



Eswatini — Va-PoReg Country Report

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[formerly known as Swaziland (until 2018)]

12/10/1894 Start Autocratic Monarchy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under Transvaal Republic]: On 07/24/1890, Swaziland was placed under a triumvirate administration, representing the interests of the British, the Dutch republics, and the Swazi people. On 12/10/1894,¹ a convention was established, placing Swaziland under the protection of the South African Republic.² In 1899, the Second Boer War broke out, in which Swaziland was indirectly involved. During this time, the colonists evacuated Swaziland, leaving it in the power of the King, Ngwane V of Swaziland.³ According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. Political liberties were absent per LIED and can be interpreted as not really present according to V-Dem's PCLI. 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.

05/31/1902 End Autocratic Monarchy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under Transvaal Republic]/Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Electoral Oligarchy, as part of Transvaal Republic]: When the British won the Second Boer War, the Treaty of Vereeniging between the Empire and the Transvaal Republic and Orange Free State was signed on 05/31/1902. With this Treaty, Transvaal became part of the British Empire.⁴ With that, "[t]he Governor of the Transvaal was granted all His Majesty's powers and jurisdiction within Swaziland" (Mashasha 1974). Swaziland became a British "High Commission Territory".⁵ On 10/01/1904, Lord Milner issued the Swaziland Administration Proclamation, which stated that the laws of the Transvaal were declared in force in Swaziland, and it was administered as if it was a district of the Transvaal (Mashasha 1974). According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. Political liberties were absent according to LIED and not really present according to V-Dem's PCLI for this period. In this timeframe, 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.

12/01/1906 Continuation Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Electoral Oligarchy]: On 12/01/1906, Swaziland was disannexed from Transvaal and became a separate British protectorate (Mashasha 1974). After becoming a British Protectorate, the Swazi state changed its character of a traditional monarchical authority. The Swazi Ngwenyama became a 'Paramount Chief' because the British would not allow another authority to usurp theirs (Woods 2017). Contrary to the direct rule of the monarch, the nation was predominantly overseen by a resident commissioner. This commissioner governed in accordance with decrees issued by the British High Commissioner to South Africa. The formulation of these decrees involved close consultation with the resident commissioners, who, in turn, sought informal and formal advice from White settler interests and the Swazi king.⁶ In 1921 the European Advisory Council, consisting solely of elected white settlers, was established. Its task was to give advice to the Commissioner on affairs, that were not related to Swazis. After the Commissioner changed the authority of the Swazi King in 1944, objections arouse, leading to the granting of more autonomy to the Paramount Chief in 1952.⁷ According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. Political liberties were absent according to LIED and

not really present according to V-Dem's PCLI in this period. For almost the entire 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. For 1964, 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.

06/17/1964 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]: General elections for a Legislative Council were held⁸. In 1964, preparations for Swaziland's independence began. King Sobhuza II founded his own party, the Imbokodvo National Movement (INM). According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held. Political liberties were absent according to LIED and not really present according to V-Dem's PCLI for this period. For 1965 and 1966, 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 absent. For 1967, 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.

04/25/1967 End Indirect Rule Colonial Regime [of United Kingdom, Liberal Democracy]/Start Autocratic Monarchy: On 04/25/1967, Swaziland was granted internal self-governance. In the same year, universal suffrage was introduced.⁹ In the parliamentary elections of 04/19–20/1967, the royal party, the INM, won all seats with almost 80 per cent of the vote. Although Swaziland had a parliament and initially held multiparty elections, the royal family's policy decisions and appointments were not constrained by the legislature from the outset (Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014b: 96). Hence, the country is coded as an autocratic monarchy. In 1972, the opposition secured victories in three constituencies. In reaction, the king declared a state of emergency, dissolved parliament, disbanded all political parties, and governed by decree from 1973 to 1978 (Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014b: 96). In 1978, the new constitution banned parties and introduced nomination and indirect election procedures to ensure royal control over future parliaments. On 08/22/1982 King Sobhuza II died and as he did not name an heir, the Queen Mother became the Executive Authority (Marshall 2018i). She was replaced by Ntombi as Queen contrary to the King's wishes on 08/10/1983. The new constitution of 07/26/2005 allowed direct, non-partisan election of most of the assembly, but the king could still appoint ten of 65 MPs, 20 of 30 Senators, and the government (Baloro 1994: 21-29, Daniel/Vilane 1986: 57, Levin/MacMillan 2003: 1094-95, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014b: 96).¹⁰ In line with FH we observe that the "king exercises ultimate authority over all branches of the national government and effectively controls local governance through his influence over traditional chiefs".¹¹ Hence, the country is still classified as an autocratic monarchy. According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held in 1967, from 1968 to 1972 multiparty executive and legislative elections were held, and from 1972 onward no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. Per FH, for 1972, the country scores between 6 and 7, categorized as partly free, which we interpret as rather free. Between 1973 and 1983 a score between 9 and 10 makes the country not free, which aligns with our interpretation of rather not free. From 1984 to 1997 Eswatini is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. In 1998, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. For the remaining period from 1999 onward the country scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. Besides, political liberties are classified as constantly absent by LIED since 1967. Following V-Dem's PCLI they were not really present until 1972 and constantly absent from 1973 onwards. From 1968 to 1972, based on Polity5's evaluation, the executive faced weak constraints, classified as Intermediate Category 1 between unlimited authority and slight limitations. Between 1973 and 1978, the executive wielded unrestricted authority without any formal limitations. In 1979, 1980, and 1981, the executive experienced minimal limitations on decision-making, placing it in the first intermediate category. From 1982 to 1985, according to Polity5, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. Between 1986 and

1992, the executive faced weak constraints, classified as Intermediate Category 1 between unlimited authority and slight limitations. From 1993 to 2004, as per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was subject to minor institutional constraints. Since 2005, the executive's constraints fell into Intermediate Category 1, between unlimited authority and slight limitations. From 1968 to 2004, 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. From 2005 to 2017, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited. For 2018-2020, 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. Again since 2021, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited.

Autocratic Monarchy as 07/01/2024 continued.

Additional sources (Keltie 2014)

Notes

¹ <https://www.worldstatesmen.org/Swaziland.html>

² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eswatini#Swazi_settlers_\(18th_and_19th_centuries\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eswatini#Swazi_settlers_(18th_and_19th_centuries))

³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Eswatini#Anglo-Boer_War_\(1899%E2%80%931902\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Eswatini#Anglo-Boer_War_(1899%E2%80%931902))

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

⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eswatini>

⁶ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Eswatini#Swaziland_Protectorate_\(1906%E2%80%931968\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Eswatini#Swaziland_Protectorate_(1906%E2%80%931968))

⁷ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Eswatini#Swaziland_Protectorate_\(1906%E2%80%931968\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Eswatini#Swaziland_Protectorate_(1906%E2%80%931968))

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1964_Swazi_general_election

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women%27s_suffrage

¹⁰ <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/national-practice/constitution-2005-2>; <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2841.html>;
<https://africanelections.tripod.com/sz.html>

¹¹ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/eswatini>; https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Swaziland_2005?lang=en

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