

Azerbaijan

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James D. Fearon

David D. Laitin

Stanford University

This is one of a set of “random narratives” to complement our statistical findings in regard to civil war onsets. It quotes freely and without attribution from Laitin and Suny (1999) and Laitin (2001). This is a draft completed on April 4, 2006; comments welcome.

Azerbaijan entered the international system of states in 1991, and by our statistical model it had nearly a 20 percent chance of a civil war onset that year, a factor of 10 higher than the world average. There were only six countries in the world that our model ever assigns a higher probability for a civil war (Indonesia, Pakistan, Yemen, Philippines, South Korea, and Angola). All of them experienced at least one onset in our dataset. Consistent with our model’s predictions, Azerbaijan was at war with a separatist movement in Nagorno-Karabakh in the wake of receiving independence that came with the Soviet collapse. Nearly all commentary on Azerbaijan points to the historic injustice of incorporating this Armenian populated mountainous enclave under Azeri political control as the basic cause for the war. Our model does not consider historical injustices as relevant for prediction. Rather, Azerbaijan’s extraordinary hazard rate for civil war is in our models a result of having a low GDP/cap,¹ being a new state in which oil was a major part of the economy, on a terrain that is significantly mountainous,² and with a political regime that was anocratic, that is, neither democratic nor autocratic. The clear picture in 1991 is of Azerbaijan as a weak state. The first question we ask in this narrative is

¹ . While the GDP/cap figures in 1991 were close to the world mean, the reality is more likely that the values for GDP/cap in the mid-1990s (about half the world mean) were more reflective of the immediate post-Soviet world.

² . Azerbaijan is significantly more mountainous the mean country in the region or in the world. The Library of Congress Country Study report “The elevation changes over a relatively short distance from lowlands to highlands; nearly half the country is considered mountainous. Except for its eastern Caspian shoreline and some areas bordering Georgia and Iran, Azerbaijan is ringed by mountains. To the northeast, bordering Russia’s Dagestan Autonomous Republic, is the Greater Caucasus range; to the west, bordering Armenia, is the Lesser Caucasus range. To the extreme southeast, the Talysh Mountains form part of the border with Iran. The highest elevations occur in the Greater Caucasus, where Mount Bazar-dyuzy rises 4,740 meters above sea level.”

whether the factors our model points to are more compelling as causal than the more well-known historic injustice narrative.

The second question we ask is why there was not a second civil war onset in the mid 1990s, when population rises, GDP/cap declines, and due to the seizure of power by a former Soviet apparatchik (Haidar Aliyev), Azerbaijan becomes politically unstable. In 1995, the probability of civil war, after declining by virtue of no longer being a new state, shoots up to about seven times the world average. Yet there was no second civil war. Here we can ask whether our “instability” variable had a discernible impact on civil war incentives, even if it did not tip the scales toward an onset?

By 1999, Aliyev consolidated autocratic power, and oil revenues began coming into the economy. There was therefore neither anocracy, nor instability and GDP was on the rise. Azerbaijan’s predicted probability for a civil war onset began to converge toward the world mean (though still three times higher), and there has been no war. For this final period, there is little to explain.

I. Civil War over Nagorno-Karabakh 1991-1993

Background to the Conflict

In late 1921, the Bolshevik insurgents, in reconstituting the Russian empire on a new political foundation, fashioned the Transcaucasian federated republic, composed of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. In 1922, it became part of the newly proclaimed Soviet Union as the Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (TSFSR). The three subunits ceded their constitutional powers over foreign policy, finances, trade, transportation, and other areas to the TSFSR. In 1936, with the issuance of the new "Stalin Constitution", the TSFSR was abolished, and the three constituent parts were proclaimed as separate Soviet “union” republics (Radio Odlar Yurdu).

In making the division into three republics, Soviet authorities had to face two boundary anomalies. The first was Nakhichevan, an Azerbaijani enclave between Armenia and northwestern Iran. The Red Army that occupied this zone in 1920 declared Nakhichevan a Soviet socialist republic with close ties to Azerbaijan, and Soviet authorities reported that a 1921 referendum confirmed a majority in that enclave preferred to be part of Azerbaijan. Turkey also supported this solution. The Russo-Turkish Treaty

of Moscow and the Treaty of Kars among the three Transcaucasian states and Turkey, both signed in 1921, confirmed Nakhichevan's close ties to Azerbaijan. Although without any contiguity with Azerbaijan, Nakhichevan became an Autonomous Republic (ASSR) within the Azeri Soviet Socialist Republic (Radio Odlar Yurdu).

Soviet authorities did not, however, give a parallel parcel to the Armenian Republic. They created the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region within Azerbaijan in 1924, when over 94 percent of the region's population was Armenian. Autonomous Karabakh was separated from Armenia proper by a six-mile swath of land - the Lachin corridor - that was primarily settled by Muslim Kurds. With Lachin as part of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Armenia had no contiguous border with Karabakh. Through formal control over the Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR), one step below a Union Republic in the federal hierarchy, Armenian nationals had nominal political control over the regional Karabakh soviet. But ASSRs had minimal autonomy in the federal structure of the Soviet Union, and Karabakh remained subservient to Baku and its Azerbaijani Communist party.

