

AZERBAIJAN

POLITY5 REGIME CODES:

fac	scode	polity	pers	bmon	bday	byear	emon	eday	eyear	exec	exconst	polcomp
1X	AZE	-3	1	8	30	1991	6	7	1992	3	3	6
1Xa	AZE	1	1	6	8	1992	7	15	1993	7	3	6
1Xb	AZE	-3	2	7	16	1993	8	2	1995	3	3	6
1O	AZE	-6	3	8	3	1995	10	15	1998	3	2	3
1Oa	AZE	-7	20	10	16	1998	99	99	9999	3	2	2

PITF Problem Events:

- 1) 08/91-06/97 (ETH 02/88-06/97; ARC 06/93-11/95)

1X) Date of Change to Factional-Autocratic: August 30, 1991 (independence)

Ethnic War: February 1988 – June 1997

In October 1987, public demonstrations began in the ethnic-Armenian majority region of Nagorno-Karabakh in the republic of Azerbaijan in reaction to the enforcement of changes in the school curriculum that excluded the teaching of Armenian history. Support for the Armenians in Karabakh was strong in neighboring Armenia from the beginning and on February 20, 1988, the local government in Karabakh voted to petition the central Soviet government to transfer the region from Azerbaijan to Armenia. This vote triggered communal clashes in Karabakh and anti-Armenian riots in Azerbaijan in late February. A major outbreak of armed violence in November 1988 induced 150,000 Armenians to flee Azerbaijan and a like number of Azeris to flee Armenia. By 1992, the Karabakh had effectively been annexed to Armenia and in May 1994 a cease-fire in Karabakh was negotiated; however, violence did not abate until mid 1997. The status of the region remains in dispute.

Brief Explanation of Change To:

Azerbaijan gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 amid general political turmoil related to the crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijani nationalism mobilized quickly in response to the Karabakh crisis, especially in the trade unions. The nationalist Popular Front of Azerbaijan organized general strikes and an effective blockade of Armenia; it was registered as an official organization on October 5, 1989. On January 20, 1990, the Popular Front temporarily seized control of the republic government triggering a confrontation with the Communist Party and a crackdown on by Soviet authorities on January 24. Ayaz Mutalibov was named the new Communist Party leader and he became the first President of the republic when it gained independence on August 30, 1991. The legislature was also held over from the Soviet period; 80% of delegates were from the Communist Party. A second body, the *Milli Majlis*, was established with equal representation from Communist party and Popular Front.

Identify Main Factions:

- *Azerbaijan Popular Front* — a populist party emphasizing Azeri-Shi'ite nationalism. The Muslim Democratic Party, *Musavat*, is generally aligned with the Popular Front.
- *Communist Party of Azerbaijan* — the Communist Party in Azerbaijan is less an ideological party than a network of local political and economic elites. It had been officially “abolished” in August 1991 but was reconstituted in November 1993. After Geidar Aliyev’s takeover in 1993 a new party, *Yeni Azerbaijan*, (New Azerbaijan) was formed to support the President.

- *Ethnic-Armenians* — ethnic-Armenians had engaged in commercial interests throughout Azerbaijan before the onset of hostilities over the status of the Karabakh enclave; by the time of Azerbaijan's independence they had fled to secure territories or emigrated and are no longer a factor in conventional politics.

1Xa) Date of Change to Factional-Democratic: June 7, 1992 (presidential elections)

The Popular Front staged mass demonstrations over the failure of government efforts in the Karabakh war and succeeded in forcing President Mutalibov to resign on March 6, 1992. Interim President Yagub Mamedov was not able to manage the situation and the Popular Front was able to force a shift in legislative power to the *Milli Majlis* and schedule new multi-party presidential elections for June 6, 1992. The Popular Front leader, Abulfaz Elchibey, won the election with nearly 60% of the vote.

1Xb) Date of Change to Factional-Autocratic: July 15, 1993 (attempted coup)

Continuing Armenian battlefield successes and increasing economic problems triggered a rebellion by forces loyal to ousted Col. Surat Guseinov that began on June 4 and quickly marched on the capital. President Elchibey fled Baku on June 18 and the Supreme Soviet Chairman, Geidar Aliyev (former Communist Party leader in Nakhichevan), took over as acting president. On June 24, the *Milli Majlis* voted to impeach President Elchibey. An alleged coup attempt on July 15 led to a government crackdown on the Popular Front. New presidential elections were held on October 3, 1993; both the Popular Front and *Musavat* boycotted the elections and Aliyev won with 99% of the vote.

1O) Date of Change from Factional-Autocratic: August 2, 1995 (coup plot; opposition parties banned)

Brief Explanation of Change From:

The government reported on August 2, 1995, that a coup plot had been uncovered; this announcement coincided with the government's decision not to register fifteen opposition parties, including the Popular Front, for the upcoming legislative elections to be held on November 12, 1995 (the first legislative elections since independence). President Aliyev's New Azerbaijan party won an overwhelming majority of seats in the new legislature.

Changes within Autocratic Consolidation Period:

1Oa) November 16, 1998 (crackdown on independent and opposition press) – In early November 1998 the government issued libel suits against a number of independent and opposition newspapers triggering a hunger strike by 20 newspaper editors who claimed the government was acting to strangle opposing viewpoints after criticism of the October presidential elections.