

Ethiopia — Va-PoReg Country Report

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[the Ethiopian Empire was also known by the exonym Abyssinia]

11/03/1889 Start Autocratic Monarchy [as independent country]: During the Convention of Addis Abeba on 10/26/1896, Italy recognized the independence of the Ethiopian Empire; known as Abyssinia (Willoughby/Fenwick 1974). On 11/03/1889, Menelik II was crowned following his capture of the Ethiopian throne in battle against Menelik of Shewa, a vassal state at the time, marking the beginning of a new dynasty. Menelik brought together the territories that now comprise Ethiopia (Haile-Selassie 1997: 27-29, 34, Turner 1991, Mockler 2002: 89-90, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014b: 59). In a Treaty between Great Britain, France and Italy on 12/13/1906, the then colonial powers agreed to refrain from any intervention in Abyssinian affairs and to respect the respective interests of the contracting powers in those territories bordering on Abyssinia (Willoughby/Fenwick 1974). From 12/12/1913 until 09/27/1916 Lij Iyasu was empress of Ethiopia. Then she was removed from power.¹ After Iyasu was removed, Zewditu became Empress of Ethiopia. Yet, Täfäri Mäkönnän was ruling because Zewditu was not allowed to exercise power herself.² On 04/02/1930 Mäkönnän was crowned himself as Emperor Haile Selassie I. Selassie endeavored to modernize the nation by implementing a range of political and social changes. For this period, political liberties are classified as absent by LIED and V-Dem's PCLI. These included the enactment of the 1931 constitution, the first written constitution for the country, and the elimination of slavery.³ According to our observations as well as LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. Until 1929, according to Polity5, during this period, the executive was subordinate to or held equal power with other institutions, indicating executive parity or subordination. Since 1930, based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive operated with unlimited authority, facing no institutional checks on power. Until 1930, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are absent. Simultaneously, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. From 1931 onwards, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent.

10/03/1935 End Autocratic Monarchy/Start Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Italy, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy]: During the Second Italo-Ethiopian War, Ethiopia was occupied by Italian forces and Emperor Haile Selassie and his family were forced to flee into exile. A few days later, the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa came under Italian control (Roberts 1986). On 06/01/1936 Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia are united into Italian East Africa and reorganized as a federation of six provinces. LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is also classified by us as showing that political liberties are absent. V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are absent. Simultaneously, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive.

05/09/1936 End Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Italy, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy]/Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Italy, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy]: Ethiopia was annexed by Italy and together with Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia was united into Italian East Africa (AOI) under a unified government in Addis Ababa.⁴ In this short colonial time no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held (LIED). Both

LIED and V-Dem's PCLI classify political liberties as absent. From 1937 to 1940, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are absent. Simultaneously, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. For 1941, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent.

05/05/1941 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Italy, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy]/Start Autocratic Monarchy [as independent country]: After Italy declared war on Britain and France on 06/19/1940, allied forces led by Britain invaded Italian East Africa (Eritrea, Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland). Addis Ababa was liberated by allies and on 05/05/1941 Haile Selassie re-entered Addis Ababa and returns to the throne (Roberts 1986). The last Italian forces surrendered in November 1941. With the withdrawal of the Italian Army and the return of the emperor Ethiopia was again an autocratic monarchy according to our classification. The previous regime count of the ruling monarchy is proceeded. In 1955 universal suffrage was introduced.⁵ According to our observations, as well as LIED, no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. As classified by FH since 1972, the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. Political liberties were absent for the whole time according to data from LIED and V-Dem's PCLI. 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 absent, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent.

09/12/1974 End Autocratic Monarchy/Start Communist Ideocracy: Facing popular unrest since February 1974 in the course of inflation, famine and discontent, Emperor Selassie was overthrown by the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police and Territorial Army, commonly known as the Derg (aka Dergue) (Abate 1983: 32, Haile-Selassie 1997: 121, 127, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014b: 59-60). The Derg became the ruling junta under Andom's rule.⁶ Between February and September 1974, the Dergue eliminated power holders of the old regime; the removal of the emperor completed the transition from monarchy to a new form of autocracy. When the crown prince, who had been offered the throne, refused to return to Ethiopia, the Dergue proclaimed itself acting head of state and changed its name to the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) on 09/13/1974 (Haile-Selassie 1997: 128). The Dergue originally included three elected representatives from each unit of the armed forces; members ranged from ordinary soldiers to colonels (Erlich 1983: 473-475, Clapham 1985: 260, Haile-Selassie 1997: 147-148). In March 1975 the Derg established Ethiopia as a Marxist-Leninist state with itself as the vanguard movement in a provisional government. While Ethiopia became not earlier than in 1987 the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) under a new communist constitution, the regime is classified as communist from the start. In 1975, for instance, the regime asserted control over all land, assigning parcels of up to 25 acres (10 hectares) to individual peasants who worked the land themselves.⁷ From September 1974 until June 1991 the Ethiopian Civil War was fought between the regime and Ethiopian-Eritrean anti-government rebels. It left at least 1.4 million people dead.⁸ According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held until 1986, from 1987 onward only executive elections were held. As classified by FH since 1972, the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. Regarding the political liberties, LIED and V-Dem's PCLI code them as absent. From 1975 to 1983, based on Polity5's assessment, the executive faced slight limitations on power during this period. Since 1984, as per Polity5's categorization, the executive experienced minimal limitations on decision-making during this period, placing it in the first intermediate category. From 1975 to 1986, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are absent. Simultaneously, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent.