Armenians in Karabakh and Armenia proper protested periodically against this infringement of the national principle (especially in light of the lack of parallel justice in light of the Nakhichevan's status), as well as what they perceived to be restrictions on the cultural and economic development of the Karabakh Armenians. Azerbaijanis, on the other hand, saw Karabakh as part of their historic homeland, the cradle of poets and composers, and the victim of aggressive Armenian nationalism. When in the late-1980s nationalist stirrings were felt throughout much of the Soviet Union, titular groups within union republics envisioned a possible sovereignty and a concomitant "ownership" of their republics. In this utopian vision, national minorities like Azerbaijanis in Armenia or Armenians in Azerbaijan were a thorn pricking the balloon of national fulfillment. Migration back to "home" republics accelerated. But with the opening of greater political expression under Gorbachev, the Karabakh Armenians called for the merger of their autonomous district with the Armenian republic. On February 13, 1988, street demonstrations began in Stepanakert, the capital of Karabakh, and six days later they were joined by mass marches in Erevan. In an unprecedented action, the Soviet of People's Deputies in Karabakh, up to this time a typical rubber-stamp Soviet-style legislature, voted 110-17 to request from Moscow the transfer of Karabakh to Armenia.

Towards a Civil War Onset

On February 20, 1988, the Armenian deputies in Nagorno-Karabakh's National Council voted for unification with Armenia. This vote triggered an Azerbaijani massacre of Armenians in the drab industrial town of Sumgait, just north of Baku. Armenians were set upon by neighbors, some of them Azeris who were refugees from Armenia. The pictures were gruesome. Some were hacked to death before the eyes of family members, several set afire, and about one hundred total were killed.

Radio Odlar Yurdu reports, "A similar attack on Azerbaijanis occurred in the Armenian town of Spitak. Large numbers of refugees left Armenia and Azerbaijan as pogroms began against the minority populations of the respective countries. In the fall of 1989, intensified interethnic conflict in and around Nagorno-Karabakh led Moscow to grant Azerbaijani authorities greater leeway in controlling that region. The Soviet policy backfired, however, when a joint session of the Armenian Supreme Soviet and the National Council, the legislative body of Nagorno-Karabakh, proclaimed the unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia. In mid-January 1990, Azerbaijani protesters in Baku went on a rampage against remaining Armenians and the [Azerbaijani Communist Party] ACP. Moscow intervened, sending police troops of the MVD, who violently suppressed the [Azerbaijani Popular Front] APF and installed Ayaz Mutalibov as president. The troops reportedly killed 122 Azerbaijanis in quelling the uprising, and Gorbachev denounced the APF for striving to establish an Islamic republic. These events further alienated the Azerbaijani population from Moscow and ACP rule."

In the declining hours of the Soviet Union, in a December 1991 referendum boycotted by the Azerbaijanis, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh approved the creation of an independent state. Armenian voters elected a new Supreme Soviet, and the new government appealed for world recognition. Armenian militias along with civilian compatriots shortly thereafter went on the attack. They systematically cleansed the corridor separating Armenia from Karabakh in a cold-blooded campaign. Armed bands relied on local Armenians to identify Azerbaijani villages and homes and then recruited these people to burn down the homes of their (ethnically different) neighbors.

Azerbaijan's strategy in this initial period was to blockade landlocked Armenia's supply lines and to rely on support from the Russian 4th Army, which remained in Azerbaijan after the Soviet collapse. Azerbaijanis clashed regularly with Russian troops, however, and this compelled Russia to withdraw from the republic (Library of Congress). In the early period of attack, Azerbaijani forces were able to push back the Armenians, empty Armenian villages outside of Karabakh, and use Russian and Chechen mercenaries effectively against enemy soldiers and civilians. But after the Armenians took towns outside Karabakh and hundreds of Azerbaijanis died in a massacre at Khojali in March 1992, the Communist government of Mutalibov fell. When Shushi, the mountain-top traditional capital of Karabakh, was captured by the Armenians, Mutalibov attempted to return to power, but fighting in the streets resulted in a victory of the APF in May.

In 1992, in Azerbaijan's only free election, Abulfaz Elchibey, leader of the APF, was elected president. This nationalist government reoriented Azerbaijan away from Russia, left the CIS and turned toward Turkey but proved equally inept in pursuing the war. After an Armenian victory at Kelbajar, opening up a broad land bridge to the Armenian republic, forces led by Azeri warlord Suret Huseinov overthrew the Elchibey government in June 1993 and this brought the former Communist chief Heidar Aliyev back to power in Baku (Suny 1999). Under Aliyev, "in December 1993, Azerbaijan launched a major surprise attack on all fronts in Karabakh, using newly drafted personnel in wave attacks, with air support. The attack initially overwhelmed Armenian positions in the north and south but ultimately was unsuccessful. An estimated 8,000 Azerbaijani troops died in the two-month campaign, which Armenian authorities described as Azerbaijan's best-planned offensive of the conflict" (Library of Congress). Azerbaijan was defeated.

