



Papua New Guinea — Va-PoReg Country Report

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11/06/1884 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [partially of United Kingdom, partially of Germany]: The island of New Guinea was divided into two separate colonial territories between British (and later Australian) and German authorities. On 11/06/1884, a British Protectorate was proclaimed over the southern portion of the eastern half of New Guinea and in 1888 the territory was annexed. When German forces claimed control over the north-east corner of the island (New Guinea) in 1884, Australia claimed the south-east corner (Papua) (Suter 1981). On 09/01/1906, British New Guinea was placed under Australian control and the Governor-General of Australia declared that it was to be known henceforth as the Territory of Papua.¹ For the relevant period, V-Dem's JCE is classified as limited, indicating weak judicial oversight. Concurrently, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which can be cautiously interpreted as indicating an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. LIED classifies multiparty executive and legislative elections, as well as universal suffrage, as absent. According to LIED political liberties were absent. V-Dem's PCLI classifies political liberties as not really present for this period.

09/17/1914 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Electoral Oligarchy, and Germany, Constitutional Monarchy]/Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Australia, (Monarchical) Electoral Democracy]: On this date, during the First World War, British Imperial Forces occupied German New Guinea and placed it under Australian administration. On 11/21/1914 German forces in the colony surrendered. In 1920, German New Guinea became an Australian territory after Australia was awarded a mandate to administer the area (Nelson 1996).² In this timeframe, 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. According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. Political liberties were absent according to LIED and not really present according to V-Dem's PCLI.

12/17/1920 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Australia, (Monarchical) Electoral Democracy]/Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom,]: Under the Treaty of Versailles, German New Guinea was ceded to Australia as League of Nations Mandate. The British Government, on behalf of Australia, governed the League of Nations Mandate from 12/17/1920.³ For the relevant period, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are absent. Simultaneously, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. Political liberties were absent according to LIED and not really present according to V-Dem's PCLI.

05/19/1921 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Electoral Democracy]/Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Australia, Electoral Democracy]: On this date, the League of Nations Mandate was transferred from United Kingdom to Australia through the New Guinea Act.⁴ For the relevant period, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are absent. Simultaneously, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. Political liberties were absent according to LIED and not really present according to V-Dem's PCLI.

01/23/1942 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Australia, Electoral Democracy]/Start No Central Authority: On this day, the Empire of Japan invaded the Territory of New Guinea, followed by the Territory of Papua on 07/21/1942.⁵ Despite the construction of a formidable fortress by the Japanese at Rabaul and their occupation of certain areas, the majority of Papua and New Guinea remained under Allied control (Iwamoto 1997:305). In January 1942, the east of New Guinea became the Australian Territories of Papua and New Guinea under separate administrations. However, in February 1942, when military administrations replaced civil administrations, two distinct military units were established: the Papuan Administrative Unit and the New Guinea Administrative Unit. Later, these units merged in March-April 1942 to form the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU) (Nelson 1996). Due to the constant warfare in the context of the Second World War and the accompanying shifts in control over territory, the period is categorized as No Central Authority. For the relevant period, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are absent. Simultaneously, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. According to our observations and LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. LIED identifies political liberties as absent, whereas V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as showing that political liberties are not truly present in this timeframe.

08/15/1945 End No Central Authority/Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Australia, (Monarchical) Electoral Democracy as International Mandate,]: On this date, Japanese forces surrendered, and eastern New Guinea gradually returned to provisional civil administrations. The Provisional Administration of the Territory of Papua-New Guinea continued until the Papua and New Guinea Act was enacted on 07/01/1949 (Nelson 1996). The Act merged their administrations, forming Papua and New Guinea, formally approved placing New Guinea under the international trusteeship system, and provided for a Legislative Council, established in 1951.⁶ From 1946 to 1950, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are robust. 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. According to our observations and 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 categorized by us as ambiguous regarding the state of political liberties, indicating an intermediate state between present and absent.

11/10/1951 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Australia, (Monarchical) Electoral Democracy as International Mandate]/Start Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of Australia, (Monarchical) Electoral Democracy as International Mandate]: On this day, the first general elections were held in Papua and New Guinea, electing three members from three single-member constituencies to the legislative council, comprised of the administrator, 16 civil servants, nine members appointed by the Administrator, and three elected Europeans. Voting was limited to residents over 21 who had resided in the territory for the last 12 months and were not classified as native or alien. The Chinese community and Europeans also had voting rights. Candidates had to reside continuously in the territory for three years before their nomination and could not be public employees.⁷ Women were granted the right to stand for national elections in 1963 and the universal right to vote on 02/15/1964.⁸ On 06/08/1964, the House of Assembly of Papua and New Guinea replaced the Legislative Council following elections held on 02/15/1964. The territory's name was changed to Papua New Guinea in 1972.⁹ From 1951 to 1972, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive. According to LIED, only multiparty legislative elections were held during this period. No executive elections were present. In this timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as ambiguous until 1959 and as somewhat present afterwards regarding the status of political liberties.

