

Libya — Va-PoReg Country Report

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05/27/1835 Start Part of Other Country [of Ottoman Empire]: The region of Libya was ruled by the autonomous Karamanli dynasty from 1711 to 1835. On 05/27/1835 an Ottoman naval force landed on Tripolitan shores. Following this event, Sultan Mahmud II of the Ottoman Empire brought the region under his direct control.¹ After the collapse of the Karamanli dynasty,² Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and the Fezzan had formed the Ottoman province of Libya (Roberts 1986). LIED and V-Dem only start to provide data for Libya in 1911.

10/03/1911 End Part of Other Country [of Ottoman Empire, Autocratic Monarchy]/Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Italy, Constitutional Monarchy]: In 1911, Italy declared war on the Ottoman Empire and invaded Libya, occupying the five ports of Tripoli, Horns, Benghazi, Derna and Tobruk (Anderson 1986: 125, Roberts 1986). By November of 1911, Italy had declared Tripolitania and Cyrenaica to be annexed to Italy (Collins 1974). Under pressure from European powers, the Turks withdrew under the Treaty of Lausanne in October 1912, which granted Cyrenaica and Tripolitania ‘independence’ under Italian ‘sovereignty’ (Collins 1974, Roberts 1986). From 1912 to 1927, the territory of Libya was known as Italian North Africa. In 1917, Italy granted the Sanusiyya local autonomy. On 11/16/1918 the Tripolitanian Republic was established as „the first republican government created in the Arab world” (St. John 2011). The Tripolitanian republic accordingly reconstituted itself as a National Reform Party under Azzam (Roberts 1986). Tripolitans had the right to a parliament, Italian citizenship and other benefits (Collins 1974). Reopened negotiations with the Italians led to the Regima Agreement of October 1920, which gave Idris the hereditary title of Amir (Prince) and recognized him as the independent ruler of the oases of Giarabub, Augila-Gialo and Kufra (Collins 1974). Later, Italy asserted sovereignty over Cyrenaica, with governance of the province as a whole to be administered through the Cyrenaican parliament, which convened for the first time in 04/1921 (Roberts 1986). The governance system implemented by the Italians following their pacification of the country was tailored exclusively for Italian settlers, with little to no opportunity for Libyans to participate (Anderson 1986: 182-183). The Mussolini regime soon rejected the Liberal practice of collaboration with local Libyan elites in place since 1911 and most of Tripolitania was subdued by the end of 1924 (St. John 2011). Benghazi and Tripoli territories later merged into the single colony of Libya (St. John 2011). On 01/09/1939, the colony of Libya was incorporated into metropolitan Italy. Based on our observations, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Universal suffrage was not achieved before 1964. Both LIED and V-Dem’s PCLI classify political liberties as absent.

05/01/1943 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Italy, Right-Wing Autocracy]/Start Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]: By this date, Cyrenaica and Tripolitania came under British Military administration until 1949. Fezzan was occupied by Free French troops and France administered the Fezzan through a combination of French military authorities, the House of Sayf al-Nasra, a local ruling family, and Fezzanese officials until 1951 (St. John 2011). On 10/01/1946 the Sanusi Emir Sayyid Idris was recognized by the United Kingdom to administer the territory of Cyrenaica for the UN. He soon dissolved all political organizations in December 1947 in favor of a new united front which took the form of a National Congress (St. John 2011). LIED offers no information on this period, except for 1950, during which no multiparty executive or legislative elections were observed. Between 1942 and 1950 both LIED and

V-Dem do not provide data for Libya.

12/24/1951 End Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy and France, Liberal Democracy]/Start Autocratic Monarchy [as independent country]: On 12/24/1951, King Idris proclaimed the United Kingdom of Libya as a sovereign and independent state (Crawford 2006, St. John 2011). The United Kingdom of Libya was declared to be a hereditary monarchy and the constitution provided for a federal form of government (St. John 2011). Cyrenaica, Fezzan, and Tripolitania were described as provinces, not states, to emphasize national unity (St. John 2011). Idris I had been before the Emir of Cyrenaica, one of three regions grouped together to form Libya (Berry 1989). A year later, in 1952 male suffrage was introduced (LIED) and in 1963 female suffrage was introduced.³ Libya held its first general elections on 02/19/1952, electing members of the House of Representatives, the lower house of Parliament. However, elections in three Tripolitania constituencies were delayed until March due to rioters destroying electoral registers on election day.⁴ Subsequent elections were held on 01/07/1956, 01/17/1960, and 10/10/1964, with notable developments in each. In the 1960 elections, Prime Minister Abdul Majid Kabar and his ministers were re-elected, but Speaker Salim al-Qadi lost his seat.⁵ By 1964, constitutional changes introduced universal suffrage, expanding the number of representatives to 103. Following the 1952 elections, political parties were banned, forcing all candidates to run as independents. Despite opposition securing some parliamentary representation, King Idris dissolved the Assembly, triggering early elections.⁶ These were held on 05/08/1965 after the 1964 election results were annulled. Allegations of ballot tampering by police emerged as authorities sought to ensure the success of pro-government candidates.⁷ According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held until 1955, from 1956 onward only legislative elections, which weren't multiparty, were held. Besides, political liberties were coded as absent by LIED and can be interpreted as not really present according to V-Dem's PCLI. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. Therefore, we classify this period as an autocratic monarchy. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive.