By 1994 a ceasefire was signed. About 30,000 people had already lost their lives during the conflict, and more than one million were driven out of their homes.³

Accounting for the Civil War

Ethnic Hatreds

³ . BBC News, July 7, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3052410.stm>.

In seeking to account for this war Stuart Kaufman emphasizes what he calls “modern hatreds”. War over Nagorno-Karabakh “occurred because both Armenians and Azerbaijanis held such deep mutual prejudices that each side defined its security in ways that the other side considered threatening to its national existence” (1998, p. 12). There is a powerful brief for an account of the violence based upon prejudice and hatred.

From the early 20th century, the Azeri and Armenian communities kept at arms length from each other. With the growth of industry and international political influences, radical and reformist political organizations emerged at the turn of the century. A leftist party Himmat (Equality) was formed in 1903-4 by a group of intellectuals to champion Azerbaijani culture in the face of Russian influence. Meanwhile, a Social Democratic Party (which later split into Bolshevik and Menshevik factions) also existed, but that party was more Russian and Armenian than Azerbaijani (GAN).

And by the time of the civil war in the wake of the Bolshevik coup, the Azeri/Armenian conflict had already become violent. In April 1920, the Red Army met little resistance from Azerbaijani forces because the Azerbaijanis were themselves suppressing separatism among the Armenians who formed a majority in Nagorno-Karabakh (Radio Odlar Yurdu). To insure security for the Bolsheviks, in 1921 Lenin and Stalin, working through the Caucasian Bureau of the Russian Communist Party, pacified Mustafa Kemal, the leader of the Turkish Nationalist Army, by assigning Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan, angering Armenian leaders (Mooradian and Druckman 1999, 709).

In the late Gorbachev period, the population diverged territorially and culturally. “Azerbaijan, already 83 percent Azerbaijani before independence, became even more homogeneous as members of the two principal minorities, Armenians and Russians, emigrated in the early 1990s and as thousands of Azerbaijanis immigrated from neighboring Armenia” (Library of Congress). And in this period, especially after independence, reported by a world traveler, “the number of mosques rose dramatically. Many were built with the support of other Islamic countries, such as Iran, Oman, and

Saudi Arabia, which also contributed Korans and religious instructors to the new Muslim states.”⁴

The two nationalities diverged equally in the political realm, especially in the creation of the popular front (APF). Widespread discontent with the Azerbaijani Communist Party “(ACP) rule led to the formation of the APF in March 1989 by intellectuals, including journalists and researchers belonging to the Azerbaijani Academy of Sciences. The APF's founding congress in July 1989 elected Abdulfaz Elchibey party chairman. The APF characterized itself as an umbrella organization composed of smaller parties and groups and likeminded individuals. A central plank of its program was rejection of self-determination for Nagorno-Karabakh and defense of Azerbaijani territorial integrity” (Library of Congress). Here was a popular front, unlike those in the Baltics, that made not even a symbolic gesture to include Armenians.

Even Laitin and Suny (1999), who emphasize the social links among the two nationalities in Azerbaijan due to the facts of migration, intermingling of different religious and linguistic groups, the historic facts of common ancestry among Caucasian Albanians, not to mention overlapping polities and contested sovereignties from ancient to modern times, lend support to this “modern hatreds” argument. Referring to the nationalist debates of the perestroika period, they point out, “nationalists persistently draw harder and clearer boundaries between their own people and those living closest to them (who share much of each other's culture), to obscure distinctions within their own nation and to exaggerate differences with their neighbors. For example, Patrick Donabedian, a French diplomat in Erevan, quotes the Greek geographer Strabo, who attests that by the second century BC the entire population of Greater Armenia (including today's Karabakh) spoke Armenian, implying that today's Armenians are the direct descendants of those speakers. On the other side, A. Abbasov and A. Memedov of the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences write that the early settlers were Caucasian Albanian tribes, precursors of today's Azeris, and that the Armenians, unlike most of the other minorities, do not have a long history in Azerbaijan, even in Karabakh.”

⁴ . Kiffer's Travel Log [http://www.kiffer.us/azeri_info/Azerbaijani_Culture_and_Art.htm], downloaded June 15, 2005.

Under these conditions, Azeris or Armenians who try to build bridges are sternly policed. Armenians who deny the fundamental historical role of Karabakh in Armenian national history are not coded as dissident; rather they are held to be traitors to the Armenian nation. Similarly, Azeris police themselves so that speaking openly about Azerbaijani "murders" of Armenians in Sumgait (February 1989) or in Baku (January 1990) would be heavily sanctioned. Authentic Azerbaijanis must blame the Russians, Gorbachev and the Communists, or the Armenians themselves (Laitin and Suny 1999).

