

SURINAME

Polity5 regime codes:

fac	scode	polity	pers	bmon	bday	byear	emon	eday	eyear	exec	exconst	polcomp
1X	SUR	5	4	11	25	1975	2	24	1980	7	5	7
1Xa	SUR	0	0	2	25	1980	8	14	1980	3	4	7
1Xb	SUR	-1	2	8	15	1980	3	16	1982	4	3	6
1O	SUR	-6	5	3	17	1982	1	24	1987	4	1	2
1Oa	SUR	-1	3	1	25	1987	12	23	1990	7	3	3
1Ob	SUR	2	1	12	24	1990	9	15	1991	5	4	8
1Oc	SUR	5	27	9	16	1991	99	99	9999	7	5	8

PITF Problem Events:

- 1) 02/80-03/82 (ARC 02/80-03/82)

1X) Date of Change to Factional-Democratic: November 25, 1975 (independence)

Brief Explanation of Change To:

Beginning in 1954, the Dutch colony of Suriname (Dutch Guiana), along with the Caribbean islands comprising the Netherlands Antilles, was granted self-governing status within the Netherlands Realm. The population of the mainland consisted mainly of the descendants of imported slaves and laborers: Creoles (freed slaves of African descent, c35%), Maroons (escaped slaves of African descent who resided in tribes in the backcountry “bush,” c9%), East Asians (largely Hindustani, c37%), and Javanese (c15%), along with smaller numbers of Amerindians, Chinese, and Europeans. Several years of labor unrest brought down successive governments in Suriname in 1969 and 1973. Independence for Suriname was proposed by the Netherlands Government on 2 March 1973 and elections held on 19 November 1973 in Suriname resulted in a narrow victory for a pro-independence coalition, the National Party Alliance, comprising the largely-Creole National Party of Suriname (NPS) and Nationalist Republican Party (NRP). The largely-Hindustani Progressive Reform Party (PRP) favored the continuation of Dutch control as a buffer against political domination by the Creole population. With independence imminent, many of the better-educated residents (eventually totaling about one-third of the local population) emigrated to the Netherlands in order to retain their Dutch citizenship and for the fear that their status and livelihoods in the newly-independent country would diminish.

A parliamentary constitution was adopted on 21 November 1975 and Suriname gained independence on 25 November 1975. However, a proposed reconciliation between pro- and anti-independence parties succeeded in securing a promise of development assistance from the Netherlands but failed to materialize, with the opposition Progressive Reform Party boycotting the *Staten* (National Assembly) and the governing coalition faltering from the beginning. The governing coalition collapsed on 15 July 1977 and new elections were held on 31 October 1977, returning a Suriname National Party coalition to power (the leftist Nationalist Republican Party lost all its seats). The new government collapsed in July 1979 and early elections were scheduled for 27 March 1980.

Identify Main Factions:

- *Creoles* — Descendants of African slave laborers brought in originally to work the territory’s agricultural plantations (slavery was abolished in 1863 and finally implemented in 1873). Conservative Creoles controlled the territorial government of Suriname during its period of self-rule but were largely discredited due to poor economic performance and charges of

corruption. Pro-independence “nationalists” displaced the conservative leadership in the late 1960s and early 1970s and many conservatives emigrated to the Netherlands in order to secure their Dutch citizenship when Suriname gained independence.

- *South Asians* — The South Asian population is largely descended from laborers recruited from the Hindu India. The Surinamese Hindustanis are represented by the opposition Progressive Reform Party. The Hindustani community was largely against independence and demanded constitutional guarantees that their interests would be protected.
- *Surinamese Émigrés* — The independence legislation passed by the Netherlands Parliament on 24 October 1975 stated that those who obtained Suriname citizenship would lose their Dutch citizenship and vice versa; the bill did not set limits on categories of relatives who could join their families in the Netherlands after Suriname’s independence. About one-third of Suriname’s population emigrated to the Netherlands in the latter 1970s and renounced their Surinamese citizenship. The Surinamese émigré population in the Netherlands was very active in trying to influence Surinamese politics, particularly after the 1980 military coup.

