek Cypriot, Maronite

Note: See Cyprus (Greek) under country reports.

Overview: The Cypriot Republic received independence from Britain in 1960. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, violence flared between the island's Greek and Turkish communities. In July 1974, following an abortive coup attempt organized by Greece's military junta, Turkey invaded Cyprus, seized 37 percent of the territory and expelled 200,000 Greek Cypriots from the north. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) declared its independence in 1982, but so far has only been recognized by Turkey, which maintains more than 35,000 troops in the territory and provides an estimated \$200 million in annual assistance. Nevertheless, the North is less prosperous than the South, suffers from constant shortages and high unemployment and is almost totally reliant on the Cypriot Republic for a free but insufficient power supply that is responsible for frequent outages of 12 to 14 hours per day. A 1,200-strong United Nations force controls the 103-mile long demarcation line, which runs through Nicosia, the world's last divided capital.

In early 1995, the European Union (EU) promised to open accession negotiations with the Cypriot Republic following a planned review of the Maastricht treaty on Economic and Monetary Union. The completion of the Maastricht review in June 1997 and the subsequent scheduling of talks on the Cypriot Republic's membership to begin in April 1998 provided new urgency for a political settlement for the divided island. The EU wants a negotiated solution prior to the Cypriot Republic's accession to avoid antagonizing Turkey, but Greece has threatened to block the EU's eastern enlargement if the Cypriot Republic is not admitted.

In July and August, TRNC President Rauf Denktaş and Cypriot Republic leader Glafkos Clerides held their first talks in three years, under U.N. auspices, to discuss longstanding proposals to reunite the island as a "bi-zonal federation." The arrangement would give autonomy to the Greek and Turkish zones but ban annexation by the respective motherlands. As in the past, the talks failed to resolve key issues including the powers of the proposed federal government and the degree of separation between the two communities.

Adding to the pressure for a political solution, in January the Cypriot government ordered Russian-made air defense missiles for delivery in 1998. Turkey has threatened a pre-emptive strike on the missiles.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Citizens of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus can change their government democratically. The TRNC has a presidential-legislative system of government with elections held at least every five years. Turkish immigrants who settled in the North after the 1974 Turkish invasion have the right to vote in TRNC elections. The Greek and Maronite communities, with a combined population of about 1,000 people, are disenfranchised in the North but maintain the right to vote in Cypriot Republic elections. Ankara has considerable influence over the TRNC's policies, and in August 1997, one month after the EU again rejected Turkey's membership application, Turkey and the TRNC responded by announcing plans to further integrate their economic and security policies.

The judiciary is independent, and trials are fair. Civilians deemed to have violated military zones are subject to trial in military courts, which provide due process rights. In 1995, the TRNC allowed for the first time an investigation into the whereabouts of five American citizens of Greek Cypriot descent who disappeared during the 1974 invasion. Ethnic violence in 1996 killed four unarmed Greek Cypriots in the U.N.-controlled buffer zone. Three of the victims were killed by Turkish troops; one was beaten to death by armed demonstrators.

The private press includes newspapers and periodicals that carry a range of viewpoints. Broadcast media are government-owned and offer some pluralistic views. Authorities control the content of Greek Cypriot textbooks, and many titles are rejected on the grounds that they "violate the feelings" of Turkish Cypriots.

Advocates for Greek Cypriots living in the Northern city of Karpassia claim these "enclaved" individuals are denied freedom of movement, speech, property and access to the Greek press. Outstanding property claims arising from the division and population exchange in 1974 remain an obstacle to peace and demilitarization on the island. Roughly 85 percent of the land in the north continues to be claimed by its original Greek Cypriot owners. In 1996, the European Court for Human Rights at Strasbourg held Turkey directly responsible for denying a Greek Cypriot refugee unconditional access to her property in the North since 1974. In doing so, the Court recognized Ankara, not the TRNC, as having control of the North and treated the internationally-recognized Cypriot Republic as the sole legitimate government on the island. According to the *Financial Times*, property rights are weak within the TRNC itself and some residents accuse politically-connected persons of illegally appropriating land.

The majority Sunni Muslims and the minority Greek and Maronite Orthodox Christians worship freely. Restrictions exist on travel to and from the South. Trade unions are independent.

United Kingdom Northern Ireland

Polity: British administration and elected local councils (military-occupied)
Political Rights: 3*
Civil Liberties: 3
Status: Partly Free

Economy: Mixed capitalist

Population: 1,630,000

Ethnic Groups: Protestant (mostly Scottish and English) (57 percent), Irish Catholic (43 percent)

Ratings Change: Northern Ireland's political rights rating increased from 4 to 3 because of increased Republican participation in peace negotiations, and British efforts to enhance the efficiency and accountability of law enforcement.



Overview:

Substantive negotiations on the future of Northern Ireland convened on October 7 with Sinn Fein among the eight political parties participating. These talks, which bring the British government face to face with the Irish Republican Army's political wing for the first time in 76 years, represent the most hopeful opportunity so far to end 28 years of sectarian violence in the territory.

Northern Ireland comprises six of the nine counties of the Irish province of Ulster. At the insistence of the locally dominant Protestants, these counties remained part of the United Kingdom after the other 26, predominantly Catholic, counties in Ireland gained independence in 1921. Catholics now constitute a majority in four of the six counties. The demographic trends have aroused anxiety within the Protestant population, which is largely descended from seventeenth-century Scottish and English settlers. Britain's 1920 Government of Ireland Act set up the northern Irish parliament, which functioned until the British imposed direct rule in 1972. Subsequent attempts at Catholic-Protestant power-sharing have failed.

Disorder resulting from a nonviolent Catholic civil rights movement in the 1960s prompted the deployment of British troops which have occupied Northern Ireland to date. Amid sectarian violence beginning in the 1970s, division grew within both the primarily Protestant "Unionist" and the Catholic "Nationalist" or "Republican" communities. In addition to numerous political factions including the conservative Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), the hardline Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the interdenominational unionist Alliance Party, the moderate pro-Nationalist Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP) and the pro-Nationalist Sinn Fein, there are also paramilitary groups on both sides that have continued to engage in acts of terrorism.

Negotiations for a peace settlement began in June 1996 without Sinn Fein. The party was banned from the talks by then-prime minister John Major pending a cessation of terrorism and a renunciation of violence. As expected, the talks produced no significant agreement without IRA representation, stalling over the issue of the decommissioning of terrorist arms.

British general elections in May 1997 brought about significant gains for Republicans and a new Labor government with a mandate to effect progress in the peace

process. Sinn Fein took 17 percent of the Northern Ireland vote, with leaders Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness winning seats in the House of Commons. Tony Blair's Labor party won an overwhelming majority in the Commons, giving his government the freedom to make concessions to Republicans in the interests of peace.

Making peace in Northern Ireland a priority of his administration, Blair almost immediately began to undertake confidence-building measures with Sinn Fein. In May, he ended a 16-month ban on official contacts between his government and Sinn Fein. He also began repatriating Republican prisoners from British prisons to ones in Ireland, fulfilling a longstanding Republican demand. In July, a joint British/Irish proposal stated that talks on weapons decommissioning could proceed parallel to the peace negotiations, causing Unionist parties, who have consistently demanded Republican disarmament as a prerequisite to talks, to threaten a boycott. Blair's efforts bore fruit when the IRA announced a ceasefire effective July 20. A formal renunciation of violence in September ensured Sinn Fein its place at the negotiating table.

The decision of Unionists to remain involved in the process in the face of perceived Republican "triumphalism" is likewise a credit to Blair's careful balancing strategy. The prime minister reassured Unionists that any change in the political status of Northern Ireland would occur only with the consent of the majority of the province, which is 57 percent Protestant. This "principle of consent" ensures that the North will not be united with the Irish Republic as a result of the current negotiations.

Full-scale negotiations began in October along three tracks: the internal governance of the North; the role of Dublin in Northern Irish affairs; and relations between Dublin and London. However, the process stalled almost immediately with each side accusing the other of blocking progress. Unionists are bitterly opposed to the idea of any cross-border executive body and were infuriated by Irish prime minister Bertie Ahern's refusal to amend Ireland's 1937 constitution, which claims Irish sovereignty over the whole island, at the outset of talks. Meanwhile, Gerry Adams struggles to convince an increasingly divided Republican movement that any deal resulting from the current talks will not simply reinforce partition, but further the Republican goal of a united Ireland.

Despite British and Irish assurances of progress, parties to the negotiations failed in December to agree on key issues to be addressed when talks restart in January. A crisis ensued at year's end with a wave of reprisal killings sparked by the murder of a Protestant guerrilla leader by Republicans in the Maze high-security prison. British and Irish leaders reaffirmed their intention to send their original proposals to the Northern Irish voters in a referendum by May 1998 if no settlement is reached.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties: The people of Northern Ireland can elect members to the British House of Commons and to local government bodies. The regional parliament was suspended in 1972 following the imposition of British direct rule. Unionists retain effective veto power over the North's unification with the Republic, causing Nationalists to claim that they lack the right to self-determination.

In May local elections, Sinn Fein made impressive gains while Unionists lost control of several key city councils, including Belfast. The Belfast city council elected its first Nationalist mayor ever, a former councilor from the SDLP. Outraged Unionists accused the British government of breaching electoral laws by convening talks

with Sinn Fein on polling day, giving Republicans an unfair publicity advantage.

The British government published a Human Rights Bill in October, along with a White Paper proposing to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into British law. The Bill would effectively establish a Bill of Rights, which Britain has lacked so far. For the first time, citizens who believe that their rights have been violated will be able to seek redress against the government or other public bodies through British courts. Previously, aggrieved citizens had to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

The Emergency Provisions Act (EPA), which is due for renewal every two years, severely limits due process rights, compromising internationally recognized standards for detention, interrogation and the right to counsel. Under emergency law, suspected terrorists may be arrested without warrants and are denied trial by jury.

