



Comoros — Va-PoReg Country Report

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04/26/1886 Start Autocratic Monarchy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under France]: On 04/26/1886 under the rule of Sultan Mardjani Abdou Cheikh, Mwali was placed under the protection of the French. In the same year, Sultan Said Ali of Bambao, one of the sultanates on Ngazidja, also sought French protection, leveraging it to assert his claim over the entire island. Subsequently, the Sultanates were entirely abolished when Mardjani and his ministers signed a treaty, accepting a French protectorate and thereby supplanting the authority of the other sultanates (Walker 2019, Walker 2022). According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. Both LIED and V-Dem's PCLI indicate that political liberties were absent. For the year 1900, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are limited. At the same time, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive.. For the rest of the regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust.

04/09/1908 End Autocratic Monarchy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under France, Electoral Oligarchy (Patriarchal)]/Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of France, Electoral Democracy]: On this date, France declared the Comoros a single territory (Mayotte and Dependencies) and attached it to the colony of Madagascar.¹ In 1909, Sultan Said Muhamed of Ndzwani relinquished his position in favor of French governance. Three years later, in 1912, the colony and protectorates were dissolved, leading to the islands becoming a province of the Madagascar colony.² The three islands (Ngazidja, Ndzuwani, Mohéli) which were proclaimed protectorates of France, were annexed by France in 1912 and joined with Mayotte and Dependencies in 1912. With neighboring Mayotte, they were administratively attached to Madagascar in 1914 (Turner 2005) and placed under the administration of the governor general of Madagascar.³ The four islands were separated in 1947, when Comoros became a French overseas territory with a higher level of administrative autonomy and the entitlement to vote for one senator and one deputy to represent them in the French legislature in Paris. (Ciment 2007). This period is coded as colonial rule. According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. Regarding the political liberties they were absent according to LIED and V-Dem's PCLI. Both datasets show a gap between 1914 and 1945. Since 1946 political liberties were still coded as absent following LIED. Whereas V-Dem's PCLI classification switched to not really present since 1947. During this regime period (except the aforementioned data gap from 1914 and 1945, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust.

03/31/1957 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of France, Liberal Democracy]/Start Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of France, Liberal Democracy]: Under colonial rule, universal suffrage for Comorians aged 21 and older was implemented through the Loi Cadre of 1956 (LIED). This was first applied in the elections for the Territorial Assembly (Assemblée Territoriale) in 1957 (Thibaut 1999: 246).

12/01/1961 End Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of France, Liberal Democracy]/Start Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under France, Liberal Democracy]: On this date, after the Comorian people

chose to remain in the French Union by referendum, they were granted internal self-governance in 1961. There was a chamber of Deputies, which in turn elected a territorial president (Ciment 2007, Gaspart 1979, Turner 2005). In referendums held on each island on 12/22/1974, the three western islands voted for independence, while Mayotte voted to remain French (Ciment 2007, Gaspart 1979, Turner 2005). It is unclear to what extent the Comoros were able to determine their own internal affairs during this period. According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. Moreover, LIED still classifies political liberties as absent and V-Dem's PCLI as what we interpret as not really present. From 1958 to 1969, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. For the years 1970 and 1971, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. For 1972 and 1973, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. For the rest of the regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent.

07/06/1975 Continuation Electoral Democracy [sovereign]: On this date, the Comorian parliament passed a resolution asserting independence. Ahmed Abdallah, leader of the Comoros Democratic Union, who had been elected in 1972 as president of the government council and Chief Minister of the Comoros, in turn, declared the establishment of the Comorian State and assumed the role of its inaugural president. The French government officially acknowledged the newly formed state.⁴ Upon gaining independence, there were five prominent political parties: OUDZIMA, UMMA, the Comoro People's Democratic Rally, the Comoro National Liberation Movement, and the Socialist Objective Party.⁵ As it is quite common for a former colonial regime, the Comoros had a well-structured system of government, but it was built on an extremely shallow foundation. Organized political groups and written political communications systems are virtually non-existent, suggesting a population that lacks experience and inclination towards participatory politics (Ostheimer 1973: 497). Therefore, we code this very short regime period as an electoral democracy.

08/03/1975 End Electoral Democracy/Start Military Autocracy: President Ahmed Abdallah was overthrown by Bob Denard, a French mercenary working for Said Jaffar leading a group of six opposition parties.⁶ Jaffar seated himself at the head of the National Council of the Revolution. Said Mohamed Jaffar, who emerged as the leader following the coup, was not a military officer himself. Instead, he was a political figure and a member of the United National Front. However, there was a strong involvement of military figures and mercenaries in its establishment and governance. Since the regime started by a military coup and there was a junta the regime is coded as a military autocracy. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive held unlimited authority with no institutionalized constraints on decision-making power. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited. According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. Political liberties are still coded absent per LIED and can be interpreted as not really present by V-Dem's PCLI.

