Figure 7. Transportation System of Armenia, 1994

Erevan, and in the western part of the country four-lane highways connect major cities (see fig. 7). The main route for international travel of passengers and goods before the start of the conflict with Azerbaijan was Route M24, which leads northeast out of Erevan to connect with Route M27, the principal east-west highway across the Caucasus Mountains. Other major highways extend southeast from the capital to southern Armenia and to Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic and west to the populated areas of western Armenia and to the Turkish border.

In 1992 Armenia had about 100,000 state-owned vehicles (automobiles, trucks, taxis, and buses). Observers noted, how-

ever, that at any given time about one-third of these vehicles were inoperable because of poor maintenance and unavailability of spare parts. Average vehicle age in 1992 was 6.5 years.

Armenia had 825 kilometers of mainline railroad track in 1992, excluding several small industrial lines. Most lines are 1.520-meter broad gauge, and the principal routes are electrified. The rail system is roughly configured like a " Y " and has lines radiating from a central point just south of Erevan. The northeast branch roughly parallels Route M24 to Azerbaijan. About 85 percent of all goods used in Armenia are imported by rail, and before the conflict with Azerbaijan, most came via this rail line. Closure of the line at the international border during the early 1990s has caused severe disruption to the Armenian economy. The southern branch of the line extends south toward the Turkish border, where it turns southeast into Nakhichevan. The war with Azerbaijan has stopped service on this segment of the rail system as well.

In 1994 the last operative portion of the country's rail lines was the northwest branch of the "Y," which winds through the populated areas of northwestern Armenia before crossing into Georgia. A short spur of this line at Gyumri connects with the Turkish rail system. However, a difference in gauge with the Turkish system means that goods crossing the Turkish border must undergo a time-consuming reloading process.

In 1991 Armenia Railways, the state-owned rail system, operated with 100 electric and eighty diesel locomotives. Delays in the delivery of spare parts from Russia have been a nagging problem in the maintenance of the system. Cannibalization of rolling stock to obtain parts has severely reduced service.

Erevan's new subway system was still largely under construction in the early 1990s. In 1994 nine stations had opened on the first ten-kilometer section of heavy-rail line. This first line connected Erevan's industrial area with the downtown area and the main rail station. Work on an additional four kilometers was slowed by the 1988 earthquake. Plans called for an eventual system of forty-seven kilometers organized into three lines.

Armenia's principal airport, Zvartnots, is about seven kilometers from downtown Erevan. With a runway approximately 2,700 kilometers long, the airport can handle airplanes as large as the Russian Tu-154 and IL–86 or the Boeing 727. In 1993 the airport handled about 34,000 tons of freight. The State Airlines Company of Armenia, the new state-run airline, provides direct or nonstop service to about a dozen cities of the former Soviet

Union, as well as to Paris. The Russian and Romanian national airlines also provide regular international air service into Erevan. Since the beginning of the conflict with Azerbaijan, fuel shortages have curtailed expansion of passenger and cargo service, however. Several other airports elsewhere in Armenia have paved runways, but most are used for minor freight transport. Although air cargo has the potential to relieve the effects of the Azerbaijani blockade of land routes, efforts to fly in aviation kerosene were frustrated in 1993 by corruption in the Main Administration for Aviation and by high prices charged by Russian suppliers.

Armenia's one major natural gas pipeline branches off the main Transcaucasian line that runs from Russia through Georgia to Baku. The Armenian spur begins in western Azerbaijan and reaches its main terminus in Erevan. In all, Armenia has 900 kilometers of natural gas pipeline. Armenia imports most of its fuel and, before the conflict with Azerbaijan, imported 80 percent of its fuel from Azerbaijan via the pipeline or in rail tanker cars. Like Armenia's rail and highway links, the pipeline from Azerbaijan has been closed by the Azerbaijani blockade.

In 1991 the American Telephone and Telegraph Company installed 200 long-distance circuits in Armenia, which gave the republic the capacity, available elsewhere in the former Soviet Union only in Moscow, to receive direct-dial international calls. Radio and television are controlled by the State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting. Ten AM and three FM radio stations broadcast from Erevan, Kamo, and Sisian. Broadcasts are in Armenian, Kurdish, and Russian to points within Armenia, and in those languages plus Arabic, English, French, Persian, Spanish, and Turkish to points outside the country. The single television station broadcasts in Armenian and Russian. According to Soviet statistics of the late 1980s, between 90 and 95 percent of Armenian homes had radios or televisions. No statistics are available for the blockade years, but experts believe that under blockade conditions substantially fewer Armenians have had regular access to broadcast information.