Changes within Factional-Democratic Period:

1Xa) February 25, 1980 (military coup) – In the early morning hours of 25 February 1980, about three hundred non-commissioned officers mounted an armed revolt in the capital, Paramaribo, in response to poor economic conditions in the country, leading to the overthrow of the coalition government of Prime Minister Henck Arron, who had led the government since 1973. A temporary military administration, the National Military Council (NMC), was set up and a new, predominately civilian government was formed under the leadership of Dr. Henck Chin-a-Sen on 15 March 1980. On 26 March 1980, Dr. Chin-a-Sen announced that new elections would take place in October 1981 as originally scheduled. On 6 May 1980, the government reported that some three hundred mercenary soldiers under the leadership of a former member the Surinamese armed forces, Frits Ormskerk, had been captured while attempting to enter the country from French Guiana; several members of parliament were arrested in connection with the attempted counter-coup.

1Xb) August 15, 1980 (military coup) – Political disagreements within the military administration erupted on 15 August 1980 in the seizure of ruling authority by Sgt-Maj. Desiré Bouterse, a member of the National Military Council. A state of emergency was declared; the constitution was suspended; parliament was disbanded and replaced by an appointed, advisory council; and press censorship was imposed. The civilian government led by Dr. Chin-a-Sen was retained but reorganized. Although the situation remained volatile in the immediate aftermath of the coup, Bouterse appeared to have consolidated his grip on power by late March 1981; Dr. Chin-a-Sen continued to press for new elections and a return to civilian government. It was reported on 15 March 1981 that forces loyal to Bouterse had foiled an attempted coup led by Sgt-Maj. Willem Hawker.

10) Date of Change from Factional-Democratic: March 17, 1982 (adverse regime change)

Brief Explanation of Change From:

On 23 June 1981, it was announced that a Revolutionary Front was being established in Suriname with the assistance of Cuba to defend the country from “imperial subjugation” and overcome its inherent ethnic tensions; this move underscored increasing tension between the government of Dr. Chin-a Sen and the Bouterse-led NMC over the timetable for a return to parliamentary government. On February 4, 1982, Bouterse announced that Dr. Chin-a-Sen and his entire government had resigned and a new government would be appointed. In the early morning of 11 March 1982, an armed insurrection was launched and Sgt-Maj. Hawker was freed from prison by the rebel forces. The rebellion was crushed within a few days by NMC loyalists and Hawker was executed by firing squad. Col. Bouterse imposed martial law on 17 March 1982 and a roundup of former members of parliament was conducted. In response, the Dutch Government immediately suspended its development assistance program in Suriname. A further crisis emerged on 28 October 1982 when the Bouterse regime faced a series of strikes by the trade unions followed by student demonstrations in early December 1982; about forty people were reported to have been killed. Martial law was imposed again on 8 December 1982; fifteen prominent opposition leaders were rounded up and executed. The Dutch Government suspended all economic and military assistance to the regime. Between February 1980 and July 1986, Suriname experienced no fewer than ten coup attempts or coup plots, many initiated from abroad.

Adverse Regime Change: February 1980 – March 1982

Deep-rooted ethnic divisions, patronage, poor economic performance, high unemployment, interference by émigré groups, and serious political disagreements over policies and governance had rendered the newly independent country nearly ungovernable; the elected parliamentary government was forced out by military forces on 24 February 1980. Similarly sharp divisions in the military contributed to the eventual emergence of a personalistic, military dictatorship under Col. Bouterse, who imposed a martial regime on 17 March 1982.

Changes within Post-Factional Period:

10a) January 1, 1985 (executive-led transition) – In December 1984, Col. Bouterse announced a 27-month program for a “return to democracy” that would be initiated on 1 January 1985; a 31-member assembly was appointed and tasked with drafting a new constitution. The Dutch Government rejected the plan as insufficient to restart suspended development and military assistance. The assembly drafted the new presidential constitution and it was submitted to and approved by a popular referendum on 30 September 1987. The constitution gave considerable authority to the executive, who was to be elected by a two-thirds vote of the legislative representatives (or a majority of a broader People’s Assembly, if a two-thirds vote could not be reached); executive authority was to be backed by an activist military and included the power to annul laws passed by the National Assembly. A law legalizing political parties was enacted in September 1987 and the leaders of the three largest traditional parties agreed to unite as the Front for Democracy and Development (FDD) to contest elections scheduled for 25 November 1987. The FDD won all but one seat for which they contested (taking 40 of 51 assembly seats), easily defeating the military-backed National Democratic Party (NDP). Ramsewak Shankar of the

Progressive Reform Party was elected president and assumed office on 25 January 1988. Some humanitarian foreign aid was resumed.

