

COMOROS

Anjouanese

Activity: 1996-2015

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- In August 1997, Anjouanese separatists unilaterally declared the independence of their island, Anjouan, after Anjouan's autonomy was significantly curtailed in 1996. But separatist agitation appears to have started earlier. The evidence is limited, but Minahan (2002: 127) reports that the first openly nationalist organization, the Anjouan Liberation Movement (MLA), was formed in 1996. UCDP appears to suggest that there has been separatist agitation already before that date, but does not give clearer indications. Hence, we peg the start date at 1996. In 2001, an accord to end Anjouanese separatism was signed (Agence France Presse 2/17/2001, Lexis Nexis). Yet separatist agitation continued.
- In 2005, several Anjouanese separatists were arrested. According to Lansford (2014: 310), the movement's activities were limited thereafter. We code an end to the movement in 2015, following the ten-year rule. The 2015 end date also aligns with Dobler (2018: 166), who states that "In 2015, 40 years after the Comoros became independent, the political climate seemed at its calmest and secessionism was no longer on the table."
- In 2018, there was an uprising against President Azali Assoumani on Anjouan, which appears to be in reaction to a Constitutional referendum which ended the system of rotating representation in the Executive between the three main islands (Nexis, 2018: Online). We found no clear evidence that separatist claims were made in the context of the rebellion. [start date: 1996; end date: 2015]

Dominant claim

- Anjouanese separatists unilaterally declared the independence of their island in August 1997 and a subsequent independence referendum, 99.68% voted in favor of independence with a turnout of 94.79% (Dobler 2018: 160). Overall, the evidence we collected suggests that independence likely remained the dominant claim throughout most of the movement's history. However, independence importantly was not the only claim made. On the one hand, the 1997 bid for independence involved a concurrent request to rejoin France (Minahan, 2002: 127; Roth, 2015: 297). Minahan (2016: 29) suggests that pro-independence sentiment remained widespread. [1996-2015: independence claim]

Independence claims

- See above. [start date: 1996; end date: 2015]

Irredentist claims

- The 1997 bid for independence involved a concurrent request to rejoin France. However, when the French refused a merger, the irredentist claim was dropped (Minahan 2002: 127; Roth 2015: 297). [start date: 1997; end date: 1997]

Claimed territory

- The territory claimed by Anjouanese is the Anjouan island. We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database.

Sovereignty declarations

- The first declaration of independence was on the 25th March 1998, however, the establishment of a state president in August 1997 is as clear of a signal for independence as can be given (Dobler, 2019: 160-162). There is some overlap with a claim to irredentism, however, the two claims ran parallel meaning that irredentism did not disrupt declaration of sovereignty. [1997: independence declaration]
- According to Minahan (2016: 489), Anjouan again declared independence in 2007. [2007: independence declaration]

Separatist armed conflict

- Although Marshall & Gurr (2003: 64) classify this movement as a nonviolent self-determination movement, there are reports in Keesing's of separatist violence. In September 1997 clashes between Anjouanese secessionists and Comorian army personnel resulted in at least 46 deaths (30 government troops and 16 secessionists). In line with Keesing's, UCDP/PRIO codes an armed conflict over Anjouan in 1997.
- An additional thirteen people were killed in December 1998 in clashes between separatist factions. Three more were killed in the 2008 invasion of Anjouan (Mail and Guardian, 2008: Online) and at least three were killed during an uprising in 2018 against President Azali Assoumani (Nexis, 2018: Online). We do not code those years with LVIOLSD since the 25 deaths threshold was not met. [1996: NVIOLSD; 1997: LVIOLSD; 1998-2015: NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- The Comoros islands (Anjouan, Grande Comore, Moheli, Mayotte under French rule) have seen waves of migration, first from mainland Africa, with notable migrations from Arab and Persian merchants, and Madagascan's. This made it an Muslim outpost of trade in Africa and the Indian Ocean. The islands were under Omani rule until the 16th Century, and from the early 19th Century from Malagasy of Madagascar. These latter rulers both imported slaves and conducted slave raids among the islands, leading to isolated and defensive communities on each island. The Sultan of Anjouan requested protection of the French Empire in 1816, but France later bought the islands and spread control over them from 1841 (Dobler, 2019: 152-3; Minahan, 2002: 125-6; Minahan, 2016: 29). Given this history, Anjouan and Grande Comore were the former centers of power under the sultanates, whilst Mayotte had closer ties to France as the first island to be bought by the French (Dobler, 2019: 154).
- There was disparity in the management of the Comoros Islands for much of French rule, leading to diverse attitudes towards autonomy, independence, and even irredentism. Anjouan became a French protectorate in 1866 with Moheli and Grande Comore following in 1886. From 1892 each protectorate was brought under the governor of Mayotte, only becoming officially attached to the colony of Mayotte from 1904. From 1912 the islands were formally attached to Madagascar until 1947 when the four islands detached to become the Territoire d'Outre-Mer (TOM) with their own governor and seats in the French parliament. The TOM became self governing in 1961. Increasingly vocal calls for independence on Moheli and French domestic pressures led to an independence referendum on the islands on 12th December 1974, with 94.65% in favour. However, Mayotte voted against independence, leaving it separate from the newly formed state and has remained a part of the French Overseas Territories. Comoros declared independence on the 6th July 1975 (Dobler, 2019: 152-3; Minahan, 2002: 125-6)

