



Faroe Islands — Va-PoReg Country Report

Kailitz, Steffen, et al., 2026: Varieties of Political Regimes (Va-PoReg). Country Report Faroe Islands, Dresden: Hannah Arendt Institute for Totalitarianism Studies.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/JYEL7U>

01/14/1814 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [Denmark]: Between 1814 and 1948, the Faroe Islands are classified by us as a colonial regime under direct rule by Denmark. On 01/14/1814, with the dissolution of the Denmark–Norway union, the Faroe Islands, along with Iceland and Greenland, were incorporated into Denmark as a result of the Peace of Kiel.¹ In 1816, the Faroese parliament, known as the Løgting, was officially dissolved, and a Danish judicial and administrative system was introduced to replace it. The use of Danish as the primary language was promoted in administration, education, and the church, while Faroese was actively discouraged. Executive authority was exercised by a Danish-appointed prefect, and all significant decisions were made in Copenhagen. This structure reflects the defining features of direct colonial rule, in which a non-sovereign territory is governed by officials of the metropole without meaningful delegation of authority to local actors. In 1849, Denmark adopted a new constitution, which was extended to the Faroe Islands in 1850, granting them two seats in the Danish parliament, the Rigsdag. However, this limited metropolitan representation did not entail local self-government. In 1852, the Faroese successfully reinstated the Løgting, but only as a county council with an advisory role, lacking any binding legislative power.² The body remained fully subordinate to the Danish administration. The Løgting did not become a directly elected institution until 1926, and even then, it remained an advisory body without legislative competence. While Faroese was standardized as a written language in 1890, it was not permitted for use in public schools until 1938 and in the church (Fólkakirkjan) until 1939.³ The continued imposition of Danish and the marginalization of the Faroese language and culture were characteristic of colonial assimilation policies. There was no attempt to govern through traditional Faroese elites or to integrate local institutions into the decision-making process. Instead, Danish officials exercised political control throughout the period. This political structure, marked by the absence of internal sovereignty, legislative autonomy, and cultural self-determination, corresponds to standard definitions of direct colonial rule in comparative political science.

04/12/1940 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [Denmark]/Start Indirect Rule Occupation Regime [by United Kingdom, (Monarchical) Liberal Democracy]: In World War II, Nazi Germany invaded and occupied Denmark. In response to this, the British conducted a preemptive invasion and occupation of the Faroe Islands, which was called Operation Valentine, with the aim of preventing a potential German invasion. The Løgting acquired legislative authority during this time, while Danish prefect Carl Aage Hilbert continued to hold executive control. Although there were certain efforts to proclaim full independence at this juncture, the United Kingdom had made a commitment not to intervene in the internal matters of the Faroe Islands or take action without the consent of a liberated Denmark. The wartime self-government experience played a pivotal role in preparing the path for the formal autonomy achieved in 1948.⁴

05/13/1945 End Indirect Rule Occupation Regime [United Kingdom, (Monarchical) Liberal Democracy]/Start Part of Other Country [of Denmark, Liberal Democracy]: After the liberation of Denmark and the conclusion of World War II, the British occupation came to an end.⁵ The final British troops departed in September 1945. Until 1948, the Faroe Islands held the official designation of a Danish amt (county). In 1946, a referendum on complete independence took place, garnering majority support. However, the Danish government and king did not acknowledge this outcome because only two-thirds of the population participated in the referendum. Consequently, the Danish king dissolved the Faroese government.⁶

03/23/1948 End Part of Other Country [of Denmark, Liberal Democracy]/Start Liberal Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under Denmark, Liberal Democracy]: Responding to the increasing movements advocating for self-government and independence, Denmark ultimately conferred home-rule upon the Faroe Islands in 1948, providing a significant level of local autonomy.⁷ Executive authority in local government matters is vested in the Faroese government. The leader of the government, known as the Løgmaður (Chief Justice), serves as both the Prime Minister and the head of the Faroese Government. Elections take place under universal suffrage at both municipal and national levels, also choosing two members for the Folketing. Up until 2007, there were seven electoral districts, but they were eliminated on 25 October of that year in favor of a single nationwide district.⁸⁹ The judiciary in the Faroe Islands maintains independence from both the executive and legislative branches and falls under the jurisdiction of Denmark.¹⁰ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period. The Faroe Islands are not registered in FH's, LIED's or V-Dem's datasets.

Liberal Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Notes

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

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

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Faroe_Islands#1600s_onwards

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Faroe_Islands#World_War_II

⁵ <https://www.royalmarineshistory.com/post/operation-valentine-occupation-of-the-faroe-islands>

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Faroe_Islands#Post-World_War_II:_Home_Rule

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faroe_Islands#History

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faroe_Islands#Government_and_politics

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Faroe_Islands#Parliamentary_appointments_and_elections

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_the_Faroe_Islands