



Palau — Va-PoReg Country Report

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02/12/1899 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Germany]: On 02/12/1899 Palau became a part of German New Guinea (see under Papua New Guinea) through the German-Spanish Treaty of 1899.¹ No data was provided by LIED for the specified period.

08/15/1914 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Germany, Constitutional Monarchy]/Start Part of Other Country [of Japan, Autocratic Monarchy]: The Japanese Empire took control of the islands from Germany during World War I and annexed them.²

06/28/1919 End Part of Other Country [of Japan, Autocratic Monarchy]/Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Japan, Autocratic Monarchy]: On this date, the Treaty of Versailles was signed and the League of Nations assigned the islands to Japanese administration under the South Seas Mandate after World War I.³ During World War II, Japan utilized Palau to aid its successful invasion of the Philippines in 1942.⁴

11/27/1944 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Japan, Constitutional Monarchy]/Start Direct Rule Occupation Regime [of USA, Electoral Democracy]: In 1944, the United States took control of Palau from Japan after the Battle of Peleliu, which resulted in significant casualties on both sides. Following the war, from 1945 until 1946, the United States regained control of the Philippines and administered Palau from the Philippine capital of Manila.⁵ LIED does not include data on Palau prior to 1947.

07/18/1947 End Direct Rule Occupation Regime [of USA, Electoral Democracy]/Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of USA, Electoral Democracy]: In 1947, Palau was transferred to the United States as part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, which was established under the authority of United Nations Security Council Resolution 21.⁶ According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. LIED identifies political liberties as absent for that period.

09/28/1964 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of USA, Electoral Democracy]/Start Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of USA, Electoral Democracy]: On this day, the Congress of Micronesia, as the legislature of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, was created and was composed of a Senate and a House of Representatives with 21 members. Palau had two members in the senate and three members in the House of Representatives.⁷ On 01/19/1965 the first Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands parliamentary elections were held.⁸ Universal suffrage was introduced in 1979.⁹ In 1979, four of the Trust Territory districts came together to form the Federated States of Micronesia, but Palau and the Marshall Islands voted against it. Instead, Palau opted for independent status in 1978, which was supported by several countries, including the Philippines, Taiwan, and Japan. In line with the Encyclopedia Britannica, we find that Palau with the other trust territories „was administered as a de facto American colony”.¹⁰ On 11/04/1980 general elections were held to elect a President, Vice-President, Senate and House of Delegates. However, according to LIED multiparty executive and legislative elections were absent until 1978. From 1978 onward, only multiparty legislative elections were held. Executive elections were absent as well as universal suffrage. LIED identifies political liberties as absent until 1978 and as present from 1979 onwards.

01/01/1981 End Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of USA, Liberal Democracy]/Start Liberal Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under USA, Liberal Democracy]: Palau established a new constitution and became the Republic of Palau on this date. In 1982 Palau signed a Compact of Free Association with the

United States and ratified it in 1993 after eight referendums and a constitutional amendment.¹¹

10/01/1994 Continuation Liberal Democracy [as independent country]: On this date the Compact of Free Association became effective, officially granting Palau independence, although it had been de facto independent since 05/25/1994 when the trusteeship ended. Palau was one of the founding members of the Nauru Agreement in the same year.¹² The judiciary operates independently, and regular competitive elections resulted in multiple peaceful changes in government.¹³ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. 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. Since its independence the elections are classified as competitive, following LIED and political liberties were achieved (LIED). Palau is not treated by V-Dem's data.

Liberal Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional Sources (Shuster 2001)

Notes

¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German%E2%80%93Spanish_Treaty_\(1899\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German%E2%80%93Spanish_Treaty_(1899))

² <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palau>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Seas_Mandate; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Versailles

⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palau#History>

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Peleliu

⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palau#History>; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trust_Territory_of_the_Pacific_Islands

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congress_of_the_Trust_Territory_of_the_Pacific_Islands

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1965_Trust_Territory_of_the_Pacific_Islands_parliamentary_election

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage

¹⁰ <https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/trust-territory-pacific>

¹¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palau#History>

¹² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palau#History>

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_Palau; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Palau#Elections

References

Shuster, Donald R. (2001): Palau, in: Grotz, Florian, Nohlen, Dieter & Hartmann, Christof (Hrsg.), Elections in Asia and the Pacific: A Data Handbook. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 741–762.