On October 1, Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam announced the government's intention to reform the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) police force, eliminate indefinite internment without trial, narrow the scope of cases heard by the Diplockjuryless courts and replace the EPA and the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) with one all-embracing act. At year's end, legislation to implement compulsory audio recording during interrogation was being debated by parliament, as were other aspects of RUC reform.

"Punishment beatings" by paramilitaries on both sides of the conflict continued in 1997. The attacks are used by the paramilitaries to discipline their own ranks for offenses ranging from wife abuse to drug dealing and often result in serious injury or death. Police reported 120 punishment beatings by Loyalists and 102 by Republicans in 1997.

The annual summer marching season, during which Protestant parades commemorate past victories over Catholics, led to several days of sectarian violence throughout Northern Ireland. Nationalists denounced the government's decision to allow a July 6 parade to march through a center of Nationalist opposition in Portadown. A brief but intense clash erupted between police and Catholic protesters, in which 14 persons were injured, some with plastic bullets. Serious rioting continued for three days throughout the North, including car and train hijackings and burnings, paramilitary attacks on security forces and the shooting of a female officer. The Orange Order voluntarily canceled or re-routed four of its parades in order to avert further unrest.

A marked decrease in sectarian violence followed the IRA ceasefire, and about 300 army troops were withdrawn from Northern Ireland to bases in England. Nevertheless, police report that paramilitary activity resulted in 22 deaths, 251 shootings, and 78 bombings in 1997.

United States

Puerto Rico

Polity: Elected governor and legislature
Economy: Capitalist
Population: 3,613,000
Ethnic Groups: Hispanic

Political Rights: 1
Civil Liberties: 2
Status: Free



Overview:

While President Clinton has promised that if Puerto Rico votes for statehood it will be able to keep its language and culture, congressional debate on a plebiscite over the future status of the island has been postponed until 1998 due to Republican opposition.

Following approval by plebiscite, Puerto Rico acquired the status of a commonwealth in free association with the U.S. in 1952. Under its terms, Puerto Rico exercises approximately the same control over its internal affairs as do the 50 U.S. states. Residents, though U.S. citizens, 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.

The Commonwealth constitution, modeled on that of the U.S., provides for a governor and a bicameral legislature, consisting of a 28-member Senate and a 54-member House of Representatives, elected for four years. A Supreme Court heads an independent judiciary, and the legal system is based on U.S. law.

Pedro Rosello of the pro-statehood New Progressive Party (PNP) was elected governor in 1992, defeating Victoria Munoz Mendoza of the incumbent Popular Democratic Party (PPD). The PNP also won majorities in the House and Senate.

The election reflected anti-incumbency sentiment and immediate concerns over rising crime, high unemployment, government corruption and education. Still, the island's relationship with the U.S. remains a fundamental issue. In a nonbinding 1993 referendum, voters narrowly opted to retain commonwealth status. Commonwealth status received 48.4 percent of the vote; statehood, 46.3 percent; and independence, 4.4 percent. The vote indicated significant gains for statehood, which in the last referendum, in 1967, received only 39 percent of the vote.

Any vote to change the island's status would have to be approved by the U.S. Congress. A bill introduced in the House of Representatives in March 1996 called for a congressionally mandated plebiscite by the end of 1998 that would offer Puerto Ricans a choice between statehood or independence.

At the November 5, 1996 elections Rosello won re-election with 51.2 percent of the vote, defeating the PPD's Hector Luis Acevedo, who took 44.4 percent. The Puerto Rico Independence Party's (PIP) David Noriega Rodriguez took 3.8 percent. In the House the PNP won 37 seats; the PPD, 16; and the PIP, one. In the Senate the PNP won 19 seats; the PPD, eight; and the PIP, one.

As Washington seeks to cut the federal deficit, the benefits the island receives under Section 936 of the Internal Revenue Code will be phased out over the next ten years. This fundamental change in U.S.-Puerto Rican economic relations means the

eventual end to a system in which income tax and wage credits to subsidiaries of U.S. companies operating on the island will be eliminated, as well as the tax-free status of interest earned on income.

**Political Rights
and Civil Liberties:**

As U.S. citizens, Puerto Ricans are guaranteed all civil liberties granted in the U.S. The press and broadcast media are well developed, highly varied and critical. In recent years the Puerto Rican Journalists' Association (ASPRO) has charged successive governments with denying complete access to official information. Labor unions are well organized and have the right to strike.

The greatest cause for concern is the steep rise in criminal violence in recent years, much of it drug related, and the Rosello government's response to it. Puerto Rico is now the Caribbean's main drug transshipment point. Since mid-1993, about 80 public housing projects, or about two-fifths of the total, have been under the control of the National Guard, the first time U.S. military units have been routinely deployed to fight crime.

In 1997 island residents were shocked by a U.S. District Court report that found that many elected officials were actively currying the favor of incarcerated gang members in order to court votes among inmates. The report said that violent narcotics gangs were in virtual control of Puerto Rico's 36 prisons and had the ability to decide who received goods ranging from toothpaste to cocaine. According to the report, a "shadow governing body" led by the strongest of several competing prison gangs—the Asociacion Neta, which dominates the drug trade inside the corrections system—had taken control of prison functions from corrections staff.

The Rosello government claims the projects have been "liberated" from drug traffickers. Critics point to civil rights abuses including unlawful search and seizure and other transgressions. The policy appears to have reduced crime in some categories, including homicide. Corruption and criminal activity within the police force are continuing concerns.

In late 1997, the Commonwealth Congress appeared on the verge of passing a bill that would amend the island's Civil Code and outlaw gay marriages. Civil rights activists say the bill, which is supported by Puerto Rico's influential Protestant evangelical organizations, is unnecessary given existing laws and may induce even greater discrimination against gays and lesbians.

Yugoslavia

Kosovo

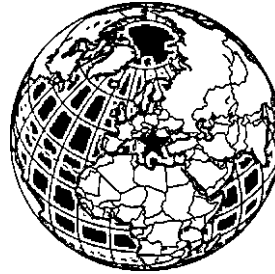
Polity: Serbian
administration

Economy: Mixed-statist
Population: 2,018,000

Ethnic Groups: Albanian (90 percent), Serb, Montenegrin

Political Rights: 7
Civil Liberties: 7

Status: Not Free



Overview:

In 1997, tensions escalated in Kosovo, the predominantly ethnic-Albanian enclave within Serbia, in the face of increased violent activity by the underground Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) and continued Serb repression of Albanians, including the brutal dispersal of several Albanian demonstrations, regular raids on Albanian homes in search of weapons and several arrests and trials.

For Serbs, Kosovo is the historic cradle of the Serbian medieval state and culture. It was the site of the Battle of Kosovo Fields in 1389 between Serbian Prince Lazar and the Turks, which solidified Ottoman control over the Serbs for the next 500 years. Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic rose to power in 1987 over the issue of Kosovo's status. Central to his platform was the subjugation of the then-autonomous Yugoslav province (established by the 1974 constitution) to Serbian authority. Persecution by ethnic Albanians caused some 50,000 Serb and Montenegrin residents to flee Kosovo after the 1980 death of Yugoslav strongman Josip Broz (Tito).

In 1989-1990, Milosevic abolished the provincial government and legislature and introduced a series of amendments to the Serbian constitution that effectively removed the legal basis for Kosovo's autonomy. Albanians elected a shadow president, Ibrahim Rugova, leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), and a 130-member parliament in 1992 to underscore the illegitimacy of Serb rule. Bujar Bukoshi, based in Bonn, was named prime minister. His task is to raise funds from the large Albanian diaspora in Europe.

Since the Serb takeover, hundreds of thousands of Albanians lost their jobs, and over 200,000 left for other parts of Europe and the United States. Serbs were placed in control of hospitals, universities, businesses, schools and government. While Albanian resistance has officially been non-violent, several Serbian policemen and militiamen were murdered in the last six years.

In 1996, President Milosevic and President Rugova signed an agreement for the return of ethnic Albanians to schools and the university, thus ending the parallel school system set up by Albanians after the abolition of the region's autonomy. But by the end of 1997, the agreement had not been implemented, largely because of resistance from Serb academics and nationalist leaders in Kosovo. Some 200 schools continued to operate in private homes.

In 1997, the UCK, a shadowy group armed with Chinese-made weapons, launched a string of attacks on Serb police stations, and Albanians seen to be collaborating with the state. The attacks increasingly undermined President Rugova, whose adherence to passive resistance and civil disobedience came under increased criticism from opposition parties and members of the shadow government. Among the critics is Adem

Demaci, a highly respected former political prisoner, head of the Kosovo Human Rights Council and a leader of the Parliamentary Party (PPK), an LDK rival. The United States and Europe have proposed a new federation that would give Kosovo, the Muslim Sandjak region, and Vojvodina a constitutional status equal to that of Serbia and Montenegro, but without the right to secede from Yugoslavia. Both Serbia and the Kosovars have rejected the plan.

There were several large demonstrations during the year. In October, 15,000 students marched in Pristina, the capital, demanding education in their native language. Hundreds of riot police used tear gas and clubs to break up the protest. Demonstrations continued in November and December throughout the region.

Kosovars boycotted 1997 presidential elections in Serbia. In December, President Rugova announced presidential and parliamentary elections for March 22, 1998. He will be challenged by the PPK's Adem Demaci.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Kosovars cannot change democratically the *de jure* government imposed by Serbia. The Parliamentary Party and the Social Democrats are technically outlawed, while the LDK and its leaders have been targets of harassment and detention. Kosovo's democratically elected legislature and government were forced underground after the 1992 elections, which were not recognized by Serbia. New presidential and parliamentary elections were announced for March 1998. The Liberal Party (PLK) is also prominent.

