



Wallis and Futuna — Va-PoReg Country Report

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04/05/1887 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of France]: The French were the first Europeans to settle in the area, with French missionaries arriving in 1837. On 04/05/1887, the queen of Uvea, from the traditional chiefdom of Wallis, formally signed a treaty officially establishing a French protectorate. Subsequently, on 02/16/1888, the kings of Sigave and Alo, representing the islands of Futuna and Alofi, also signed a treaty establishing a French protectorate. From that point onward, the islands came under the jurisdiction of the French colony of New Caledonia. Throughout the entire period from 1887 to 2003, Wallis and Futuna was governed through a system of indirect colonial rule. The three customary kings retained full authority over their subjects in all internal matters, with the French resident's role limited to external affairs, budget oversight, and the formal validation of royal appointments.¹ There was no settler colonization and no direct administrative takeover of local governance. French annexation was explicitly considered and rejected in 1913 and again in 1924, as Paris deemed direct rule too costly for a territory of limited strategic value. The administrative reclassifications of 1946, when Wallis and Futuna's status changed alongside New Caledonia's, and of 1961, when residents voted to become a distinct French overseas territory separate from New Caledonia, altered the territory's formal status without changing its underlying governance structure.² Although the 1961 statute introduced an elected Territorial Assembly for the first time, executive power remained firmly with the French-appointed administrator, and the three customary kings continued to exercise parallel authority over local affairs. Neither transition constituted a fundamental regime change: French sovereignty was exercised throughout via existing traditional institutions rather than through direct administrative control, and the territory was never integrated as a formal and equal constituent part of the French state in the manner of the départements. The arrangement therefore does not qualify as Part of Other Country, which would imply full constitutional integration and equal standing within the metropolitan state. The French were the first Europeans to settle in the area, with French missionaries arriving in 1837. On 04/05/1887, the queen of Uvea, from the traditional chiefdom of Wallis, formally signed a treaty, officially establishing a French protectorate. Subsequently, on 02/16/1888, the kings of Sigave and Alo, representing the islands of Futuna and Alofi, also signed a treaty, officially establishing a French protectorate. From that point onward, the islands came under the jurisdiction of the French colony of New Caledonia.³ Due to the population threshold, Wallis and Futuna are excluded from the LIED and V-Dem datasets.

03/28/2003 End Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of France, Liberal Democracy]/Start Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under France, Liberal Democracy]: With the amendment of the French Constitution in 2003, the legal status of the region of Wallis and Futuna changed from a territoire d'outre-mer to a collectivité d'outre-mer (COM).⁴ Wallis and Futuna gained the right to vote for both legislative and executive powers and is represented in the French Senate and Assembly. However, a representative of the French state oversees these institutions and has the authority to postpone legislative decisions, dissolve the parliament or the executive, and establish an interim government. Important policy areas, such as foreign affairs and security policy, are determined by France.⁵ The autonomy rights, representation in the French parliament, and limited sovereignty make it difficult to categorize the regime. Saint Pierre and Miquelon, as well as the other overseas collectivities, represents a special case. Due to its higher degree of autonomy compared to other French administrative zones, such as the départements et régions d'outre-mer, the region is

no longer an Indirect Rule Colonial Regime, but is as, for instance, Greenland, categorized as a semi-sovereign political entity. FH does not provide data for Wallis and Futuna.

Electoral Democracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under France, Liberal Democracy] continued as of 07/01/2025.

Notes

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

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Caledonia#History

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wallis_and_Futuna#History

⁴ <https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/les-revisions-constitutionnelles/revisions-constitutionnelles-de-mars-2003>

⁵ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wallis_und_Futuna