- Comoros has seen persistent political upheaval, seeing numerous coup attempts involving outside powers and individual strongmen. The first President, Ahmed Abdullah, was ousted within a month of independence, but led a coup with the help of French mercenaries 3 years later in 1978. Throughout his rule he became increasingly autocratic until he was shot and killed in a coup in 1989. Persistent interference from foreign powers, autocratic rule, and a dire economic situation fuelled the emergence of independence movements on the islands, including on Anjouan and Mohéli (Dobler, 2019: 159).
- According to UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia: “In 1996, Mohamed Taki was elected president of the Comoros. He quickly adopted a new constitution, which strengthened his own position and centralised the country's political structure. The latter meant that the autonomy of the two smaller islands - Mohéli and Anjouan - was severely eroded. This fact, in combination with the widespread perception that a disproportionate share of government spending was allocated to the main island, Grande-Comore, spurred violent protests. Tension began to mount on Anjouan in early 1997, when large and oftentimes violent demonstrations, demanding wage arrears and protesting against the policies of President Taki, became increasingly common.” Note: the account in Minahan (2002: 127) suggests that it is the constitution which led to the formation of the SDM; therefore, we code this as a prior restriction. [1996: autonomy restriction]

Concessions and restrictions

- In 1997 following the unilateral establishment of independence, Comorian soldiers landed on Anjouan to subdue the independence movement. They were met with resistance that led to at least 46 deaths (UCDP). Following this, economic sanctions were placed on the island that led to an economic blockade of Anjouan. The free movement of persons and goods to and from Anjouan was forbidden and telephone links closed (UCDP; AllAfrica, 2000: Online). [1997: autonomy restriction]
 - o Note: this restriction was imposed after the outbreak of violence in 1997.
- According to Dobler (2019: 161): “From April 19 to 23, 1999, still under a caretaker central government, Anjouan took part in the inter-island conference in Antananarivo, which reached an agreement between the central state and the island of Mohéli: Through a new constitution, the islands would gain more autonomy within a new federal state now called “Union des Comores.” In exchange, Anjouan and Mohéli would abandon their secession attempts.” This could be coded as a concession because the central state's offer constitutes a significant offer of autonomy to a de facto entity; however, there was a successful military coup shortly after the conference with the army leader suggesting that the interim president was too generous to Anjouanese separatists. Therefore, we do not code a concession.
- In August 2000 the Comorian government unilaterally lifted the economic embargo of Anjouan that had been installed in 1997 (AllAfrica, 2000: Online). In line with the codebook, we do not code the lifting of a blockade as a concession.
- Under sanction from the African Union (AU) and guidance from South Africa, a new constitution was adopted in 2001 (Cederman et al, 2010; Vogt et al, 2015). This established a new federal system where the presidents of each island would serve as vice president of the central government. (Dobler, 2019: 162). The new constitution was approved by referendum in December 2001. [2001: autonomy concession]
- The new federal system allowed for negotiation of dispersed power within a unified Comorian state. This included a revenue-sharing formula in 2005 and a compromise for local control over security forces in 2006 (Dobler, 2019: 164). [2006: autonomy concession]
- Anjouan made another secession attempt in 2007. The islands were subsequently retaken militarily by Comoros and AU forces on March 2008 (Minahan, 2016: 29). This is not coded as an autonomy restriction because Anjouan had acted unilaterally.
- After this, the President of Comoros, Ahmed Sambi, sought reform for a more centralized constitution. This was approved by referendum in May 2009. This downgraded the presidents and ministers of the islands to governors and commissioners, gave the president the right to dissolve parliament, and created a unified public service (Dobler, 2019: 165). However, the single term