12/01/1973 End Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [as International Mandate, Australia, Liberal Democracy]/Start Electoral Democracy [as self-governing state]: Papua New Guinea continued to be under an Australian Trusteeship by a UN mandate, however, Australia granted the country on this date self-government. Before of that general elections were held in the territory of Papua and New Guinea between

02/19/1972 and 03/11/1972. Before the elections, the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18.¹⁰ For 1973 and 1974, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. The two years before independence, LIED classifies the elections as not competitive. Since 1973 V-Dem's CEI considers ambiguous cleanliness scores. In addition, V-Dem's EF&FI states the elections as somewhat free and fair. Besides, political liberties were still absent according to LIED. In contrast to that V-Dem's PCLI declares full political liberties.

09/16/1975 Continuation (Monarchical) Electoral Democracy [as independent country]: On this date, Papua New Guinea became a fully independent state (Turner 2008) and joined the Commonwealth with the British Crown as ceremonial head of state. Frequent government changes have marked Papua New Guinea's national politics. The 1977 elections saw Michael Somare become prime minister, but he lost a vote of no confidence in 1980 and was replaced by Sir Julius Chan. Somare regained power after the 1982 elections but lost another vote of no confidence in 1985, and Paias Wingti became prime minister. A coalition led by Wingti won the elections in 1987 but was removed by a vote of no confidence in 1988, and Rabbie Namaliu became prime minister. Consequently, legislation that grants immunity from no-confidence votes for the first 18 months of a new government's term has been introduced.¹¹ On 12/01/1988, the secessionist Bougainville conflict began between Papua New Guinea's government and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA).¹² A truce was reached on 10/10/1997, followed by a permanent ceasefire on 04/30/1998. A peace agreement was signed on 08/30/2001, establishing the Bougainville Autonomous District and Province (PA-X Database). Bougainville voted overwhelmingly for independence in a non-binding referendum held from 11/23/2019 to 12/07/2019. An agreement in July 2021 stated that Bougainville would gain independence by 2027 if Papua New Guinea's parliament ratified it.¹³ Papua New Guinea operates as a democracy with regular elections; however, these polls have frequently encountered issues such as irregularities and violence. Party allegiances tend to be unstable, and since gaining independence in 1975, only two governments have successfully completed a full term.¹⁴ General elections were held in Papua New Guinea between 06/24 and 07/08/2017. The 2017 elections in Papua New Guinea were marred by significant flaws, including reports of bribery and voter fraud. Election-related violence, particularly in the Highlands Region, resulted in dozens of deaths and extensive property damage.¹⁵ There are serious irregularities reported during voter registration and ballot counting, with strong indications that the 2017 election experienced systematic manipulation of the electoral roll in certain constituencies.¹⁶ General elections were held in Papua New Guinea from 07/04/2022 to 07/22/2022 to elect the members of the parliament for a new five-year term. However, there were accusations of electoral fraud.¹⁷ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Ever since the country's independence the elections score constant competitiveness (LIED). According to V-Dem's CEI, cleanliness was ambiguous until 2003. Since 2004, no real cleanliness is achieved. In addition, the overall election conditions were somewhat free and fair until 2006. Since 2007 V-Dem's EF&FI underlines ambiguous election conditions. According to FH, in 1975, the country is rated as free with a score of 5, which we interpret as rather free in our framework. As per FH's classification from 1976 to 1987, the country is considered free with a score ranging from 2 to 4, which we also interpret as free in our framework. Per FH's scoring for 1988, the country is classified as free with a score of 5, which falls into our interpretation of the rather free category. According to FH, in 1989, the country is categorized as free with a score between 2 and 4, which corresponds to our interpretation of free. As per FH's classification from 1990 to 1992, the country receives a score of 5 as free, which we categorize as rather free. Per FH, from 1993 to 1997, the country scores between 6 and 7, categorized as partly free, which we interpret as rather free. Per FH's scoring from 1998 to 2002, the country is classified as free with a score of 5, which falls into our interpretation of the rather free category. According to FH, a score of 6 to 7 from 2003 onward designates the country as partly free, which aligns with our interpretation of rather free. However, both LIED and V-Dem's PCLI acknowledge the constant presence of full political liberties ever since 1978. Between 1975 and 2011, based on Polity5's assessment, the executive encountered substantial institutional limitations

on power. Since 2012, the executive's constraints fell into Intermediate Category 3, between substantial limitations and executive parity or subordination. From 1975 to 2011, 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. For 2012-2017 and in 2019, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive. In 2018 and from 2020 onward, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were comprehensive, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. After 2017 the regime is a borderline case between a Electoral Democracy and an electoral hybrid regime.

(Monarchical) Electoral Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Papua_Act_1905

² <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/atwar/first-world-war>

<https://www.loc.gov/item/2021668665/#:~:text=When%20World%20War%20I%20broke,the%20territory%20of%20New%20Guinea.>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territory_of_New_Guinea

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territory_of_New_Guinea

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

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Papua_New_Guinea

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1951_Papua_New_Guinean_general_election

⁸ https://data.ipu.org/node/131/elections/historical-data-on-women?chamber_id=13487

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Papua_New_Guinea

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1972_Papua_New_Guinean_general_election

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

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bougainville_conflict

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019_Bougainvillean_independence_referendum

¹⁴ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/papua-new-guinea/freedom-world/2021>

¹⁵ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/papua-new-guinea/freedom-world/2022>

¹⁶ <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/PNG#pos4>

¹⁷ <https://learnrgerman.dw.com/en/electoral-fraud-claims-disrupt-papua-new-guinea-elections/a-39510652>

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