



Natal — Va-PoReg Country Report

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10/12/1838 Start Electoral Oligarchical Autocracy [semi-sovereign, external affairs under United Kingdom, Electoral Oligarchy]: On 10/12/1838 Natal became a republic. However, by 1839, the Boers, led by Pretorius, had overcome the Zulu and established a republic in Natal. This move led to renewed conflict with the British government, which opposed the presence of a competing European state on the Indian Ocean coast. The British also feared the impact of Boer expansion into Natal on the surrounded Nguni communities in the eastern Cape. Consequently, Britain annexed Natal in 1845. Disheartened by this turn of events, most of the Natal Boers returned to the highveld, where other groups of settlers had already displaced the Ndebele beyond the Limpopo River. The British government hesitantly followed the Boers north of the Orange River, yet in 1852 and 1854, it acknowledged the independence of the Boer republics, the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, respectively. Thus, in the mid-nineteenth century, South Africa comprised two British colonies, the Cape and Natal, alongside two Boer republics and numerous independent African kingdoms and chiefdoms, with the Basuto and Zulu kingdoms being the most prominent among them (Oliver/Anthony 2005). From 01/07/1856 on, Natal was a separate British colony. The Imperial Government reluctantly consented to the annexation of Natal. It was not warmly received as an addition to the British Empire; however, the Secretary of State, Lord Stanley, believed that Natal might pose less of a burden to Britain if it were integrated into the Cape Colony rather than being administered as a separate entity. This arrangement remained until 1856, but the challenges of governing the new territory from Cape Town were considerable. Consequently, in 1848, a distinct Legislative Council was established in Pietermaritzburg, and Martin West became the first Lieutenant-Governor, effectively governing Natal as a separate colony (Lambert 1975). On 05/01/1893 Natal received self-government. Following his communication with the Imperial Government, Robinson, upon his return to Natal, strongly advocated for responsible government. This led to the commencement of a significant constitutional discussion in the colony in 1888. Due to disagreements regarding the degree of control the colonists would have over native policy, the debate prolonged for more than four years. However, in 1893, the colony ultimately achieved full self-government (Lambert 1975). In May, the small white settler community commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of Natal's annexation by the British Crown as a district of the Cape Colony. This status persisted until 1856 when Natal became a distinct colony with its own 'representative government'. During the same month of May in 1893, Natal's Legislative Council passed a 'responsible government' bill with a narrow majority, receiving royal assent in July of that year. The year 1893 was significant for another reason, marked by the elections held in September for the new Legislative Assembly under Natal's 'responsible government' constitution. This assembly was elected by a predominantly male and white electorate, reflecting the Colony's non-racial franchise, which, due to property qualifications enforced by local officials, effectively excluded most people of color. Natal's achievement of 'responsible government' status was part of a larger imperial process. Each of the white settlement colonies in Canada and Australia gained representative institutions, albeit at varying rates within the British Empire, depending on local circumstances. Closer to home, Natal neighbored politically independent Boer republics in the interior, as well as the Cape Colony, which had obtained 'representative government' in 1853 and 'responsible government' in 1872. It's noteworthy that Natal was one of the last British colonies with a white settler population to achieve this constitutional milestone. The Imperial Government had to balance settler demands with the interests of

indigenous populations across its overseas territories, particularly in Natal, where settlers constituted a small minority of the population (Guest 1993/94). On 05/31/1910 Natal became part of the Union of South Africa (see Cape Colony, Orange Free State and Transvaal). Based on our observations, only multiparty legislative elections were held during this period, which contradicts the observations of LIED. Before the affiliation to South Africa the country held elections which were not competitive between 1900 and 1910, according to LIED. Furthermore, political liberties were absent (LIED). V-Dem does not register Natal in its dataset.

05/31/1910 End Natal [Electoral Oligarchical Autocracy]: On this date Natal became part of the Union of South Africa.

For time after 05/31/1910, see South Africa.

References

Lambert, John (1975): The Responsible Government Question in Natal, 1856–1893, in: *Kleio* 7, 22-39.

Oliver, Roland/Anthony, Atmore (2005): *Africa Since 1800*. 5. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.