

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Barbudans

Activity: 1981-2020

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- Antigua and Barbuda gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1981 and at that time representatives from Barbuda declared that they wished to create a separate sovereign state for their island. We therefore peg the start date of the movement at 1981.
- The Barbuda Independence Movement (BIM) was formed in 1987 to campaign for island self-government and in the parliamentary elections of 1999 and 2009, the separatist Barbuda People's Movement retained its lone seat (Banks et al. 1997; Caribbean Elections; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000; Keesing's; Lexis Nexis; Minahan 2002).
- On the 31 August 2020, the Barbuda Council, a local council that was established in 1976 by the Barbuda Local Government Act, wrote the Secretary of the cabinet of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda to express their dissatisfaction with the government due to ongoing neglect and called for separation from Antigua (Antigua News Room 2020). Based on this, we code the movement as ongoing as of 2020. [start date: 1981; end date: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- Representatives of Barbudans called for independence for their island since the country's independence from the United Kingdom in 1981. In 1987 the Barbuda Independence Movement (BIM) was formed and later also the separatist Barbuda People's Movement, which continues to advocate independence (Minahan 2002: 269f). Corbett (2020) suggests that independence remained the dominant claim in recent years and, in September 2020, the Barbuda Council sent a formal letter to the central government to initiate a process of separation (Goodwin 2020). [1981-2020: independence claim]

Independence claims

- See above. [start date: 1981; end date: ongoing]

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- The territory claimed by the Barbudans is Barbuda Island (Roth 2015: 431f). We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database.

Sovereignty declarations

- According to Minahan (2002: 269), in late 1981, the Barbudan council announced the secession of their island from the new state. However, it is not clear whether this can be seen as a declaration of independence as defined in the codebook as Minahan does not include this event in his list of independence declarations (see Minahan 2002: 2121ff, 2016: 482ff). The detailed account in Corbett (2020) suggests that the declaration, which was made in early 1981, merely established Barbuda's *intention* to seek separate independence should Antigua become independent. As explained above, this declaration occurred in the context of negotiations about Barbuda's status, which concluded with an autonomy deal. We do not code a declaration.

Separatist armed conflict

- We found no reports of separatist violence, hence a NVIOLSD classification. [NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- Barbuda was claimed by the Spanish in 1493. In 1632, Britain took both Barbuda and Antigua from the Spanish. There were attempts to plant sugar, but the neighboring Antigua island was much more suited to sugar production. A wealthy British family, the Codringtons, bought much of Antigua in the 1640s. Barbuda became a supply colony for their Antigua estates. In Barbuda, enslaved people and following the 1834 abolition freed women and men performed a variety of chores for the Codringtons, but were otherwise largely left to fend for themselves (Lightfoot 2020).
- In 1860, Barbuda was officially annexed to Antigua and in 1872 it became a direct British territory and a dependency of the island of Antigua, ending the feudal control of the Codrington family (Minahan 2002: 268). "The colonial legislature in Antigua passed an ordinance in 1904 that, based on Barbuda as Crown Land, made all Barbudans the British Crown's "tenants" and in effect individualized this tenancy by noting that each "tenant shall pay as rent in respect of land allotted to him such sum as the Governor in Council may from time to time see fit to impose" (Lightfoot 2020: 136). The rent requirement was however never enforced.
- Antigua, with Barbuda as its dependency, joined the West Indies Federation in 1958. In 1967 Antigua became an associated state of Britain, with Barbuda as its dependency. As an associated state, Antigua was fully self-governing in all internal affairs, while the United Kingdom retained responsibility for external affairs and defense. Rejecting their dependent status, Barbudans repeatedly petitioned the British government to grant them a separate administration to protect their unique culture and lifestyle. In 1976, Barbuda was made a semi-autonomous department of Antigua, with its own elected council and a separate representative in the Antigua parliament (Minahan 2002: 268). [1976: autonomy concession]
- Barbudans continued to object to their association with Antigua. Their resistance delayed Antigua and Barbuda's independence for several years. The Barbudan delegation refused to sign the independence agreement. This led to negotiations about an autonomy deal, which led to the Barbuda Council taking over certain island functions. The autonomy deal was enshrined in Antigua and Barbuda's new constitution, which was adopted on 31 July 1981. Antigua and Barbuda ultimately became independent on November 1, 1981 (Meditz & Hanratty 1987; Minahan 2002: 269). [1981: autonomy concession]

