



Portugal — Va-PoReg Country Report

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12/01/1640 Start Constitutional Monarchy: Portugal has been a ruling monarchy since 10/05/1143 when it formed as a country. From 1821 onwards, it was a constitutional monarchy.¹ The House of Braganza began its reign over Portugal on 12/01/1640, when John IV was proclaimed King of Portugal. The discontent Portuguese nobility, tired of the policies and taxation under the Spanish Habsburgs, rallied behind John, who had a claim to the throne through his ancestry. This day is known as Restoration of Independence Day in Portugal, marking the end of 60 years of the Iberian Union under Spanish rule. The last dynastic regime in Portugal before 07/01/1900, was the House of Braganza-Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. The exact start date for this lineage within the House of Braganza was 09/16/1837, with the accession of Queen Maria II and King Ferdinand II as king consort after the period of civil wars known as the Liberal Wars in Portugal.² However, there was no regime change in 1837 and it was de facto a continuation of the rule of the House of Braganza. According to LIED, only multiparty legislative elections were held until 1906. From 1900 to 1906, as per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was significantly constrained by institutional checks during this time. For the relevant regime period, 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 limited. For the given timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, whereas V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as ambiguous regarding the status of political liberties.

05/08/1907 End Constitutional Monarchy/Start Autocratic Monarchy: On this date, prime minister João Franco exercised dictatorial power for the first time, ruling by decree without parliamentary approval. In response, dissidents from the Progressive Party formed an alliance with the Republicans. By early January 1908, several Republican Party leaders and Progressive Party dissidents were arrested and convicted for allegedly plotting a coup d'état. Franco requested and obtained a decree from the king authorizing the deportation of Republican insurgents to the overseas colonies. On 02/01/1908, King Carlos I of Portugal and his heir, Luís Filipe, were assassinated in Lisbon's Praça do Comércio. For the relevant regime period, 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 limited. According to LIED no multiparty executive or legislative elections were conducted in 1907. In 1907, the executive held unlimited authority with no institutionalized constraints on decision-making power. For that period, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as ambiguous regarding the status of political liberties.

04/05/1908 End Autocratic Monarchy/Start Constitutional Monarchy: On this date, parliamentary elections took place. The Regeneration Party secured the most seats in Parliament, winning a total of 62.³ From 1908 onward only multiparty legislative elections were held again during this period. In 1908 and 1909, as per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was on par with or below that of other branches, reflecting 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 moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited. In this timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, whereas V-Dem's PCLI is categorized by us as ambiguous regarding the state of

political liberties, indicating an intermediate state between present and absent.

10/05/1910 End Constitutional Monarchy/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: The revolution on this date led to the deposition of King Manuel II and the change from a ruling monarchy to a non-electoral transitional regime.⁴ For the relevant regime period, 1910 and 1911, 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 limited. According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. In 1910, LIED still identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as ambiguous regarding the status of political liberties. The regime is a borderline case between a democratizing regime and a non-electoral transitional regime.

05/28/1911 End Non-electoral Transitional Regime/Start (Male) Electoral Hybrid Regime: On this date elections to a constituent assembly took place.⁵ However, only adult males had the right to vote.⁶ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Elections were not competitive according to LIED and according to V-Dem's CEI they were not really clean. In 1911 and 1912 the overall election conditions were ambiguous. From 1913 to 1914 the elections are classified as somewhat free and fair before they turn back to ambiguous for the remaining regime period (V-Dem EF&FI). Moreover, LIED underlines the absence of political liberties for this time. Whereas V-Dem's PCLI indicates an ambiguous presence of political liberties. Based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. For 1912-1916, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive. Teófilo Braga was provisional president of the new republic. After Manuel José de Arriaga had been elected new president, Braga retired from his office. Arriaga was president from 08/24/1911 to 05/29/1915.⁷ According to our observations Portugal in this period does not fulfill our criteria for a democracy and is classified as an electoral hybrid regime.

12/08/1917 End (Male) Electoral Hybrid Regime/Start Military Autocracy: On this date Sidónio Pais overthrew the government of Afonso Costa in a military coup (Birmingham 2018: 155-56, Casey et al. 2020: 15). The coup resulted in the dissolution of the National Congress and the forceful dismissal of the President of the Republic, Bernardino Machado, who was later exiled. Sidónio Pais subsequently assumed power as the President of the Ministry (Prime Minister), consolidating control over the executive.⁸ For 1917, 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 limited. According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. In 1917, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, whereas V-Dem's PCLI is categorized by us as ambiguous regarding the status of political liberties.

04/28/1918 End Military Autocracy/Start Electoral Autocracy: On this date, parliamentary elections took place, which were boycotted by major political parties, including the Democratic Party, the Evolutionist Party, and the Republican Union, which had dominated the 1915 elections. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. The elections are considered as not competitive (LIED). V-Dem's CEI scores not really cleanliness outcomes. Moreover, the overall election conditions were ambiguous (V-Dem EF&FI). Besides, according to LIED no political liberties were present. V-Dem's PCLI still considers their presence as ambiguous. Consequently, the National Republican Party, led by Pais, secured the majority of seats in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. As per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was on par with or below that of other branches, reflecting executive parity or subordination. For 1918, 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 limited.

