



Indonesia — Va-PoReg Country Report

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08/19/1816 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Netherlands]: On 08/19/1816 the French and British interregnum in the Dutch East Indies ended and the Netherlands regained full control over the area.¹ Starting in 1816 the Dutch East Indies was a Dutch colony consisting of what is now Indonesia (Ricklefs 2001). Since 1918, there was a People's Council, an advisory body whose membership was partly nominated and partly elected based on a small racially delineated franchise. However, the Governor-General retained the power to defy the decisions by the Council (Feith 1962). In 1937, restricted suffrage for Europeans was introduced.² LIED confirms that multiparty legislative elections as well as universal suffrage were absent. Both LIED and V-Dem's PCLI indicate political liberties as absent. From 1900 to 1917, 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. From 1918 to 1935, 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. From 1936 to 1942, 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.

03/08/1942 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Netherlands, Direct Rule Occupation Regime]/Start Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Japan, Constitutional Monarchy]: After Germany invaded the Netherlands, they ceded their European territory to Germany on 05/14/1940, and on 09/27/1940, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Japan signed a treaty outlining 'spheres of influence' whereas the Dutch East Indies fell into Japan's sphere (Ricklefs 2001).³ According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period. LIED and V-Dem's PCLI indicate the absence of political liberties for this time. For 1943 and 1944, 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. For the year 1945, 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.

08/17/1945 End Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Japan, Constitutional Monarchy]/Start Democratizing Regime: On this date, the Japanese occupation ended with Japanese surrender in the Pacific and two days later Sukarno, born Koesno Sosrodihardjo, and Mohammad Hatta declared Indonesian independence on the morning of this day (Ricklefs 2001). The following day, the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence (PPKI) elected Sukarno as President, and Hatta as Vice-president.⁴ Universal suffrage was granted for all citizens.⁵ The initial elections were slated for January 1946; however, due to the ongoing Indonesian National Revolution, they could not proceed as scheduled.⁶ By late August 1946, a central Republican administration had been formed in Jakarta, which adopted a constitution prepared by the Preparatory Committee for Indonesian Independence during the Japanese occupation.⁷ The Dutch accused Sukarno and Hatta of collaborating with the Japanese, and denounced the Republic as a creation of Japanese fascism.⁸ The nationalist government was captured by the Dutch but had to be freed due to pressure from the United Nations.⁹ De facto Dutch forces re-occupied most of Indonesia's territory and committed a variety of

war crimes which led to four years of guerrilla struggle. On 12/20/1948 Dutch invasion forces overthrew the elected government. Sukarno took over as a dictator to combat the invasion.¹⁰ On 12/27/1949, Indonesia attained de facto independence as the Republic of the United States of Indonesia, comprising the Republic of Indonesia (covering parts of Java and Sumatra) and various states and autonomous territories that had been established since 1946.¹¹ However, the Dutch part of New Guinea was excluded.¹² On 12/20/1949 the cabinet was sworn in, and seven days later, it officially received sovereignty transferred by both the Netherlands and the Republic of Indonesia (Feith 1962). On 08/17/1950, the Republic of the United States of Indonesia was dissolved, and the unitary state inaugurated as the Republic of Indonesia (Feith 1962). The cabinet and president were not elected by Indonesian people and no legislative elections took place before 1955. Therefore, this period is coded as transitional. At independence, Sukarno was unelected president. The unelected first parliament included representatives of the Dutch-created states, members of the revolutionary committee, and members appointed by Sukarno based on estimates of the various parties' strength. The first parliamentary election was not held until September 1955 (Liddle 1978: 173-74, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014b: 68-69). According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. From 1946 to 1949, 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. Between 1950 and 1955, the executive's authority was significantly constrained by institutional checks during this time. For the years 1946-1948, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive. For 1949, 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 rest of the relevant regime period, 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. Moreover, LIED continued to code political liberties as absent. V-Dem's PCLI indicates them as somewhat present from 1946 to 1948 and as present afterwards