The question here is the extent to which these modern hatreds can account for the civil war onset. One way to address this question is to ask if the fears and prejudices that divided Azeris and Armenians were systematically worse than between titulars and minorities in other post-Soviet republics. Laitin presents survey data collected in Azerbaijan (and among Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan) based on memories of Azeris and Armenians from Azerbaijan from the period before hostilities broke out, and compared to post-Soviet cases where there were no such hostilities between the titular group and a significant minority living in the newly independent republic. The data represent answers to questions concerning knowledge and use of each other's language, the degree of cosmopolitan friendship networks or marriage decisions, and openness to assimilation (a composite index on views concerning interethnic marriage, language learning, accommodation to minorities, and media of instruction for public schools). Laitin concludes from his data analysis that "it would be impossible to surmise that the prejudices or tensions were significantly higher in Azerbaijan, enough to fuel a catastrophic war. Armenians may well have worried for their security before the tragic pogrom of March 1988 in Sumgait. But by security before the pogrom they meant the maintenance of an Armenian way of life in the context of Azerbaijani sovereignty. There was no special fear of violence, any more so than for minorities in other republics" (2001, 852).

The Rationality of Fear

It would be better to rely on the information on prejudice and threat to account for Azeri/Armenian violence through a "rationality of fear" dynamic (de Figueiredo and Weingast, 1999). Irrespective of any conviviality during the high Soviet period, for Armenians the pogroms of Sumgait and Baku were bloody proof that Armenians could never live under Azerbaijani rule

and feel safe. Armenian accounts refer to these events as evidence of Azerbaijani ethnic hatred, of the genocidal tendency among "Turks" that Armenians experienced in the Ottoman Empire in 1915 and which now Azerbaijani "Turks" were reviving. For Armenians genocide is a palpable threat, and their historical experience suggests that no outside power will come to their aid against Turkish extermination. They have developed a mentality, not unlike many Israelis, of a besieged and vulnerable nation whose only salvation lies in its own efforts to defend itself within a region dominated demographically by Muslims. In Armenia one frequently is told that only Karabakh and its army stand between the Armenians and another genocide.

To be sure, as horrific as the killings in Azerbaijan were, the initial tragic events in Sumgait and Baku were affairs of a few days rather than a methodical, prolonged genocide of local Armenians. Ethnic violence did not spread from city to city, village to village. There was no overall Azerbaijani plan to rid Azerbaijan of Armenians, certainly not to murder them systematically. Even today some Armenians manage to live in Baku without overt threat or ethnic slurs. Whatever the role of Azerbaijani officials - and that remains murky - it is clear that the key actors in the pogroms, particularly those in Baku in 1990, were Azerbaijani refugees themselves forced out of Armenia. And there was no coordinated effort from Turkey to plan for a replay of the early 20th century genocide.

The limits to the pogroms discredit somewhat arguments concerning hatred and revenge that pervaded the populations. But those limits are consistent with a rationality of fear argument. However limited, the riots and killings in Sumgait fatally colored the mutual understandings of these two nationalities in Azerbaijan, making each see itself as victim and the other as predator. In the wake of the pogroms on both sides, ordinary people of each nationality raised by a bit the probability that they would be massacred by the ethnic other – and the expected cost of the realization of the probability (however small) was threateningly high. Therefore it was rational to fight in order to cleanse their republics of the ethnic other.

The problem with this explanation is that it does not account for the war itself. The war took place in Nagorno-Karabakh, a region that was so dominated by Armenians that there was no way they could be threatened by Azeris as was the case among the small Armenian community in Sumgait. There is no evidence that the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, or the

militias supporting them from Armenia were motivated by a fear of extermination if they did not take control over the territory in which Armenians lived.

New State

From the point of view of our model, the key to the Nagorno-Karabakh civil war was in the fact that Azerbaijan was a new state, and therefore vulnerable. The Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh understood that at the moment in which Azerbaijan received international recognition as an independent state, it did not yet have its own army, and could not mount an effective counter-insurgency against a separatist movement. In fact, most of the Azeris returning “home” from the Soviet army were ill-trained for combat. In the words of the Library of Congress study “In the Soviet military system...Azerbaijanis were underrepresented in the top ranks of the armed forces, despite the presence of the Higher All Arms Command School and the Caspian High Naval School in Azerbaijan. Many Azerbaijani conscripts were assigned to construction battalions, in which military training was minimal and the troops carried out noncombat duties. Preinduction military training in most Azerbaijani secondary schools was also reportedly less stringent than in other Soviet republics. For these and other reasons, the Azerbaijanis were not prepared for long-term warfare in Nagorno-Karabakh when independence arrived.”⁵

Furthermore, unlike the newly independent states in Africa in the 1960s, Azerbaijan had no protection of its “colonial” boundaries by the former metropole. In fact the metropole itself disappeared. Its army was a mixed blessing, especially as the evidence mounted that Russian troops had assisted Armenians in an attack that killed hundreds of Azeris in the town of Khodzhal, in February 1992 (Library of Congress, section on “Russian Troop Withdrawal”). Under these strategic conditions, the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh could only reckon that any Azeri claims that Armenians would be treated fairly in the new state would not be credible once the state

⁵ . Working against this negative picture was the transport network that should have helped the counter-insurgency. In the assessment of the Library of Congress study “Azerbaijan’s transportation system is extensive for a country of its size and level of economic development. Analysts attribute this advantage to the fact that when Azerbaijan was part of the Soviet Union, its economy was heavily geared to export of petroleum and to transshipment of goods across the Caucasus.” But this assessment is quickly qualified. “The system is burdened by an extensive bureaucracy,” the report concludes, “that makes prompt equipment repair difficult, and the country’s economic problems have delayed replacement of aging equipment and facilities.”

got stronger. Early rebellion was the dominant Armenian strategy in its dealings with the new Azeri state as the Armenian population in Nagorno-Karabakh articulated demands for the right to autonomy in the new state structure.

