



San Marino — Va-PoReg Country Report

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10/08/1600 Start Electoral Oligarchy: Around 1200, San Marino was governed by the Council of the Heads of State, the Arengo. Two Captain Regents ruled the city-state, selected for six months and representing the state equally. However, the Arengo gradually transferred its powers to the Grand and General Council, formed in the 14th century. This council comprised 20 nobles, 20 burghers, and 20 land-owning peasants. The Grand Council eventually evolved into an oligarchy dominated by a few influential families. On 10/08/1600, a new constitution was introduced, which formalized the existing institutional system (Baukhage 2010). When Napoleon invaded Italy in 1797, he respected San Marino's independence, further confirmed by the 1815 Congress of Vienna. After political upheavals in Italy ended in 1862, the newly formed Kingdom of Italy officially recognized San Marino.¹ Until 1906, the 60 members of parliament were appointed for life.² Overall, until 1906 the political regime of San Marino was more an oligarchy than a democracy (Baukhage 2010: 1669). On 03/25/1906, the Arengo was reconstituted through a referendum, which ended the non-electoral oligarchical system and restored its power to elect the Grand Council. Since then, the Grand Council has been elected in direct, equal, and secret elections. However, voting rights were restricted to male heads of households and academics, excluding women, clergy, the mentally disabled, and felons (Baukhage 2010). Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. According to LIED the elections were not competitive until 1906. Since 1907, competitiveness is achieved. Moreover, political liberties were absent for the entire period (LIED).

06/19/1909 End Electoral Oligarchy/Start Electoral Oligarchy (Patriarchal): On this date, general elections for the Grand and General Council were held.³ Suffrage was expanded to male citizens aged 24 or older in 1909.⁴ However, women gained the right to vote only in 1957. In this period San Marino experienced an unstable and restricted democratic phase. San Marino remained neutral during the First World War. Between 1918 and 1923, a period characterized by relatively unstable governments ensued (Veenendaal 2020, Baukhage 2010). Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. While LIED affirms the presence of competitive elections for the entire time, it scores political liberties as absent. AF classifies San Marino between 1906 and 1925 as a parliamentary democracy, LIED as a male democracy between 1909 and 1920 and as a multiparty autocracy until 1922. We classify the regime this period as an electoral democracy, however, it was a borderline case between this category and an electoral hybrid regime.

03/03/1923 End Electoral Oligarchy (Patriarchal)/Start Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy: On this date, a fascist government was elected, but the country remained neutral during the Second World War. Under the fascist administration, suffrage was again restricted to the heads of households, academics, militia members, and citizens who paid income tax of at least 150 Lira per year (Baukhage 2010, Edwards/Michaelides 1996). According to LIED, both executive and legislative elections were held, but they were not categorized as multiparty. For the given timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as absent.

09/13/1944 End Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy/Start Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Germany, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy, afterwards by Allied forces]: On this date, Germany invaded San Marino.

From 09/17-20/1944, the German and Allied forces engaged in battle on San Marino's soil during the Battle of San Marino. Afterward, Allied troops occupied San Marino, but they only stayed for two months before returning the Republic's sovereignty.⁵ No legislative elections were held (LIED). In 1944, LIED still identifies political liberties as absent.

03/25/1945 End Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Allied Forces]/Start Electoral Oligarchy (Patriarchal): On this date, San Marino held general elections mandated by the British Army to remove all fascist-friendly politicians. From this date, San Marino had the world's first democratically elected communist-socialist government, a coalition between the Sammarinese Communist Party and the Sammarinese Socialist Party. Male citizens of San Marino, aged at least 24, were eligible to vote.⁶ For the elections on 09/13/1959, absentee voting was introduced, benefitting the Sammarinese Christian Democratic Party (PDCS) as many of its voters lived in the United States of America. However, absentee voting was abolished in 1966 due to pressure from leftist parties. 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 ever since according to LIED. Besides, political liberties were still not present until 1952 according to LIED.

09/13/1964 End Electoral Oligarchy (Patriarchal)/Start Liberal Democracy: On this date, the first elections with female suffrage, introduced in 1957, were held. Formal equality between men and women was achieved in 1974 with the Declaration on the Civic Rights and Fundamental Principles of the Order of San Marino, which lowered the voting age to 18 (Baukhage 2010). San Marino is a parliamentary democracy with a unicameral system. Free and fair elections are held regularly and civil liberties as well as political rights are safeguarded. However, corruption remains a problem.⁷ On 04/01/2022, Paolo Rondelli was elected as one of the two captain regents, becoming the first openly gay head of state.⁸ While the captains have a ceremonial role, the secretary of state for foreign and political affairs is the head of government. Luca Beccari of the Sammarinese Christian Democratic Party (PDCS) was elected to this post in the elections on 12/08/2019.⁹ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which we consider competitive. This aligns with the observations of LIED. Moreover, the country guaranteed constant political liberties since 1964 per LIED. V-Dem does not list the country. As per FH's classification from 1972 onward, the country is considered free with a score ranging from 2 to 4, which we also interpret as free in our framework.

Liberal Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Marxer/Pállinger 2009)

Notes

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Sao-Tome-and-Principe/Government-and-society>

² https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Marino#Die_Zeit_bis_zum_Ende_des_Zweiten_Weltkriegs

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1909_San_Marino_general_election

⁴ https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elezioni_politiche_a_San_Marino_del_1909

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_San_Marino#19th_century

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1945_San_Marino_general_election

⁷ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/san-marino/freedom-world/2023>

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_San_Marino

⁹ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/san-marino/freedom-world/2022>

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