



Somalia — Va-PoReg Country Report

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08/03/1889 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Italy]: Egypt occupied parts of the Somali coast since the 1860s. After the Mahdist Movement Uprising in 1885, Egypt had to withdraw its forces from the Somaliland coast (Issa-Salwe 1996). Italy obtained the protectorate over Obbia and Mijertina in 1889 and administered the territory directly until 1898 (Tripodi 1999, Turner 2004). On 03/16/1905 Italian Somaliland became officially a colony of Italy. In 1925, the United Kingdom “gifted” Italy the Jubaaland region as a reward for having joined the First World War and in 1926, it became part of Italian Somaliland.^{46F¹} On 06/01/1936 Somalia became part of Italian East Africa (province of Somalia, formed by the merger of the colony and the Ethiopian region of Ogaden). Following conflicts between Ethiopia and Italy, the Ethiopian territory was annexed to Eritrea and Somalia, so that, apart from British Somaliland and French Djibouti, the Horn of Africa was almost completely under Italian control. The Ogaden became part of Somalia (Tripodi 1999). According to LIED multiparty executive and legislative elections were absent during this period. For 1900-1909, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties are not really present. For the period 1910 to 1940, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is also classified by us as indicating that political liberties were absent. For 1941, V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating that political liberties were not really present. For the relevant period, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are limited. At the same time, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive.

03/25/1941 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Italy, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy]/Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]: see for the time between 03/25/1941 and 04/01/1950 Somaliland. For the relevant period, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are limited. At the same time, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive.

04/01/1950 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Italy, Liberal Democracy]: On this date, the United Nations made Italian Somaliland into a Trust Territory under Italian Administration (Tripodi 1999).^{47F²} The “Amministrazione fiduciaria italiana della Somalia” began its rule, accompanied with the deployment of 6,500 troops. Therefore, the country's internal affairs were administered by the Italian Administration. In 1954, the first local elections were held, which were won by the Somali Youth League (SYL). However, the Italian Administration remained the state authority, only the cooperation between them and SYL grew.^{48F³} According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held, and political liberties were absent. V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as indicating political liberties are not really present until 1954 and as ambiguous from 1955 onward. For the relevant period, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are moderate. Simultaneously, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive.

03/02/1956 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Italy, Liberal Democracy]/Start Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of Italy, Liberal Democracy]: Universal suffrage was introduced, and first parliamentary elections

were held in February 1956.^{49F}⁴ The SYL won the majority of seats in the Territorial Council.^{50F}⁵ In line with that LIED indicates that multiparty legislative elections were present, whereas executive elections remained absent. These elections gave the assembly complete power over domestic affairs. However, the Italian Administration had the right of absolute veto.^{51F}⁶ For the period under consideration, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI indicates in our interpretation an ambiguous state regarding political liberties. For the relevant regime period, 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.

07/01/1960 End Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of Italy, Liberal Democracy]/Start (Male) Electoral Hybrid Regime: On this date the independent Somali Republic came into being as a result of the merger of the British Somaliland Protectorate, which first became independent on 06/26/1960, and the Italian Trusteeship Territory of Somaliland (Turner 2004). The first parliament that took office was a merger of the elected officials of British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland.^{52F}⁷ They formed the National Assembly.^{53F}⁸ Adan Abdullah Osman Daar was named the first president and named Abdi Rashid Ali Shirmarke as prime minister on 07/12/1960. On 06/20/1961, a new constitution was approved in a referendum. The constitution was widely perceived as unjust in former Somaliland, with over 60% of northern voters opposing it in the referendum. Nevertheless, it was ratified into law. This decision fueled widespread discontent among the population in the north.^{54F}⁹ Until 1963 there was no universal suffrage in the Somali Republic. Only women in the former Italian Trust Territory had been granted the right in 1956. Women in the former British Somaliland were granted the legal right to vote in 1963.^{55F}¹⁰ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Following LIED's data, the elections were competitive. Between 1960 and 1963 the V-Dem's CEI determined the country's elections with a level of ambiguous cleanliness. Additionally, the overall election conditions are also classified as ambiguous by V-Dem's EF&FI. According to LIED political liberties were absent and V-Dem's PCLI indicates in our interpretation an ambiguous state regarding political liberties. Based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority.