Ultimate judicial authority lies with Belgrade, and there is no independent judiciary. In December, 17 Kosovars were sentenced to a total of 186 years in prison for alleged membership in the UCK. Legal experts said the trial was marred by gross irregularities. Prisoners were tortured, defense lawyers were denied access to information to prepare an adequate defense, and self-incriminating statements made under duress were admitted. Also in December, a Kosovo association of former political prisoners said that 80 ethnic Albanians are being held as political prisoners, including the president of the Party for the National Unity of Kosovo. More than 3,000 Albanians have been sentenced to prison during political trials since 1989. The security forces regularly engage in illegal searches, torture, beatings, extortion and murder.

Albanian TV and radio have been abolished. A Belgrade-based conglomerate took over the newspaper *Rilindja*. The weekly *Zeri* continues to be published. In October, police officers raided the offices of the Albanian-language *Koha Ditore* after the paper covered police violence at a demonstration.

Over the last ten years, Albanian monuments have been destroyed, streets have received Serbian names, and signs in Cyrillic have replaced those in the Latin script. Serbian has supplanted Albanian as the official language. Since 1991, some 8,000 Albanian teachers have been dismissed. In 1993, Serb authorities shut down all Albanian-language secondary schools, denying schooling to an estimated 63,000 children. The crackdown shut all 58 Albanian-language secondary schools and 21 of the 350-odd Albanian-language primary schools. A network of clandestine, underground schools have been set up in Albanian households.

The Independent Trade Unions of Kosovo (BSPK), an outlawed Albanian-language confederation, has been the subject of repression for refusing to affiliate with the official Serbian unions or sign collective agreements approved by these unions. Scores of union leaders were arrested in 1995 and 1996.

The Comparative Survey of Freedom—1997-1998

Survey Methodology

The purpose of the *Comparative Survey of Freedom* since its inception in the 1970s has been to provide an annual evaluation of political rights and civil liberties everywhere in the world.

The *Survey* attempts to judge all places by a single standard and to point out the importance of democracy and freedom. At a minimum, a democracy is a political system in which the people choose their authoritative leaders freely from among competing groups and individuals who were not chosen by the government. Putting it broadly, freedom is the chance to act spontaneously in a variety of fields outside the control of government and other centers of potential domination.

For a long time, Westerners have associated the adherence to political rights and civil liberties with the liberal democracies, such as those in North America and the European Union. However, there has been a proliferation of democracies in developing countries in recent years, and the *Survey* reflects their growing numbers.

Freedom House does not view democracy as a static concept, and the *Survey* recognizes that a democratic country does not necessarily belong in our category of "free" states. A democracy can lose freedom and become merely "partly free." Sri Lanka and Colombia are examples of such "partly free" democracies. In other cases, countries that replaced military regimes with elected governments can have less than complete transitions to liberal democracy. Guatemala fits the description of this kind of "partly free" democracy. (See the section below on the designations "free," "partly free," and "not free" for an explanation of those terms.) Readers should note that some scholars would use the term "semi-democracy" or "formal democracy," instead of "partly free" democracy, to refer to countries that are democratic in form but less than free in substance.

WHAT THE *SURVEY* IS NOT

The *Survey* does not rate governments *per se* but rather the rights and freedoms individuals have in each country and territory. Freedom House does not score countries and territories based on governmental intentions or constitutions but on the real world situations caused by governmental and non-governmental factors. The *Survey* does not quantify our sympathy for the situation a government finds itself in (e.g., war, terrorism, etc.) but rather what effect the situation itself has on freedom.

DEFINITIONS AND CATEGORIES OF THE *SURVEY*

The *Survey's* understanding of freedom is broad and encompasses two sets of charac-

teristics grouped under political rights and civil liberties. Political rights enable people to participate freely in the political process. By the political process, we mean the system by which the polity chooses the authoritative policy makers and attempts to make binding decisions affecting the national, regional or local community. In a free society this means the right of all adults to vote and compete for public office, and for elected representatives to have a decisive vote on public policies. A system is genuinely free or democratic to the extent that the people have a choice in determining the nature of the system and its leaders.

Civil liberties are the freedoms to develop views, institutions and personal autonomy apart from the state.

The *Survey* employs checklists for these rights and liberties to help determine the degree of freedom present in each country and related territory, and to help assign each entity to a comparative category.

Beginning with the 1995-96 edition of the *Survey*, we reduced the number of questions on the political rights checklist from nine to eight. The question was deleted because a lack of decentralization does not necessarily translate into a lack of freedom. The revised checklist also mandated changes in assignment of category numbers and freedom ratings (see below).

This year Freedom House made minor changes to the Civil Liberties checklist in an effort to better capture the increasing differentiations among countries in two key areas: the rule of law and economic freedom. The existing question on the judiciary (Question 5) has been separated into two rule of law questions, now Question 5 and Question 6.

The previous Question 6 is now Question 7. The previous Question 7 has been integrated into Question 8. Question 9, regarding economic freedom, is now worded in a more nuanced way.

POLITICAL RIGHTS CHECKLIST

1. Is the head of state and/or head of government or other chief authority elected through free and fair elections?
2. Are the legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?
3. Are there fair electoral laws, equal campaigning opportunities, fair polling and honest tabulation of ballots?
4. Are the voters able to endow their freely elected representatives with real power?
5. 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?
6. Is there a significant opposition vote, *de facto* opposition power, and a realistic possibility for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?
7. Are the people free from domination by the military, foreign powers, totalitarian parties, religious hierarchies, economic oligarchies or any other powerful group?
8. Do cultural, ethnic, religious and other minority groups have reasonable self-determination, self-government, autonomy or participation through informal consensus in the decision-making process?

Additional discretionary Political Rights questions

A. For traditional monarchies that have no parties or electoral process, does the system provide for consultation with the people, encourage discussion of policy, and allow the right to petition the ruler?

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?

When answering the political rights questions, Freedom House considers the extent to which the system offers the voter the chance to make a free choice among candidates, and to what extent the candidates are chosen independently of the state. We recognize that formal electoral procedures are not the only factors that determine the real distribution of power. In many Latin American countries, for example, the military retains a significant political role, and in Morocco the king maintains significant power over the elected politicians. The more people suffer under such domination by unelected forces, the less chance the country has of getting credit for self-determination in our *Survey*.

Freedom House does not have a culture-bound view of democracy. The *Survey*

The Tabulated Ratings

The accompanying Table of Independent Countries and Table of Related Territories rate each country or territory on seven-category scales for political rights and civil liberties, and then place each entity into a broad category of "free," "partly free" or "not free." On each scale, 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free.

Political rights

In political rights, generally speaking, places rated 1 come closest to the ideals suggested by the checklist questions, beginning with free and fair elections. Those elected rule. There are competitive parties or other competitive political groupings, and the opposition has an important role and power. These entities have self-determination or an extremely high degree of autonomy (in the case of related territories). Usually, those rated 1 have self-determination for minority groups or their participation in government through informal consensus. With the exception of such entities as tiny island countries, these countries and territories have decentralized political power and free sub-national elections. Entities in Category 1 are not perfect. They can and do lose credit for their deficiencies.

Countries and territories rated 2 in political rights are less free than those rated 1. Such factors as gross political corruption, violence, political discrimination against minorities, and foreign or military influence on politics may be present, and weaken the quality of democracy.

The same factors that weaken freedom in category 2 may also undermine political rights in categories 3, 4, and 5. Other damaging conditions may be at work as well, including civil war, very strong military involvement in politics, lingering royal power, unfair elections and one-party dominance. However, states and territories in these categories may still have some elements of political rights such as the freedom to organize nongovernmental parties and quasi-political groups, reasonably free referenda, or other significant means of popular influence on government.

Typically, states and territories with political rights rated 6 have systems ruled by military juntas, one-party dictatorships, religious hierarchies and autocrats. These regimes may allow only some minimal manifestation of political rights such as competitive local elections or some degree of representation or autonomy for minorities. Category 6 also contains some countries in the early or aborted stages of democratic transition. A few states in Category 6 are traditional monarchies that mitigate their relative lack of political rights through the use of consultation with their subjects, toleration of political discussion, and acceptance of petitions from the ruled.

Freedom House does not have a culture-bound view of democracy. The *Survey* team rejects the notion that only Europeans and those of European descent qualify as democratic. The *Survey* demonstrates that, in addition to those in Europe and the Americas, there are free countries with varying kinds of democracy functioning among people of all races and religions in Africa, the Pacific and Asia. In some Pacific islands, free countries can have competitive political systems based on competing family groups and personalities rather than on European- or American-style parties.

THE CHECKLIST FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES

1. Are there free and independent media, literature and other cultural expressions? (Note: In cases where the media are state-controlled but offer pluralistic points of view, the *Survey* gives the system credit.)
2. Is there open public discussion and free private discussion?
3. Is there freedom of assembly and demonstration?
4. Is there freedom of political or quasi-political organization? (Note: This includes political parties, civic associations, ad hoc issue groups and so forth.)

The Tabulated Ratings

Category 7 includes places where political rights are absent or virtually nonexistent due to the extremely oppressive nature of the regime or extreme oppression in combination with civil war. A country or territory may also join this category when extreme violence and warlordism dominate the people in the absence of an authoritative, functioning central government. Places in Category 7 may get some minimal points for the checklist questions, but only a tiny fragment of available credit.

Civil liberties

Category 1 in civil liberties includes countries and territories that generally have the highest levels of freedoms and opportunities for the individual. Places in this category may still have problems in civil liberties, but they lose partial credit in only a limited number of areas.

The places in category 2 in civil liberties are not as free as those rated 1, but they are still relatively high on the scale. These countries and territories have deficiencies in several aspects of civil liberties, but still receive most available credit.

