



Serbia — Va-PoReg Country Report

Kailitz, Steffen, et al., 2026: Varieties of Political Regimes (Va-PoReg). Country Report Serbia, Dresden: Hannah Arendt Institute for Totalitarianism Studies.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/JYEL7U>

[Serbia and Yugoslavia, along with its short-lived successor, the Union of Serbia and Montenegro (02/04/2003–06/05/2006), are treated as separate countries in this dataset. We adopted this approach due to significant concerns about the assumption, used in other datasets, that they represent the same country.]

04/23/1815 Start Autocratic Monarchy [as Serbia]: The house of Obrenović came to power under the leadership of Miloš I in the Serbian Uprising between 04/23/1815–07/26/1817¹ against the Ottoman Empire. This led to the formation of the Principality of Serbia in 1817.² In 1882 the Principality of Serbia elevated to the status of Kingdom of Serbia. The independence of Serbia was internationally recognized in 1878.³ For male voters who paid taxes suffrage was granted in the Constitution of 1869, and in the Constitution of 1888 the right to vote was given to all males of age 21. For 1900-1902, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited. According to LIED, only multiparty legislative elections were held during this period. No executive elections were present. In this timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as ambiguous regarding the status of political liberties.

06/15/1903 End Autocratic Monarchy [as Serbia]/Start Constitutional Monarchy [as Serbia]: During the May Coup 1903 (06/10–11; May refers to the Old Style dating system) Alexander I and his wife were assassinated⁴ which meant the end of the Obrenović dynasty.⁵ Peter I became the king of Serbia.⁶ He adopted a revised version of the 1888 constitution and allegedly gained popularity for his commitment to parliamentary democracy.⁷ For 1903-1915, 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 moderate. Until 1914, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as ambiguous regarding the status of political liberties.

01/01/1916 End Constitutional Monarchy [as Serbia]/Start Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Austria, Constitutional Monarchy and Bulgaria, Constitutional Monarchy]: After three failed invasion attempts by the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, a combined invasion of Austrian-Hungarian, German and Bulgarian forces attacked Serbia in October of 1915 and took the country by 11/24h. Parts of the army and the government fled to Corfu.⁸ Serbia was divided into one zone occupied by Austria-Hungary and one zone occupied by Bulgaria.⁹ On 01/01/1916, Austria-Hungary established the Military General Governorate of Serbia (MGG/S), which is why we code this date as the start of the regime. In this timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties are not really present.

11/01/1918 End Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Austria, Constitutional Monarchy]/Start (Monarchical) Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: Following the victories of the remaining parts of the Serbian Army alongside other Entente-forces, Bulgaria signed an armistice and the armies of Austria-Hungary and Germany retreated.¹⁰ Belgrad was liberated by the Royal Serbian Army on 10/30/1918. In respect of the short period of time, we code this as a transition period.

12/01/1918 End (Monarchical) Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start Part of Other Country [of Yugoslavia, Constitutional Monarchy]: Serbia became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes,

later renamed Yugoslavia. This constitutional monarchy introduced male suffrage in 1920, and multiparty elections began at the national level. Serbia, as a constituent region, operated under the centralized authority of Yugoslavia. Political liberties were limited (see Yugoslavia).

01/06/1929 Continuation Part of Other Country [of Yugoslavia, Autocratic Monarchy]: King Aleksandar Karadjordjevic declared a royal dictatorship, dissolving parliament and suspending constitutional governance. Serbia remained a component of Yugoslavia, governed under the same repressive framework. Political liberties were absent (see Yugoslavia).

03/27/1941 Continuation Part of Other Country [of Yugoslavia, Military Autocracy]: Following a coup, Serbia continued to be part of Yugoslavia, now under military rule. The new government lacked democratic legitimacy, and Serbia's political and administrative affairs were directed by the central authority of the Yugoslav regime (see Yugoslavia).

04/06/1941 End Part of Other Country [of Yugoslavia, Military Autocracy]/Start Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Germany, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy]: The German invasion fragmented Yugoslavia. Serbia was directly occupied and administered by German forces through collaborationist puppet governments. Though technically still within the Yugoslav framework, Serbia's governance was entirely controlled by external forces, with no political liberties or meaningful elections (see Yugoslavia).

10/20/1944 End Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Germany, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy]/Start Part of Other Country [of Yugoslavia, Communist Ideocracy]: On this date, Belgrade was liberated from German occupation by Soviet and Bulgarian troops, as well as Yugoslav partisans. This marked the end of the occupation for the Serbian territories within Yugoslavia. On 03/07/1945, and during the retreat of the German forces, a government dominated by Tito and the communists was established (Petrovich 1947: 508-9, Van Dyke 1947: 375). Serbia became a republic within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which was officially proclaimed on 11/29/1945, governed by a centralized communist regime led by Tito. Political liberties were absent, and elections were not competitive. Serbia's status was that of a fully integrated part of the federal Yugoslav state (see Yugoslavia).