12/14/1918 End Electoral Autocracy/Start (Male) Electoral Hybrid Regime: Pais was assassinated on this date and Portugal saw in the views of many observers a return to some kind of democracy (Birmingham 2018: 156, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 90, Casey et al. 2020: 15). As the assassination of Pais occurred in a wider context of political unrest and strikes, we code this regime change event as a popular uprising, as it caused the collapse of the Pais-Regime, and consider the subsequent election as a resulting event.⁹ Just two days later, on 12/16/1918, presidential elections were held. João do Canto e Castro was elected as President, succeeding the late Sidónio Pais. These elections were conducted by the Congress of the Republic, following the 1911 constitution, rather than through a direct popular vote. The election had to be repeated as the first round did not meet the required quorum. João do Canto e Castro won with an overwhelming majority of 99.28% of the votes. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED views the elections as not competitive for the entire time. V-Dem's CEI indicates that the elections in 1918 were not really clean and not clean in 1919. Since 1920, V-Dem's CEI indicates not really cleanliness outcomes. The overall election conditions are considered as ambiguous at this time by V-Dem's EF&FI. Furthermore, regarding the political liberties, LIED declares their absence. Between 1918 and 1919 ambiguous political liberties were given. Since 1920, somewhat political liberties are achieved (V-Dem PCLI). Based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. From 1919 to 1925, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive. Again, the regime in this period is a borderline case between an electoral democracy and an electoral hybrid regime.

05/28/1926 End (Male) Electoral Hybrid Regime/Start Military Autocracy: On this date, a military coup of nationalist origin led by General Gomes da Costa overthrew the unstable electoral hybrid regime (Opello 1991: 57). Following the coup, Prime Minister António Maria da Silva resigned, and President Bernardino Machado transferred power to José Mendes Cabeçadas on May 30 before resigning himself. The new regime, initially termed the Ditadura Militar (National Military Dictatorship), moved quickly to consolidate control: on 06/03/1926, a dictatorial decree dissolved the National Congress, and shortly thereafter, all political parties were banned and censorship was instituted. Although Gomes da Costa marched triumphantly into Lisbon on 06/06/1926 and forced Cabeçadas to resign on 06/17/1926, his leadership was short-lived.¹⁰ António Óscar de Fragoso Carmona, who had been the Minister for Foreign Affairs between 06/03-06, was the leader of the most conservative and authoritarian wing of the military regime, which considered the more moderate Gomes da Costa a liability.

07/09/1926 End Military Autocracy/Start Military Autocracy: On this date, Carmona led a counter-coup together with general João José Sinel de Cordes. He named himself president and immediately assumed dictatorial powers. The period is known as Ditadura Militar.¹¹ Restricted female suffrage was first allowed in 1931; it was further extended in 1933.¹² In 1928, Carmona appointed António de Oliveira Salazar as Minister of Finance. Impressed by Salazar's charisma and qualities, Carmona nominated Salazar as Prime Minister in 1932 and largely turned over control of the government to him.¹³ According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. Since 1930, as per Polity5's classification, the executive wielded unrestricted authority without any formal limitations during this time. For 1926, V-Dem's JCE is classified as moderate, indicating occasional 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. From 1927 to 1931, 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 1932, 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 absent. For the given timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is also classified by us as indicating that political liberties were absent.

03/19/1933 End Military Autocracy/Start Right-Wing (Corporatist) Autocracy: On this date the corporatist constitution was approved in a referendum. The regime was renamed Estado Novo (New State).¹⁴ António de Oliveira Salazar served as prime minister until 1968. Salazar was followed as prime minister by Marcello Caetano. The regime can be characterized as a right-leaning corporatist government. While the ruling elite from 1926 to 1974 remained largely the same, a new regime is coded for the period following 1933. The ideology of the Estado Novo was based on an interpretation of the Catholic social doctrine similar to the regime of Engelbert Dollfuss in Austria.¹⁵ Salazar created the National Union as a de facto single-party, while it was officially a non-party organization. The National Union was set up to control and restrain public opinion rather than to mobilize it (Costa 1995).¹⁶ The National Union functioned more as a political extension of the government rather than exerting direct control over it. The National Union membership was mostly drawn from local notables: landowners, professionals and businessmen, Catholics, monarchists or conservative republicans.¹⁷ The regime was not entirely dependent on Salazar's personal charisma. It also had a strong institutional basis. Salazar was willing to share power with other members of the regime, such as his close associate Marcelo Caetano. There was also no specific personality cult. We classify Portugal in this period as a right-wing (Corporatist) autocracy. In accordance with LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held in 1933. In 1934 only executive elections were held, but they were not categorized as multiparty and from 1935 onward, multiparty executive and legislative elections were conducted. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive held unlimited authority with no institutionalized constraints on decision-making power. For 1933-1973, 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 absent. Per FH, for this regime period, the country scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. For that period, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, whereas V-Dem's PCLI is likewise classified by us as showing that political liberties were absent.