Independent countries and related territories with ratings of 3, 4 or 5 have progressively fewer civil liberties than those in category 2. Places in these categories range from ones that receive at least partial credit on virtually all checklist questions to those that have a mixture of good civil liberties scores in some areas and zero or partial credit in others. As one moves down the scale below category 2, the level of oppression increases, especially 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 carry out political terror that undermines other freedoms. That means that a poor rating for a country is not necessarily a comment on the intentions of the government. The rating may simply reflect the real restrictions on liberty which can be caused by non-governmental terror.

Typically, at category 6 in civil liberties, countries and territories have a few partial rights. For example, a country might have some religious freedom, some personal social freedoms, some highly restricted private business activity, and relatively free private discussion. In general, people in these states and territories experience severely restricted expression and association. There are almost always political prisoners and other manifestations of political terror.

At category 7, countries and territories have virtually no freedom. An overwhelming and justified fear of repression characterizes the society.

The accompanying Tables of Combined Average Ratings average the two seven-category scales of political rights and civil liberties into an overall freedom rating for each country and territory.

Political Rights	
Category Number	Raw Points
1	28-32
2	23-27
3	19-22
4	14-18
5	10-13
6	5-9
7	0-4

Civil Liberties	
Category Number	Raw Points
1	45-52
2	38-44
3	30-37
4	23-29
5	15-22
6	8-14
7	0-7

5. Is there an independent judiciary?
6. Does the rule of law prevail in civil and criminal matters? Are citizens equal under the law? Are police under civilian control?
7. Is there protection from political terror, and from unjustified imprisonment, exile or torture, whether by groups that support or oppose the system, and freedom from war or insurgency situations? (Note: Freedom from war and insurgency situations enhances the liberties in a free society, but the absence of wars and insurgencies does not in itself make an unfree society free.)
8. Are there free trade unions and peasant organizations or equivalents, and is there effective collective bargaining? Are there free professional and other private organizations?
9. Are property rights secure? Do citizens have the right to establish private businesses? Is private business activity unduly influenced by government officials, the

security forces, or organized crime?

10. Are there free religious institutions and free private and public religious expressions?
11. Are there personal social freedoms, which include such aspects as gender equality, freedom of movement, choice of residence, and choice of marriage and size of family?
12. Is there equality of opportunity, which includes freedom from exploitation by or dependency on landlords, employers, union leaders, bureaucrats or any other type of denigrating obstacle to a share of legitimate economic gains?
13. Is there freedom from extreme government indifference and corruption?

When analyzing the civil liberties checklist, Freedom House does not mistake constitutional guarantees of human rights for those rights in practice. For tiny island countries and territories and other small entities with low populations, the absence of unions and other types of association does not necessarily count as a negative unless the government or other centers of domination are deliberately blocking association. In some cases, the small size of these entities may result in a lack of sufficient institutional complexity to make them fully comparable to larger countries. The question of equality of opportunity also implies a free choice of employment and education. Extreme inequality of opportunity prevents disadvantaged individuals from enjoying a full exercise of civil liberties. Typically, desperately poor countries and territories lack both opportunities for economic advancement and the other liberties on this checklist. We have a question on gross indifference and corruption, because when governments do not care about the social and economic welfare of large sectors of the population, the human rights of those people suffer. Government corruption can pervert the political process and hamper the development of a free economy.

HOW DO WE GRADE?

The *Survey* rates political rights and civil liberties separately on a seven-category scale, 1 representing the most free and 7 the least free. A country is assigned to a particular category based on responses to the checklist and the judgments of the *Survey* team at Freedom House. The numbers are not purely mechanical; they also reflect judgment. Under the methodology, the team assigns initial ratings to countries by awarding from 0 to 4 raw points per checklist item, depending on the comparative rights or liberties present. (In the *Surveys* completed from 1989-90 through 1992-93, the methodology allowed for a less nuanced range of 0 to 2 raw points per question. Taking note of this modification, scholars should consider the 1993-94 scores the statistical benchmark.) The only exception to the addition of 0 to 4 raw points per checklist item is the discretionary question on cultural destruction and deliberate demographic change to tip the political balance. In that case, we subtract 1 to 4 raw points depending on the situation's severity. The highest possible score for political rights is 32 points, based on up to 4 points for each of eight questions. The highest possible score for civil liberties is 52 points, based on up to 4 points for each of thirteen questions. After placing countries in initial categories based on checklist points, the *Survey* team makes minor adjustments to account for factors such as extreme violence, whose intensity may not be reflected in answering the checklist questions. These exceptions aside, in the overwhelming number of cases, the checklist system reflects the real world situation and is adequate for placing countries and territories into the proper comparative categories.

At its discretion, Freedom House assigns up or down arrows to countries and territories to indicate positive or negative trends, whether qualitative or quantitative, that may not be apparent from the ratings: Such trends may or may not be reflected in raw points, depending on the circumstances of each country or territory. Only places without ratings changes since the previous year warrant trend arrows. Distinct from the trend arrows, the triangles indicate changes in political rights and civil liberties caused by real world events since the last *Survey*.

FREE, PARTLY FREE, NOT FREE

The accompanying map divides the world into three large categories: "free," "partly free," and "not free." The *Survey* places countries and territories into this tripartite division by averaging the ratings they received for political rights and civil liberties. Those whose ratings average 1-2.5 are generally considered "free," 3-5.5 "partly free," and 5.5-7 "not free." The dividing line between "partly free" and "not free" usually falls within the group whose category numbers average 5.5. For example, countries that receive a rating of 6 for political rights and 5 for civil liberties, or a 5 for political rights and a 6 for civil liberties, could be either "partly free" or "not free." The total number of raw points is the definitive factor which makes the difference between the two. Countries and territories with combined raw scores of 0-28 points are "not free," and those with combined raw scores of 29-56 points are "partly free." "Free" countries and territories have combined raw scores of 57-84 points. Based on raw points, this year we have two unusual cases: Mali's ratings average 3.0 but it is "free," while Cote D'Ivoire's rating average 5.0 but it is "not free."

The differences in raw points between countries in the three broad categories rep-

resent distinctions in the real world. There are obstacles which "partly free" countries must overcome before they can be called "free," just as there are impediments which prevent "not free" countries from being called "partly free." Countries at the lowest rung of the "free" category (category 2 in political rights with category 3 in civil liberties or category 3 in political rights with category 2 in civil liberties) differ from those at the upper end of the "partly free" group (e.g., category 3 in both). Typically, there is more violence and/or military influence on politics at 3,3 than at 2,3 and the differences become more striking as one compares 2,3 with worse categories of the "partly free" countries.

The distinction between the least bad "not free" countries and the least free "partly free" may be less obvious than the gap between "partly free" and "free," but at "partly free," there is at least one extra factor that keeps a country from being assigned to the "not free" category. For example, Lebanon, which was rated 6,5, Partly Free, in 1994, was rated 6,5, but Not Free, in 1995 after its legislature unilaterally extended the incumbent president's term indefinitely. Though not sufficient to drop the country's political rights rating to category 7, there was enough of a drop in raw points to change its category.

Freedom House wishes to point out that the designation "free" does not mean that a country has perfect freedom or lacks serious problems. As an institution which advocates human rights, Freedom House remains concerned about a variety of social problems and civil liberties questions in the U.S. and other countries that the *Survey* places in the "free" category. Similarly, in no way does an improvement in a country's rating mean that human rights campaigns should cease. On the contrary, we wish to use the *Survey* as a prod to improve the condition of all countries.

Readers should understand that the "free," "partly free," and "not free" labels are highly simplified terms that each cover a broad third of the available raw points. The labels do *not* imply that all countries in a category are the same any more than a bestseller list implies that all titles on it have sold the same number of books. Countries and territories can reach the same categories or even raw points by differing routes. We use the tripartite labels and tricolor maps to illustrate some broad comparisons. In theory, we could have eighty-five categories and colors to match the range of raw points, but this would be highly impractical. Anyone wishing to see the distinctions within each category should look at the category numbers and combined average ratings.

THE APPROACH OF THE *SURVEY*

The *Survey* attempts to measure conditions as they really are around the world. This approach is distinct from relying on intense coverage by the American media as a guide to which countries are the least free. The publicity given problems in some countries does not necessarily mean that unpublicized problems of other countries are not more severe. For example, while U.S. television networks are allowed into Israel and Northern Ireland to cover abuses of human rights, they are not allowed to report freely in North Korea, which has far less freedom than the other two entities. To reach such comparative conclusions, Freedom House evaluates the development of democratic governmental institutions, or lack thereof, and also examines the quality of civil society, life outside the state structure.

Without a well-developed civil society, it is difficult, if not impossible, to have an atmosphere supportive of democracy. A society that does not have free individual and group expressions in nonpolitical matters is not likely to make an exception for political ones. As though to prove this, there is no country in the *Survey* that places in category 6 or 7 for civil liberties and, at the same time, in category 1 or 2 for political rights. Almost without exception in the *Survey*, countries and territories have ratings in political rights and civil liberties that are within two categories of each other.

The *Survey* rates both countries and related territories. For our purposes, countries are internationally recognized independent states whose governments are resident within their officially claimed territories. In the unusual case of Cyprus, we give two ratings, since there are two governments on that divided island. In no way does this imply that Freedom House endorses Cypriot division. We note only that neither the predominantly Greek Republic of Cyprus nor the Turkish-occupied, predominantly Turkish territory of the Republic of Northern Cyprus is the *de facto* government for the entire island. Related territories consist mostly of colonies, protectorates, occupied territories and island dependencies. However, the *Survey* also reserves the right to designate as related territories places within internationally recognized states that are disputed areas or that have a human rights problem or issue of self-determination deserving special attention. Northern Ireland, Tibet, and Kashmir are examples falling within this category. The *Survey* excludes uninhabited related territories and such entities as the U.S.-owned Johnston Atoll, which has only a transient military population and no native inhabitants. Since most related territories have a broad range of civil liberties and some form of self-government, a higher proportion of them have the "free" designation than do independent countries.

