



Barbados — Va-PoReg Country Report

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02/17/1627 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom]: On 02/17/1627 the English expedition ship ‘William and John’ landed on Barbados.¹ Hence, Barbados became a British Colony in 1627.² From 1833 to 1885 Barbados was part of the Windward Islands (with the governor of Barbados also governor of the Windward Islands) and from 01/03/1958 to 05/31/1962 part of the Federation of the West Indies. According to LIED, universal male suffrage was absent. Political liberties were absent for this period according to LIED. V-Dem’s PCLI classifies political liberties as ambiguous until 1944 and as somewhat present from 1945 onward. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem’s JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were comprehensive, while V-Dem’s LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate. Political parties did not arise until the 1950s. According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held.

12/13/1951 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]: On this date parliamentary elections with universal adult suffrage took place (LIED), which were won by for the Barbados Labour Party (Lansford 2021:138). Political liberties were absent according to LIED and somewhat present according to V-Dem’s PCLI. Until 1954, V-Dem’s JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were comprehensive, whereas V-Dem’s LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate. For the rest of the regime period, V-Dem’s JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were comprehensive, while V-Dem’s LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. On 02/01/1954 Grantley Herbert Adams became the first Premier of Barbados.³ According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held during this period.

12/04/1961 End Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start (Monarchical) Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]: On this date the first free and fair elections were held after Barbados was granted self-government in October 1961. The Democratic Labour Party (DLP) won the election in December of the same year.⁴ Political liberties are classified as absent by LIED and as somewhat present by V-Dem’s PCLI for this period. During this regime period, V-Dem’s JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were comprehensive, whereas V-Dem’s LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. The British monarch was formally head of state with merely ceremonial functions. According to our observations, multiparty legislative and executive elections were present during this period onwards, which aligns with the observations of LIED.

11/30/1966 End (Monarchical) Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start (Monarchical) Liberal Democracy [as independent country]: On this date Barbados became independent.⁵ An election confirmed the dominant position of the DLP, whose leader, Errol Walton Barrow, had been named premier in 1961 and was reappointed prime minister in 1971 (Lansford 2021:138). The political stability was affirmed by a competitive two-party system, most notably marked by the first peaceful alternation of power in 1976, when the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) took control.⁶ This competitive

landscape dramatically changed in 2018 when the BLP won all 30 seats in the House of Assembly, making Mia Mottley the country's first female prime minister.⁷ Barbados is a democratic country that conducts regular competitive elections and protects civil liberties.⁸ In November 2021, Barbados transitioned from a constitutional monarchy under the British crown to a republic. This change involved removing Queen Elizabeth II as the head of state and declaring full sovereignty, with the first President of Barbados, Sandra Mason, being sworn in. FH classifies Barbados for the whole regime period as free.⁹ In snap elections in 01/2022 the Barbados Labor Party won all 30 seats of the parliament in the elections, while voter turn-out fell to about 42%.¹⁰ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Since its independence Barbados held competitive elections. V-Dem's CEI declares somewhat clean election until 1980. For the remaining years electoral cleanliness is achieved. Moreover, V-Dem's EF&FI underlines free and fair election conditions since 1966. According to FH, from 1972 onwards, the country is categorized as free with a score between 2 and 4, which corresponds to our interpretation of free. LIED as well as V-Dem PCLI classify political liberties as present since 1966. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were comprehensive, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. British monarch was formally head of state with merely ceremonial functions.

Liberal Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Hillebrands/Falk 2005)

Notes

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Barbados/Cultural-life#ref54603>

² https://www.barbadosparliament.com/main_page_content/show_content/13

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1951_Barbadian_general_election

⁴ https://www.barbadosparliament.com/main_page_content/show_content/13 ;
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1961_Barbadian_general_election

⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Barbados/British-rule>; https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Barbados_2007?lang=en

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1976_Barbadian_general_election

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Barbadian_general_election

⁸ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/barbados/freedom-world/2022>

⁹ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/barbados/freedom-world/2024>

¹⁰ <https://data.ipu.org/parliament/BB/BB-LC01/election/BB-LC01-E20220119/>

References

Hillebrands, Bernd/Ortiz Ortiz, Richard (2005): Belize, in: Nohlen, Dieter (Hrsg.), Elections in the Americas: A Data Handbook. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 97–108.

Lansford, Tom (2021): Political Handbook of the World 2020-2021. Thousand Oaks: CQ Press.