



Italy — Va-PoReg Country Report

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03/17/1861 Start Constitutional Monarchy: Sovereignty of the Kingdom of Italy, an independent successor state of the dissolved Carolingian Empire was gained on 02/02/888. Italy was unified on 03/17/1861. The Kingdom of Italy as a state existed from 03/17/1861, when Victor Emmanuel II of Sardinia was proclaimed King of Italy.¹ The kingdom adopted the Statuto Albertino, the governing document of the Kingdom of Sardinia, as its constitution. On 07/29/1900, King Umberto I was assassinated. His son Victor Emmanuel III, who favored a return to constitutional government,² acceded to the throne. Parliamentary rule had been firmly established but some considerable residual powers were granted to the monarch. The Statuto Albertino allowed him to appoint the prime minister even against a majority in the Chamber of Deputies. The first universal male suffrage, which was introduced in 1912, extended to all citizens aged 30 and older, with no restrictions. It was applied in the elections of 1913. Nevertheless, when Prime Minister Antonio Salandra resigned after Italy had signed the secret Treaty of London in April 1915, which had been rejected by most politicians, King Victor Emmanuel III rejected his resignation. He personally decided for Italy to enter the war, exercising his right under the Statuto.³ According to LIED multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. According to the Polity5 indicator, during this period, the executive faced substantial limitations on decision-making power. Until 1913, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive. For the year 1914, 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. From 1915 to 1918, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive. For 1919, 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. Political liberties are coded as absent by LIED and can be interpreted as somewhat present by V-Dem's PCLI. The King had the exclusive authority to sanction and promulgate laws. Both the King and the two Chambers had the right to propose legislation. Under the Statuto Albertino, the King of Italy held the authority to appoint the Prime Minister. While the King had the formal power to select the Prime Minister, in practice, the appointee needed to maintain the confidence of Parliament to effectively govern. Over time, it became increasingly difficult for the King to appoint a government entirely of his own choosing or to keep it in office against the will of Parliament. As a result, the Prime Minister became both politically and legally responsible to Parliament, necessitating its confidence to remain in office.⁴

11/16/1919 End Constitutional Monarchy/Start (Monarchical) Electoral Oligarchy (Patriarchal): On this date, the general elections were held. Considered the most significant elections in Italy since 1870, they were the first to occur under conditions approaching mass political democracy (Morgan 1995). The Electoral Reform Law which had been passed in August 1919 expanded suffrage to all males over the age of 21 and introduced proportional representation. The period from 1919-1920 is referred to as the Red Biennium. It was marked by intense social conflicts. Reasons for the unrest were mainly political instability, the aftermath of the First World War, high unemployment, and the economic crisis. Mass strikes and demonstrations occurred throughout the country. This paved the way for the fascist March on Rome.⁵ While royal prerogatives were not officially diminished, they were challenged by a substantial rise in political participation as well as the

turmoil of the Red Biennium. However, Italy is on one hand in this regime period a borderline case between an electoral regime and a constitutional monarchy, on the other hand it is a borderline case between an electoral democracy and an electoral hybrid regime. During this regime period, the position of prime minister was held by five different politicians of four different political parties, indicating low governmental stability, though the transitions have been conducted non-violently.⁶ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED categorizes these elections as competitive. V-Dem's EF&FI scores them as somewhat free and fair while their CEI scores electoral cleanliness as ambiguous. Political liberties are considered as absent by LIED and as somewhat present by V-Dem's PCLI. According to the Polity5 indicator, during this period, the executive faced substantial limitations on decision-making power. For the years 1920 and 1921, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive. For 1922, V-Dem's JCE is classified 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 also moderate.

10/27[-29]/1922 End (Monarchical) Electoral Oligarchy (Patriarchal)/Start (Monarchical) Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy: The March on Rome brought Benito Mussolini in power, when he was appointed on 10/29/1922 by King Victor Emmanuel III as prime minister.⁷ Soon after taking office, Mussolini pushed through an electoral law which made it nearly impossible for non-fascists to be elected, purged non-fascist ministers, and engaged in widespread electoral fraud and violence (Bosworth 2002: 145-70, Berman 2019: 220-37, Casey et al. 2020: 10-11). From 1925 onwards, constitutional safeguards against government autocracy were dissolved, elections were banned, free speech and free association abolished, unions and opposition parties banned. Opposition leaders were imprisoned, sent into exile, or killed at the hands of Mussolini's supporters. In 1927, the Organizzazione di Vigilanza Repressione dell'Antifascismo (Organization for the Vigilant Repression of Anti-Fascism, OVRA) was established. The OVRA subsequently was involved in the persecution and assassination of demarked "enemies of the state".⁸ According to LIED multiparty executive and legislative elections were held from 1922 to 1925, from 1926 to 1928 only multiparty executive elections were held, from 1929 to 1938 only legislative elections, which were not multiparty, were held, from 1939 onward no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. LIED continued to code political liberties as absent. V-Dem's PCLI indicates them as ambiguous in 1922, as not really present from 1923 to 1924 and as absent from 1925 onwards. For the years 1923 and 1924, 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 the rest of the 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.