Adding confidence to the strategy of “rebel early” by the Armenians was the support they got from rump elements of the Armenian national army. These quasi-regular militias from Armenia, reluctantly accepted by officials from the Armenian government, gave clear signals to the rebels in Nagorno-Karabakh that they would get external support at almost any level of Azerbaijani offer. Armenian authorities themselves were heavily constrained. In the late Soviet period, they were instructed to dampen public support for the incorporation of Nagorno-Karabakh into the Armenian Republic. When in early February 1988 massive demonstrations took place in support of the incorporation of this Armenian-majority enclave into Armenia, and the March, after the pogrom in Sumgait, Erevan’s official reactions were diplomatic and calm. The Armenian government was further constrained by Soviet troops that formally supported Azerbaijan in 1991, in punishment for the Armenian popular movement organized to disregard the Soviet decision to support Azerbaijan’s authority in Nagorno-Karabakh. Levon Ter-Petrosian, Armenia’s first post-Soviet president, would have become a national hero if he had recognized Nagorno-Karabakh’s unilateral declaration of independence in 1992. But Russian military threats were sobering.

Therefore, it was not the government but Armenian paramilitaries (in alliance with several quasi-autonomous Russian generals, as noted by Fairbanks, 1995, 20) that organized to fulfill the dream of the incorporation of Nagorno-Karabakh into Armenia. Although unwilling to take the lead, the pressures of democratic responsiveness gave Ter-Petrosian little choice but to follow the already highly mobilized mass base that supported his rule (Kaufman 1998, p. 31). He remained cautious, as the Russian military support for an Azeri offensive in 1993 was sobering. But he was forced into early retirement for his more conciliatory stand toward Azerbaijan, a move that was political death.⁶ Given the domestic pressures and the powerful alliance of Armenian militias and elements in the Russian high military command, it was crucial for Armenia’s president to lend support to the

⁶ . To support this interpretation, note that later on Vazgen Sargsisian, who served as prime minister to Ter-Petrosian’s ultranationalist successor, was assassinated in 1999. Informants have suggested that he was mooring within Armenia’s inner circle a compromise to bring peace.

Armenian militias fighting in Nagorno-Karabakh. Under such conditions, rebels in Nagorno-Karabakh were quite confident of Armenia's commitment to their protection.

The Nagorno-Karabakh civil war broke out when Azerbaijan (as theorized in a model that takes no account of the particulars concerning the Armenian population, e.g. its grievances or its cultural history) was quite vulnerable to an insurgency. In terms of that model, the fact of mountains made the separatist guerrilla movement a greater challenge for the weak Azeri army. But more important, the fact that Azerbaijan was a new state without a protector (in the name of the former metropole) made it more vulnerable to a civil war onset. In that the Azeris could not commit to a respect for Armenian rights in a consolidated Azerbaijan and that Armenian militias could commit to support for the independence for Nagorno-Karabakh gave strong incentive to the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh to strike hard and early.

II. Political Instability with No Civil War Onset 1995

A Narrative Account

Political instability in post-Soviet Azerbaijan was rife. As reported by Radio Odlar Yurdu, "The intractable conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh contributed to the fall of several governments in newly independent Azerbaijan. After a February 1992 armed attack by Armenians on Azerbaijani residents in Nagorno-Karabakh caused many civilian casualties, Mutalibov was forced by opposition parties to resign as president. The president of Azerbaijan's Supreme Soviet, Yakub Mamedov, became acting president. Mamedov held this position until May 1992, when he in turn was forced from power in the face of continuing military defeats in Nagorno-Karabakh. Mutalibov loyalists in the Supreme Soviet reinstated him as president, but two days later he was forced to flee the country when APF-led crowds stormed the government buildings in Baku. An interim APF government assumed power until previously scheduled presidential elections could be held one month later." Polity IV codes this post-Soviet regime as a -3 on the democracy index, which is anocratic on the authoritarian side.

"The presidential election of June 1992," reports the Library of Congress study, "was the first in more than seventy years not held under

communist control. Five candidates were on the ballot, seeking election to a five-year term. The election featured the unprecedented use of television, posters, and other media by multiple candidates to communicate platforms and solicit votes. The candidates included APF leader Elchibey, former parliament speaker Yakub Mamedov, Movement for Democratic Reforms leader and Minister of Justice Ilias Ismailov, National Democratic Group leader Rafik Abdullayev, and Union of Democratic Intelligentsia candidate Nizami Suleimanov.” Abulfaz Elchibey, the intellectual leader of the APF, won over 59 percent of the vote in a five-candidate electoral contest. As a result, he formed Azerbaijan's first postcommunist government (Radio Odlar Yurdu). Polity IV codes Azerbaijan at the end of 1992 as a +1, which is anocratic on the democratic side as well as initiating a period of political instability.