01/02/1976 End Military Autocracy/Start Military Autocracy: On this date the Revolutionary Council of State headed by Ali Soilih, a Comorian socialist revolutionary, was established to govern the country. Soilih obtained significant authority under the provisions of a newly established constitution and was endorsed in a referendum with 95 percent of the vote on 10/28/1977.⁷ He implemented socialist economic policies.⁸ Soilih founded the 'Moissy,' a revolutionary youth militia trained under the guidance of Tanzanian military advisors. The Moissy represented a Comorian adaptation of Mao Zedong's Red Guards.⁹ According to Encyclopedia Britannica Soilih „attempted to convert the country into a secular, socialist republic.”¹⁰ According to Polity5, during this period, the executive held unlimited authority with no institutionalized constraints on

decision-making power. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited. Due to the short period of time it remains unclear if the regime clearly would have been communist. Therefore, we classify it as a military (rebel) autocracy. As per FH, for this regime period, the country receives a score of 8, which we interpret as falling into the rather not free category. Political liberties were absent per LIED and not really present per V-Dem's PCLI. According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held.

05/13/1978 End Military Autocracy/Start Military Autocracy: Abdallah, who had been residing in exile in Paris, France, was the figurehead of a coup orchestrated by mercenary Bob Denard on 05/13/1978. Initially, Said Atthoumani assumed the position of „Chairman of the Politico-Military Directorate“ for a brief period, after which Abdallah and Mohamed Ahmed took on the roles of „Co-Chairmen of the Politico-Military Directorate.“ On 07/22, their titles were modified to Co-Chairmen of the Directorate, and on 10/03, Abdallah became the sole chairman. However, Abdallah held little actual power and was essentially a puppet leader, while the true ruler was Denard, who served as the commander of the Presidential Guard.¹¹ According to LIED, both executive and legislative elections were present after 1978, but they were not categorized as multiparty. As classified by FH for the period until 1982, the country scores between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free. In 1983 the country receives a score of 8, which we interpret as falling into the rather not free category and in 1984 it scores once again between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free. For the rest of the regime period the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. Besides, LIED and V-Dem's PCLI classification continued to code political liberties as absent and as not really present. From 1978 to 1981, based on Polity5's assessment, the executive encountered substantial institutional limitations on power. In 1982 and 1983, as per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was subject to minor institutional constraints. Since 1984, based on Polity5's assessment during this period, the executive operated with unlimited authority, facing no institutional checks on power. For the year 1979, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited. From 1980 to 1989, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent.

11/27/1989 End Military Autocracy/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: On this date President Ahmed Abdallah was assassinated. Denard is widely believed to have had Abdallah assassinated after he attempted to dismiss him as the commander of the Presidential Guard. During Denard's 1999 trial in Paris for Abdallah's murder, he claimed that Abdallah was actually killed by Abdallah Jaffar during a coup led by Said Mohamed Djohar, the half-brother of Ali Soilih. However, Denard was acquitted due to a lack of evidence, as the judge deemed the prosecution's case against Denard as circumstantial. The day after the assassination, Djohar took control of the country. Denard tried to prevent Djohar from assuming the presidency, but France, deployed military forces to peacefully remove Denard and his mercenaries from Comoros.¹² An interim government led by Chief of the Supreme Court Mohammed Djohar orchestrated competitive elections in March 1990 (Haggard/Kaufman/Teo 2016: 20). LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties are not really present. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited.

03/04/1990 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start Electoral Hybrid Regime: On this date, presidential elections were held, followed by a second round on 03/11. Originally scheduled for January, the elections were delayed, leading to protests.¹³ Elections were initially held on 02/18 but were invalidated due to severe fraud (Thibaut 1999: 244-245). Despite Mohamed Taki Abdoukarim from the opposition National Union for Democracy in the Comoros receiving the most votes in the first round, the incumbent President Said