We provide only designations of "free," "partly free" and "not free" for the eight related territories with populations under 5,000, without corresponding category numbers. Notwithstanding, we will continue to score these territories according to the same methodology as the rest. They are: Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Rapanui (Easter Island), Falkland Islands, Niue, Norfolk Island, Pitcairn Islands, Svalbard and Tokelau.

This year there are no new countries, but there is one additional related territory. We have added Abkhazia as a related territory of Georgia, thus recognizing that Abkhazia is essentially *de facto* independent from Georgia, with its own governmental structures and militia.

Tables and Ratings

TABLE OF INDEPENDENT COUNTRIES
COMPARATIVE MEASURES OF FREEDOM

COUNTRY	PR	CL	FREEDOM RATING	COUNTRY	PR	CL	FREEDOM RATING
Afghanistan	7	7	Not Free	Dominica	1	1	Free
Albania	4	4	Partly Free	Dominican Republic	3	3	Partly Free
Algeria	6	6	Not Free	Ecuador	3▼	3▲	Partly Free
Andorra	1	1	Free	Egypt	6	6	Not Free
Angola	6	6	Not Free	El Salvador	2▲	3	Partly Free
Antigua and Barbuda	4	3	Partly Free	Equatorial Guinea	7	7	Not Free
Argentina	2	3	Free	Eritrea	6	4	Partly Free
Armenia	5	4	Partly Free	Estonia	1	2	Free
Australia	1	1	Free	Ethiopia	4	5	Partly Free
Austria	1	1	Free	Fiji	4	3	Partly Free
Azerbaijan	6	4▲	Partly Free	Finland	1	1	Free
Bahamas	1	2	Free	France	1	2	Free
Bahrain	7	6	Not Free	Gabon	5	4	Partly Free
Bangladesh	2	4	Partly Free	The Gambia	7	6	Not Free
Barbados	1	1	Free	Georgia	3▲	4	Partly Free
Belarus	6	6	Not Free	Germany	1	2	Free
Belgium	1	2	Free	Ghana	3	3▲	Partly Free
Belize	1	1	Free	Greece	1	3	Free
Benin	2	2	Free	Grenada	1	2	Free
Bhutan	7	7	Not Free	Guatemala	3	4	Partly Free
Bolivia	1▲	3	Free	Guinea	6	5	Not Free
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5	5	Partly Free	Guinea-Bissau	3	4	Partly Free
Botswana	2	2	Free	Guyana	2	2	Free
Brazil	3▼	4	Partly Free	Haiti	4	5	Partly Free
Brunei	7	5	Not Free	Honduras	2▲	3	Partly Free
Bulgaria	2	3	Free	Hungary	1	2	Free
Burkina Faso	5	4	Partly Free	Iceland	1	1	Free
Burma	7	7	Not Free	India	2	4	Partly Free
Burundi	7	7	Not Free	Indonesia	7	5	Not Free
Cambodia	7▼	6	Not Free	Iran	6	7	Not Free
Cameroon	7	5	Not Free	Iraq	7	7	Not Free
Canada	1	1	Free	Ireland	1	1	Free
Cape Verde	1	2	Free	Israel	1	3	Free
Central African Republic	3	5	Partly Free	Italy	1	2	Free
Chad	6	5	Not Free	Jamaica	2	3	Free
Chile	2	2	Free	Japan	1	2	Free
China (P.R.C.)	7	7	Not Free	Jordan	4	4	Partly Free
Colombia	4	4	Partly Free	Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free
Comoros	5▼	4	Partly Free	Kenya	6▲	6	Not Free
Congo (Brazzaville)	7▼	5▼	Not Free	Kiribati	1	1	Free
Congo (Kinshasa)	7	6	Not Free	Korea, North	7	7	Not Free
Costa Rica	1	2	Free	Korea, South	2	2	Free
Côte d'Ivoire	6	4▲	Not Free	Kuwait	5	5	Partly Free
Croatia	4	4	Partly Free	Kyrgyz Republic	4	4	Partly Free
Cuba	7	7	Not Free	Laos	7	6	Not Free
Cyprus (C)	1	1	Free	Latvia	1▲	2	Free
Czech Republic	1	2	Free	Lebanon	6	5	Not Free
Denmark	1	1	Free	Lesotho	4	4	Partly Free
Djibouti	5	6	Not Free	Liberia	4▲	5▲	Not Free
				Libya	7	7	Not Free

COUNTRY	PR	CL	FREEDOM RATING	COUNTRY	PR	CL	FREEDOM RATING
Liechtenstein	1	1	Free	Singapore	5▼	5	Partly Free
Lithuania	1	2	Free	Slovakia	2	4	Partly Free
Luxembourg	1	1	Free	Slovenia	1	2	Free
⬇️ Macedonia	4	3	Partly Free	Solomon Islands	1	2	Free
⬇️ Madagascar	2	4	Partly Free	Somalia	7	7	Not Free
Malawi	2	3	Free	South Africa	1	2	Free
Malaysia	4	5	Partly Free	Spain	1	2	Free
Maldives	6	6	Not Free	Sri Lanka	3	4▲	Partly Free
Mali	3▼	3▼	Free	Sudan	7	7	Not Free
Malta	1	1	Free	Suriname	3	3	Partly Free
Marshall Islands	1	1	Free	Swaziland	6	5	Not Free
Mauritania	6	6	Not Free	Sweden	1	1	Free
Mauritius	1	2	Free	Switzerland	1	1	Free
Mexico	3▲	4▼	Partly Free	Syria	7	7	Not Free
Micronesia	1	2▼	Free	Taiwan (Rep. of China)	2	2	Free
Moldova	3	4	Partly Free	Tajikistan	6▲	6▲	Not Free
Monaco	2	1	Free	Tanzania	5	5	Partly Free
Mongolia	2	3	Free	Thailand	3	3	Partly Free
Morocco	5	5	Partly Free	Togo	6	5	Not Free
Mozambique	3	4	Partly Free	Tonga	5	3	Partly Free
⬇️ Namibia	2	3	Free	Trinidad and Tobago	1	2	Free
Nauru	1	3	Free	⬇️ Tunisia	6	5	Not Free
Nepal	3	4	Partly Free	⬇️ Turkey	4	5	Partly Free
Netherlands	1	1	Free	Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free
New Zealand	1	1	Free	Tuvalu	1	1	Free
⬆️ Nicaragua	3	3	Partly Free	Uganda	4	4	Partly Free
Niger	7	5	Not Free	⬇️ Ukraine	3	4	Partly Free
Nigeria	7	6	Not Free	United Arab Emirates	6	5	Not Free
Norway	1	1	Free	United Kingdom*	1	2	Free
⬆️ Oman	6	6	Not Free	United States	1	1	Free
Pakistan	4	5	Partly Free	Uruguay	1	2	Free
Palau	1	2	Free	Uzbekistan	7	6	Not Free
Panama	2	3	Free	Vanuatu	1	3	Free
Papua New Guinea	2	4	Partly Free	Venezuela	2	3	Free
⬇️ Paraguay	4	3	Partly Free	Vietnam	7	7	Not Free
Peru	5▼	4▼	Partly Free	Western Samoa	2	2	Free
Philippines	2	3	Free	⬆️ Yemen	5	6	Not Free
Poland	1	2	Free	Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)	6	6	Not Free
Portugal	1	1	Free	⬇️ Zambia	5	4	Partly Free
Qatar	7	6	Not Free	Zimbabwe	5	5	Partly Free
Romania	2	2▲	Free				
⬇️ Russia	3	4	Partly Free				
Rwanda	7	6	Not Free				
St. Kitts and Nevis	1	2	Free				
St. Lucia	1	2	Free				
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	2	1	Free				
San Marino	1	1	Free				
Sao Tome and Principe	1	2	Free				
Saudi Arabia	7	7	Not Free				
Senegal	4	4	Partly Free				
Seychelles	3	3	Partly Free				
Sierra Leone	7▼	6▼	Partly Free				

PR and CL stand for Political Rights and Civil Liberties. 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free category.

⬆️ up or down indicates a general trend in freedom.

▲▼ up or down indicates a change in Political Rights or Civil Liberties since the last Survey.

The Freedom Rating is an overall judgment based on Survey results. See the "Methodological Essay" for more details.

* Excluding Northern Ireland.