07/25/1943 End Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy/Start Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Germany, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy]: Mussolini's reign ended due to a successful vote of no confidence. Pietro Badoglio took over the government for a short period. Mussolini was placed under arrest.⁹ German troops continued to fight in Italy until their defeat and unconditional surrender in May 1945 (Collier 2003: 58, Casey et al. 2020: 11). As the Allies progressed through the peninsula, it became evident that Victor Emmanuel III's previous support of Mussolini had compromised him too greatly to continue in any significant capacity. Consequently, in April 1944, he delegated the majority of his powers to Crown Prince Umberto.¹⁰ According to LIED, no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period. Since 1928, based on Polity5's assessment, the executive operated with unlimited authority, facing no institutional checks on power. For the year 1944, 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 1945, 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 limited. Political liberties were still coded as absent per LIED. V-Dem's PCLI indicates

them as absent in 1943 and as not really present between 1944 and 1945.

05/02/1945 End Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Germany, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy]/Start Democratizing Regime: On this date, the German Army Group C surrendered, marking the collapse of the German forces on the Italian front. On 04/25/1945, which is celebrated as Liberation Day, a partisan uprising with support from Allied forces managed to oust the German occupation forces, one day later Mussolini was captured by partisan forces and killed.¹¹ Disestablishment of the German-backed Italian Social Republic, whereby the unity and independence of the Italian state was restored. Following World War II, Italy was governed under provisional laws established through agreements between the National Liberation Committee (CLN) and the royal Lieutenant General of the Realm, Umberto II of Italy.¹² The member parties of the CLN were the Italian Communist Party, the Italian Socialist Party, the Action Party, the Christian Democracy, the Labour Democratic Party, and the Italian Liberal Party.¹³ According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as showing that political liberties are not truly present. 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 comprehensive.

06/02/1946 End Democratizing Regime/Start Liberal Democracy: On this date, the first elections after World War II for a Constituent Assembly were held. The election did not take place in the Julian March and in South Tyrol, which were under military occupation by the United Nations. For the first time, Italian women were allowed to vote in a national election.¹⁴ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Since then, LIED categorizes elections as competitive. V-Dem's EF&FI and CEI score them as free, fair and clean. On 01/01/1948 the Constitution of the Italian Republic came into force, having already been ratified by the Constituent Assembly on 12/22/1947.¹⁵ From then on Italy's parliamentary system features competitive multiparty elections. Italy has a parliamentary system of government with a multi-party system and a bicameral parliament consisting of the Chamber of deputies and the Senate.¹⁶ The Christian Democratic party (DC) dominated the political landscape in the post-war years, but slowly lost support. In 1960, attempts were made by the DC to incorporate the right-wing and neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI) into the cabinet, leading to riots in the summer of 1960. Consequently, this incorporation did not come to pass and on 07/27/1960, Amintore Fanfani replaced Fernando Tambroni as Prime Minister.¹⁷ Between 03/01/1968 and 10/23/1988, during the "Years of Lead", right- and left-wing political terrorism disrupted the Republic.¹⁸ On 03/16/1978, a unit of the militant far-left Red Brigades (BR) kidnapped Italian politician and former Prime Minister Aldo Moro, killing his five bodyguards in the process. Extensive mobilization by the police and attempts toward a release of Moro made by Pope Paul VI remained without success. After the Italian government and authorities continuously refused to negotiate, the BR assassinated Moro after 55 days of capture.¹⁹ Following Moro's death, the so-called "historic compromise", a phase of mutual accommodation between the Christian Democracy (DC) party and the Communist Party (PCI) came to an end. Subsequently, the DC lost its dominant role in Italian politics, with Giovanni Spadolini from the Republican Party becoming Prime Minister from 06/28/1981 to 12/01/1982.²⁰ He was followed by Benedetto Craxi from 08/04/1983 to 04/18/1987. On 05/11/1994 Silvio Berlusconi took the Prime Minister office for the first time.²¹ Similar to the first democratic period from 1919 to 1922, the governmental composition since 1946 and the office of prime minister were characterized by numerous and frequent changes as well as coalitions containing relatively many parties, for example, in the year 2000, Giuliano Amato, who did not belong to a party, acted as prime minister in a coalition of nine parties (IND, DS, PPI, UDEUR, Greens, PCDI, RI, DEM, SDI). While this can be interpreted as compromise oriented, it also underscores the instability of governmental compositions. However, constitutional successions were upheld.²² On 06/11/2001, Berlusconi was once again elected Prime Minister and held the office for a full term until 05/17/2006, followed by center-left Romano Prodi who held the office until 05/08/2008.²³ The 2008 general election returned Berlusconi to the office of Prime Minister which he held until his resignation on 11/12/2011. The 2013 elections were once again followed by a number