03/30/1964 Continuation Electoral Hybrid Regime: On this date parliamentary elections under universal suffrage took place. These were also the first elections to be conducted after the merger of British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland. The ruling Somali Youth League (SYL) won 69 out of 123 seats.^{56F}¹¹ Therefore, based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED declares the elections as competitive. However, V-Dem's CEI indicate that elections were not really clean from 1964 to 1969, while in contrast to that V-Dem's EF&FI indicates that the elections were somewhat free and fair. We would side, in this case and based on our observations with V-Dem's CEI against LIED and V-Dem's EF&FI. Despite the constitutional framework that ostensibly protected civil and political rights, the elections were influenced by deep-rooted clan dynamics and political manipulations. In this timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI indicates in our interpretation an ambiguous state regarding political liberties. For 1969, the PCLI switched into a range that, in our interpretation, indicates that political liberties were not really present. Until 1968, based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive was either equal to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. For the relevant regime period, 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 comprehensive. The ruling SYL dominated the political scene, and the lack of political competition and transparency led to questions about the elections' legitimacy. However, there are also voices like Ahmed Ali M. Khayre (2016: 16) who argue that the elections were free and fair, the judiciary operated independent and the civil and political rights of citizens were adequately protected in this period.

10/21/1969 End Electoral Hybrid Regime/Start Military Autocracy: After the president was assassinated in an unrelated incident, the military used the opportunity to stage a military coup led by colonels under the leadership of Siad Barre. They established the Supreme Revolutionary Council of 25, including initially four generals, seven lieutenant colonels, and seven majors to rule the country. The goal of the council was to create socialism (Welch 1974: 137, Samatar 1992, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 94). According to FH's classification since 1972, a score between 11 and 14 makes the country not free, which we also place in the not free category. No multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period according to LIED. LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is also classified by us as indicating that political liberties were absent. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive held unlimited authority with no institutionalized constraints on decision-making power. For the relevant period, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are absent. Simultaneously, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive.

08/25/1976 End Military Autocracy/Start One-Party Autocracy: A one-party government by the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party was formed.^{57F¹²} It replaced the Supreme Revolutionary Council. In 1979 a new constitution was instated, under which the first election since 1969 was held. As Somalia was a one-party state, the Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party won, and the People's Assembly appointed Siad Barre as President.^{58F¹³} The regime is classified as a one-party autocracy and not a communist ideocracy because the SRSP encouraged private investment on a limited scale. The ideology was based on a so-called scientific socialism and Islamic tenets and not Marxism-Leninism.^{59F¹⁴} Although Somalia was a one-party state, it lacked the organizational features of a typical communist party, such as a commitment to democratic centralism or a vanguard role in leading the proletariat. After a failed coup attempt against Siad Barre in 1978, unrest swept Somalia. No multiparty executive and legislative elections were held until 1978 according to LIED. In 1979 only legislative elections, which weren't multiparty were held. From 1980 to 1990 executive and legislative elections, which weren't multiparty, were held. As classified by FH for this regime period, the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. As per Polity5's classification, the executive wielded unrestricted authority without any formal limitations during this time. For the given timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, whereas V-Dem's PCLI is likewise classified by us as showing that political liberties were absent. From 1976-1978, V-Dem's JCE indicates that judicial constraints on the executive are absent. Simultaneously, V-Dem's LCE shows no value, which, with appropriate caution, can be interpreted as an absence of legislative constraints on the executive. In 1979, 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. For the remaining years, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent.

01/26/1991 End One-Party Autocracy/Start No Central Authority: On this date, Siad Barre was driven from power, after multiple rebellions started across the country. Effective government ceased after in-fighting between groups began (Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 94).^{60F¹⁵} A humanitarian crisis started to unfold, leading to the formation of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) in 1992. On 07/21/1991, northern groups of the country proclaimed Somaliland Republic. Following Somaliland's example, the north-east of Somalia declared autonomy in 1998 and established Puntland.^{61F¹⁶} In 2000 the Republic of Somalia, an interim government (the Transitional Federal Government) was formed, consisting of the many warring clans. It had its headquarters in Kenya until 2005 and never got the support of all war parties.^{62F¹⁷} Per FH, for this regime period, the country scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. No multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period according to LIED. For that period, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as ambiguous regarding the status of political liberties, indicating an intermediate state between present and absent. From 1992 to 2000,

V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent. For the remaining years, 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 robust.