Elchibey served as president only one year. Suret Huseynov, a disgruntled military officer, led the uprising of mutinous paramilitary forces. Elchibey sought unsuccessfully to disarm them. In the turmoil, several top government officials were fired or resigned. Masses of demonstrators in Baku demanded a change in government. Elchibey tried to restore order and endorsed Aliyev's election as chairman of the Melli-Majlis [the Azerbaijani ad hoc legislature]. But shortly after a brief attempt to retain the presidency, Elchibey fled Baku in mid-June as Huseynov's forces approached. Taking advantage of the chaos, Aliyev returned to power and announced himself as acting head of state. Radio Odlar Yurdu continues with the narrative: “Within a week, a bare quorum of Melli-Majlis legislators, mostly former communist deputies, formally transferred Elchibey's powers to Aliyev until a new president could be elected. Aliyev then replaced Elchibey's ministers and other officials with his own appointees. Huseynov received the post of prime minister. The legislature also granted Huseynov control over the "power" ministries of defense, internal affairs, and security.

“In late July 1993, Aliyev convinced the legislature to hold a popular vote of confidence on Elchibey's moribund presidency and an extension of a state of emergency that had existed since April 1993 because of military setbacks. Although the APF boycotted the referendum, more than 90 percent of the electorate reportedly turned out to cast a 97 percent vote of no-confidence in Elchibey's rule. This outcome buttressed Aliyev's position and opened the way for new presidential elections.

“In early September 1993, the Melli-Majlis scheduled new presidential elections for October 3, 1993. Removal of the maximum age requirement in the election law allowed Aliyev to run. Aliyev's position was strengthened further in August when paramilitary forces defeated a rebel warlord who had seized several areas of southern Azerbaijan and declared an autonomous republic of Talysh-Mugan.” The Library of Congress Country Study continues the narrative: “Aliyev and two minor party candidates ran in [the] presidential [election]. Voter turnout was about 90 percent, of which almost 99 percent voted for Aliyev. Many international observers declared the elections biased because no major opposition candidates ran, and reporting by the mass media favored Aliyev and failed to report views of the other candidates or of the APF. Aliyev was sworn in as Azerbaijan's president on October 10.” Polity IV codes Azerbaijan at the end of 1993 as a -3 on the democracy index, which starts a new period of instability on our measure, and still anocratic.

Aliyev found himself in political turmoil in May 1994, the Library of Congress reports, over his “handling of the Karabakh peace process. A variety of opposition parties and organizations claimed that the Bishkek Protocol had betrayed Azerbaijan by recognizing the sovereignty of Nagorno-Karabakh. A new coalition, the National Resistance Movement, was formed immediately after the May confrontation in the Mellis-Majlis. The movement's two principles were opposition to reintroduction of Russian forces in Azerbaijan and opposition to Aliyev's "dictatorship." By the end of the summer, however, the movement had drawn closer to Aliyev's position on the first point, and the announcement of long-delayed parliamentary elections to be held in the summer of 1995 aimed to defuse charges of dictatorship. Draft election legislation called for replacing the "temporary" Melli-Majlis with a 150-seat legislature in 1995. In October 1994, a military coup, supported by Prime Minister Suret Huseynov, failed to topple Aliyev. Aliyev responded by declaring a two-month state of emergency, banning demonstrations, and taking military control of key positions. Huseynov, who had signed the Bishkek Protocol as Azerbaijan's representative, was dismissed.” By 1995, Aliyev was in complete control of the political apparatus, and by Polity IV coding, Azerbaijan began yet a third new start to instability with a -6 score for democracy, but anocratic rule tipped toward full authoritarian rule.

Explanations for No Civil War Onset Post-1995

End of Anocracy

The first explanation for the failure of a new civil war onset in the mid 1990s is that the renewed authoritarian rule by ending anocracy was sufficiently strong to deter rebels. The foundation for a new authoritarianism goes back to – as reported in the Library of Congress – “November 1993, [when] Aliyev created the Defense Council to provide him direct oversight of military affairs in order to curtail the loss of considerable Azerbaijani territory outside [Nagorno-Karabakh]. The new council, which reported to the president, also strengthened Aliyev's control over military and security affairs, which previously had been directed by Prime Minister Huseynov. At its first meeting, the Defense Council replaced the deputy defense ministers in charge of the Border Guards and the general staff, and the council criticized the Council of Ministers for neglecting urgent defense matters.

“At the end of 1993, Aliyev continued his criticism of widespread draft evasion, appealing particularly to the 10,000 Afghan war veterans in Azerbaijan to reenlist. Penalties for draft evasion and desertion were tightened. At the same time, Aliyev ordered most officers with desk assignments to be deployed to the front lines.”

