



Lithuania — Va-PoReg Country Report

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

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

10/24/1795 Start Part of Other Country [of Russia]: In the 18th century, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth underwent a decline in its political power, which resulted in foreign intervention following attempts at reform. The state's decline culminated in three partitions, causing it to cease to exist. During the first two partitions in 1772 and 1793, only lands inhabited by East Slavs were lost by Lithuania. However, the third partition on 10/24/1795 resulted in a division of the land inhabited by ethnic Lithuanians, with the majority of it being annexed by Russia.¹

09/08/1915 End Part of Other Country [of Russia, Constitutional Monarchy]/Start Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Germany, Constitutional Monarchy]: In April 1915, Germany launched a military offensive against Russian troops in Lithuania and captured Vilnius on 09/08/1915.² The German administration aimed to create a Lithuanian state that would be subservient to Germany.³ Between 1900 and 1917 LIED and V-Dem do not provide data for Lithuania.

02/16/1918 End Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Germany, Constitutional Monarchy]/Start Democratizing Regime: On this date, the Taryba declared Lithuanian independence, but the country remained under German occupation. After the armistice of 11/11/1918, the German army began to withdraw, and Lithuania faced a new threat from a Soviet invasion from the east. The Red Army occupied Vilnius on 01/05/1919 and established a communist Lithuanian government. The national government was forced to evacuate to Kaunas. However, by mid-1919, the situation changed, and the Russians were effectively pushed back to the east.⁴ Based on our observations, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Besides, political liberties are coded as absent following LIED and can be interpreted as somewhat present by V-Dem's PCLI. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive was subordinate to or held equal power with other institutions, indicating executive parity or subordination. For the relevant period, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are robust.

04/14[&16]/1920 End Democratizing Regime/Start Electoral Democracy: Free and fair elections for the Constituent Assembly were held on this date.⁵ Universal suffrage was introduced in 1922.⁶ Although technically, with the constitution of 1922, the electoral regime was parliamentary, the legislative processes were seriously hindered by lack of coalition stability. Prime ministers frequently changed and foreign policy was effectively made by the president. During this regime period, the president and most of the prime ministers came from the party of Christian Democrats (LKDP), which suggests a dominant influence of the LKDP.⁷ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. During this time LIED classifies the elections as competitive. V-Dem's CEI scores somewhat cleanliness outcomes since 1921. Moreover, V-Dem's EF&FI underlines free and fair election conditions. However, due to ongoing foreign pressure on Lithuania political and civil rights were considerably restricted due to a state of emergency. Therefore, LIED's outcome underlined an absence of political liberties. However, according to V-Dem's PCLI they were somewhat present. According to our observations this is overly optimistic. Furthermore, a power struggle between the newly established political institutions delayed and hindered the development of a stable democratic system

with clear institutional responsibilities and effective checks.⁸ According to Polity5, during this period, the executive was subordinate to or held equal power with other institutions, indicating executive parity or subordination. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were comprehensive, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust.

12/17/1926 End Electoral Democracy/Start One-Party (Personalist) Autocracy: A military coup overthrew the government of prime minister Mykolas Sleževičius and placed Antanas Smetona in office.⁹ The official rationale given by the military was that their actions had prevented an imminent Bolshevik coup.¹⁰ Smetona dissolved the Seimas in 04/1927, leading to the resignation of the Christian Democrats from the government in May. Subsequent parliamentary elections were postponed until 1936, with the Lithuanian Nationalist Union maintaining its exclusive presence in the government.¹¹ Smetona banned all parties other than his own, the Lithuanian Nationalist Union (LTS), and declared martial law. There was a strong personality cult around Smetona, who was titled the „Father of the Nation”, hence the subtype classification as personalist.¹² In the whole period the regime was a de facto one-party autocracy with a strong personalist component. Based on our observations, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held from 1927 to 1935, which aligns with the observations of LIED. According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held in 1926, from 1927 to 1935 no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held and from 1936 onward executive and legislative elections, which weren't multiparty, were held. Furthermore, political liberties were still coded as absent according to LIED. V-Dem's PCLI decreased into a range which we interpret as not really present. From 1928 to 1940, based on Polity5's assessment, the executive operated with unlimited authority, facing no institutional checks on power. 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 moderate from 1927-1929, absent from 1931-1935 and no value for the rest of the period as no parliament existed, and thus no legislative constraints on the executive possible.

06/15/1940 End One-Party Autocracy/Start Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by USSR, Communist Ideocracy]: Following the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in August 1939, Lithuania was occupied by the USSR after it was coerced into signing a treaty in October 1939. On this date the Soviet Red Army ousted the Smetona government and established a client regime (Vardys/Slaven 1996: 180-81, Casey et al. 2020: 11). On 07/14&15 parliamentary elections were held for the so-called People's Seimas. The elections were manipulated, permitting only communist candidates to participate.¹³ The new parliament was convened on 07/21 and voted unanimously to establish the Lithuanian SSR and request to join the Soviet Union.