In July 1986, a former member of Bouterse's bodyguards, Ronnie Brunswijk, who had organized a rebel force (the "Jungle Commando" or Surinamese Liberation Front, SLA) among the ethnic-Maroon population in the backcountry, launched an insurrection against the regime in July 1986. Whole villages were brutally decimated by government forces during the height of the rebellion, 1986-1989. A peace accord was negotiated in 1989 but Bouterse refused to implement it (the SLA rebellion formally ended by agreement on 1 August 1992).

10b) January 25, 1987 (new elected government) – Although the NDD dominated the National Assembly and a civilian president, Ramsewak Shankar, assumed the presidency in the newly reconstituted democratic government of Suriname, because of the SLA rebellion and continued interference by expatriate and émigré groups, Bouterse, as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, continued to control government policy. A government attempt to negotiate a settlement with the SLA in July 1989 (the Kourou Accord) was rejected by Bouterse and legal action by the Dutch Government against Bouterse (alleging that he was smuggling cocaine into the Netherlands and accusing him of human rights violations) culminated in a confrontation in December 1990 and the "telephone coup" of 24 December 1990 in which the military called the leaders of the Suriname government demanding, and receiving, their resignations.

10c) December 24, 1990 (military coup) – The military sided with their commander, Col. Bouterse, in his confrontation with the elected government and forced the resignation of the entire government on 24 December 1990 (formally handing over power on 27 December). A provisional president and prime minister were nominated by the military and duly elected by the National Assembly. New general elections were held on 25 May 1991, resulting in a victory for the New Front for Democracy and Development (NF) but short of the two-thirds majority needed to elect a new president. The National Assembly was unable to elect a president and a United People's Assembly (UPA) was convened in September to elect a president. The New Front's candidate, Ronald Venetiaan of the National Party of Suriname (NPS) was elected president by the UPA on 7 September 1991, with the promise to reform the constitution to reduce the activism of the military in political affairs.

10d) September 16, 1991 (new government) – President Ronald Venetiaan assumed office on 16 September 1991 and a new government was formed on 17 September. A treaty of cooperation was signed with the Netherlands on 18 June 1992 and Dutch development assistance (suspended in December 1982) was resumed. The government signed a peace treaty on 1 August 1992 with the SLA and the smaller *Tucayana Amazonas* which called for a general amnesty, disarmament, and the integration of the rebels in the Police Force of the Interior. Lt-Col. Bouterse resigned as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces on 20 November 1992 and entered politics as leader of the National Democratic Party. Elections held on 23 May 1996 were inconclusive. The New Front gained the largest share of legislative seats but failed to form a coalition; the NDP was finally able to garner a majority of votes in the United People's Assembly with the stipulation that Bouterse was not to take office in the new government and the NDP would not hold the Defense, Finance, or Foreign Affairs portfolios. The deputy leader of the NDP, Jules Wijdenbosch, was elected president by a narrow margin in the UPA on 5 September 1996.

Venetiaan was re-elected president following elections in May 2000 and May 2005. The Mega Combinatie (MC) coalition led by the NDP gained the largest share of seats in elections held on 25 May 2010 and succeeded in pooling enough votes among coalition partners (including the party of former SLA leader Ronnie Brunswijk) to elect Desiré Bouterse president despite his July 1999 conviction in absentia by a Dutch court (and 11-year sentence) for drug trafficking and his current trial in Suriname for the December 1982 murders of opposition leaders while serving as military dictator. In April 2012, the National Assembly voted to grant President Bouterse immunity for alleged violations of law during his 1980-1992 leadership of the military regime.