Mohamed Djohar of the Comorian Union for Progress emerged as the winner with 55% of the vote in the second round. These elections marked the first multi-party elections in the Comoros since gaining independence.¹⁴ A National Constitutional Conference was established in beginning of 1992. More than 20 parties participated. The constitution was approved on 06/07/1992 via referendum. On 11/22 and 11/29/1992 parliamentary elections were held. They were considered free and fair, although irregularities led to the repetition of the election in five constituencies (Thibaut 1999: 245). The two major parties, Union for Progress and the National Union for Democracy in the Comoros, boycotted the elections, since the government had refused to update voting lists and to end the detention of major political figures.¹⁵ On 06/18/1993 Djohar dissolved the parliament and called for new elections. The parliamentary elections on 12/12 and 12/20/1993 were characterized by organizational irregularities. Nearly all opposition parties boycotted the second round. Overall, this period was marked by unstable political conditions (Thibaut 1999: 245). Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Elections during this period are classified as not competitive by LIED. V-Dem's EF&FI classifies electoral freedom and fairness as ambiguous while their CEI scores them as not clean. Per FH's evaluation for 1990, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. Between 1991 and 1992 the country scores between 6 and 7, categorized as partly free, which we interpret as rather free. For the rest of the regime period, the country is classified as partly free with a score of 8, which we categorize as rather not free. Political liberties were absent according to LIED and somewhat present according to V-Dem's PCLI in this period. According to the Polity5 indicator, during this period, the executive faced substantial limitations on decision-making power. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited.

09/28/1995 End Electoral Hybrid Regime/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: Bob Denard struck a fourth time, this time overthrowing the regime of President Said Djohar. Djohar was imprisoned by Denard and his band of mercenaries for several days.¹⁶ Within a week of the coup, on 10/05/1995 a French military intervention averted the breakdown of the constitutional order (Thibaut 1999) and forced the removal of Abdoukarim, the interim president installed by Denard. Prime Minister El-Yachroutu became acting president from 10/05/1995 until the return of Djohar on 01/26/1996.¹⁷ Djohar spent the meantime until his return in January 1996 in exile in Réunion (Thibaut 1999). We classify the whole period, including the coup attempt by Denard as Non-Electoral Transitional Regime, because Denard was not part of the military. His allegiance was not bound to one state, it rather shifted during his lifetime several times. During his coup attempt the constitutional order did not collapse. According to FH, for this regime period, the country is partly free with a score of 8, which we interpret as rather not free. Political liberties were still coded as absent according to LIED and can be interpreted as somewhat present following V-Dem's PCLI. Therefore, we do not classify the coup period separately as military autocracy or no central authority. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited.

03/06/1996 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start Electoral Hybrid Regime: On this date presidential elections took place, followed by a second round on 03/16. Mohamed Taki Abdoukarim emerged as the victor, despite having come in second during the 1990 elections, where he had secured the highest number of votes in the first round. Abdoukarim had previously served as the acting President in October 1995, following a failed coup led by Bob Denard (Haggard/Kaufman/Teo 2016: 74-75).¹⁸ Soon after his inauguration he began to restructure the political system towards Islamic authoritarianism. On 04/12/1996 he dissolved the Federal Assembly. A committee was supposed to draft a new constitution. The opposition boycotted the committee (Thibaut 1999). Ratified through a referendum on 10/20/1996, the reform narrowed party eligibility to those winning a minimum of two seats on each island in parliamentary elections. Furthermore, it strengthened the President's influence in various areas, including government formation, the appointment of governors, and the

removal of restrictions on re-election(Thibaut 1999). On 11/06/1998 after the death of Abdoukarim, he was succeeded by Interim President Tadjidine Ben Said Massoude. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. During these three years, electoral competitiveness is assessed to be present by LIED: V-Dem's EF&FI scores electoral freedom and fairness to be somewhat present while their CEI scores the elections as not really clean. As classified by FH for this regime period, the country scores between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free. Political liberties were absent according to LIED and can be interpreted as somewhat present per V-Dem's PCLI in this period. According to our observations the regime in this period is an electoral hybrid regime. According to the Polity5 indicator, during this period, the executive faced substantial limitations on decision-making power. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited.

04/30/1999 End Electoral Hybrid Regime/Start Military Autocracy: Prime Minister Massoude decided to delay mandatory elections and was subsequently ousted in a military coup. General Assoumani chaired the government afterwards. On 12/23/2001 a new constitution was approved by referendum, creating the Union of Comoros.¹⁹ In 1999, as per Polity5's classification, the executive wielded unrestricted authority without any formal limitations. Between 2000 and 2001, based on Polity5's evaluation, the executive faced weak constraints, classified as Intermediate Category 1 between unlimited authority and slight limitations. For the years 2000 and 2001, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate. For 2002, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. As classified by FH for this regime period, the country scores between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free. Despite the classification as a military autocracy V-Dem's PCLI scores a somewhat presence of political liberties while LIED continues to code them as absent.