“In 1993, [to forestall any interest by the Russian Federation in giving support to his potential enemies,] Aliyev attempted to establish better relations with Russian military and political officials by rejoining the CIS and signing CIS agreements on multilateral peacekeeping and mutual security policy. He answered nationalist critics by citing the hope that Russia might coax or coerce Armenia and the [Nagorno-Karabakh] Armenians into reaching a suitable settlement of the conflict. Some APF members and others denounced these moves as jeopardizing Azerbaijani sovereignty more seriously than did the existing conflict.

“In November 1993, the Melli-Majlis approved the Law on Defense, ratifying Aliyev's proposed reforms. Paramilitary forces were officially disbanded, and strenuous efforts were undertaken to increase the size of the military. In early 1994, these measures appeared to help Azerbaijani forces to regain some territory that had been lost in late 1993. These successes were attributed to several factors: Aliyev's success in wooing veterans, including officers, back into military service; increased enlistments and a lower desertion rate; improved morale; a streamlined command system with Aliyev at its head; and training assistance and volunteers from abroad.” In

sum, building new authoritarian structures, getting Russia out of the picture for supporting dissidents, and disbanding private militias all worked to forestall potential rebellion.

Leadership Skill

Reconstructing authoritarianism is no meat feat. Aliyev did it successfully in part because of his skill and his credibility as someone who is fearless. His background is impressive indeed. Born in Armenia and raised in Nakhichevan, he is said to have captured Stalin's attention as a member of a counter-intelligence group on the Ukrainian front in World War II by intimidating Soviet deserters. He worked his way up to become first secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist party in 1969 and eventually as a member of the Politburo in Moscow, until his removal by Gorbachev in 1987. Despite the continued losses suffered in the Karabakh war, Aliyev gained a significant degree of popular support as a competent and experienced "politician who best represented a promise of peace and stability in the future" (Suny 1999). Aliyev cleverly trumped Huseinov who attempted to use his resources as Prime Minister to stage a coup, and he managed to escape several other attempted assassinations and coups. He built up tremendous credibility by negotiating the oil concessions to Western companies in September 1994 (the so-called "deal of the century") and agreed to Russian and Iranian shares. Though he agreed to have Azerbaijan rejoin the CIS, Aliyev was keen enough to respect the deep anti-Russian sentiments in Azerbaijan by steadfastly opposing the stationing of Russian troops in the republic (Laitin and Suny, 1999). Aliyev's nose for danger was acutely sensitive; this allowed him to build authoritarian structures in an unstable environment.

The State-of-War in Nagorno-Karabakh

The fact that Azerbaijan was a country in a state of war with a rebellious province that was fully supported by a neighboring country made it difficult for Azeris to take up arms against other Azeris. Most of the young men who had a taste for rebellion would find sufficient fulfillment working in the refugee camps to support a guerrilla war against the Armenians. To be sure, there was a proto-rebellion among the Lezgins in the north and those who organized for a "Talysh-Mughan Republic" on the Iranian border. But these groups were small; and the potential rebels among Azeris were preoccupied by Armenia.

III. Conclusions

Only six countries in our dataset have ever had probabilities of a civil war onset higher than Azerbaijan for 1991-1992, and no country in the East Europe and Former Soviet Union region surpassed Azerbaijan in the model's assessment of its predicted probability for a civil war onset. This "prediction" was made without any information on the historical situation of Armenian-Azeri relations or the felt injustice of the placement of Nagorno-Karabakh under Azerbaijani sovereignty. This adds confidence to our interpretation of the data, an interpretation that ignores historical injustices and ethnic relations as useful information in assessing whether a country is more or less susceptible to a civil war. We are not claiming that the historical conflicts and suspicions were unimportant in understanding the civil war in Azerbaijan; rather we are claiming that these conflicts and suspicions do not help us distinguish say Estonia (where there was no civil war, and our model predicts a .01 probability in 1991) from Azerbaijan (where there was a civil war, and our model predicts a .183 probability for 1991).

To account for the civil war onset in Azerbaijan in 1991, our narrative points to the value of "new state" under conditions in which the metropole was not able or interested in preserving order in the transition and in which there was a neighboring state (or militias within a neighboring state) that committed itself (or themselves) to support a secession by a minority group. The narrative does not support a commitment logic, however. There is no evidence that the Azerbaijani authorities sought to explore commitment devices that would have mollified the Armenians living in Azerbaijan; nor was there evidence that Armenians were projecting their situation in a consolidated Azerbaijani state. The narrative highlights the recognition that the weakness of the Azerbaijani state and the willingness of Armenian militias and rump elements of the Russian army to support their cause gave them an historic opportunity to demand secession.

This analysis raises the question, considering the costs of the war (30,000 deaths and a million displaced Azeris), of why the Azerbaijani government did not recognize its weakness and negotiate a settlement reflecting of that weakness. At least part of the answer has to do with the fact of state weakness itself. No Azerbaijani government (nor for that matter, no Armenian government) has been able sufficiently to control its own

radicals, who could get popular support for overthrowing any regime that made concessions on this issue. State weakness therefore not only incentivizes rebels to challenge the state, but it also limits governments from making pareto improving bargains with those rebels.