01/20/1990 End Part of Other Country [of Yugoslavia, Communist Ideocracy]/Start No Central Authority: With the disintegration of the League of Yugoslav Communists, centralized control over Yugoslavia faded. Serbia remained within the Yugoslav framework, but governance structures were breaking down. While opposition parties formed, Serbia was still considered part of Yugoslavia during this transitional phase (see Yugoslavia).

04/27/1992 End No Central Authority/Start Part of Other Country [of Yugoslavia, Electoral Autocracy]: Under the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (composed of Serbia and Montenegro), Serbia continued as part of a unified state. Elections were neither free nor fair, and political liberties remained restricted. Serbia's political system was subordinate to the broader federal structure of Yugoslavia (see Yugoslavia). On 02/04/2003 Serbia became part of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, a looser federation. Although competitive elections were held, political liberties were not fully secured. Serbia's governance operated within the framework of this broader union until its dissolution (see Yugoslavia).

06/05/2006 End Part of Other Country [of Yugoslavia, Electoral Democracy]/Start Electoral Democracy [as independent country]: On this date, Serbia acknowledged the end of the Union of Serbia and Montenegro.¹¹ During this period regular free and fair elections were held. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. The elections are classified as competitive (LIED). Until 2013 the election remained somewhat clean. For the time since 2014 V-Dem's CEI indicates ambiguous cleanliness of the elections. Moreover, V-Dem's EF&FI underlines somewhat freedom and fairness until 2015. Since 2016 the overall conditions are considered as ambiguous. From 2003 to 2012, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were comprehensive. In 2013, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints

on the executive were moderate, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were comprehensive. For 2014-2016, 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 robust. According to FH, from 2006 to 2008 the country is rated as free with a score of 5, which we interpret as rather free in our framework. As per FH's classification from 2009 to 2015, the country is considered free with a score ranging from 2 to 4, which we also interpret as free in our framework. Per FH's scoring in 2016, the country is classified as free with a score of 5, which falls into our interpretation of the rather free category. While civil liberties were overwhelmingly upheld, an increasingly hostile environment towards independent media perpetuated. Moreover, the judiciary remained plagued by issues of corruption (Puddington 2016: 598). Furthermore, LIED still classified political liberties as absent. V-Dem's PCLI outcomes remain the same until 2012, as they changed to somewhat presence since 2013.

04/02/2017 End Electoral Democracy/Start Electoral Hybrid Regime: In the April 2017 presidential elections, Vučić won the election with 55 percent of the vote in a field of eleven candidates. The campaign was characterized by media bias and allegations of misuse of public resources and vote buying. The SNS was previously accused in the 2016 snap elections rigging the polls and tampering with ballot boxes. OSCE election observers noted pressure on public-sector workers to vote for the ruling party. Private television outlets also largely favored the SNS in their coverage.¹² On 04/03/2022 general elections were held in Serbia to elect both the president and members of the National Assembly, although initially scheduled for 2024. The OSCE criticized irregularities such as an unbalanced access to the media, undue pressure on public sector employees to support the incumbents, significant campaign finance disparities and misuse of state resources resulted in unequal conditions for contestants.¹³ For 2017-2019, 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 robust. For 2020, 2021 and 2023, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited. In 2022, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive. 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 remained competitive until 2019. Since 2020 no competitiveness is achieved. Furthermore, V-Dem's CEI indicates not really cleanliness scores. The overall election conditions are classified as ambiguous by V-Dem's EF&FI. According to FH, in 2017, the country is rated as free with a score of 5, which we interpret as rather free in our framework. Per FH, from 2018 onward, the country scores between 6 and 7, categorized as partly free, which we interpret as rather free. Besides, LIED scores no political liberties. According to V-Dem's PCLI the scores remained at a somewhat presence, except in 2018 an ambiguous outcome is given.

Electoral Hybrid Regime: as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Kasapović 2010b, Ristić 2010)

Notes

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

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Obrenovi%C4%87_dynasty

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Principality_of_Serbia

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_I_of_Serbia

⁵ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_Coup_\(Serbia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/May_Coup_(Serbia))

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

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_I_of_Serbia#Politics

⁸ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serbian_campaign_\(1915\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serbian_campaign_(1915))

⁹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulgarian_occupation_of_Serbia_\(World_War_I\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulgarian_occupation_of_Serbia_(World_War_I))

¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austro-Hungarian_occupation_of_Serbia#Liberation_of_Serbia

¹¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17907947>; <https://www.worldstatesmen.org/Serbia.html>

¹² <https://freedomhouse.org/country/serbia/freedom-world/2019>; <https://freedomhouse.org/country/serbia/freedom-world/2022>

¹³ <https://www.oscepa.org/en/news-a-media/press-releases/2022/serbia-s-elections-offered-diverse-political-options-but-shortcomings-led-to-an-uneven-playing-field-international-observers-say>

References

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Puddington, Arch (Hrsg.) (2016): *Freedom in the World 2016: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

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