of quickly changing governments, and the 2018 general elections resulted in no clear majority. Giuseppe Conte led a government coalition for 14 months, until one the League withdrew its support, and Conte allied with other parties to form a new cabinet.²⁴ Since an amendment to the constitution in 2021, all citizens aged 18 and older are entitled to vote for both chambers of the parliament. Previously, the voting age for the Senate was 25 (OSCE 2022). Between 02/13/2021 and 10/22/2022, following the resignation of Giuseppe Conte, Mario Draghi lead the Italian government at the behest of President Sergio Mattarella.²⁵ On 09/25/2022 snap elections were held. Giorgia Meloni became the first female prime minister of Italy and a right-wing coalition under her leadership formed the government. The snap elections were deemed free and fair. The political spectrum in Italy is characterized by diversity and competitiveness.²⁶ Civil liberties are generally respected, but there are endemic problems of corruption and organized crime which pose an enduring challenge to the rule of law as well as rising concerns about the rights of LGBT+ people and migrants.²⁷ Freedom of the press, freedom to assemble and religious freedom are constitutionally guaranteed. As per FH's classification for this regime period, the country is considered free with a score ranging from 2 to 4, which we also interpret as free in our framework. LIED scores the political liberties as present since 1957 and V-Dem's PCLI since 1948. Since 1948, based on Polity5's assessment, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. Until 1969, 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. Since 1970, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating comprehensive constraints on the executive. Incidents of corruption led to stricter laws in 2022, with which aspects of the judicial system should be reformed. Overall, the judiciary operates autonomously and independently.²⁸

Liberal Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional Sources (Gosewinkel/Masing/Würschinger 2006, Bach/Breuer 2010, Dunnage 2002, Hertner 1987, Petersen 1981, Salvemini 1973, Schieder 2008, Seton-Watson 1967, Stübler 1987, Trautmann 1997, Ullrich 2009, Wellhofer 2003, Zohlhöfer 2002)

Notes

- ¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Italy
- ² <https://www.britannica.com/place/Italy/The-Crispi-era-1887-1900>
- ³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor_Emmanuel_III_of_Italy
- ⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Italy?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- ⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biennio_Rosso
- ⁶ <http://www.chisols.org/narratives.html>, see narratives for version 5.0, Italy_R: 1, Italy_V: 1
- ⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/March_on_Rome
- ⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Fascist-Party>
- ⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fall_of_the_Fascist_regime_in_Italy
- ¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1946_Italian_institutional_referendum
- ¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italian_Social_Republic
- ¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1946_Italian_general_election
- ¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Liberation_Committee
- ¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1946_Italian_general_election
- ¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Italy
- ¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Italy
- ¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Italy#First_Republic:_1946%E2%80%931994
- ¹⁸ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Years_of_Lead_\(Italy\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Years_of_Lead_(Italy))
- ¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aldo_Moro
- ²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni_Spadolini

- ²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silvio_Berlusconi
- ²² <http://www.chisols.org/narratives.html>, see narratives for version 5.0, Italy_R, Italy_V.
- ²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romano_Prodi
- ²⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Italy#Republican_era_\(1946%E2%80%93present\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Italy#Republican_era_(1946%E2%80%93present))
- ²⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Draghi_government
- ²⁶ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/italy/freedom-world/2023>
- ²⁷ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/italy>
- ²⁸ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/italy/freedom-world/2023>

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