Foreign Trade

In the Soviet period, Armenia traded almost solely with the union's other republics. A foreign trade organization (FTO) controlled each product group, and exports by each Armenian enterprise were determined by the State Planning Committee (commonly known by its Russian acronym, Gosplan) in Mos-

cow. Enterprises had no control over the size or destination of shipments of their products. Together with Estonia and Tajikistan, Armenia had the highest level of imports among the Soviet republics. Its exports consisted mostly of semifinished goods that needed processing in other republics.

In the years since the breakup of the Soviet Union, Armenia's economy has been hurt by the need to import much of its food and almost all of its oil and gas. In 1989 the FTO monopoly was removed, allowing enterprises to seek their own buyers and sellers abroad. In 1992 the government removed most state controls over foreign trade. Export licensing continued to protect enterprises from fraud and to enforce domestic market quotas. In the early 1990s, most of Armenia's exports went to Russia, Eastern Europe, and various developing countries (see table 8, Appendix). By January 1992, Armenia had signed bilateral trade protocols with most of the former Soviet republics. To ensure flexibility in the face of future price liberalization, prices were to be set in direct negotiation between enterprises. Enterprises were not strictly bound by protocols signed by their respective governments, although quotas remained a possibility. At this stage, all payments were to be in rubles.

In 1990 Armenia's largest sources of export income were light industrial products (mostly knit clothing, shoes, and carpets), machines and metal products, processed foods, and chemical products. The highest total expenditures on imports were for light industrial products, processed foods, chemical products, energy and fuels, and unprocessed agricultural products. In 1990 Armenia showed a trade deficit of 869 million rubles in industrial goods and a deficit of 278 million rubles in agricultural goods.

In April 1992, Armenia became the first former Soviet republic to sign a comprehensive bilateral trade agreement with the United States and the first to receive most-favored-nation status. Canada soon followed in granting Armenia similar status. In planning future trade, Armenia expected to rely heavily on foreign markets for products from its newly organized complex of chemical enterprises, for which demand was identified in the former Soviet republics, Eastern Europe, Iran, Syria, Turkey, Argentina, and Australia.

Government and Politics

The Republic of Armenia declared its sovereignty on August 23, 1990, and became an independent state a year later, on Sep-

tember 23, 1991. In October 1991, Levon Ter-Petrosian, who had been elected democratically as chairman of the Armenian Supreme Soviet under the Soviet system in 1990, was chosen president of the republic in a six-candidate election. As of early 1994, Armenia was a reasonably stable democratic state, although its party structure was fractious and its legislative branch ineffectual. Because no consensus could be reached on a new constitution, a standoff between parliament and the president remained unresolved in early 1994.

Parliament

The 248 members of Armenia's unicameral parliament (Geraguin khorhurt in Armenian, officially retaining the term "Supreme Soviet" from the communist era) are elected for five-year terms and meet for six months each year. The prime minister and the Council of Ministers, which together constitute the executive branch of the government, are chosen from parliament. Although half the members of parliament (124) must be present for a quorum, a majority of the votes of the entire body (125) is needed to pass laws. In the early 1990s, because more than 160 members were rarely present and the ruling party did not have a majority in the body, the parliament was proving unable to act decisively on major legislative issues. Moreover, a two-thirds majority of the parliament (165) is needed to override a presidential veto. In the absence of a constitution, however, the parliament has issued laws regulating the relations and powers of the branches of government.

The Presidium, the parliament's executive body, administers parliament when it is not in session. The Presidium is made up of the president of the republic (whose title is also chairman of parliament), two deputies, the secretary of the parliament, and the twelve chairmen of the permanent parliamentary committees. Often laws are initiated by the president of the republic, sent to the Presidium for review, and then passed on to appropriate committees before being reviewed and voted upon by the whole parliament. (Besides permanent committees, the parliament can create temporary committees to deal with specific issues.)

