



Cyprus — Va-PoReg Country Report

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06/04/1878 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom]: Since 06/04/1878 by the Cyprus Convention, Cyprus was a British Protectorate, given to Britain by the Ottoman Empire.¹ Initially hopeful for prosperity, democracy, and national liberation, the Cypriots embraced British rule in anticipation of gradual improvements. However, their optimism waned as they encountered disappointments. The British burdened them with high taxes to compensate the Sultan for conceding Cyprus to them. Furthermore, the Cypriot people were denied the opportunity to participate in the island's administration, as all authority was concentrated in the hands of the High Commissioner and London.² On 11/11/1914 Cyprus was annexed by the British and put under a military administration status.³ With this action Cyprus became officially a part of the British colonial empire. On 03/10/1925, Britain declared it as the Crown colony of British Cyprus, establishing an undemocratic constitution for the island.⁴ Cyprus was governed directly by British colonial authorities. Attempts to introduce representative institutions were limited and often ineffective. The Legislative Council had restricted powers and was frequently overshadowed by the colonial administration. The parliament, when it existed, served more as a façade. Hence, LIED is not completely wrong when it states that there were no multiparty legislative elections during this period (LIED). Political liberties were absent according to LIED and not really present according to V-Dem's PCLI. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate.

12/07/1959 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]: Following the Zurich and London Agreements, a constitution was established providing for a bicomunal government. Elections were held, and the parliament had substantial powers over internal affairs. The indigenous population gained significant influence, and the parliament was effective in governance, although tensions between Greek and Turkish Cypriots persisted. This period marked a shift to indirect rule until independence on 08/16/1960. According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties are not really present. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate.

08/16/1960 End Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start Electoral Democracy: On this date, British rule ended with the signing of the Zurich and London Agreements, which established the independent Republic of Cyprus based on a framework of institutional guarantees for all signatory parties.⁵ We code this regime change event as a negotiated transition. Already prior to independence, the legislative elections of 07/31/1960 took place. The elections introduced universal suffrage.⁶ The 1960 constitution established a myriad of civil and political liberties taking into account the representation of the Turkish- and Greek-Cyprian ethnic communities. It also promulgated a robust system of checks and balances.⁷ On 12/21/1963 an armed conflict was triggered.⁸ Constitutional amendment proposed by President Makarios and intended to enhance Greek power was not accepted by the Turkish-Cypriots.⁹ This led to fighting from 1963-1964. UN peacekeepers intervened. Greek and Turkish parties collapsed, and ethnic

fighting went on. The Cypriot Turks set up a separate community in Northern Cyprus. The crisis led to the discontinuation of Turkish Cypriot involvement in administration, coupled with assertions of its loss of legitimacy. In certain regions, Greek Cypriots obstructed the movement and access of Turkish Cypriots to government premises, while others voluntarily withdrew under the guidance of the Turkish Cypriot administration. Consequently, Turkish Cypriots began residing in enclaves. Makarios unilaterally restructured the republic, resulting in the division of Nicosia by the Green Line, established by in 1964 deployed United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP).¹⁰ On 12/28/1967 the Turkish-Cypriot community declared the establishment of the Turkish-Cypriot Provisional Administration.¹¹ On 02/25/1968 presidential elections took place and President Makarios III was reelected. On 07/05/1970 free and fair multi-party elections were conducted, yet the Turkish-Cypriot community abstained from participating in the legislative election, leaving the 15 designated seats for the Turkish community uncontested.¹² Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED classifies elections during this period as not competitive. V-Dem's EF&FI scores them as somewhat free and fair while their CEI scores them as of ambiguous electoral cleanliness. As per FH's classification for this regime period since 1972, the country receives a score of 5 as free, which we categorize as rather free. Political liberties were coded absent according to LIED and somewhat present according to V-Dem's PCLI for this period. From 1961 to 1962, as per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was on par with or below that of other branches, reflecting executive parity or subordination. From 1968 to 1973, based on Polity5's evaluation, during this period, the executive's power was limited to a degree between substantial constraints and parity with other institutions, fitting Intermediate Category 3. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive.

07/15/1974 End Electoral Democracy/Start Military Autocracy: The military regime in Greece engineered a coup against Markarios III in an effort to solidify their position in Cyprus in the face of Turkish Invasion threats, tensions with the Markarios regime, and ethnic unrest. The nationalist Nikos Sampson was installed in the wake of the military coup as president. In response to the coup, on 07/20/1974 Turkey invaded the island taking control of the north and dividing Cyprus along what became known as the Green Line. However, the military regime that had appointed Sampson collapsed on 07/23 July and he handed over power to Glafkos Klerides.¹³ Due to the very short period of the military regime it is not included in the country-year dataset. For this short regime period political liberties continued to be coded as absent (LIED) and can be interpreted as somewhat present according to V-Dem's PCLI.