03/10/2002 End Military Autocracy/Start Electoral Hybrid Regime: The initial presidential elections held under the new constitution took place on two dates, namely 03/10 and 04/14/2002. In the primary election held on 03/10 on Grande Comore Island, Azali Assoumani emerged as the top candidate out of a pool of nine contenders, securing 39.81% of the total votes. Mahamoud Mradabi and Saïd Ali Kemal also qualified for the second round by obtaining 15.69% and 10.68% of the votes, respectively. However, Mradabi and Kemal claimed that there were irregularities during the primary and opted to boycott the subsequent poll on 04/14. Consequently, Azali Assoumani secured around 80% of the votes as the only candidate, thereby winning the election.²⁰ First parliamentary elections under the new constitution were held on 04/18/2004.²¹ On 11/07/2010 presidential elections were held. Dhoinine was elected with 61 percent of the vote on 12/26 in the candidate run-off. The opposition alleged fraud and called for protests. International observers described the polls as 'generally free and fair' but also cited irregularities in the balloting. Several high-level were involved in substantial corruption scandals leading to a cabinet reshuffle in 2013 (Lansford 2021:354). Protests broke out after the first round of the 2015 parliamentary elections and eight protesters were shot by police during the uprising. President Azali was re-elected in 2019 in elections not considered as free nor fair and was boycotted by the opposition. Moreover, international election monitors (including from the AU) reported that the contest was defined significant irregularities. Additionally, journalists continue to face harassment, intimidation, and arbitrary arrests.²² He won a fourth term in the January 2024 elections, which saw a turnout of 16% amid an opposition boycott.²³ Key opposition parties largely boycotted the parliamentary election on 01/12/2025, continuing a trend of limited political competition. The Supreme Court annulled the initial results in some constituencies due to procedural irregularities, necessitating a re-run. Ultimately, President Azali Assoumani's ruling Convention for the Renewal of the Comoros (CRC) secured an overwhelming majority, winning 31 out of 33 seats. This substantial victory consolidated the president's power in the assembly amid heavy criticism

over the exclusion of opposition voices.²⁴ During this latest regime period, we see a gradual decrease in scoring by LIED and V-Dem. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. While LIED categorized elections as competitive in 2006, they stopped doing so in 2018. V-Dem's EF&FI score has continuously dropped from attesting to somewhat free and fair elections in 2003 to elections that are not free at all in 2019. Their CEI similarly dropped from ambiguous electoral cleanliness in 2003 to no cleanliness in 2019 and counting. As classified by FH for 2002 and 2003, the country scores between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free. Between 2004 and 2005 the country is classified as partly free with a score of 8, which we categorize as rather not free. In 2006 a score of 6 to 7 for the assessed regime period designates the country as partly free, which aligns with our interpretation of rather free. In 2007 Comoros receives a score of 8, which we interpret as falling into the rather not free category. Per FH, for the period between 2008 and 2017, the country scores between 6 and 7, categorized as partly free, which we interpret as rather free. In 2018 and 2019, it is partly free with a score of 8, which we interpret as rather not free. From 2020 onward the country scores between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free. Political liberties maintained to be coded as absent by LIED and as somewhat present according to V-Dem's PCLI until 2019. From 2020 onward V-Dem's PCLI indicates political liberties as ambiguous. From 2002 to 2003, according to the Polity5 indicator, during this period, the executive faced substantial limitations on decision-making power. From 2004 to 2017, based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. In 2018, as per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was subject to minor institutional constraints during this time. For the years 2003 and 2004, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. For 2005, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive. For the years 2006-2012, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate. For the following two years, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. For 2015 and 2016, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate. For 2017-2018, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. Since 2019, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent.

Electoral Hybrid Regime as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Said_Ali_bin_Said_Omar_of_Grande_Comore

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comoros>

³ <https://2009-2017.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/comoros/26153.htm>

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comoros#European_contact_and_French_colonisation; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmed_Abdallah

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

⁶ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Comoros/Government-and-society>

⁷ <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/comoros-1975-present/>

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

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ali_Soilih

- ¹⁰ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Comoros/Government-and-society>
- ¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmed_Abdallah#Second_presidency
- ¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahmed_Abdallah#Assassination
- ¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1990_Comorian_presidential_election
- ¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1990_Comorian_presidential_election
- ¹⁵ http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2069_92.htm
- ¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Said_Mohamed_Djohar
- ¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Comoros#1989%E2%80%931996
- ¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1996_Comorian_presidential_election
- ¹⁹ <https://www.rulers.org/rulc3.html#comoros>
- ²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_Comorian_presidential_election
- ²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2004_Comorian_legislative_election
- ²² <https://freedomhouse.org/country/comoros/freedom-world/2022>
- ²³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-68002934>
- ²⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_Comorian_parliamentary_election

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