

Azerbaijan

Vanderbilt

Azerbaijan is coded as a personalist authoritarian from independence in 1991 until 2008. Geddes codes a first personalist regime lasting from 1991-1992 and a second from 1993 through 2008.

Ayaz Mutalibov, former First Secretary of the Communist Party but Non-Party as of election time, became president at independence. There is no SOLS change at independence. In 1992, there were four leadership changes following a massacre of Azerbaijanis in Nagorno-Karabakh (ethnically Armenian, territorially Azerbaijani). The U.S. Library of Congress (1994) explains the circumstances of these transitions:

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-led¹ crowds stormed the government buildings in Baku. An interim APF government assumed power until previously scheduled presidential elections could be held one month later. APF leader and intellectual Abulfaz Elchibey, who won over 59 percent of the vote in a five-candidate electoral contest, then formed Azerbaijan's first postcommunist government. Elchibey served as president only one year, however, before being forced to flee Baku in mid-June 1993 in the face of an insurrection led by a disgruntled military officer.

According to our coding rules, the transfer to Mutalibov to Mamedov is not a SOLS change because Mamedov was an acting, or interim, leader (Ipek 2009, 229). Mutalibov's two-day return to power is not a SOLS change because he was the last regular leader. Isa Gambarov, AKC, the "interim APF government" is not a SOLS change because of his interim status (van der Leeuw 2000, 173). Elchibey, AKC, is a SOLS change because his SOLS is different from the last regular leader Mutalibov. He was not Mutalibov's pre-designated successor.

Elchibey's government became unpopular after accusations of corruption and incompetency. In 1993, an armed insurrection drove Elchibey out of town. The National Council appointed Heydar Aliyev of the Yeni Azerbaijan Partiyasi or YAP (New Azerbaijan Party) President and he was elected shortly thereafter. This is a SOLS change as Aliyev was not Elchibey's pre-designated successor and in fact he created a new personalist regime. He "won" reelection in 1998. In 2003, his son Ilham Aliyev, YAP, was elected president. This is not a SOLS change since Ilham was Heydar's pre-designated successor.

References:

"A Country Study: Azerbaijan." 1994. U.S. Library of Congress. Available from <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/aztoc.html>. Accessed October 5, 2010.

¹ Azerbaijani Popular Front (nationalist), also known as Azerbaijan Khalq Cabhasi (AKC).

“Background Note: Azerbaijan.” 2010. U.S. Department of State, June 14, 2010. Available from <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2909.htm>>. October 5, 2010.

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