rotational presidency remained (Cederman et al, 2010; Vogt et al, 2015; Roth, 2015: 297). [2009: autonomy restriction]

- A 2018 constitutional referendum led to the end of the single term rotating presidency. This eliminated the guaranteed political representation of Moheli and Anjouan and the power sharing system in place since 2001 (Cederman et al, 2010; Vogt et al, 2015; Reuters, 2018). Furthermore, according to EPR, “the islands further lose regional autonomy status, as the new constitution “significantly reduced the size and authority of the islands’ governorates”. We would code an autonomy restriction in 2018, but the movement was no longer active at the time.

Regional autonomy

- Anjouan unilaterally declared independence in August 1997 and was subsequently de facto independent. In 2001, a new constitution was approved that gave Anjouan substantial autonomy. Anjouan reintegrated. Although the level of regional autonomy waxed and waned in subsequent years (see concessions and restrictions), Anjouan always maintained a meaningful level of regional autonomy until 2018, when all meaningful autonomy was revoked (Cederman et al, 2010; Vogt et al, 2015; Reuters, 2018). [1996-1997: no autonomy; 1998-2015: regional autonomy]

De facto independence

- Florea (2014: 793) codes Anjouan as a de facto state continuously from 1997-2008, however this can be disputed due to the reintegration of the island in the new federal system, where Anjouan became a senior partner according to EPR (Cederman et al, 2010; Vogt et al, 2015). Contrary to Florea, we code two periods of de facto independence. The first began on 5th August 1997 when Abdullah Ibrahim was named the first State President, with the declaration of independence on 25th February 1998. This ended with the February 2001 framework for a new constitution and the peaceful reintegration of Anjouan (and Moheli) (Dobler, 2019: 160-162). [1998-2001: de facto independence]
- The second period of de facto independence was short-lived and began in 2007 when Anjouan again declared independence. The Comoros government and AU intervened on 25th March 2008 and Anjouan was forcibly reintegrated. This period is not coded by EPR as self-exclusion; however control of the territory of Anjouan was total and not recognized by the central Comorian government or the international community despite doubts about the motive of the independence declaration (Dobler, 2019: 165; Minahan, 2016: 29; Danver, 2015: 598). [2008: de facto independence]

Major territorial changes

- [1997: establishment of de facto independence]
- [2001: revocation of de facto independence]
- [2001: establishment of regional autonomy]
- [2007: establishment of de facto independence]
- [2008: revocation of de facto independence]

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Anjouanese
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Nzwani Comorans
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	58101000

Power access

- We adopt EPR central state power access codes, with the exception that in line with our general approach, we code the Anjouanis as powerless during periods when they were de facto independent. [1996-1997: junior partner; 1998-2001: powerless; 2002-2007: senior partner; 2008: powerless; 2009-2015: senior partner]

Group size

- We adopt the relative group size from EPR. [0.443]

Regional concentration

- Minahan (2002: 124) suggests that >50% of Anjouanese live in on Anjouan and that they make up 84% of the local population there. [regional concentration]