07/23/1974 End Military Autocracy/Start Electoral Democracy: The military regime led by Sampson came to an end, resulting in the restoration of democracy in the southern part of the island. Meanwhile, Turkish-Cypriots established a de facto government in the northern region. On 11/15/1985 Denktash, the leader of the Turkish Cypriot National Unity Party (UPB), proclaimed the statehood of the Turkish region of Cyprus. The formal declaration of independence set the stage for the enactment of a new democratic constitution in the same year (Haggard/Kaufman/Teo 2016: 23). The Republic of Cyprus operates as a democracy with de jure sovereignty encompassing the entire island. However, in practice, the government exercises control solely over the southern, predominantly Greek-speaking part of the island. The northern region is governed by the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), a recognition acknowledged solely by Turkey.¹⁴ Cyprus is a presidential democracy with a unicameral system, consisting of the House of Representatives. The president serves as head of government and head of state. Governmental power, in this regime period, has been exercised by several presidents of alternating parties or, in the case of Georgios Vasiliou, without party association but party support. While frequent changes in governmental power across the political spectrum might be interpreted as an indicator for political instability, considering also the partition of Cyprus, leadership transitions have been without conflict. Thus, they might be more aptly interpreted as a representation of active political competition.¹⁵ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED.

Elections are considered competitive by LIED. V-Dem's EF&FI and CEI score them as clean, free and fair. According to FH, for 1974 and 1975, the country is partly free with a score of 8, which we interpret as rather not free. Between 1976 and 1981 a score of 6 to 7 designates the country as partly free, which aligns with our interpretation of rather free. From 1982 onward the country is classified as free, scoring between 2 and 4, which we also place in the free category. LIED classifies political liberties as absent until 1989 and present from 1990 onward. In contrast, V-Dem's PCLI indicates that political liberties were somewhat present in 1974 and 1975 and became present in 1976. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive was subordinate to or held equal power with other institutions, indicating executive parity or subordination. For the years 1975 and 1976, 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. Between 1977 and 1988, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive. For 1989 and 1990, V-Dem's JCE is again 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. From 1991 to 2002, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating comprehensive constraints on the executive. In the timeframe 2003-2006, 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. For the years 2007- 2008 as well as 2017-2018, V-Dem's JCE is classified 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 also comprehensive. From 2009 to 2016, and again in 2019, 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. Since 2021, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive.

Electoral Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Schober 2010, Solsten 1991)

Notes

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

² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Cyprus_\(1878%E2%80%93present\)#Protectorate_of_Cyprus_\(1878%E2%88%921914\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Cyprus_(1878%E2%80%93present)#Protectorate_of_Cyprus_(1878%E2%88%921914))

³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Cyprus_\(1878–present\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Cyprus_(1878–present))

⁴ [https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/euoperussiacentral-asia-region/british-cyprus-1914-1960/#:~:text=Cyprus%20was%20proclaimed%20a%20British,Cyprus%20on%20November%2030%2C%201926;https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Cyprus_\(1878%E2%80%93present\)#Protectorate_of_Cyprus_\(1878%E2%88%921914\)](https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/euoperussiacentral-asia-region/british-cyprus-1914-1960/#:~:text=Cyprus%20was%20proclaimed%20a%20British,Cyprus%20on%20November%2030%2C%201926;https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Cyprus_(1878%E2%80%93present)#Protectorate_of_Cyprus_(1878%E2%88%921914))

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_and_Z%C3%BCrich_Agreements; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Guarantee_\(1960\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Guarantee_(1960))

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1960_Cypriot_legislative_election; https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Cyprus_2013?lang=en

⁷ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Cyprus_2013

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cypriot_intercommunal_violence#Crisis_of_1963%E2%80%931964

⁹ <http://www.chisols.org/narratives.html> , see narratives for version 5.0, Cyprus_V: 1

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyprus#Independence_and_inter-communal_violence

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Cyprus

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1970_Cypriot_legislative_election

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1974_Cypriot_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat

¹⁴ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/cyprus/freedom-world/2023>

¹⁵ <http://www.chisols.org/narratives.html> , see narratives for version 5.0, Cyprus_R: 1-2, Cyprus_V: 1-2

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