09/01/1969 End Autocratic Monarchy/Start Military (Personalist) Autocracy: On this date, a military coup of a relatively small group of young Libyan Army officers led by Captain Muammar Gaddafi against King Idris I took place. Motivations were the concentration of oil wealth in royal hands combined with sentiments of Arab nationalism. After Idris I. had fled the country, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) headed by Gaddafi abolished the monarchy (Haddad 1973: 325-30, Anderson 1986: 260, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 75). Upon assuming power, the RCC government commenced redirecting funds towards universal education, healthcare, and housing. Public education was made free and primary education mandatory for both genders. Access to medical care was provided to the public without charge, although the task of ensuring housing for all remained incomplete under the RCC government.⁸ Based on our observations, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. As a non-electoral autocracy, the regime fulfils a necessary precondition of being coded as a personalist autocracy. However, it is a borderline case between a military (Personalist) autocracy and a personalist autocracy. Because there was a junta, and the regime rooted in a military coup it is coded as a military (personalist) autocracy. Based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive operated with unlimited authority, facing no institutional checks on power. As classified by FH for this regime period since 1972, the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. Furthermore, both LIED and V-Dem's PCLI indicate that political liberties were absent in this period. For the relevant regime period, 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 absent until 1976, moderate in 1977 and limited for the rest of the period.

10/20/2011 End Military (Personalist) Autocracy/Start No Central Authority: On 03/19/2011, a multi-state NATO-led coalition began a military intervention in Libya, to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 in response to events during the First Libyan Civil War. The fall of Sirte on 10/20/2011, the

last city under control of pro-Gaddafi units, followed by the killing of Gaddafi, marked the end of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. We code this regime change event as a liberation by foreign forces since the regime change was enforced by the NATO intervention. However, the liberating aspect of this classification is highly debatable because without any central authority, the regions were susceptible to authoritarian malfeasance. On 10/27/2011, the Security Council unanimously voted to end NATO's mandate for military action on 10/31/2011. A period with no effective central authority began.⁹ After the fall of Gaddafi, Libya's political landscape transformed into a complex terrain marked by horizontal and vertical modes of authoritarian governance. In Tripolitania, a form of authoritarianism that was populist in character emerged, allowing space for horizontal arrangements between rivals and some degree of political initiative by citizens and local leaders. This contrasted with the more vertical authoritarian model consolidated by Khalifa Haftar and his supporters in Cyrenaica, which tolerated minimal contestation.¹⁰ Libya held elections for a General National Congress (GNC) on 07/07/2012, after being rescheduled from the original date of 06/19. These were the first elections following the overthrow and death of longtime leader Muammar Gaddafi a year earlier, marking the country's first free national elections since 1952 and only the second since Libya's independence in 1951.¹¹ Libya held Constitutional Assembly elections on 02/20/2014, followed by parliamentary elections for the House of Representatives on 06/25/2014. Voter turnout was significantly low at just 18%, compared to 60% in the initial post-Gaddafi election of July 2012, with only 630,000 participants. In November, the Supreme Court invalidated the election after an appeal by a group of unidentified MPs, citing unclear reasons.¹² According to LIED no executive and legislative elections were held in 2011, in 2012 and 2013 multiparty executive and legislative elections were held, from 2014 to 2017 executive and legislative election, which weren't multiparty, were held and from 2018 onward no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. Per FH's evaluation for the period until 2013, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. From 2014 onward Libya scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. In addition to that, LIED continued to code political liberties as absent. V-Dem's PCLI increased into a range which we interpret as somewhat present until 2017 and to an ambiguous presence afterwards. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate until 2017 and limited between 2018-2021, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust.

03/10/2021 End No Central Authority/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: After nearly a decade of hostilities and civil war, a Ceasefire Agreement between the Government of National Accord (GNA) and the Libyan National Army of the General Command of the Armed Forces was signed on 10/23/2020. The subsequent formation in March 2021 of the Government of National Unity (Magnusson/Clark) established a provisional governmental structure while striking a delicate balance between regional powers in the country.¹³ In December 2021, the country's first presidential election was scheduled, but was indefinitely postponed after the head of the High National Election Commission (HNEC) ordered the dissolution of the electoral committees nationwide.¹⁴ LIED offers no information on this period, except for 2021, during which no multiparty executive or legislative elections took place. According to FH's classification for the assessed regime period, a score between 11 and 14 makes the country not free, which we also place in the not free category. Since 2021 political liberties are coded as absent by LIED and can be interpreted as ambiguous per 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 limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate.

Non-Electoral Transitional Regime as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional Sources (Mattes 1999, Metz 1987, Vandewalle 1998, Vandewalle 2008, Vandewalle 2012)

- ¹ <https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/qaramanli-dynasty>
- ² <https://www.britannica.com/place/Libya/History>
- ³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage
- ⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1952_Libyan_general_election
- ⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1960_Libyan_general_election
- ⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1964_Libyan_general_election
- ⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1965_Libyan_general_election
- ⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Libya_under_Muammar_Gaddafi
- ⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_military_intervention_in_Libya
- ¹⁰ <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/libyas-recurring-government-splits-and-international-recognition-dilemmas/>
- ¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2012_Libyan_parliamentary_election
- ¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_Libyan_Constitutional_Assembly_election ;
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_Libyan_parliamentary_election
- ¹³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/libya/libya-humanitarian-needs-overview-2022-december-2021-enar>
- ¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Next_Libyan_presidential_election; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libya#Post-civil_war_years

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