Kin

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

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Mohelis

Activity: 1997-2008

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- In 1997, Mohéli unilaterally declared independence from Comoros (Roth 2015: 297) in response to a decision to reduce the island's autonomy by Comoros' newly elected president in 1996 (UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia). This is the first evidence for organized separatist activity we have found, and so peg the start date to 1997. Mohéli was de facto independent until 1998, when it reintegrated with Comoros (Buzard et al. 2017; Dobler 2019: 159; Roth 2015: 297).
- We found no concrete evidence of separatist mobilization after 1998. Therefore, following the 10 year rule, we code the end date as 2008 [start date: 1997; end date: 2008]

Dominant claim

- Moheli separatists unilaterally declared the independence of their island in August 1997, a few days after Anjouan. However, unlike Anjouan there is no clear group making a claim for independence prior to 1997, with Minahan simply citing an independence claim by "leaders of the Moheli people" (2002: 127). There are conflicting accounts of the exact claim made by the Moheli. Minahan states that Moheli announced it would "join the new state [of Anjouan]" (2002: 127). Both Roth and Dobler highlight a simpler claim of independence (Roth, 2015: 297; Dobler, 2019: 159). [1997-2008: independence claim]

Independence claims

- See above. [start date: 1997; end date: 2008]

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- The territory claimed by Moheli is the Moheli island. We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database.

Sovereignty declarations

- Moheli declared independence unilaterally on 11th August 1997 (Cederman et al, 2010; Vogt et al, 2015; Roth, 2015: 297; Minahan, 2002: 127). No further detail is given on the nature of this sovereignty declaration. [1997: independence declaration]

Separatist armed conflict

- We found no evidence for separatist violence above the threshold and therefore code the entire movement as NVIOLSD. [NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- The Comoros islands (Moheli, Anjouan, Grande Comore, Mayotte under French rule) have seen waves of migration, first from mainland Africa, with notable migrations from Arab and Persian merchants, and Madagascan's. This made it a Muslim outpost of trade in Africa and the Indian Ocean. The islands were under Omani rule until the 16th Century, and from the early 19th Century were ruled by the Malagasy of Madagascar. These latter rulers both imported slaves and conducted slave raids among the islands, leading to isolated and defensive communities on each island. The island of Moheli was under the Sultan of Anjouan until the early 19th century when it came under control of Malagasy of Madagascar (Minahan, 2002: 126).
- There was disparity in the management of the Comoros Islands for much of French rule, leading to diverse attitudes towards autonomy, independence, and even irredentism. Moheli and Grande Comore became French protectorates in 1886, 22 years after Anjouan (Dobler, 2019: 153). From 1892 each protectorate was brought under the governor of Mayotte, only becoming officially attached to the colony of Mayotte from 1904. From 1912 the islands were formerly attached to Madagascar until 1947 when the four islands detached to become the Territoire d'Outre-Mer (TOM) with their own governor and seats in the French parliament. The TOM became self governing in 1961. Increasingly vocal calls for independence on Moheli and French domestic pressures led to an independence referendum on the islands on 12th December 1974, with 94.65% in favour. However, Mayotte voted against independence, leaving it separate from the newly formed state and has remained a part of the French Overseas Territories. Comoros declared independence on the 6th July 1975 (Dobler, 2019: 152-3; Minahan, 2002: 125-6)
- Comoros has seen persistent political upheaval, seeing numerous coup attempts involving outside powers and individual strongmen. The first President, Ahmed Abdullah, was ousted within a month of independence, but led a coup with the help of French mercenaries 3 years later in 1978. Throughout his rule he became increasingly autocratic until he was shot and killed in a coup in 1989. Persistent interference from foreign powers, autocratic rule, and a dire economic situation fuelled the emergence of independence movements on the islands, including on Moheli and Anjouan (Dobler, 2019: 159).
- According to UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia: "In 1996, Mohamed Taki was elected president of the Comoros. He quickly adopted a new constitution, which strengthened his own position and centralised the country's political structure. The latter meant that the autonomy of the two smaller islands - Moheli and Anjouan - was severely eroded. This fact, in combination with the widespread perception that a disproportionate share of government spending was allocated to the main island, Grande-Comore, spurred violent protests" (UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia). In particular, Moheli was concerned about under representation in parliament and only receiving a disproportionately small share of the states budget (Minority Rights Online). [1996: autonomy restriction]

