



Turks and Caicos Islands — Va-PoReg Country Report

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09/03/1783 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom as Part of Colony of Jamaica]: Commencing in the mid-1600s, individuals from Bermuda engaged in seasonal visits to the islands for salt collection, eventually establishing more permanent settlements with the presence of African slaves. Amidst the Anglo-French War (1778–1783), the French seized control of the archipelago in 1783. Nevertheless, the Treaty of Paris (1783) subsequently affirmed its status as a British colony. In 1799, Britain incorporated both the Turks and Caicos Island groups into its territory as components of the Bahamas. In 1848, Britain established the Turks and Caicos as an independent colony with a council president. From 1873 to 1874, the islands were integrated into the Jamaica colony and in 1894, the title of the chief colonial official was changed to commissioner.¹ No data was provided by LIED for Turks and Caicos Islands.

07/04/1959 Continuation Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, (Monarchical) Liberal Democracy]: On this date, the islands were once again established as an independent colony, with the final commissioner assuming the title of administrator. The governor of Jamaica concurrently served as the governor of the islands. Following Jamaica's attainment of independence from Britain in August 1962, the Turks and Caicos Islands became a Crown colony. Starting in 1965, the governor of the Bahamas assumed the additional role of overseeing affairs for the Turks and Caicos Islands. When the Bahamas achieved independence in 1973, the Turks and Caicos Islands were appointed their own governor.²

08/30/1973 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]: On this date, the Turks and Caicos Islands adopted their first constitution, marking the establishment of a self-governing system led by a chief minister. Following the People's Democratic Movement's (PDM) victory in the 1976 general election under "Jags" McCartney's leadership, there was an initial push for eventual independence. However, McCartney's untimely death eroded confidence in the pursuit of full independence. In 1980, the pro-independence PDM reached an agreement with the British government, proposing independence by 1982 if the PDM was re-elected that year. The subsequent election in 1980, essentially a referendum on independence, saw the PDM losing to the Progressive National Party (PNP), which favored continued British rule. Norman Saunders of the PNP became chief minister, securing victory again in the 1984 elections. Consequently, the push for independence receded from the political forefront.³ From 1986 to 1988, local government in the Turks and Caicos Islands was suspended due to allegations of government involvement in drug trafficking, leading to the arrest of Chief Minister Norman Saunders. In 2002, the islands were reclassified as a British Overseas Territory, granting full British citizenship to the residents. A new constitution was established in 2006.

02/15/2009 End Electoral Democracy/Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [UK Oversight]: Following corruption allegations Premier Michael Misick of the Progressive National Party (PNP) resigned, the UK suspended the constitution and restored direct rule under a governor appointed by London. During the period of direct British rule, discussions between the leaders of The Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands in 2010 explored the potential formation of a federation.

11/09/2012 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]: On this date, a new constitution came into force and local elections were held on 11/09/2012, restoring an elected House of Assembly and Chief Minister while retaining UK sovereignty.⁴ In 2016, the People's Democratic Movement (PDM) defeated the ruling Progressive National Party (PNP).⁵ In the 2021 general election, the PNP returned to office.⁶ The general election on 02/07/2025 marked the first election held under significant constitutional changes, including the introduction of elected at-large members and electronic voting. The ruling Progressive National Party (PNP), led by Premier Washington Misick, won a decisive victory in the reelection, securing 16 of the 19 available seats. This result solidified the PNP's mandate and maintained its strong dominance over the opposition.⁷ The judiciary is regarded as independent, and elections generally take place under universal suffrage.⁸ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED, FH and V-Dem do not list the country in their datasets.

Electoral Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turks_and_Caicos_Islands#History

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turks_and_Caicos_Islands#20th_and_21st_centuries

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Turks_and_Caicos_Islands#Autonomy

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turks_and_Caicos_Islands#20th_and_21st_centuries

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016_Turks_and_Caicos_Islands_general_election

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2021_Turks_and_Caicos_Islands_general_election

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_Turks_and_Caicos_Islands_general_election

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_the_Turks_and_Caicos_Islands#Political_parties_and_elections