03/20/2012 End No Central Authority/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: The Transnational Federal Government was disbanded on 03/20/2012, as part of the official "Roadmap for the End of Transition", a political process that provided clear benchmarks leading toward the formation of permanent democratic institutions in Somalia,^{63F¹⁸} and the first constitutional government was formed. The Federal Government of Somalia was the first permanent central government in the country since the start of the civil war.^{64F¹⁹} Under the 2012 provisional constitution the president is elected with a two-third majority of both parliamentary chambers of the Federal Parliament to serve a four-year term. The president shares executive power with a prime minister, who must have the support of the parliament. However, the parliament is not elected by the citizens.^{65F²⁰} The lower house as legislative institution, is elected under a clan-based power-sharing system in which clan elders choose delegates, who in turn select lawmakers, rather than popular elections. The electoral framework does not provide universal suffrage. Balloting is the result of an ad-hoc process based on lengthy negotiations among the country's main clans.^{66F²¹} As neither the president nor the parliament are elected by the population, it cannot be coded as an electoral autocracy. As classified by FH for this regime period, the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. Other datasets vary in their classification of Somalia, ranging from personalist rule (AF) to non-electoral autocracy (LIED) to closed autocracy (RoW). This variation suggests coding Somalia as a non-electoral transitional regime in this dataset. LIED classifies multiparty executive and legislative elections as absent until 2021 and doesn't provide a classification for the following years. In this timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as ambiguous regarding the state of political liberties. According to Polity5, during this period, the executive's constraints fell into Intermediate Category 3, between substantial limitations and executive parity or subordination. From 2013 to 2015 and from 2017 to 2018, 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 robust. In 2018, 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. In 2016 and for the remaining years, 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 robust. As of 2016, the government had formed five federal member states, but these semi-autonomous regions frequently clash with the central government. Additionally, the government's authority over territory is challenged by a separatist administration in Somaliland and by the Shabaab, an Islamist militant group. National elections have yet to be conducted, and political dynamics are largely influenced by clan affiliations. Against a backdrop of persistent insecurity, both state and non-state actors frequently perpetrate human rights violations.^{67F²²} On 02/08/2017 Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, also known as Farmaajo, was elected as president by Somalia's two-chamber legislators, who were not freely elected, but selected by tribal clans. He took over the office on 02/16/2017. Farmaajo's term concluded in 02/2021, and the presidential election faced multiple delays throughout the year. In April, Parliament decided to prolong Farmaajo's term by two years, ostensibly to provide adequate time for the nation to prepare for direct elections. However, this decision was reversed a month later following international condemnation. After his term ended, struggles within the country prevented new elections, which then led to demonstrations and unrest. On 05/16/2022 former president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud was re-elected. The regime since 2012 is hard to classify.

Non-Electoral Transitional Regime as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Kakwenzire 1986, Wegemund 1999, Lewis 1981, Roberts 1986)

Notes

- ¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jubaland>
- ² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somalia>; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trust_Territory_of_Somaliland
- ³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trust_Territory_of_Somaliland
- ⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage
- ⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1956_Italian_Somaliland_parliamentary_election
- ⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trust_Territory_of_Somaliland
- ⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1964_Somali_parliamentary_election
- ⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federal_Parliament_of_Somalia
- ⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_of_Somaliland
- ¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somali_Republic
- ¹¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1964_Somali_parliamentary_election
- ¹² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somalia#Somali_Democratic_Republic_\(1969%E2%80%931991\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somalia#Somali_Democratic_Republic_(1969%E2%80%931991))
- ¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1979_Somali_parliamentary_election
- ¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somali_Democratic_Republic
- ¹⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-12285365>
- ¹⁶ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puntland>
- ¹⁷ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somalia>
- ¹⁸ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somalia>
- ¹⁹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somalia>
- ²⁰ <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somalia#Politik>
- ²¹ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/somalia/freedom-world/2023>
- ²² <https://freedomhouse.org/country/somalia>

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