

LAOS

Polity5 regime codes:

fac	scode	polity	pers	bmon	bday	byear	emon	eday	eyear	exrec	exconst	polcomp
0a	LAO	4	1	10	22	1953	5	3	1958	6	5	5
0b	LAO	5	2	5	4	1958	6	28	1959	6	5	8
1X	LAO	-4	1	6	29	1959	12	13	1960	2	3	6
1Xa	LAO	-77	13	12	14	1960	4	4	1974	-77	-77	-77
1O	LAO	-88	2	4	5	1974	12	2	1975	-88	-88	-88
1Oa	LAO	-7	43	12	3	1975	99	99	9999	3	3	1

PITF Problem Events:

1) 06/59-06/79 (ARC 06/59-12/75; REV 08/60-05/62; ETH 07/61-06/79; REV 03/63-03/79)

0a) October 22, 1953 (independence) – Laos gained limited self-government within the French Union as a constitutional monarchy on July 19, 1949. In elections to the National Assembly held on August 26, 1951, the National Progressive Party (NPP) formed by returned leaders of the earlier Lao Issara administration won fifteen of thirty-nine seats; seventeen seats went to independents. Prince Souvanna Phouma of the NPP formed a government on November 21, 1951. The Franco-Lao Treaty of Amity and Association signed on October 22, 1953, removed the remaining limitations on sovereignty and Laos became a fully independent state. Politics were overshadowed by the greater French Indochina War and repeated incursions by Pathet Lao forces supported by the Vietminh. The Armistice ending the war was signed on July 20, 1954, in Geneva. Under terms of the agreement, the Vietminh would withdraw all its forces from the country and the pro-Vietminh Pathet Lao forces would be concentrated in two northeastern provinces and given considerable autonomy, with the intent of being reintegrated with the Kingdom of Laos after elections to be held in 1955. Disagreements and sporadic clashes with the Pathet Lao continued through 1955 and the two northeast provinces did not participate in the December 25, 1955, elections that returned the NPP government. An agreement between (half-brothers) the prime minister, Prince Souvanna Phouma, and the leader of the Pathet Lao, Prince Souphannou Vong, to reintegrate the Pathet Lao was finally reached and signed on October 28, 1957; the northeastern provinces were reincorporated on November 18. The leadership of the Pathet Lao formed the Laotian Patriotic Front (LPN) to participate in May 1958 elections for seats in an expanded National Assembly.

0b) May 4, 1958 (partial legislative elections) – Partial elections held on May 4, 1958, to fill twenty additional seats in the expanded National Assembly; the LPN won nine of the seats. Prince Souvanna Phouma was unable to form a new government due to resistance by the newly formed Committee for the Defense of the National Interests (CDIN) and was replaced as prime minister by Phoui Sananikone of the NPP.

1X) Date of Change to Factional-Autocratic: June 29, 1959 (arrest of communist leaders)

Brief Explanation of Change To:

Due to the popularity of the long-reigning King Sisavang Vong and the common desire to stay neutral in the rapidly disintegrating confrontation between North and South Vietnam, an elected government had emerged under the guidance of the “neutralists” that included both

communists and anti-communist parties. The tenuous political arrangement quickly crumbled when faced with competing threats from North Vietnam and pressures from the United States. On June 28, 1959, the Laotian Patriotic Front (LPF) leadership was arrested and the newly formed, US-backed (anti-communist) CDIN party pressed the neutralist government to name a new power-sharing government. A state of emergency was declared on August 4, 1959. The resulting political crisis triggered a military intervention and the appointment of caretaker government leading to new elections.

Identify Main Factions:

- *Western-oriented parties* – The Western-oriented, anti-communist parties were led by the landed families and received substantial assistance from the United States, as did the Royal Laotian Army, however, the parties and leaders lacked any real cohesion and were wracked by personal rivalries. The US attempted to create a party of young technocrats, the Committee for the Defense of the National Interest (CDIN), but this attempt came late and failed to overcome internal factionalism.
- *Neutralists* – Led by (Prince) Souvanna Phouma, the neutralists promoted an inclusive political program of unity and reconciliation through a policy of neutrality in regard to the war in neighboring Vietnam. They favored integration of the Pathet Lao through appeals to Lao nationalism. The neutralist stance enjoyed support from the highly popular King Sisavang Vong, who died in October 1959.
- *Communists* – The Pathet Lao were led by Prince Souphanouvong and received substantial support from North Vietnam. For a short time in the late 1950s (during the elected government led by Souvanna Phouma), they operated as a conventional party: the Laotian Patriotic Front (*Neo Lao Haksat*). Prior to the military takeover in January 1960, their leadership was detained (on July 28, 1959) and, afterward, jailed to prevent them from running in elections held in April and May 1960. They subsequently escaped from jail and fomented open rebellion against the government.
- Other minor factions:
 - *Ethnic-Hmong* – The ethnic-Hmong occupied areas in the north and were enlisted and armed by the anti-communist factions to resist advances by Pathet Lao rebels and North Vietnamese allies. They did not participate directly in conventional politics.

Adverse Regime Change: June 1959 – December 1975

The reintegration of the LPF (Pathet Lao) into conventional politics in November 1957 and their strong showing in partial legislative elections held in May 1958 triggered a backlash among conservatives in the government and the Royal Laotian Army and incorporation of the newly formed CDIN in the government. Increasing tensions led to clashes between armed forces in the northeast and the arrest of LPF leaders in June 1959. A state of emergency was declared on August 4, 1959. On August 9, 1960, Capt. Kong Le seized power in a coup in an attempt to establish a neutralist government and end fighting between rightist government forces and the communist insurgency. The government remained locked in a tug-of-war between neutralists, rightists, and communists, for fifteen years as regional pressures associated with the neighboring war in Vietnam prevented accommodation among contenders. Following the Vientiane agreement of February 21, 1973, the communist Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) joined a coalition government. Following the fall of Saigon in 1975, the Laotian king renounced

his title in the constitutional monarchy, opening the way for the LPRP to dissolve the coalition government and establish one-party rule.

Revolutionary War: August 1960 – May 1962

Attempts to establish a "neutralist" government in Laos begins to falter when some Pathet Lao forces refuse terms of integration with Royal Army and cross into North Vietnam. Leftist leaders in Laos are arrested for treason in July 1959 and flawed 1960 elections are swept by rightist candidates. In August 1960 a bloodless "neutralist" coup led by Capt. Kong Lae was thwarted by Royal Laotian Army forces under command of Gen. Phoumi in September 1960, sparking an invasion by Pathet Lao forces from their refuge in North Vietnam.

Changes within Factional-Autocratic Period:

1Xa) December 14, 1960 (collapse of central authority) – Elections held in April and May 1960 were manipulated to produce a CDIN victory; this move triggered an August 9, 1960, coup by troops loyal to the neutralists (led by Capt. Kong Le). The neutralist coup effectively split the armed forces as conservative Gen. Phoumi challenged the return to power of Souvanna Phouma and pressured the King to name a provisional government under Prince Boun Oum on December 14, 1960, thereby establishing rival governments.

Ethnic War: July 1961 – June 1979

Hmong (Meo) rebels, encouraged by U.S., fight the Pathet Lao; the ethnic-Hmong rebellion was eventually suppressed after Pathet Lao takeover in 1975. Only sporadic guerrilla activity among the ethnic-Hmong has been noted after June 1979.

Revolutionary War: March 1963 – March 1979

Neutralists and conservatives join forces to oppose communist Pathet Lao insurgents. The Pathet Lao gained effective power in 1975 but resistance by rightist forces continued through March 1979 before it was finally repressed.

1O) Date of Change from Factional-Autocratic: April 5, 1974 (transitional government)

Brief Explanation of Change From:

Following the protracted civil war in Laos, amid serious spillover effects of the neighboring war in Vietnam, pressure to negotiate peace in Laos paralleled the Paris peace talks for Vietnam. An agreement to end hostilities and establish a new coalition government was reached in Vientiane on February 21, 1973, and signed on September 14, 1973. Under terms of the agreement (and following one last, desperate coup attempt), a Provisional Government of National Union was established on April 5, 1974; however, this proved to be simply a prelude to assumption of power by the communists.

Changes within Autocratic-Consolidation Period:

1Oa) December 3, 1975 (one-party state) – King Savang Vatthana signed a letter of abdication on November 29, 1975, and a National Congress of People's Representatives was convened on

December 1-2, 1975. As a result of the congress, the provisional government resigned and a one-party state under the Lao People's Revolutionary Party was declared on December 3, 1975.