09/29/1955 End Democratizing Regime/Start Electoral Hybrid Regime: On this date legislative elections took place. This was the first national election since the conclusion of the Indonesian National Revolution. The outcome was inconclusive as none of the parties received a clear mandate to govern.¹³ The parliament (People's Representative Council) convened on 03/04/1956. During his opening speech, President Sukarno advocated for an Indonesian-style democracy, and in the subsequent years, he further elaborated on his vision of a novel governmental system known as "konsepsi".¹⁴ Sukarno's preference for a "guided democracy" was inspired by his observations in the Chinese People's Republic. This model diverged from the Western liberal democratic model, leaning more towards a system where democratic and autocratic elements were mixed. The period in question is marked by divergent assessments concerning its classification. It is acknowledged that between 1950 and either 1957 or 1959, this phase exhibited characteristics of a democracy (Liddle 1992).¹⁵ BR classifies it as civilian dictatorship starting in 1950, GWF as a personal autocracy between 1950 and 1966, AF as a democracy between 1955 and 1956 and as a personalist rule before and after, LIED codes a multiparty autocracy between 1955 and 1959 and a closed autocracy before and after. We argue that this specific regime period starts in 1955 because there were no elections prior to that. President Sukarno survived an attempted assassination on 11/30/1956. Afterwards he declared a state-of-siege in North Sumatra on 12/25/1956 and South Sumatra on 12/28/1956. A military council headed by Lieutenant Colonel Sumual took control of East Indonesia 03/02/1957.¹⁶ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED categorizes elections during this time as not competitive. V-Dem's EF&FI scores them as free and fair while their CEI scores them as somewhat clean. Furthermore, LIED classified the political liberties as absent. V-Dem's PCLI scores them as present in 1955 and 1956 and as somewhat present the year after. In 1956, as per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was significantly constrained by institutional checks during this time. For the year 1956, 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 1957,

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.

03/14/1957 End Electoral Hybrid Regime/Start Electoral Autocracy: On this date, President Sukarno declared a national state-of-emergency. In May 1957 he established by martial law a National Council, which he chaired. It was a non-political body on the basis of functional groups. It was supposed to give advice to the cabinet, as a counterweight to the political sphere.¹⁷ The fragmentation in the parliament, combined with Sukarno's growing influence and his vision for a "guided democracy", set the stage for a political regime where democratic elections coexisted with strong executive control and diminishing parliamentary power.¹⁸ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. According to LIED no electoral competitiveness was present. V-Dem's CEI scored a somewhat cleanliness. V-Dem's EF&FI categorizes the elections as free and fair. Regarding the political liberties, they are absent according to LIED and score an ambiguous outcome by V-Dem's PCLI. As per Polity5's classification, the executive experienced moderate limitations on authority, placing it in the second intermediate category. For the year 1958, 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. For the following year, 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.

07/05/1959 End Electoral Autocracy/Start Personalist Autocracy: On this date Sukarno launched a self-coup which granted him dictatorial powers. He established a political regime called "guided democracy". Following the declaration of martial law and its implementation, Indonesia reverted to presidentialism, resulting in Sukarno reassuming the position of president.¹⁹ What makes the regime in this period hard to classify is that it was a party regime but without elections. Since the regime started with a self-coup, no elections and parties played a neglectable role the regime period it is classified as a personalist autocracy (by Sukarno).²⁰ Political power was concentrated in the hands of Sukarno. The parliament provided no check on his power because he appointed all members of the parliament. Although representatives from various political parties, including the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), were included in the parliament, they lacked real power or influence. Their appointment was mainly symbolic and intended to give the appearance of broad political support. Our categorization as a personalist autocracy is especially underpinned by the fact that Sukarno was made president for life by the parliament in 1963. Sukarno's ideological writings on Manipol-USDEK and NASAKOM were made compulsory subjects in Indonesian schools and universities.²¹ However, there were also semi-ideocratic elements of Sukarno's rule. The Encyclopaedia Britannica characterized the ideology of Guided Democracy as a "neo-Marxist, crypto-communist ideology".²² Similarly J. M. Van Der Kroef argued that "Sukarno's own ideological exhortations steadily seemed to merge with Marxist-Leninist doctrine" (Van Der Kroef 1972: 277). However, Sukarno's "guided democracy" rested on precarious foundations, as it faced an inherent conflict between its two main support pillars, namely, the military and the communists.²³ On 10/01/1965 in a coup attempt, in which the communist party was involved, six Indonesian army generals were killed (Van Der Kroef 1972). On 11/01/1965, Major General Suharto, commander of the military's strategic reserve command, took control of the army. The army subsequently led a nationwide violent anti-communist purge.²⁴ In this period there was a power struggle between Sukarno and the military. Sukarno refused to outlaw the PKI despite military pressure, and he was able to appoint ministers and top military officers opposed by the army high command before (Crouch 1988: 158-78). Commencing in January 1966, university students-initiated protests Sukarno, calling for the dissolution of the PKI and urging the government to address escalating inflation.²⁵ According to LIED, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held in 1959, from 1960 onward no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. Moreover, political liberties are coded as absent per LIED and can be interpreted as ambiguous per V-Dem's PCLI. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. Until 1965, 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. For 1966, 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.