Once parliament passes a law, the president of the republic, who also may participate in parliamentary debates, must sign or veto within two weeks. In early 1994, parliament had not yet passed legislation replacing Soviet-era laws in several major areas: criminal and civil codes, administrative violations, mar-

riage and family, labor rights and practices, land tenure, and housing.

The Presidency

As it has developed in the 1990s, the Armenian presidency is the most powerful position in government. More than a ceremonial head of state, the president is the most active proposer of new legislation, the chief architect of foreign and military policy, and, during Armenia's prolonged state of national emergency, the unchallenged center of government power in many areas.

Levon Ter-Petrosian, a former philologist and a founding member of the Karabakh Committee, became the first president of independent Armenia in 1991. Ter-Petrosian has occupied the political center of Armenian politics as the single most important politician in the country and the principal advocate of moderate policies in the face of nationalist emotionalism. The parliamentary plurality that Ter-Petrosian's party, the Armenian Pannational Movement (APM), enjoyed at the formation of the republic in 1991 enhanced presidential authority at the expense of parliament, where the majority of seats were divided among many parties. Beginning in 1992, Ter-Petrosian took several controversial unilateral actions on major issues, which brought accusations of abuse of power.

State Administrative Bodies

The Council of Ministers, which performs the everyday activities of the executive branch of government, is presided over by the prime minister, who reports directly to the president and to parliament. The prime minister is named by the president but must be approved by parliament. The members of the council are appointed by joint decision of the president and the prime minister.

The Council of Ministers underwent a series of changes in the early 1990s as Ter-Petrosian sought a prime minister with whom he could work effectively. As a result, four men occupied that position between 1991 and 1993. The principal source of friction within government circles is factional disagreement about the appropriate elements and pace of economic reform. In the first years of independence, most of the members of the council have belonged to the APM. In 1994 the Council of Ministers included the following ministries: agriculture, architecture and urban planning, communications, construction,

culture, defense, economics, education, energy and fuel, environment, finance, food and state procurement, foreign affairs, health, higher education and science, industry, internal affairs, justice, labor and social security, light industry, national security, natural resources, trade, and transportation.

In addition to the regular ministries, state ministries coordinate the activities of ministries having overlapping jurisdictions. State ministers rank higher than regular ministers. In 1994 there were six state ministries: agriculture, construction, energy and fuel, humanitarian assistance, military affairs, and science and culture. State agencies have responsibilities similar to those of ministries, but they are appointed by and report directly to the president. Seven state agencies were operating in 1994.

The Judiciary

With no constitution in place, the structure of the new Armenian judiciary remains unformalized. Most judges are holdovers from the Soviet period, and the power to appoint judges has not been decided between the legislative and executive branches. Appointment and training of new judges are high priorities in replacing the Soviet judicial system with an independent judiciary.

District courts are the courts of first instance. Their judges are named by the president and confirmed by the parliament. The Supreme Court, whose chief justice is nominated by the president and elected by a simple majority of parliament, provides intermediate and final appellate review of cases. The court includes a three-member criminal chamber and a three-member civil chamber for intermediate review and an eleven-member presidium for final review. The full, thirty-two-member court provides plenary appellate review.

The general prosecutor is nominated by the president and elected by parliament. The general prosecutor's office moves cases from lower to higher courts, oversees investigations, prosecutes federal cases, and has a broad mandate to monitor the activities of all state and legal entities and individual citizens. The general prosecutor appoints district attorneys, the chief legal officers at the district level.

The Constitution

As of early 1994, adoption of a constitution for the Republic of Armenia remained a controversial and unresolved project.

In the meantime, the 1978 constitution, a replica of the Soviet Union's 1977 document, remained in effect except in cases where specific legislation superseded it. At the end of 1992, the president and the APM parliamentary delegates presented a draft constitution. They put forward a revised version in March 1993. Then, after nearly a year's work, a bloc of six opposition parties led by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) presented an alternative constitution in January 1994 that would expand the parliament's power, limit that of the president, expand the authority of local government, allow Armenians everywhere to participate in governing the republic, and seek international recognition of the 1915 massacre. As 1994 began, observers expected a long struggle before parliament adopted a final version.

