



Saint Kitts and Nevis — Va-PoReg Country Report

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09/03/1783 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom]: In 1882 the islands were united as Saint Christopher-Nevis-Anguilla (Saint Christopher also called Saint Kitts). The islands were part of the Leeward Islands from 1833 to 01/01/1960 (see under Antigua and Barbuda). Despite being one of the smallest territories in the West Indies, St. Kitts holds historical significance as Britain's first colony in the region, established in 1623. Ownership of the island was disputed with France until 1783 when Britain gained undisputed control through the Treaty of Versailles. St. Kitts, along with Nevis and Anguilla, formed a tripartite entity and joined the West Indies Federation in 1952 (Lansford 2021: 1401). LIED misclassifies that legislative and multiparty elections were present since 1937. Universal suffrage was absent during this time (LIED). LIED identifies political liberties as absent for the given period. LIED does not treat Saint Kitts and Nevis before 1937.

10/06/1952 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]: On 10/06/1952 the first general elections with universal suffrage were held.¹ LIED confirms the presence of legislative and multiparty election as well as universal suffrage since 1952. Political liberties were absent according to LIED.

02/27/1967 End Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start (Monarchical) Liberal Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]: On this date St. Kitts and Nevis achieved independence as an independent state in association with the United Kingdom as a member of the West Indies Associated States. This arrangement granted the islands full internal self-government, while the United Kingdom retained responsibilities for defense and foreign affairs.² Three months later, Anguilla rejected governance from Basseterre (Lansford 2021: 1401). Anguilla received its own constitution on 02/10/1976, leading to the formal dissolution of its union with Saint Kitts and Nevis in 1980.³ 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 competitive during the entire time (LIED) and political liberties were achieved according to LIED.

09/19/1983 Continuation (Monarchical) Liberal Democracy [as independent country]: On this date, independence was reached as the Federation of Saint Christopher (or Saint Kitts) and Nevis. Nevis got limited self-government.⁴ In this year it became a commonwealth realm with the British Crown as ceremonial head of state. In 1984, early elections were held, resulting in the Nevis Reformation Party (NRP) winning all three seats in Nevis, while the People's Action Movement (PAM) secured six seats in St. Kitts. In contrast, the Labour Party won two seats. Despite the Labour Party winning the popular vote nationwide, the distribution of seats favored the NRP and PAM.⁵ Throughout its history, St. Kitts and Nevis has been known for conducting elections that are characterized by fairness and freedom. However, the 1993 elections faced significant opposition and led to protests from the opposing party. The situation escalated to the point where the Regional Security System (RSS) was temporarily deployed to restore order in the country. Following the general election held on 08/05/2022, Terrance Drew got elected as the fourth and current Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis. His victory came as his party, the St. Kitts-Nevis Labour Party (SKNLP), won the election.⁶ Periodic elections are held under universal suffrage with regular changes in government.⁷⁸ FH lists Saint Kitts

and Nevis as free since 1984 while V-Dem does not list the country. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. According to FH, for the assessed regime period, the country is categorized as free with a score between 2 and 4, which corresponds to our interpretation of free. Since the country's independence, LIED confirms the presence of competitive elections and political liberties are guaranteed ever since. V-Dem does not list the country in its database.

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

Additional sources (Hillebrands/Schwehm 2005)

Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1965_Laotian_coups

² <https://www.britannica.com/place/Saint-Kitts-and-Nevis/History>

³ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Saint-Kitts-and-Nevis/History>

⁴ https://www.gov.kn/the-constitution/#:~:text=The%20Constitution%20of%20Saint%20Kitts,the%20citizens%20of%20the%20federation,;https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/St_Kitts_and_Nevis_1983?lang=en

⁵ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Saint_Kitts_and_Nevis#Saint_Kitts_and_Nevis_\(1883_%E2%80%93_93_present\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Saint_Kitts_and_Nevis#Saint_Kitts_and_Nevis_(1883_%E2%80%93_93_present))

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

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1952_Saint_Kitts-Nevis-Anguilla_general_election

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2022_Saint_Kitts_and_Nevis_general_election

References

Hillebrands, Bernd/Trefs, Matthias (2005): Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, in: Nohlen, Dieter (Hrsg.), Elections in the Americas: A Data Handbook. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 595–606.

Lansford, Tom (2021): Political Handbook of the World 2020-2021. Thousand Oaks: CQ Press.