03/12/1966 End Personalist Autocracy/Start Military Autocracy: General Suharto forced Sukarno to step down from his executive post. Sukarno retained a ceremonial position, but Suharto led the country from then on as a dictator. The March 1966 coup resulted in the transfer of day-to-day executive power to Suharto, the arrest of more than fifteen ministers, the purge of left-leaning bureaucrats, officers, and PNI party leaders, and the symbolically important outlawing of the PKI. Thus, we code it as the point at which Sukarno lost control, though he retained the formal title president until March 1967 (Crouch 1988: 188-202, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014b: 69). On 01/10/1967 Sukarno was stripped of his president-for-life title by parliament and arrested at home. On the same day, the parliament named Suharto acting president. A policy of "De-Sukarnoization" followed.²⁶ According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held from 1966 to 1970, in 1971 and 1972 only multiparty legislative elections were held; from 1973 onward multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. Per FH's evaluation for 1972-1983, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. According to FH's classification for 1984-1987, a score between 11 and 14 makes the country not free, which we also place in the not free category. As classified by FH for 1988 and 1989, the country scores between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free. Per FH, for the years 1990 to 1997, the country scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. According to FH, for the year 1998, a score between 9 and 10 makes the country not free, which aligns with our interpretation of rather not free. The state of political liberties is coded as absent by LIED. V-Dem's PCLI indicates them as not really present until 1973 and as absent afterwards. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive's constraints fell into Intermediate Category 1, between unlimited authority and slight limitations. From 1967 to 1997, 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. For 1998, 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.

05/21/1998 End Military Autocracy/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: A financial crisis and mass protests brought Suharto military regime to the brink. When he moved to repress the movement his security agencies refused his orders. Suharto resigned and fled, leaving his vice president Habibie in charge. Habibie initiated liberalization but did not initially signal his intention to step down. A consultative assembly dominated by authoritarian incumbents made further liberalizing moves and electoral laws were finalized in early 1999.²⁷ As per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was subject to minor institutional constraints during this time. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive. Per FH's evaluation 1998, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free.

06/07/1999 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start Electoral Democracy: On 06/07/1999, a parliamentary election took place. On 10/19/1999, President Habibie's "accountability speech" was rejected by the legislature, ending his tenure. Subsequently, on 10/20/1999, Abdurrahman Wahid was elected president by the legislature, finalizing the transition (Haggard/Kaufman/Teo 2016: 36). A parliamentary election characterized by fairness and competitiveness resulted in a victory for the opposition. Subsequently, in October 1999, the predominantly elected legislature elected a new president from the opposition (Thompson 1999: 1). Suharto's resignation following mass protests is not considered the regime's end, as he passed power to his longstanding ally, Habibie, with no significant alterations in either the cabinet or military command under Habibie's leadership (Kingsbury 2003: 162, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014b: 69). On 07/23/2001, ethnic cleavages and threats to dissolve the legislature fueled the opposition and armed forces to act and depose Wahid. Sukanoputri was voted as acting president. Until 2004 38 seats in the People's Consultative Assembly

