



Saint Martin — Va-PoReg Country Report

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23/03/1648 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [France, as part of Guadeloupe]: Saint Martin, initially a Spanish territory, piqued the interests of European powers, mainly France and the United Provinces, resulting in a decline in the native Amerindian population due to introduced diseases. In 1631, the Dutch established Fort Amsterdam on the island for salt mining, but Spanish control was regained in 1633. Despite Dutch attempts in 1644, they couldn't retake the island. The end of the Eighty Years' War in 1648 rendered the island less valuable to Spain, leading to its abandonment, with the Dutch and French dividing it by the Treaty of Concordia on 03/23/1648.¹ French Saint Martin, led by Governor Robert de Longvilliers, saw border adjustments over time, settling by 1817. Slavery was abolished by the French in 1848 and the Dutch in 1863, but enforcement became challenging as slaves could move freely between the Dutch and French sides. In 1763, the French-controlled territory of Saint Martin merged with France's Guadeloupe colony.² Saint Martin's colonial era does not appear in LIED's dataset.

03/19/1946 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of France, Liberal Democracy as part of Guadeloupe]/Start Part of Other Country [of France, Liberal Democracy (as Part of Guadeloupe)]: On this date, Saint Martin (together with Saint Barthélemy) was officially incorporated into the Guadeloupe département as an arrondissement.³

07/15/2007 End Part of Other Country [of France, Liberal Democracy]/Start Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under France, Liberal Democracy]: On this date, Saint Martin was separated from Guadeloupe and transformed into a territorial collectivity, complete with its Prefect and Territorial Council.⁴ Saint Martin gained the right to vote for both legislative and executive powers and is represented in the French Senat and Assembly. However, a representative of the French state oversees these institutions and has the authority to postpone legislative decisions, dissolve the parliament or the executive, and establish an interim government. Important policy areas, such as foreign affairs and security policy, are determined by France. Saint Martin is part of the European Union; the region is not represented independently but rather through France. The membership in the European Union distinguishes Saint Martin from other Overseas Collectivities. Severe political instability marked the year 2024 in Sint Maarten, necessitating two separate general elections due to extreme parliamentary fragmentation. The first election, held on 01/11/2024, produced a complex four-party coalition government led by Prime Minister Luc Mercelina of the Unified Resilient St. Maarten Movement (URSM). However, this government was short-lived, collapsing just 18 days after being sworn in when a coalition member of parliament defected, triggering snap elections. The subsequent August election took place amid political turmoil, including the high-profile arrests of several politicians for alleged vote buying related to the January election.⁵ The second election again produced a fragmented result, with the National Alliance (NA), URSM, and the Democratic Party (DP) emerging as the largest parties. A new four-party coalition was ultimately negotiated, allowing Mercelina to return as prime minister. His second cabinet was sworn in by late November 2024.⁶ The autonomy rights, representation in the French Parliament, limited sovereignty and the representation in the EU make it difficult to categorize the regime. Saint Martin, as well as the other overseas collectivities, represents a special case. Due to its higher degree of autonomy compared to other French administrative zones, such as the départements et régions d'outre-mer, the region cannot be classified as an Indirect Rule Colonial Regime. Instead, it can be

categorized as a semi-sovereign electoral democracy. The regime is considered defective because, due to France's position, these territories do not possess full sovereignty. V-Dem, LIED and FH do not provide data for Saint Martin.

Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under France, Liberal Democracy] as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Notes

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

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collectivity_of_Saint_Martin#History

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collectivity_of_Saint_Martin#20th%E2%80%9321st_centuries

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collectivity_of_Saint_Martin#20th%E2%80%9321st_centuries

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/January_2024_Sint_Maarten_general_election

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_2024_Sint_Maarten_general_election