TABLE OF RELATED TERRITORIES
COMPARATIVE MEASURES OF FREEDOM

COUNTRY	PR	CL	FREEDOM RATING	COUNTRY	PR	CL	FREEDOM RATING
Armenia/Azerbaijan*				Netherlands			
Nagorno-Karabakh	5▲	6	Not Free	Antilles	1	2	Free
Australia				New Zealand			
Christmas Island	3	2	Free	Cook Islands	1	2	Free
Cocos (Keeling) Islands**			Free	Niue**			Free
Norfolk Island**			Free	Tokelau**			Free
Chile				Norway			
Rapanui (Easter Island)**			Free	Svalbard**			Free
China				Portugal			
Hong Kong	6▼	3▼	Partly Free	Azores	1	1	Free
Tibet	7	7	Not Free	Macao	6	4	Partly Free
Denmark				Madeira	1	1	Free
Faeroe Islands	1	1	Free	Spain			
Greenland	1	1	Free	Canary Islands	1	1	Free
Finland				Ceuta	1	2	Free
Aland Islands	1	1	Free	Melilla	1	2	Free
France				Turkey			
French Guiana	1	2	Free	Cyprus (T)	4	2	Partly Free
French Polynesia	1	2	Free	United Kingdom			
Guadeloupe			Free	Anguilla	2	1	Free
Martinique	1	2	Free	Bermuda	1	1	Free
Mayotte (Mahore)	1	2	Free	British Virgin Islands	1	1	Free
New Caledonia	3	2	Free	Cayman Islands	1	1	Free
Reunion	2	2	Free	Channel Islands	2	1	Free
St. Pierre and Miquelon	1	1	Free	Falkland Islands**			Free
Wallis and Futuna Islands	2	2	Free	Gibraltar	1	1	Free
Georgia				Isle of Man	1	1	Free
Abkhazia	6	5	Not Free	Montserrat	1	2▼	Free
India				Northern Ireland	3▲	3	Partly Free
Kashmir	7	7	Not Free	Pitcairn Island**			Free
Indonesia				St. Helena and Dependencies	2	1	Free
East Timor	7	7	Not Free	Turks and Caicos	1	1	Free
West Papua (Irian Jaya)	7	7	Not Free	United States of America			
Iraq				American Samoa	1	1	Free
Kurdistan	6	6	Not Free	Guam	1	1	Free
Israel				Northern Marianas	1	2	Free
Israeli-Administered Territories	6	5	Not Free	Puerto Rico	1	2	Free
Palestinian Authority-Administered Territories	5	6	Not Free	U.S. Virgin Islands	1	1	Free
Moldova				Yugoslavia			
Transdnister	6	6	Not Free	Kosovo	7	7	Not Free
Morocco							
Western Sahara	7	6	Not Free				
Netherlands							
Aruba	2	1	Free				

* Nagorno-Karabakh is disputed territory contested by Armenia and Azerbaijan.

** Micro-territories have populations of under 5,000. These areas are scored according to the same methodology used in the rest of the Survey, but are listed separately due to their very small populations.

TABLE OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COMPARISONS

COUNTRY	REAL GDP PER CAPITA (PPP\$)	LIFE EXPECTANCY	COUNTRY	REAL GDP PER CAPITA (PPP\$)	LIFE EXPECTANCY
Afghanistan	na	na	Dominica	6,118	72.0
Albania	2,788	70.5	Dominican Republic	3,933	70.0
Algeria	5,422	67.8	Ecuador	4,626	69.3
Andorra	na	na	Egypt	3,846	64.3
Angola	1,600	47.2	El Salvador	2,417	69.3
Antigua and Barbuda	8,977	74.0	Equatorial Guinea	1,673	48.6
Argentina	8,937	72.4	Eritrea	960	50.1
Armenia	1,737	70.8	Estonia	4,294	69.2
Australia	19,285	78.1	Ethiopia	427	48.2
Austria	20,667	76.6	Fiji	5,763	71.8
Azerbaijan	1,670	71.1	Finland	17,417	76.3
Bahamas	15,875	72.9	France	20,510	78.7
Bahrain	15,321	72.0	Gabon	3,641	54.1
Bangladesh	1,331	56.4	The Gambia	939	45.6
Barbados	11,051	75.9	Georgia	1,585	73.1
Belarus	4,713	69.2	Germany	19,675	76.3
Belgium	19,985	76.8	Ghana	1,960	56.6
Belize	5,590	74.0	Greece	11,265	77.8
Benin	1,696	54.2	Grenada	5,137	72.0
Bhutan	1,289	51.5	Guatemala	3,208	65.6
Bolivia	2,598	60.1	Guinea	1,103	45.1
Bosnia-Herzegovina	na	na	Guinea-Bissau	793	43.2
Botswana	5,367	52.3	Guyana	2,729	63.2
Brazil	5,362	66.4	Haiti	896	54.4
Brunei	30,447	74.9	Honduras	2,050	68.4
Bulgaria	4,533	71.1	Hungary	6,437	68.8
Burkina Faso	796	46.4	Iceland	20,566	79.1
Burma	1,051	58.4	India	1,348	61.3
Burundi	698	43.5	Indonesia	3,740	63.5
Cambodia	1,084	52.4	Iran	5,766	68.2
Cameroon	2,120	55.1	Iraq	3,159	57.0
Canada	21,459	79.0	Ireland	16,061	76.3
Cape Verde	1,862	65.3	Israel	16,023	77.5
Central African Republic	1,130	48.3	Italy	19,363	77.8
Chad	700	47.0	Jamaica	3,816	73.9
Chile	9,129	75.1	Japan	21,581	79.8
China (P.R.C.)	2,604	68.9	Jordan	4,187	68.5
Colombia	6,107	70.1	Kazakhstan	3,284	67.5
Comoros	1,366	56.1	Kenya	1,404	53.6
Congo (B)	2,410	51.3	Kiribati	na	na
Congo (K)	423	52.2	Korea, North	3,965	71.4
Costa Rica	5,919	76.6	Korea, South	10,656	71.5
Cote d'Ivoire	1,668	52.1	Kuwait	21,875	75.2
Croatia	3,960	71.3	Kyrgyz Republic	1,930	67.8
Cuba	3,000	75.4	Laos	2,484	51.7
Cyprus (G)	13,071	77.1	Latvia	3,332	67.9
Czech Republic	9,201	72.2	Lebanon	4,863	69.0
Denmark	21,341	75.2	Lesotho	1,109	57.9
Djibouti	1,270	48.8	Liberia	na	na
			Libya	6,125	63.8
			Liechtenstein	na	na

COUNTRY	REAL GDP PER CAPITA (PPP\$)	LIFE EXPECTANCY	COUNTRY	REAL GDP PER CAPITA (PPP\$)	LIFE EXPECTANCY
Lithuania	4,011	70.1	Singapore	20,987	77.1
Luxembourg	34,155	75.9	Slovakia	6,182	71.0
Macedonia	3,965	71.7	Slovenia	10,404	73.1
Madagascar	694	57.2	Solomon Islands	2,118	70.8
Malawi	694	41.1	Somalia	na	na
Malaysia	8,865	71.2	South Africa	4,291	63.7
Maldives	2,200	62.8	Spain	14,324	77.6
Mali	543	46.6	Sri Lanka	3,277	72.2
Malta	13,009	76.4	Sudan	1,084	51.1
Marshall Islands	na	na	Suriname	4,711	70.7
Mauritania	1,593	52.1	Swaziland	2,821	58.3
Mauritius	13,172	70.7	Sweden	18,540	78.3
Mexico	7,384	72.0	Switzerland	24,967	78.1
Micronesia	na	na	Syria	5,397	67.8
Moldova	1,576	67.7	Taiwan (Rep. of China)	na	na
Monaco	na	na	Tajikistan	1,117	76.8
Mongolia	3,766	64.4	Tanzania	656	50.3
Morocco	3,681	65.3	Thailand	7,104	69.5
Mozambique	986	46.0	Togo	1,109	50.6
Namibia	4,027	55.9	Tonga	na	na
Nauru	na	na	Trinidad and Tobago	9,124	72.9
Nepal	1,137	55.3	Tunisia	5,319	68.4
Netherlands	19,238	77.3	Turkey	5,193	68.2
New Zealand	16,851	76.4	Turkmenistan	3,496	64.7
Nicaragua	1,580	67.3	Tuvalu	na	na
Niger	787	47.1	Uganda	1,370	40.2
Nigeria	1,351	51.1	Ukraine	2,718	68.4
Norway	21,346	77.5	United Arab Emirates	16,000	74.2
Oman	10,078	70.0	United Kingdom	18,620	76.7
Pakistan	2,154	62.3	United States	26,397	76.2
Palau	na	na	Uruguay	6,752	72.6
Panama	6,104	73.2	Uzbekistan	2,438	67.5
Papua New Guinea	2,821	56.4	Vanuatu	2,276	65.9
Paraguay	3,531	68.8	Venezuela	8,120	72.1
Peru	3,645	67.4	Vietnam	1,208	66.0
Philippines	2,681	67.4	Western Samoa	2,726	68.1
Poland	5,002	71.2	Yemen	805	56.2
Portugal	12,326	74.4	Yugoslavia (Serbia & Montenegro)	na	na
Qatar	18,403	70.9	Zambia	962	42.6
Romania	4,037	69.5	Zimbabwe	2,196	49.0
Russia	4,828	65.7			
Rwanda	352	22.6			
St- Kitts and Nevis	9,436	69.0			
St. Lucia	6,182	71.0			
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	5,650	72.0			
San Marino	na	na			
Sao Tome and Principe	1,704	67.0			
Saudi Arabia	9,338	70.3			
Senegal	1,596	49.9			
Seychelles	7,891	72.0			
Sierra Leone	643	33.6			

Notes: Freedom House obtained the figures for purchasing power parities (PPP) and life expectancy from the U.N.'s **Human Development Report 1997** (Oxford University Press, 1997). PPPs are real GDP per capita figures which economists have adjusted to account for detailed price comparisons of individual items covering over 150 categories of expenditure. The U.N. life expectancy figures represent overall life expectancy, not differentiated by sex. In some cases not covered by the U.N., the chart lists a combined average of male and female life expectancy obtained from Rand McNally. For several countries the chart lists these combined averages.

