



Oman — Va-PoReg Country Report

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12/31/1741 Start Autocratic Monarchy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under United Kingdom, Electoral Oligarchy]: Oman became sovereign on 01/26/1650. The start of the Al Said dynasty is dated to 12/31/1741. With the previous dynasty weakened by civil war over the succession and poor leadership, in 1741 Ahmed bin Said al Busaidi, governor of Sohar on the coast of what is now of Oman, led the city's defense against a Persian invasion. Although he did not become the formal leader of Oman until 1744 (probably-date of formal election is disputed) when he was named imam, Ahmed bin Said seems to have been the most powerful leader during a very chaotic time. The Al Said have remained in power as traditional sultans since then (Smyth 1994, Plekhanov 2004: 50-53). The information on whether Oman became an official protectorate of the United Kingdom are contested. However, it seems that Oman kept its legal independence, whereas Zanzibar became a British Protectorate after its separation from Oman.¹ Oman and Great Britain were bound by a series of treaties, economically and politically. Moreover, the British aided the Sultanate on many occasions. Therefore, Oman is coded as an informal protectorate, as it was so tightly tied to the Empire.² Oman is a hereditary monarchy where authority is centralized with the sultan, resulting in significant limitations on political rights and civil liberties. In accordance with LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. For that period, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is also classified by us as indicating that political liberties were absent. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive held unlimited authority with no institutionalized constraints on decision-making power. For the relevant period, 1900-1951 V-Dem's JCE is classified as absent, indicating no judicial oversight of the executive. Concurrently, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which can be cautiously interpreted as indicating an absence of legislative constraints on the executive.

12/23/1951 Continuation Autocratic Monarchy [as independent country]: The legal framework established under the guise of a British protectorate started to erode in 1939 when the 1891 treaty underwent renegotiation. This process accelerated, particularly in 1951, with the signing of the contemporary Anglo-Omani treaty, allowing Oman to reclaim formal control over its foreign relations. The complete dissolution occurred between 1958 - when the mutual termination of the territorial non-alienation declaration of 1891 took place - and 1967, marking the expiration of Britain's extraterritorial rights in Oman.³ On 07/23/1970 Qabas bin Said, the king's son suffered greatly under his father's paranoid rule and eventually overthrew him, taking the throne for himself.⁴ In 1994, women were granted the right to vote, although this right was limited until 2002. Universal suffrage has been unrestricted for all citizens since 2002.⁵ While, technically, elections take place in Oman, this is only to elect a consultative assembly with no power. Hence, Oman is still classified as an autocratic monarchy. The regime imposes criminal consequences for any form of criticism and dissent. After the death of bin Said in 2020, his cousin Haitham bin Tariq became the new monarch. Sultan Haitham distributed some of the duties that his predecessor previously kept for himself among his cabinet ministers. This included the appointment of a foreign minister, while Haitham retained his position as prime minister. In 2021, a new basic law was issued, establishing the role of crown prince. The title was bestowed upon Sultan Haitham's eldest son, Dhi Yazan bin Haitham. In 1996, a bicameral body was established consisting of an appointed Council of State and the entirely elected Consultative Council. The citizens elect members to the Consultative Council for four-year terms. However, this chamber lacks

legislative authority and is limited to suggesting modifications to proposed legislation. The electoral system permits all citizens aged 21 and above to vote, except those in the military or security forces. Nonetheless, the framework applies only to the Consultative Council and municipal councils, which serve largely as advisory bodies. The sultan holds a monopoly on political power, and the constitutional system is structured in a way that prevents any change in government through elections. Political parties are prohibited, and authorities show no tolerance for any form of organized political opposition. About 46 percent of the population comprises non-citizens, who have no political rights or electoral opportunities. While Omani women are legally permitted to vote and run for office, they face few practical opportunities to autonomously organize and further their interests within the political system. The judiciary is not independent and remains under the authority of the sultan, who has the power to appoint and dismiss senior judges. Legal restrictions on freedom of expression, including a ban on criticizing the sultan, constrain the media.⁶ According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held until 1993. From 1994 onward legislative elections were held, but they were not categorized as multiparty. No executive elections were present. Until 1990, according to Polity5, during this period, the executive held unlimited authority with no institutionalized constraints on decision-making power. Since 1991, the executive experienced minimal limitations on decision-making, placing it in the first intermediate category. From 1952 to 1976, V-Dem's JCE is classified as absent, indicating no judicial oversight of the executive. Concurrently, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which can be cautiously interpreted as indicating an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. For 1977 and 1978, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are limited. At the same time, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. For 1979 to 1991, 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. From 1992 to 1999, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. From 2000 to 2010, 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. From 2011 onward, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited. For that period, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is likewise classified by us as showing that political liberties are absent. Per FH, for this regime period, the country scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free.

Autocratic Monarchy as of 01/07/2024 continued.

Additional Sources (Alhaj 2001, Metz 1993, Richter 2014)

Notes

¹ <https://www.qdl.qa/en/close-relationship-britain-and-oman-1750>

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

³ <https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/anglo-omani-treaties>

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1970_Omani_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat

⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oman#:~:text=Oman%2C%20officially%20the%20Sultanate%20of,borders%20with%20Iran%20and%20Pakistan.>

⁶ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/oman/freedom-world/2023>

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