08/04/1940 End Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by USSR, Communist Ideocracy]/Start Part of Other Country [of USSR, Communist Ideocracy]: On this date, the USSR formally annexed Lithuania. The USA and most other countries refused to recognize the Soviet annexation of Lithuania. However, in the short period between 08/04/1940 and 06/24/1941 the borderline between occupation and forced annexation was blurred. Lithuania within the Soviet Union represents a contested borderline case, as it functioned de facto as a constituent Soviet Socialist Republic within the USSR federal structure and was governed through Soviet institutions. However, many Western states never recognized Soviet annexation as legitimate, maintaining diplomatic recognition of Baltic governments-in-exile and treating the territories as occupied rather than legitimately integrated. Va-PoReg's de facto classification principle prioritizes actual governance structures, leading to Part of Other Country classification based on factual integration into Soviet administration, with the contested nature and subsequent independence restoration (1990-1991) warranting this borderline designation.

06/24/1941 End Part of Other Country [of USSR, Communist Ideocracy]/Start Direct Rule Occupation Regime [Germany, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy]: On this day, the German troops captured Vilnius, after having invaded the Soviet Union under Operation Barbarossa on 06/22/1941, effectively halting the Soviet process of forced annexation. German troops controlled the entire Lithuanian territory within a week. Lithuania was incorporated into the Reichskommissariat Ostland as the Generalbezirk Litauen. Local

administrative offices were controlled by Germans and staffed with Lithuanians.¹⁴ Beginning on the 06/25&26/1941, German troops and Lithuanian collaborators carried out pogroms against and executions of Lithuanian Jews.¹⁵ Resistance against the German occupation was mainly driven by Polish and Soviet partisans, as well as Jewish partisans. Attempts by the Germans to raise a Waffen-SS division from the Lithuanian population in 1943 was derailed through an organized and widespread boycott.¹⁶

07/13/1944 End Direct Rule Occupation Regime [Germany, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy]/Start Part of Other Country [of USSR, Communist Ideocracy]: The USSR regained control over Lithuania with the Battle of Memel. Starting from the situation before the occupation by Germany, the annexation of Lithuania into the USSR was pushed forward.¹⁷ This included first and foremost the supervision of the Communist Party in Lithuania through Moscow-appointed officials. Lithuanians were denied possessing property beyond personal belongings after the Soviet recapture, followed by collectivization of land in 1947. To integrate Lithuania into the economic system of the USSR, power plants and factories were established. This was followed by urbanization and the relocation of residents from rural areas in Lithuania, as well as from other USSR member republics. Similarly to Estonia and Latvia, armed resistance against the Soviets was primarily carried out by partisan fighters called the „Forest Brothers,” roughly between 07/01/1944 until 05/1953. Under Operation Vesna, from 03/22/ to 03/24/1949, and Operation Priboi, from 03/25 to 03/28/1949, tens of thousands of Lithuanians were deported in order to break the resistance. Due to a comparatively slow pace in progressing with collectivization, additional thousands of Lithuanians were deported under Operation Osen between 09/20/1951 and 11/30/1951.¹⁸ Independent of the guerrilla resistance, underground dissident groups continued to foster and celebrate the Lithuanian national culture. The Catholic church took part in this and actively opposed the Soviet regime. On 08/23/1987, the Molotov-Ribbentrop was publicly condemned at an unsanctioned meeting organized by the Lithuanian Liberty League. The Lithuanian Reformation Movement was founded on 06/03/1989 with the mission of restoring statehood to Lithuania. Together with Latvia and Estonia, Lithuania participated in the Baltic Way event on 08/23/1989, declaring its intentions to break away from the USSR.¹⁹ On 05/18/1989 the Lithuanian SSR declared itself to be a sovereign state, though still part of the USSR.²⁰ LIED and V-Dem do not provide data for Lithuania between 1940 and 1991.

03/10/1990 End Part of Other Country [of USSR, Communist Ideocracy]/Start Electoral Democracy: On this date the second round of the elections to the Supreme Soviet ended. It resulted in a triumph for the independence movement (Sajudis) and the declaration of independence. Following a short-lived attempt to overthrow the government in January 1991, the USSR officially acknowledged Lithuania as an independent republic on 09/06/1991 (Haggard/Kaufman/Teo 2016: 39).²¹ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. In 1991 no competitiveness was achieved according to LIED. However, according to V-Dem's CEI and EF&FI elections were clean, free and fair. As per FH's classification for this regime period, the country receives a score of 5 as free, which we categorize as rather free. While LIED views political liberties as absent (LIED), V-Dem's PCLI declares that they were achieved since 1991. Since 1991, according to Polity5, during this period, the executive was subordinate to or held equal power with other institutions, indicating executive parity or subordination. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating comprehensive constraints on the executive. On the one hand because of problems with the democratic process in the transitional period and on the other hand because of the partly violent interference of the USSR we code this period as an electoral democracy.