COMBINED AVERAGE RATINGS: INDEPENDENT COUNTRIES			
FREE	Spain	Guatemala	Guinea
1.0	Trinidad	Guinea-Bissau	Kazakhstan
Andorra	United Kingdom	Macedonia	Lebanon
Australia	Uruguay	Mexico	Swaziland
Austria	2.0	Moldova	Togo
Barbados	Benin	Mozambique	Tunisia
Belize	Bolivia	Nepal	United Arab Emirates
Canada	Botswana	Paraguay	Yemen
Cyprus (G)	Chile	Russia	6.0
Denmark	Greece	Sri Lanka	Algeria
Dominica	Guyana	Ukraine	Angola
Finland	Israel	4.0	Belarus
Iceland	Korea, S	Albania	Brunei
Ireland	Nauru	Central African	Cameroon
Kiribati	Romania	Republic	Congo (Brazzaville)
Liechtenstein	Taiwan	Colombia	Egypt
Luxembourg	Vanuatu	Croatia	Indonesia
Malta	Western Samoa	Jordan	Kenya
Marshall Islands	2.5	Kyrgyz Republic	Maldives
Netherlands	Argentina	Lesotho	Mauritania
New Zealand	Bulgaria	Senegal	Niger
Norway	El Salvador	Tonga	Oman
Portugal	Honduras	Uganda	Tajikistan
San Marino	Jamaica	4.5	Yugoslavia
Sweden	Malawi	Armenia	6.5
Switzerland	Mongolia	Burkina Faso	Bahrain
Tuvalu	Namibia	Comoros	Cambodia
United States	Panama	Ethiopia	Congo (Kinshasa)
1.5	Philippines	Gabon	The Gambia
Bahamas	Venezuela	Haiti	Iran
Belgium	3.0	Liberia	Laos
Cape Verde	Mali'	Malaysia	Nigeria
Costa Rica	PARTLY FREE	Pakistan	Qatar
Czech Republic	3.0	Peru	Rwanda
Estonia	Bangladesh	Turkey	Sierra Leone
France	Dominican Republic	Zambia	Uzbekistan
Germany	Ecuador	5.0	7.0
Grenada	Ghana	Azerbaijan	Afghanistan
Hungary	India	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Bhutan
Italy	Madagascar	Eritrea	Burma
Japan	Nicaragua	Kuwait	Burundi
Latvia	Papua New Guinea	Morocco	China
Lithuania	Seychelles	Singapore	Cuba
Mauritius	Slovakia	Tanzania	Equatorial Guinea
Micronesia	Suriname	Zimbabwe	Iraq
Monaco	Thailand	NOT FREE	Korea, N
Palau	3.5	5.0	Libya
Poland	Antigua and Barbuda	Cote D Ivoire	Saudi Arabia
St. Kitts and Nevis	Brazil	5.5	Somalia
St. Lucia	Fiji	Chad	Sudan
St. Vincent and Grenadines	Georgia	Djibouti	Syria
Sao Tome & Principe			Turkmenistan
Slovenia			Vietnam
Solomon Islands			
South Africa			

COMBINED AVERAGE RATINGS! RELATED TERRITORIES

<p>FREE 1.0 Aland Islands (Finland) American Samoa (U.S.) Azores (Portugal) Bermuda (U.K.) British Virgin Islands (U.K.) Canary Islands (Spain) Cayman Islands (U.K.) Faeroe Islands (Denmark) Gibraltar (U.K.) Greenland (Denmark) Guam (U.S.) Isle of Man (U.K.) Madeira (Portugal) St. Pierre and Miquelon (France) Turks and Caicos (U.K.) U.S. Virgin Islands (U.S.)</p> <p>1.5 Anguilla (U.K.) Aruba (Netherlands) Ceuta (Spain) Channel Islands (U.K.) Cook Islands (New Zealand)</p>	<p>French Guiana (France) French Polynesia (France) Martinique (France) Mayotte (Mahore) (France) Melilla (Spain) Montserrat (U.K.) Netherlands Antilles (Netherlands) Northern Marianas (U.S.) Puerto Rico (U.S.) St. Helena and Dependencies (U.K.)</p> <p>2.0 Reunion (France) Wallis and Futuna Islands (France)</p> <p>2.5 Christmas Island (Australia) New Caledonia (France)</p> <p>PARTLY FREE 3.0 Cyprus (Turkey) Northern Ireland (U.K.)</p>	<p>4.5 Hong Kong (China.)</p> <p>5.0 Macao (Portugal)</p> <p>NOT FREE 5.5 Abkhazia (Georgia) Israeli-Occupied Territories (Israel) Nagorno-Karabakh (Armenia/Azerbaijan) Palestinian Authority-Administered Territories (Israel)</p> <p>6.0 Kurdistan (Iraq) Transdnier (Moldova)</p> <p>6.5 Western Sahara (Morocco)</p> <p>7.0 East Timor (Indonesia)</p>	<p>Kashmir (India) Kosovo (Yugoslavia) Tibet (China) West Papua (Irian Jaya) (Indonesia)</p> <p>MICRO-TERRITORIES (ALL FREE)</p> <p>Cocos (Keeling) Islands (Australia) Falkland Islands (U.K.) Guadaloupe (France) Niue (New Zealand) Norfolk Island (Australia) Pitcairn Islands (U.K.) Rapanui (Easter Island (Chile)) Svalbard (Norway) Tokelau (New Zealand)</p> <p>Micro-territories have populations of under 5,000. These areas are scored according to the same methodology used in the rest of the Survey, but are listed separately due to their very small populations.</p>
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ELECTORAL, DEMOCRACIES (117)

Albania	El Salvador
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	Presidential-legislative democracy (military-influenced)
Andorra	Estonia
Parliamentary democracy	Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Argentina	Fiji
Federal presidential-legislative democracy	Parliamentary democracy and native chieftains
Australia	Finland
Federal parliamentary democracy	Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Austria	France
Federal parliamentary democracy	Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Bahamas	Georgia
Parliamentary democracy	Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Bangladesh	Germany
Parliamentary democracy	Federal parliamentary democracy
Barbados	Ghana
Parliamentary democracy	Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Belgium	Greece
Federal parliamentary democracy	Parliamentary democracy
Belize	Grenada
Parliamentary democracy	Parliamentary democracy
Benin	Guatemala
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	Presidential-legislative democracy (military-dominated)
Bolivia	(insurgencies)
Presidential-legislative democracy	Guinea-Bissau
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Presidential-parliamentary democracy (transitional)	Guyana
Botswana	Parliamentary democracy
Parliamentary democracy and traditional chiefs	Haiti
Brazil	Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Federal presidential-legislative democracy	Honduras
Bulgaria	Presidential-legislative democracy (military-influenced)
Parliamentary democracy	Hungary
Canada	Parliamentary democracy
Federal parliamentary democracy	Iceland
Cape Verde	Parliamentary democracy
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	India
Central African Republic	Parliamentary democracy
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	Ireland
Chile	Parliamentary democracy
Presidential-legislative democracy	Israel
Colombia	Parliamentary democracy
Presidential-legislative democracy (insurgencies)	Italy
Costa Rica	Parliamentary democracy
Presidential-legislative democracy	Jamaica
Croatia	Parliamentary democracy
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	Japan
Cyprus	Parliamentary democracy
Presidential-legislative democracy	Kiribati
Czech Republic	Parliamentary democracy
Parliamentary democracy	Korea, South
Denmark	Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Parliamentary democracy	Kyrgyz Republic
Dominica	Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Parliamentary democracy	Latvia
Dominican Republic	Presidential-parliamentary democracy
Presidential-legislative democracy	Lesotho
Ecuador	Parliamentary democracy (military- and royal-influenced)
Presidential-legislative democracy	Liberia
	Presidential-parliamentary democracy

Liechtenstein	
Prince and parliamentary democracy	
Lithuania	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	
Luxembourg	
Parliamentary democracy	
Macedonia	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	
Madagascar	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	
Malawi	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	
Mali	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	
Malta	
Parliamentary democracy	
Marshall Islands	
Parliamentary democracy	
Mauritius	
Parliamentary democracy	
Micronesia	
Federal parliamentary democracy	
Moldova	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	
Monaco	
Prince and legislative democracy	
Mongolia	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	
Mozambique	
Presidential-legislative democracy	
Namibia	
Presidential-legislative democracy	
Nauru	
Parliamentary democracy	
Nepal	
Parliamentary democracy	
Netherlands	
Parliamentary democracy	
New Zealand	
Parliamentary democracy	
Nicaragua	
Presidential-legislative democracy (military-influenced)	
Norway	
Parliamentary democracy	
Pakistan	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy (military-influenced)	
Palau	
Presidential-legislative democracy	
Panama	
Presidential-legislative democracy	
Papua New Guinea	
Parliamentary democracy (secessionist insurgency)	
Paraguay	
Presidential-legislative democracy (military-influenced)	
Philippines	
Presidential-legislative democracy	
Poland	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	
Portugal	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	
Romania	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	
Russia	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	
St. Kitts-Nevis	
Parliamentary democracy	
St. Lucia	
Parliamentary democracy	
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	
Parliamentary democracy	
San Marino	
^ Parliamentary democracy	
Sao Tome and Principe	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	
Seychelles	
Presidential-legislative democracy	
Slovakia	
Parliamentary democracy	
Slovenia	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	
Solomon Islands	
Parliamentary democracy	
South Africa	
Presidential-legislative democracy	
Spain	
Parliamentary democracy	
Sri Lanka	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy (insurgency)	
Suriname	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	
Sweden	
Parliamentary democracy	
Switzerland	
Federal parliamentary democracy	
Taiwan	
Presidential-legislative democracy	
Thailand	
Parliamentary democracy (military-influenced)	
Trinidad and Tobago	
Parliamentary democracy	
Turkey	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy (military-influenced)	
(insurgency)	
Tuvalu	
Parliamentary democracy	
Ukraine	
Presidential-parliamentary democracy	
United Kingdom	
Parliamentary democracy	
United States	
Federal presidential-legislative democracy	
Uruguay	
Presidential-legislative democracy	
Vanuatu	
Parliamentary democracy	
Venezuela	
Presidential-legislative democracy	
Western Samoa	
Parliamentary democracy and extended family heads	