Concessions and restrictions

- Comoros adopted a new constitution in 2001 under sanction from the African Union (AU) and guidance from South Africa (Cederman et al, 2010; Vogt et al, 2015). This established a new federal system where the presidents of each island would serve as vice president of the central government. (Dobler, 2019: 162). The new constitution was approved by referendum in December 2001. [2001: autonomy concession]
- The new federal system allowed for negotiation of dispersed power within a unified Comorian state. This included a revenue-sharing formula in 2005 and a compromise for local control over security forces in 2006 (Dobler, 2019: 164). [2006: autonomy concession]

- Following a second attempt at secession in 2007 by Anjouan and its forceful reintegration into Comoros (Minahan, 2016: 29; Florea, 2014: 793), the President of Comoros, Ahmed Sambi, sought reform for a more centralized constitution. This was approved by referendum in May 2009. This downgraded the presidents of the islands to governors and commissioners and centralized some public services (Dobler, 2019: 165). However, the single term rotational presidency remained (Cederman et al, 2010; Vogt et al, 2015; Roth, 2015: 297). We would code an autonomy restriction in 2009, but the movement was no longer active at the time.
- A 2018 constitutional referendum led to the end of the single term rotating presidency. This eliminated the guaranteed political representation of Moheli and Anjouan and the power sharing system in place since 2001 (Cederman et al, 2010; Vogt et al, 2015; Reuters, 2018). Furthermore, according to EPR, “the islands further lose regional autonomy status, as the new constitution “significantly reduced the size and authority of the islands’ governorates”. We would code an autonomy restriction in 2018, but the movement was no longer active at the time.

Regional autonomy

- Moheli unilaterally declared independence in August 1997 and was subsequently de facto independent. However, unlike Anjouan, Moheli returned to Comoros in 1998 (Roth, 2015: 297; Dobler, 2019: 159). Despite its early return to Comoros, Moheli benefited from a new constitution in 2001 that gave both Moheli and Anjouan substantial autonomy. The level of regional autonomy waxed and waned in subsequent years (see concessions and restrictions). [1997: no regional autonomy; 1998: regional autonomy; 1999-2001: no regional autonomy; 2002-2008: regional autonomy]

De facto independence

- EPR suggests that the Mohéli were “self-excluded” until and including 2001; however, several other sources we consulted suggest that Mohéli had re-integrated with Comoros already in 1998 (Roth, 2015: 297; Dobler, 2019: 159; Buzard et al, 2017). [1998: de facto independence]

Major territorial changes

- [1997: establishment of de facto independence]
- [1998: revocation of de facto independence]
- [2001: establishment of regional autonomy]

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Mohélians
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Mwali Comorans
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	58102000

Power access

- EPR codes the Mohéli as junior partner in 1997 and then as self-excluded between 1998 and 2001, which would become a powerless code in our coding scheme. As noted above, several sources suggest that contrary to EPR, Mohéli’s attempted secession and period of self-exclusion ended already in 1998. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, the then-president of Comoros died of natural causes in November 1998 and was replaced by an interim president. Before new

elections, mandated by the constitution, could be held, there was a military coup, and the military dictator (Col. Azali Assoumani), who thought the interim president was too accommodating towards Anjouan, subsequently negotiated with the Anjouanese separatists. We found no concrete evidence suggesting that the Mohéli were represented in the central executive during this time and so extend the powerless code to 2001. Our coding aligns with EPR. We follow EPR in all other years. [1997: junior partner; 1998-2001: powerless; 2002-2008: senior partner]

Group size

- We adopt the relative group size from EPR. [0.052]

Regional concentration

- We could not find exact population figures, but regional concentration seems likely. For one, EPR codes Moheli as a regionally concentrated group (Cederman et al, 2010; Vogt et al, 2015). Moreover, the Joshua project suggests that Mwali/Mohélie are concentrated in Mohéli and that the only other significant population is in Madagascar. [regional concentration]

Kin

- The Joshua project suggests that there are Mwali in Madagascar, but the community is <100,000. Overall, we found no evidence for numerically significant ethnic kin as defined in the codebook. [no kin]

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