05/18/1991 End Communist Ideocracy/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: On this date, Mengistu Haile Mariam fled the country after the regime was defeated by insurgents from several different regions. Vice President Tesfaye Gebre Kidan took over the Junta (Haile-Selassie 1997: 284-328). The remaining officials declared a ceasefire and Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) forces began entering Addis Ababa on 05/27/1991 (Haile-Selassie 1997: 284-328, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014b: 60). Kidan surrendered the Derg government to the EPRDF. Meles Zenawi assumed power as interim revolutionary president. The EPRDF immediately disbanded the Workers' Party of Ethiopia and shortly afterward arrested almost all of the most prominent Derg (Haile-Selassie 1997: 284-328, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014b: 60). According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. Per FH, for 1991, 1993 and 1994, the country scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. In 1992, however, the country scores between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free. Besides, political liberties were not present (LIED) and can be interpreted as not really present by V-Dem's PCLI. During this regime period, 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.

06/05/1994 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start Electoral Autocracy: On this date the first ever multi-party elections in the country for a Constituent Assembly were held.⁹ Parliamentary elections were held in May 1995. The EPRDF and its affiliated parties won a majority of 471 out of the 547 seats. Although the initial efforts of the new administration showed some success in reshaping the economy, doubts lingered regarding its dedication to political pluralism (Meier 1999: 374).¹⁰ Opposition leaders as well as journalists stayed in prison or were in exile abroad. The exclusion of important opposition groups occurred on the federal and the regional level (Meier 1999: 374). General elections were held in 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015. The quality of the elections fluctuated. However, deficits always existed to varying degrees. In the general elections 2000, for example severe deficits and incidents in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR) occurred. These included ballot stuffing and voter intimidation.¹¹ In regard to the general election in 2010, the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor stated in the Human Rights Report: While the limited number of international observers permitted to monitor the elections acknowledged the competent handling of technical aspects of the voting process, some also observed the absence of a conducive environment for free and fair elections prior to the election day. Various laws, regulations, and procedures introduced since the 2005 national elections were seen to favor the EPRDF throughout the electoral process. Additionally, reported human rights violations during the year encompassed unlawful killings, torture, beatings, and mistreatment of detainees and opposition supporters by security forces.¹² Harassment and detention of opposition figures occurred also during the general elections in 2015.¹³ On 02/15/2018 Hailemariam announced his decision to step down following days of demonstrations and protests. Hailemariam also resigned as the chair of the EPRDF. ABIY Ahmed (OPDO) was selected as EPRDF chair on 03/27 and sworn in as prime minister on April 2 (Lansford 2021: 541). The dissolution of the EPRDF occurred on 12/01/2019. Three member-parties of the EPRDF merged into the Prosperity Party. The 2021 Ethiopian general election to elect members of the House of Peoples' Representatives was held on 06/21/2021 and 09/30/2021. Regional elections were also held on those dates. It was the first multi-party election in Ethiopia since the 2005 election.¹⁴ The Prosperity Party won with an overwhelming majority. Abiy Ahmed was confirmed as prime minister for a five-year term on 10/04/2021 by the House of People's Representatives. African Union characterized the election overall as positive and an improvement compared with previous elections, but also pointed to the need for further democratic improvements.¹⁵ The Human Rights Report by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor stated Conducted amid a backdrop of instability marked by interethnic and intercommunal violence, the elections unfolded within an electoral process that was deemed neither free nor fair for all citizens. However, observers generally concluded that the results reflected the will of the majority of citizens.¹⁶ Because of the continuation of severe deficits in the electoral process and competition with different degree, we classify this period as electoral autocracy. Based on our observations,

multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED categorizes elections in the country as not competitive. V-Dem's EF&FI and CEI score them as not really free, fair or clean. Per FH's evaluation until 1997, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. In 1998 the country is classified as partly free with a score of 8, which we categorize as rather not free. Between 1999 and 2009 Ethiopia scores between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free. From 2010 onward it scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. Additionally, according to LIED no political liberties have been achieved ever since 1994. V-Dem's PCLI scores them as not really present until 2017 and in 2023. In 2018 and from 2021 to 2022 the outcomes were ambiguous. Between 2019 and 2020 political liberties were somewhat present. Until 2017, according to Polity5, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. In 2018, according to the Polity5 indicator, the executive faced substantial limitations on decision-making power. Until 2017, 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. For the year 2018, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted 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 limited. Since 2019, 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.

Electoral Autocracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Abink 2009, Halliday/Molyneux 1983, Henze 1985, Henze 2000, Henze 2007, Hess 1970, Keller 1988, Kinfu 1994, Perham 1947, Tiruneh 1993)

Notes

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

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

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

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_East_Africa

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage

⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Derg>

⁷ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ethiopia/Socialist-Ethiopia-1974-91>

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

⁹ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Ethiopia_1994?lang=en

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1995_Ethiopian_general_election

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2000_Ethiopian_general_election

¹² <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/af/154346.htm>

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_Ethiopian_general_election

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2021_Ethiopian_general_election

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2021_Ethiopian_general_election

¹⁶ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/ethiopia>

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