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Democratic Initiatives (Ukraine)
Eastern European Constitutional Review
The Economist
Editor & Publisher
EFE Spanish news agency
El Finandero (Mexico City)
El Nuevo Herald (Miami)
Elections Canada
EPOCA (Mexico)
Equal Access Committee (Ukraine)
Ethiopian Review
Ethnic Federation of Romani (Romania)
Far Eastern Economic Review
Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS)
The Financial Times
Free Labour World
Free Trade Union Institute
The Globe & Mail (Toronto)
The Guardian
Gull News
Hemisfile
Hemisphere
Himal
Hong Kong Digest
The Hungarian Quarterly
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Index on Censorship
Index of Economic Freedom
Indian Law Resource Center
Institute for the Study of Conflict, Ideology and Policy
Inter-American Dialogue
Inter-American Press Association
International Commission of Jurists
International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)
International Freedom of Expression Exchange
International Research and Exchange Board (IREX)

International Republican Institute
The Irish Echo
The Irish Times
The Irish Voice
Jeune Airique
Jordan Times
Journal of Commerce
Journal of Democracy
La Jornada (Mexico)
Kathmandu Post
Latin American Regional Reports
Latin American Weekly Report
Lawyer to Lawyer Network (Lawyers Committee for Human Rights)
Los Angeles Times
Miami Herald
The Middle East
Middle East International
The Middle East Times
Milan Simecka Foundation (Slovakia)
Miist (Ukraine)
Monthly Digest of News from Armenia
The Nation
National Bank of Hungary (Monthly Reports)
National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
National Endowment for Democracy (U.S.)
New African
The New Republic
New York Newsday
New York Times
New Yorker
North-South Magazine
North-South Center (Miami)
Organization of American States
The Other Side of Mexico (Equipo Pueblo)
Pacific Islands Monthly
Pacific Islands News Agency
Political Handbook of the World: 1997-98
Proceso (Mexico City)
Radio Australia
Reforma (Mexico)
Spoterihach (Ukraine)
State Department *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1997*
The Statesman (Calcutta)
Swiss Press Review
The Tico Times (Costa Rica)
Times of London
The Week in Germany
Transition
U.S. News and World Report
Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research
Ukrainian Press Agency
Ukrainian Weekly
Uncaptive Minds (Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe)
UNDP *Human Development Report*
UNICEF
U.S. Committee for Refugees (Special Reports)
Vuelta (Mexico)
Wall Street Journal
Washington Post
Washington Times
West Africa
World Population Data Sheet 1997 (Population Reference Bureau)
World Press Freedom Committee
Yemen Times

Human Rights Organizations

Amnesty International	International Campaign for Tibet
Andean Commission of Jurists	International Human Rights Law Group
Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association	Jamaica Council for Human Rights
Caribbean Institute for the Promotion of Human Rights	Latin American Association for Human Rights
Caribbean Rights	Latin American Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms of the Workers
Child Workers in Nepal	Latin American Ombudsmen Institute
Chilean Human Rights Commission	Lawyers Committee for Human Rights
Civic Alliance (Mexico)	Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid (Pakistan)
Committee of Churches for Emergency Help (Paraguay)	Mexican Human Rights Academy
Council for Democracy (Mexico)	National Coalition for Haitian Refugees
Croatian Democracy Project (Croatia)	National Coordinating Office for Human Rights (Peru)
Cuban Committee for Human Rights	Panamanian Committee for Human Rights
Democracy After Communism Foundation (Hungary)	Peoples Forum for Human Rights, Bhutan
Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Center for Human Rights (Mexico)	Permanent Commission on Human Rights (Nicaragua)
Free and Democratic Bulgaria Foundation	Permanent Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (Colombia)
Group for Mutual Support (Guatemala)	Physicians for Human Rights
Guyana Human Rights Association	Reporters Sans Frontieres
Haitian Center for Human Rights	Runejel Junam Council of Ethnic Communities (Guatemala)
Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia	Tibet Information Network
Honduran Committee for the Defense of Human Rights	Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy
Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor	Tutela Legal (El Salvador)
Human Rights Commission (El Salvador)	Union of Councils for Soviet Jews
Human Rights Organization of Bhutan	Venezuelan Human Rights Education Action Program
Human Rights Organization of Nepal	Vicaría de la Solidaridad (Chile)
Human Rights Commission of Pakistan	Vietnam Committee on Human Rights
Human Rights Watch	Washington Office on Latin America
Africa, Americas, Asia, Helsinki, Middle East	Women Acting Together for Change (Nepal)
Inform (Sri Lanka)	Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
Institute for Legal Research and Resources (Nepal)	
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights	

Delegations/visitors to Freedom House

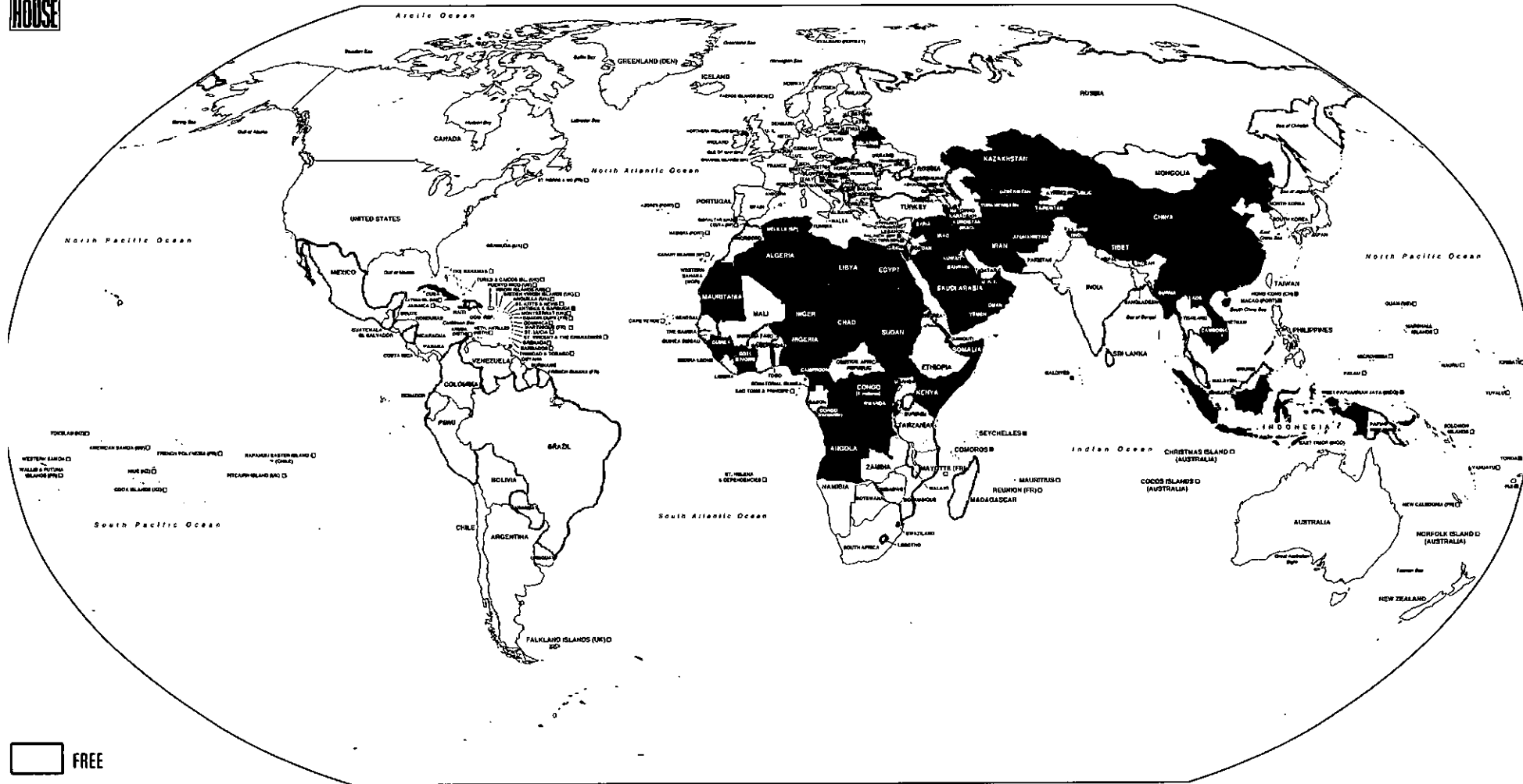
Africa/Middle East	East Central	Former USSR
Burundi	Europe	Russia
Mauritania	Bosnia	Ukraine
	Croatia	
Asia/Pacific	Hungary	Western Hemisphere
Bangladesh	Kosovo	Cuba
Bhutan	Poland	Peru
India	Serbia	Venezuela
Indonesia	Slovakia	
Nepal	Turkmenistan	
Pakistan		
Philippines		
Sri Lanka		

Delegations and On-Site Staff Investigations from Freedom House to:

Austria	Mexico
Bangladesh	Nepal
Bosnia-	Pakistan
Herzegovina	Peru
Bulgaria	Romania
Canada	Russia
Czech Republic	Singapore
Cuba	Sri Lanka
Egypt	Suriname
Eritrea	Switzerland
France	Tanzania
Hungary	Uganda
India	Thailand
Italy	Ukraine



THE MAP OF FREEDOM



- FREE
- PARTLY FREE
- NOT FREE

FREEDOM IN THE WORLD

The Annual Survey of Political Rights And Civil Liberties, 1997-1998

"With forthright analysis *Freedom in the World* lays bare the state of political rights and civil liberties around the world. It provides a candid assessment of how far nations have come in realizing fundamental human rights for their citizens, and how far they must go,"

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United States Senator

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Morton Kondracke
Syndicated Columnist

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Laura Spelman Rockefeller Professor of Ethics
University of Chicago

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Wall Street Journal

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