were reserved for the military appointment. Challenges such as systemic corruption, discrimination, and violence against minority communities, conflicts in the Papua region, and the politicized application of defamation and blasphemy laws persisted.²⁸ Although voters and candidates typically operate without undue interference, the military continues to exert influence, with former commanders assuming prominent and expanding roles in politics. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED categorizes elections during this period as competitive. V-Dem's EF&FI scores them as free and fair. Their CEI scores them as somewhat clean. Political liberties remained absent per LIED, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties are somewhat present since 2016. Nonetheless, the period is characterized by revisions in the constitution and legislative bodies that laid the foundations for later democratic elections. This included the progressive reduction and eventual elimination in 2004 of guaranteed seats for military representation in parliament (Dagg 2007). 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. On 06/05/2004, the first direct general elections were held in Indonesia, after a constitutional amendment in 2002 stripped the People's Consultative Assembly of the power to elect the president and vice-president, continuing Indonesia's path of democratization. Political bodies such as the parliament were fundamentally reformed, its size reduced, and its members largely voted directly. Elections were considered free and fair (Vaughn 2005), and the institution in charge of managing the election was found to be impartial and effective (Dagg 2007). Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED continues to categorize elections as competitive. V-Dem's EF&FI also continues to score elections as free and fair. Their CEI initially increased to calling elections clean but dropped back down to speaking of somewhat clean elections in 2010. The Democratic Party, led by Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who served in Megawati's Cabinet as Security Minister before becoming a presidential candidate, won in the second election round. In 2009, Yudhoyono secured a second term until the 2014 elections, where he yielded the presidency to the new election winner Joko Widodo. However, during Yudhoyono's presidency corruption and charges of nepotism continued, showcased by a list of fourteen relatives as presidential candidates in 2014. The 2014 elections were characterized by the race between front-runners Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto, the former son-in-law of the previous autocrat Suharto who threatened democratic backsliding by proposing returning to the 1945 constitution and framing direct election as unsuitable (Mietzner 2014: 114-115). Joko Widodo went on to be elected for two presidential terms in free, fair and competitive elections with high turn-out rates. The general elections on 02/14/2024 have tarnished Widodo's reputation. Prabowo Subianto, an ex-general and son-in-law to Suharto, who is accused of severe human rights abuses before 1999, has won the election, which his opponents claim was marred by irregularities and nepotism. ANFREL's interim report notes the unfair use of state resources during the campaign. Widodo's backing of Subianto is underscored by the fact that his running mate and now vice president is Widodo's son, Joko Widodo. Indonesia's highest court has rejected an appeal for re-elections by Subianto's opponents.²⁹ According to FH, for the year 1999, the country is partly free with a score of 8, which we interpret as rather not free. As classified by FH from 2000 to 2004, the country is partly free with a score ranging from 6 to 7, which we place in the rather free category. As per FH's classification for 2005 to 2012 the country receives a score of 5 as free, which we categorize as rather free. As classified by FH for the rest of this regime period, the country is partly free with a score ranging from 6 to 7, which we place in the rather free category. Until 2013, as per Polity5's categorization, the executive's authority was significantly constrained, nearing parity with other branches, placing it in the third intermediate category. Since 2014, based on Polity5's assessment, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. From 2000 to 2013, as well as from 2015 to 2022, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive. For 2014, 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 comprehensive. For 2023, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate

constraints on the executive.

Electoral Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional Sources (Alatas 1997, Chua 2004, Crouch 1979, Frederick/Worden 2011, Pepinsky 2009, Rüland 2001, Slater 2009, Slater 2010, Ufen 2002)

Notes

- ¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_and_British_interregnum_in_the_Dutch_East_Indies#cite_note-7
- ² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage
- ³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_occupation_of_the_Dutch_East_Indies
- ⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesian_National_Revolution
- ⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage
- ⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1955_Indonesian_legislative_election
- ⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesian_National_Revolution
- ⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indonesian_National_Revolution
- ⁹ <https://ehne.fr/en/encyclopedia/themes/europe-europeans-and-world/europeans-and-decolonisations/decolonization-dutch-east-indiesindonesia>
- ¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_East_Indies#World_War_II_and_independence
- ¹¹ <https://www.rulers.org/ruli.html#indonesia>
- ¹² <https://ehne.fr/en/encyclopedia/themes/europe-europeans-and-world/europeans-and-decolonisations/decolonization-dutch-east-indiesindonesia>
- ¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1955_Indonesian_legislative_election
- ¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1955_Indonesian_legislative_election
- ¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberal_democracy_period_in_Indonesia#Government_and_politics;
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sukarno#ref6967>
- ¹⁶ <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/asiapacific-region/indonesia-1949-present/>
- ¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guided_Democracy_in_Indonesia
- ¹⁸ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Representatives_\(Indonesia,_1956%E2%80%931959\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Representatives_(Indonesia,_1956%E2%80%931959))
- ¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guided_Democracy_in_Indonesia
- ²⁰ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sukarno>
- ²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukarno#President_for_life_and_Cult_of_personality
- ²² <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sukarno>
- ²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukarno#President_for_life_and_Cult_of_personality
- ²⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suharto>
- ²⁵ <http://soekarnotheclaimer99.blogspot.com/2011/02/>
- ²⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De-Sukarnoization>
- ²⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fall_of_Suharto
- ²⁸ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/indonesia/freedom-world/2022>
- ²⁹ <https://apnews.com/article/indonesia-election-fraud-appeal-baswedan-subianto-pranowo-cedb89b905ea598e3a025ccc2ca07d08>

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