10/25/1992 End Electoral Democracy/Start Liberal Democracy: On this date, the first multi-party parliamentary elections after independence and a constitutional referendum were held. The Democratic Labour Party of Lithuania (LDDP) won the elections in the second round of the parliamentary elections on 11/15/1992.²² Lithuania has a semi-presidential system of government with a unicameral parliament.²³ The political landscape is characterized by freely operating, competing parties. Universal suffrage applies to Lithuanian citizens aged 18 and older.²⁴ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED affirms that

competitive elections were present. Since 1992 the elections are classified as clean by V-Dem's CEI. Moreover, electoral freedom and fairness was achieved until 2019. Since 2020 V-Dem's EF&FI considers the overall election conditions as somewhat free and fair. Political rights and civil liberties are typically upheld. 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. Both LIED and V-Dem's PCLI affirm that political liberties were constantly present since 1994. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive was subordinate to or held equal power with other institutions, indicating executive parity or subordination. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating comprehensive constraints on the executive. Persistent issues such as corruption and socioeconomic disparities often prompt public discontent with the government, political factions, and other establishments. Women, LGBT+ individuals, members of the Romany minority, and certain other demographics encounter different levels of discrimination and inadequate representation in the political sphere.²⁵ Parliamentary elections occurred on 10/11/2020 and 10/25/2020, described by observers as free and fair. The TS-LKD secured 50 seats, while the incumbent centrist-populist Farmers and Greens Union (LVŽS) won 32. Two socially liberal and pro-business parties, the Liberal Movement and the Freedom Party, secured 13 and 11 seats, respectively. They subsequently formed a coalition government with the TS-LKD in November of that year.²⁶ The parliamentary election on 10/13/2024 and 10/27/2024 resulted in a major victory for the opposition Social Democratic Party (LSDP), which secured 52 seats while the ruling Homeland Union suffered heavy losses. Following the fragmented result, the LSDP formed a government with the Union of Democrats and the new nationalist party Dawn of Nemunas (PPNA). The inclusion of the controversial PPNA in the governing coalition immediately prompted swift domestic and international backlash.²⁷ PPNA's leader Remigijus Žemaitaitis was found by Lithuania's Constitutional Court to have violated the Constitution through antisemitic statements and faces criminal investigation for inciting hatred. Despite this, Lithuania remains a liberal democracy because institutional checks function effectively: President Nausėda blocked PPNA members from key ministries, the Constitutional Court maintained independence. Political controversy over coalition partners does not constitute regime degradation when institutions successfully constrain extremist actors and civil liberties remain protected.

Liberal Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional Sources (Eidintas/Žalys/Senn 1998, Jurgėla 1948, Krickus 1997, Krivickas 1970, Laučka 1986, Rogainis 1971)

Notes

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Lithuania/History>

² <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/home/research-projects/dadm-project/europerussiacentral-asia-region/russialithuania-1905-1920/>

³ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Lithuania/Russian-rule>

⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Lithuania/Russian-rule>

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1920_Lithuanian_parliamentary_election

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37

⁷ <http://www.chisols.org/narratives.html>, see narratives for version 5.0, Lithuania_R: 1, Lithuania_V: 1.

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1926_Lithuanian_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat#Background;
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Lithuania#Democratic_period

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1926_Lithuanian_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat;
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antanas_Smetona#Authoritarian_president

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1926_Lithuanian_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat

¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lithuanian_Nationalist_Union

¹² <http://www.chisols.org/narratives.html>, see narratives for version 5.0, Lithuania_R: 1-2, Lithuania_V: 1-2.

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1940_Lithuanian_parliamentary_election

- ¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_occupation_of_Lithuania_during_World_War_II#German_occupation
- ¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holocaust_in_Lithuania
- ¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_occupation_of_Lithuania_during_World_War_II#German_occupation
- ¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Memel
- ¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_deportations_from_Lithuania
- ¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lithuanian_Soviet_Socialist_Republic
- ²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lithuanian_Soviet_Socialist_Republic
- ²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1990_Lithuanian_Supreme_Soviet_election
- ²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1992_Lithuanian_parliamentary_election
- ²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Lithuania
- ²⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/EqualParticipation/contributions/Lithuania.pdf>
- ²⁵ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/lithuania/freedom-world/2022>
- ²⁶ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/lithuania/freedom-world/2023>
- ²⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_Lithuanian_parliamentary_election#

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