Concessions and restrictions

- The 2007 Barbuda Land Act confirmed that land in Barbuda is commonly owned by the people of Barbuda. The act aimed to resolve an ongoing conflict about land rights and further extended the Barbuda Council's already considerable powers (Corbett 2020). [2007: autonomy concession]

- According to Freedom House (2022), the Government of Antigua and Barbuda removed communal land ownership in 2016. However, according to Corbett's (2020) much more detailed account, the Barbuda Land Act was abolished only in 2018. Freedom House may be referring to a smaller amendment of the Barbuda Land Act in 2016, which changed the definition of major developments from \$5.4 million to \$40 million. As a result, any major projects up to a value of \$40 million were exempted from communal land ownership and therefore not subject to a vote from citizens, compared to projects up to a value of \$5.4 million before 2016. [2016, 2018: autonomy restriction]

Regional autonomy

- According to Minahan (2002: 268), Barbuda became a semi-autonomous department in 1976 and gained substantial autonomy in 1981 (effective with independence). According to the Barbuda Local Government Act, the Barbuda Council has a range of competencies including the power to make by-laws in a variety of areas including public health, water supply, traffic and roads, various administrative matters, and the ability to set, raise, and spend a number of different taxes. Regional autonomy continues to exist as of 2020 (Boger and Perdikaris 2019), though it is worth noting that the Antiguan government has restricted communal land ownership in the name of rebuilding Barbuda (Lightfoot 2020: 141). [1981-2020: regional autonomy]

De facto independence

NA

Major territorial changes

- [1981: host state change (new)]
- [1981: establishment of regional autonomy]

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Barbudans
<i>Scenario</i>	No match
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	-
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	-

Power access

- Antigua and Barbuda is not included in EPR, so power access and group size need to be hand-coded. All of Antigua and Barbuda's prime ministers are from Antigua (Vere Bird, Lester Bird, Baldwin Spencer, and Gaston Browne). The online resource CarribeanElections.com includes short biographies of most cabinet members since 1981. We could not find evidence for Barbudan representation until 2004. For most of the period since 1981, Antigua and Barbuda's government was led by the Antigua Labour Party, but between 2004 and 2014 the United Progressive Party (UPP) was in power. During this time, Trevor Walker was continuously represented in the national cabinet, first as Minister of State responsible for Public Utilities, Energy, and Barbuda Affairs and then as Minister of Works and Transport. Since 2014, Arthur Nibbs – who won the Barbudan seat in 2014, defeating Trevor Walker by a single vote – has held the post of Minister of Agriculture, Lands, and Barbuda Affairs. That Barbudan representation increased after 2004 is confirmed in the detailed account by Corbett (2020).

- Despite this, Barbuda's role in the government remains limited, with Wily (2017) suggesting that Antigua and Barbuda's government is "Antiguan-dominated". [1981-2004: powerless; 2005-2020: junior partner]

Group size

- According to Minahan (2002: 267), there were around 5,000 Barbudans living in Antigua & Barbuda. According to the WB, Antigua and Barbuda's population in 2002 was approx. 78,000. [0.064]

Regional concentration

- According to Minahan (2002: 267), Barbudans made up 92% of the population of Antigua & Barbuda in 2002, but only approx. 1,800 of the 5,000 Barbudans lived on Barbuda (36%) while the remainder lived on Antigua, where economic opportunities are more plentiful. [not concentrated]

Kin

- We found no evidence for numerically significant ethnic kin. [no kin]

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