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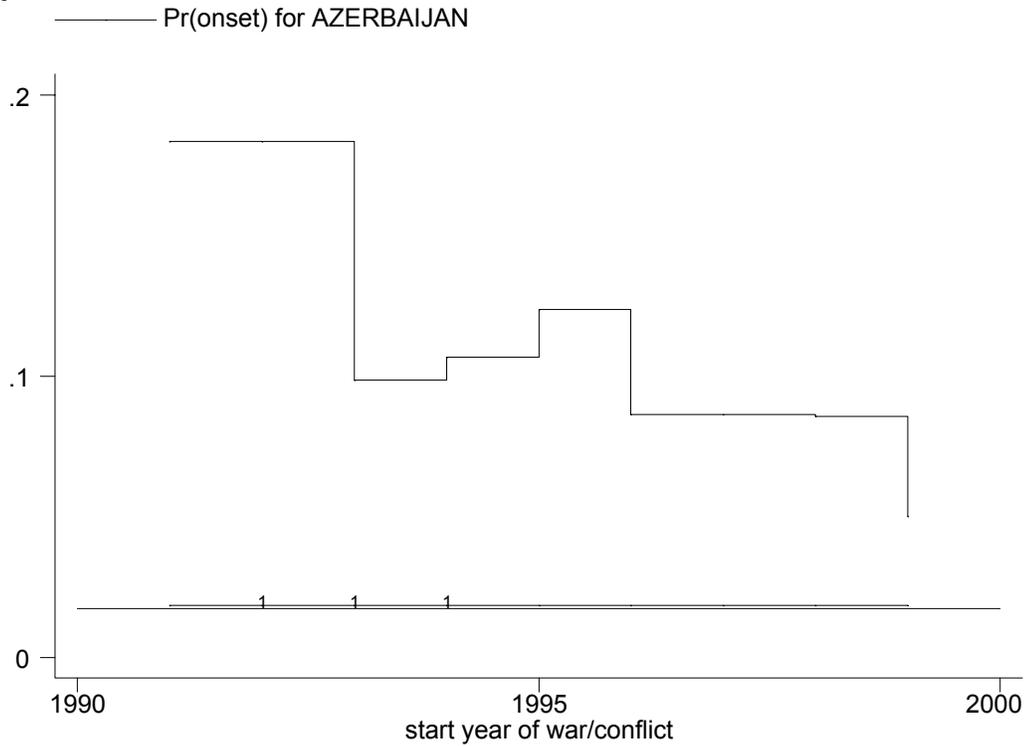
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Azerbaijan



cname	year	pr	gdp~1	pop	mtn~t	Oil	ins~b	anocl
AZERBAIJ	1991	.1834098	3.194	7242	25.6	1	0	1
AZERBAIJ	1992	.1834098	3.194	7390	25.6	1	0	1
AZERBAIJ	1993	.0986319	2.039	7400	25.6	1	1	1
AZERBAIJ	1994	.1068199	1.77	7459	25.6	1	1	1
AZERBAIJ	1995	.12362	1.275	7511	25.6	1	1	1
AZERBAIJ	1996	.0863468	1.112	7555	25.6	1	1	0
AZERBAIJ	1997	.0863969	1.115	7804	25.6	1	1	0
AZERBAIJ	1998	.0857336	1.168	7898	25.6	1	1	0
AZERBAIJ	1999	.0501273	1.273	.	25.6	1	0	0

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
pr	9	.1116107	.0452351	.0501273	.1834098
gdpenl	9	1.793333	.8543594	1.112	3.194
pop	8	7532.375	219.0649	7242	7898
mtnest	9	25.6	0	25.6	25.6
Oil	9	1	0	1	1

instab	9	.6666667	.5	0	1
anocl	9	.5555556	.5270463	0	1

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
pr	593	.0177046	.019674	.0005446	.1834098
gdpenl	595	2.903378	1.910564	.086	10.924
pop	614	31483.59	60021.23	1114	287630
mtnest	646	12.48421	15.53963	0	81
Oil	646	.0804954	.2722694	0	1

instab	646	.1377709	.3449264	0	1
anocl	640	.16875	.3748239	0	1

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
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pr		6327	.0167543	.0228494	2.45e-10	.488229
gdpenl		6373	3.651117	4.536645	.048	66.735
pop		6433	31786.92	102560.8	222	1238599
mtnest		6610	18.08833	20.96648	0	94.3
Oil		6610	.1295008	.3357787	0	1

instab		6596	.1464524	.353586	0	1
anocl		6541	.2256536	.418044	0	1

+-----+							
	year	polity21	ef	plural	second	relfrac	
+-----+							
	1991	-3	.187547	.9	.032	.1334	
	1992	-3	.187547	.9	.032	.1334	
	1993	1	.187547	.9	.032	.1334	
	1994	-3	.187547	.9	.032	.1334	
	1995	-3	.187547	.9	.032	.1334	
+-----+							
	1996	-6	.187547	.9	.032	.1334	
	1997	-6	.187547	.9	.032	.1334	
	1998	-6	.187547	.9	.032	.1334	
	1999	-7	.187547	.9	.032	.1334	