



Seychelles — Va-PoReg Country Report

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05/30/1814 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom]: Britain took control of Mauritius during the Napoleonic Wars in 1810, but the formal transfer of Mauritius and the Seychelles to the British did not occur until the Treaty of Paris on 05/30/1814. As part of the capitulation agreements, the British agreed to respect French settlers, language, and customs in the Seychelles. Although the British did not want to govern either Mauritius or the Seychelles, the Seychelles were indirectly ruled by the British until 1903, when they were granted the status of a British crown colony. The Seychelles, therefore, were rather indirectly and reluctantly ruled by the British until 1903, being technically a dependency of Mauritius, which was in turn a full-fledged British colony. Seychellois citizens gradually gained political power.

08/31/1903 Continuation as Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Electoral Oligarchy]: On this date, the territory was administratively separated from Mauritius in 1903 (Franda 1982). According to LIED multiparty executive and legislative elections were absent during this time as well as universal suffrage. Political liberties were absent according to LIED and ambiguous according to V-Dem's PCLI. Both LIED and V-Dem do not provide data for the Seychelles before 1903. For 1903-1948, V-Dem's JCE is classified as limited, indicating weak judicial oversight. Concurrently, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which can be cautiously interpreted as indicating an absence of legislative constraints on the executive.

10/01/1948 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, (Monarchical) Liberal Democracy]/Start Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, (Monarchical) Liberal Democracy]: In 1948 the first parliamentary elections took place. Four of the twelve seats were elected but suffrage was limited to citizens over 21 who paid a certain amount of taxes. Thus, only 10% of the population could register for the elections. The 1967 election was the first election held under universal suffrage. The Seychelles Democratic Party won half of the seats. LIED confirms that legislative and multiparty elections took place since 1948 and that universal suffrage was introduced in 1967.¹ In 1970 Seychelles obtained a new constitution, universal adult suffrage, and a governing council with an elected majority.² For 1949-1970, 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 moderate. For 1971-1975, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive. Political liberties were absent according to LIED and in an ambiguous state according to V-Dem's PCLI.

10/01/1975 End Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, (Monarchical) Liberal Democracy]/Start Democratizing Regime [semi-sovereign, external affairs under United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]: On this date internal self-government was granted (Turner 1998). A coalition government was formed with James Mancham as president and France-Albert René as prime minister. For 1976 and 1977, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive. According to LIED, multiparty legislative elections were held in 1975. The following year, multiparty executive and legislative elections were conducted. As per FH's classification in 1976, the country is considered free with a score ranging from 2 to 4, which we also interpret as free in our framework.

06/05/1977 End Democratizing Regime [semi-sovereign, external affairs under United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start One-Party Autocracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under United Kingdom, Liberal

Democracy]: On this date, while Mancham was abroad, René became president in a bloodless coup d'état led by the Seychelles People's United Party and their militants.³ The new regime was recognized by the United Kingdom on 06/13 (Houbert 1977: 294). According to LIED, from 1977 onward, no multiparty executive or legislative elections were held. As classified by FH in 1977, the country scores between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free.

06/29/1978 Continuation One-Party Autocracy [as independent country]: On this date independence was gained (Turner 1998). For the relevant period, V-Dem's JCE is classified as moderate, indicating occasional judicial oversight. Concurrently, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which can be cautiously interpreted as indicating an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. For the given period, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as an ambiguous state regarding political liberties until 1976 and indicating that they were not really present afterwards. Following a successful referendum on 03/26/1979, a new constitution went into effect. This constitution institutionalized Seychelles as a one-party state with the sole candidate for president nominated by the ruling party. All political activity took place under the rule of the Seychelles People's Progressive Front, and the President was voted for on a yes-no basis by any Seychelles citizen 17 or older. The president enjoyed almost unchecked executive power and appointed his own cabinet as well as his own chair of the Assembly. The legislature itself was unable to rule independently, and instead only enacted the bills proposed by the executive.⁴ For 1979-1989, 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 limited. For 1990-1993, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive. According to LIED, both executive and legislative elections were held, but they were not categorized as multiparty. On 12/27/1991 a process started to initiate a multi-party democracy.⁵ Discussions and public debates between the major political parties began to take place in 01/1993.⁶ Per FH, from 1978 to 1991, the country scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. As classified by FH in 1992, the country scores between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free. LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties are not really present.

07/20[-23]/1993 End One-Party Autocracy/Start Electoral Democracy: In these days the first multiparty elections were held. René continued to win, and in 1998 and in 2001, when he defeated the opposition leader Wavel Ramkalawan, the candidate of Seychelles National Party. In addition to presidency, he held several cabinet posts simultaneously including Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Finance.⁷ The elections were evaluated as free and fair by international observer groups (Thibaut 1999). General elections were held from 10/22 to 10/24. The presidential elections were won by Ramkalawan, who received 54.9 percent of the vote. The election marked the first opposition victory in a presidential contest in Seychellois history. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. In addition, ever since the transition the elections were viewed by LIED as competitive. According to V-Dem's CEI ambiguous cleanliness is scored until 2006. Since 2007, the elections are considered as somewhat clean. V-Dem's EF&FI underlines somewhat free and fair election conditions until 2019. On 08/09/2016 the opposition alliance Linyon Demokratik Seselwa secured a victory, winning 19 out of the 33 seats. This marked the first time since the 1979 elections that the People's Party failed to secure a majority of seats.⁸ Since 2020 the country provides fully free and fair elections. Per FH, from 1993 to 2019, the country scores between 6 and 7, categorized as partly free, which we interpret as rather free. According to FH, in 2020, 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, the country is considered free since 2021 with a score ranging from 2 to 4, which we also interpret as free in our framework. For 1994-2002, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive. For 2003, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate. For 2004-2012, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both

interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive. For 2013-2015 and from 2022 onward, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were comprehensive, whereas V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. For 2016-2021, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating comprehensive constraints on the executive. LIED declares the political liberties as absent for the whole time. V-Dem's PCLI considers them as being in an ambiguous state until 2002. From 2003 to 2018 political liberties were somewhat present per PCLI and present since 2019. Government corruption remained a problem.⁹ Until 2006 the Seychelles were a borderline case between an electoral hybrid regime and an electoral democracy.

Electoral Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Mazepus et al. 2016)

Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1948_Seychellois_parliamentary_election;
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1967_Seychellois_parliamentary_election

² <https://www.britannica.com/place/Seychelles/History>

³ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Seychelles/History>

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

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

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

⁷ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/seychelles/freedom-world/2022>

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Seychellois_parliamentary_election

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

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