



Aruba — Va-PoReg Country Report

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11/03/1816 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Netherlands]: The first inhabitants of Aruba were the Caquetío Indians of the Arawak tribe, who arrived from the Venezuelan mainland around 1000 AD. Following Spanish explorer Alonso de Ojeda's arrival in 1499, the island became a Spanish possession, though it was used primarily as a ranch and remained sparsely settled. The Dutch West India Company took control of Aruba in 1636 and administered it alongside the other ABC islands. During the Napoleonic Wars, Britain occupied Aruba in two phases, from 1799 to 1802 and again from 1804 to 1816, before returning the island to the Netherlands in accordance with the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1814, with the formal handover completed on 11/03/1816.¹ Thereafter the Netherlands administered Aruba continuously as part of the colony of Curaçao and Dependencies.

03/03/1951 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime/Start Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign, of Netherlands]: The Island Regulation of the Netherlands Antilles (Eilandenregeling Nederlandse Antillen) of 03/03/1951, issued by royal decree, established elected island councils (Eilandsraad) and executive councils (Bestuurscollege) for each island territory, including Aruba, alongside a Lieutenant Governor representing the Dutch Crown.² This created for the first time a genuinely self-governing elected institution at the island level, which is the basis for the separate coding of Aruba in Va-PoReg. On 12/15/1954, the Netherlands Antilles acceded as an equal partner in the Kingdom of the Netherlands under the Charter for the Kingdom (Statuut voor het Koninkrijk); however, as the Netherlands retained authority over foreign policy, defense, and final judicial review, Aruba's status remained semi-sovereign throughout.³ On 01/01/1986, Aruba acquired Status Aparte and became a separate constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, eliminating the federal intermediate layer of the Netherlands Antilles without altering the fundamental structure of Aruban self-governance: Aruba retained its elected parliament (Staten) and prime minister, while the Netherlands continued to control defense, foreign affairs, and cassation jurisdiction. Aruba's Status Aparte therefore represents a continuation of Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign] rather than a regime change.⁴

03/03/1951 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime/Start Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign, of Netherlands]: The Island Regulation of the Netherlands Antilles (Eilandenregeling Nederlandse Antillen) of 03/03/1951, issued by royal decree, established elected island councils (Eilandsraad) and executive councils (Bestuurscollege) for each island territory, including Aruba, alongside a Lieutenant Governor representing the Dutch Crown.⁵ This created for the first time a genuinely self-governing elected institution at the island level, which is the basis for the separate coding of Aruba in Va-PoReg. The first island council elections in 1951 were contested by five parties, including the Aruban People's Party (AVP), the Aruban Patriotic Party (PPA), the Aruba Independence Party, and two branches of the Aruba National Union, demonstrating a pluralist and competitive political landscape from the outset.⁶ Subsequent elections maintained this competitive character: the PPA dominated the island council from 1955 to 1975, while the AVP consistently held opposition representation, and the MEP, founded in 1971 by Betico Croes as a breakaway from the AVP, rapidly emerged as a major force, winning 7 of 21 council seats in its first election in 1971 and expanding to 13 seats by 1975, thereafter leading the government until 1985.⁷ On 12/15/1954, the Netherlands Antilles acceded as an equal partner in the Kingdom of the Netherlands under the Charter for the Kingdom (Statuut voor het Koninkrijk), and the United Nations removed the territory from its list of non-self-governing

territories. Nevertheless, as the Netherlands retained authority over foreign policy, defense, and final judicial review throughout, Aruba's status remained semi-sovereign, precluding classification as a Liberal Democracy: a population that cannot exercise democratic control over all essential areas of government cannot meet the threshold for full democratic self-determination that Liberal Democracy requires. Aruba is coded as an individual unit rather than as Part of the Netherlands Antilles because the Island Regulation assigned the constituent islands substantial self-governance in internal affairs, making the Netherlands Antilles a loose federal layer rather than the effective governing authority at island level. On 01/01/1986, Aruba acquired Status Aparte and became a separate constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands after a prolonged political campaign led by Betico Croes, eliminating the federal intermediate layer without altering the fundamental structure of Aruban self-governance. Under the 1986 constitution, all 21 members of the parliament (Staten) are elected by open-list proportional representation for four-year terms; the prime minister is indirectly elected by parliament and accountable to it, and the cabinet requires parliamentary confidence to govern.⁸ The judiciary operates independently of the executive and the legislature, derived from the Dutch legal tradition, with jurisdiction exercised through the Court of First Instance in Aruba, the Joint Court of Justice shared with Curaçao, Sint Maarten, and the BES islands, and final cassation at the Supreme Court of the Netherlands in The Hague.[7] Since 1986, every government has been formed by either the AVP or the MEP, with genuine alternation of power occurring regularly: the AVP won the inaugural 1985 election, the MEP returned to power in 2001 and 2005, the AVP governed from 2009 to 2017, the MEP again from 2017 to 2024, and the AVP returned to power after the 2024 election.⁹ In 1990, the governments of Aruba, the Netherlands, and the Netherlands Antilles jointly decided to postpone full independence indefinitely, and the independence clause was formally revoked in 1995, confirming Aruba's permanent status as a semi-sovereign constituent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.¹⁰

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Aruba [7] [8] [9]

Liberal Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under Netherlands, Liberal Democracy] as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Notes

¹ <https://www.worldstatesmen.org/Aruba.html>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Island_Regulation_of_the_Netherlands_Antilles

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netherlands_Antilles

⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Aruba/History>

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Island_Regulation_of_the_Netherlands_Antilles

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1951_Aruban_general_election; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aruban_People%27s_Party

⁷ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_Electoral_Movement_\(Aruba\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People%27s_Electoral_Movement_(Aruba))

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netherlands_Antilles

⁹ <https://2009-2017.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/aruba/128592.htm>

¹⁰ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Aruba/History>