



Qatar — Va-PoReg Country Report

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09/12/1868 Start Autocratic Monarchy: On 09/12/1868 Muhammad ibn Thani signed a treaty with the British, effectively establishing Qatar (previously considered to be a dependency of Bahrain) as an independent state (Brewer et al. 2007). The treaty included that the Al-Thani family was recognized as the ruler of the Qatar peninsula (Tok/Alkhater/Pal 2016). For the relevant regime period, 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. According to LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. For this timeframe political liberties were absent per LIED and V-Dem's PCLI is likewise classified by us as indicating that political liberties were absent.

11/03/1916 Continuation Autocratic Monarchy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under United Kingdom (Electoral Oligarchy)]: On 11/03/1916 Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al-Thani signed a protectorate agreement with the British (Tok/Alkhater/Pal 2016). In exchange for military protection, Qatar relinquished autonomy in foreign affairs (Stasz et al. 2007). For 1916-1970, 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.

09/03/1971 Continuation Autocratic Monarchy [as independent country]: On 09/03/1971 Qatar regained full independence. On 02/22/1972 Hamad overthrew the Emir, his cousin, and ascended to the throne. On 06/27/1995 concerns over political repression in the ruling family allowed Khalifa at Thani to overthrow his relative Hamad. The hereditary emir of Qatar holds complete executive and legislative authority and exercises control over the judiciary. After consulting with the ruling family and other notable figures, the emir appoints the prime minister, cabinet, and selects an heir-apparent. In 2013, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani abdicated as emir, passing the reins of power to his fourth-born son, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani. Subsequently, in 01/2020, Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa al-Thani assumed the roles of prime minister and interior minister, succeeding Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser al-Thani, a fellow member of the ruling family.¹ Political parties are prohibited, and the sole elections are for an advisory municipal council. Despite Qatari citizens being among the wealthiest globally, most of the population comprises noncitizens who lack political rights, have limited civil liberties, and face restricted economic opportunities. After years of delay, the emir announced in November 2020 that elections for two-thirds of the body's seats would take place in October 2021. The Constitution of 2003 stipulated that 30 of the 45 seats on the Advisory Council should be filled through elections every four years, with the emir appointing the other 15 members. Though official turnout for the election was 63.5 percent, in July 2021 Tamim signed a law restricting the voter franchise to native Qataris, whose families had settled in Qatar before 1930. The exact number of citizens denied voting rights due to the law is unclear. After public outcry and some small-scale protests, Emir Tamin supported amending the law to include all citizens for future elections. Nonpartisan elections for the 29-member Central Municipal Council, tasked with advising the minister for municipal affairs, have been conducted since 1999. Council members serve four-year terms. Municipal elections are open for active and passive participation for men and women since 1999.² The current electoral laws apply to elections for both the Central Municipal Council and the Advisory Council. Qatari citizens aged 18 and older, who can demonstrate that their male ancestors were

settled in Qatar before 1930, are eligible to vote, except for those serving in the military or employed by the Interior Ministry.³ In accordance with LIED, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held during the specified period. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive held unlimited authority with no institutionalized constraints on decision-making power. From 1971 to 2018, 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 2019 onward, 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. Per FH, from 1972 to 1975, the country scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. As classified by FH from 1976 to 1988, the country scores between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free. As classified by FH from 1989 onward, the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. For the entire period, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, whereas V-Dem's PCLI is likewise classified by us as showing that political liberties are absent.

Autocratic Monarchy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional Sources (Herb 1999, Herb 2003, Herb 2004)

Notes

¹ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/qatar/freedom-world/2023>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37

³ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/qatar/freedom-world/2023>

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