04/25/1974 End Right-Wing (Corporatist) Autocracy/Start Military Autocracy: A rebel armed forces group overthrew the Caetano government due to concerns over the economic conditions and the status of the ongoing colonial wars. The junta was established with the intention of returning the government to a democracy. The event is called the Carnation Revolution (Portuguese: Revolução dos Cravos) or 04/25.¹⁸ The coup was coupled with a popular civil resistance campaign against the Caetano government (Opello 1991: 84-86, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 90).¹⁹ We categorize the regime change event as a military coup because the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), composed of mid-ranking officers, coordinated the overthrow of the Caetano regime by seizing key institutions and forcing the government to surrender within a single day. Although civilian demonstrations emerged in support of the military action, the regime change was initiated, organized, and executed by military actors, making the military coup the decisive mechanism (Graham 1975). On 09/30/1974 Spínola was forced into resigning by the leftist officers in the junta after an attempted coup. Gomes became chairman. On 03/11/1975 the country saw a failed right-wing coup d'état and on 09/25/1975 a failed left-wing coup d'état. In 1975, Portugal granted independence to its African overseas territories.²⁰ For the year 1974, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive. According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. According to FH until 1975, the country is classified as partly free with a score of 8, which we categorize as rather not free. In 1974, LIED still identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as suggesting that political liberties are somewhat present.

04/25/1975 End Military Autocracy/Start Liberal Democracy: Exactly one year after the Carnation Revolution the first free and fair elections (for a Constituent Assembly) since 1925 took place. Since then, Portugal is a stable parliamentary democracy with „regular transfers of power between political parties”.²¹ On 04/25/1976 a legislative election was held, and the Socialist leader Mario Soares was appointed Prime Minister.²² Portugal has a semi-presidential system of government with a unicameral parliament.²³ The president is considered the effective leader. The office has been held by members of the Party of Democratic Renovation (PRD), the

Socialist Party (PS) and the Social Democrat Party (PSD) in that order.²⁴ The political landscape in Portugal is characterized by a multiparty system with parties acting freely and competitively. Elections are generally deemed free and credible. All citizens are treated equally by the constitution, but problems concerning corruption and discrimination persist. Freedom of religion, freedom of the press and freedom of assembly are upheld. On 01/30/2022 legislative elections were held, the ruling Socialist Party secured an absolute majority with 120 seats, while the center-right opposition Social Democratic Party (PSD) came in second with 77 seats. Chega gained traction, securing twelve seats, a significant increase from the 1 seat it held in the previous parliament. Liberal Initiative secured eight seats, Left Bloc (BE) obtained five seats, the leftist and green Unitary Democratic Coalition (CDU) won six seats, and both the People-Animals-Nature (PAN) party and the leftist and green Livre secured 1 seat each.²⁵ 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 held since 1976. The first three years after the military autocracy, V-Dem's CEI scored somewhat electoral cleanliness. Since 1980, constant clean elections are given. Moreover, the overall election conditions are classified as somewhat free and fair. Since 1983, freedom and fairness are achieved (V-Dem's EF&FI). As per FH's, from 1976 onward, the country is considered free with a score ranging from 2 to 4, which we also interpret as free in our framework. In addition to that, ever since 1975 both LIED and V-Dem's PCLI underlines that Portugal guarantees constant political liberties. From 1976 to 1981, as per Polity5's categorization, the executive's authority was significantly constrained, nearing parity with other branches, placing it in the third intermediate category. Since 1982, according to Polity5, the executive was subordinate to or held equal power with other institutions, indicating executive parity or subordination. From 1975 onward, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating comprehensive constraints on the executive.

Liberal Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional Sources (da Fonseca 2009, Graham 1975, Graham/Makler 1979, Hersvik/Larsen 2003, Livermore 1976, Martins 1969, Payne 2002, Robinson 1979, Schmitter 1980, Tavares de Almeida 2010, Vesper 1999)

Notes

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Portugal/Overseas-empire>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Braganza-Saxe-Coburg_and_Gotha

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1908_Portuguese_legislative_election

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/5_October_1910_revolution

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1911_Portuguese_Constituent_National_Assembly_election

⁶ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Portugal/The-First-Republic-1910-26>

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

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/December_1917_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sid%C3%B3nio_Pais

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/28_May_1926_coup_d%27%C3%A9tat

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

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%93scar_Carmona

¹⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estado_Novo_\(Portugal\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estado_Novo_(Portugal))

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37

¹⁶ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estado_Novo_\(Portugal\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estado_Novo_(Portugal))

¹⁷ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Union_\(Portugal\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Union_(Portugal))

¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnation_Revolution

¹⁹ <http://tinyurl.com/8buumze>

²⁰ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Portugal#The_Third_Republic_\(1974–present\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Portugal#The_Third_Republic_(1974–present))

- ²¹ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/portugal>
- ²² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Portugal#The_Third_Republic_\(1974–present\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Portugal#The_Third_Republic_(1974–present))
- ²³ [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2021\)659378](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2021)659378)
- ²⁴ <http://www.chisols.org/narratives.html> , see narratives for version 5.0, Portugal_V: 2,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_Portugal
- ²⁵ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/portugal/freedom-world/2023>

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