Local Government

The republic is divided into thirty-seven districts, or *gavarner*, each of which has a legislative and administrative branch replicating the national structures. Pending adoption of a new constitution prescribing a division of power, however, all major decisions are made by the central government and are merely implemented by the district administrations.

Political Parties

During Armenia's seventy years as a Soviet republic, only one party, the Communist Party of Armenia (CPA), was allowed legal status. As a branch of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, it ruled under the direct orders of the leadership in Moscow. Following the collapse of communist authority, two major parties and dozens of minor ones competed for popularity along with the remnants of the CPA.

In the years following independence, the most vocal and powerful opposition party was the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF). Founded in 1890, the ARF was the ruling party in the Republic of Armenia in 1918–20; forbidden under the communist regimes, the ARF built a strong support network in the Armenian diaspora. When the party again became legal in 1991, its foreign supporters enabled it to gain influence in Armenia out of proportion to its estimated membership of 40,000. With a platform calling for a coalition government, greater power for the parliament at the expense of the executive, and a strong social welfare program, the ARF gained eighteen seats in the 1992 parliamentary election.

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), founded in 1921, calls for privatizing the economy and rapidly establishing all possible conditions for a free-market economy. It also backs a strong system of state social welfare and recognition of Nagorno-Karabakh's independence. The LDP had seventeen seats in parliament in 1994.

Former dissident Pariur Hairikian heads the National Self-Determination Union, which has called for a coalition government based on proportional representation of each party. With only one seat in parliament, the union takes a radical-right position on most issues. Extreme nationalist parties with racist ideologies also have small followings. Most opposition parties have been critical of Ter-Petrosian's Nagorno-Karabakh policy; in 1992 they formed the so-called National Alliance to coordinate their foreign policy positions. Because of parliament's institutional weakness, oppositionists frequently have organized massive public rallies demanding the president's resignation.

In the first years of independence, the ruling elite came primarily from the Armenian Pannational Movement (APM), the umbrella organization that grew out of the Karabakh movement. In the 1992 parliamentary election, the APM gained fifty-five seats, easily giving it a plurality but leaving it vulnerable when opposition coalitions formed on individual issues. The next largest delegation, that of the ARF, had twelve seats. In 1993 the failure of Ter-Petrosian's government to bring the Karabakh conflict to an end, its own willingness to compromise on the Karabakh question, and the daily grind of fuel and food shortages reduced the popularity of the ruling nationalist movement.

Human Rights

In April 1991, Armenia signed the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and accepted it as domestic law, superseding all existing laws on the subject. That covenant includes the right to counsel; the presumption of innocence of the accused; the right to privacy; prohibition of arbitrary arrest; freedom of the press, religion, political expression and assembly, and movement; minority rights; and prohibition of discrimination. Since 1991 specific legislation has further guaranteed freedom of the press and prohibited discrimination in education, language, and employment. Rights of the accused, how-

ever, remain undefined pending Armenia's acceptance of international conventions on that subject.

In 1993 several human rights organizations were active in Armenia: the Helsinki Assembly, which represented the international Helsinki Watch; the League of Human Rights; parliament's Committee on Human Rights; a national group called Avangard; and a branch of the international Sakharov Fund.

In 1993 the National Self-Determination Union accused the Ter-Petrosian government of a state terrorism policy that included the assassination of individuals within the union and others opposed to government policy. The most publicized incident was the murder in 1993 of Marius Yuzbashian, a former chief of the Armenian branch of the Committee for State Security (Komitet gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti—KGB).

The Media

In the Soviet era, the officially sanctioned source of public information was Armenpress, the state news agency assigned to disseminate the propaganda of the CPA. In the post-Soviet years, Armenpress has remained the primary source of information for independent newspapers in Armenia and for periodicals in the diaspora. Under those conditions, the agency has required continued state funding to maintain its information flow to foreign customers, of whom seventeen had reciprocal information supply agreements with Armenpress in early 1994. Meanwhile, the agency has adopted a more neutral position in its reporting.

Early in 1994, the Ministry of Justice reported that twenty-four magazines, nine radio stations, twenty-five press agencies, and 232 newspapers were active. Several national newspapers represent a variety of political viewpoints. *Hayastani Hanrapetutiun* (Republic of Armenia) is the official daily newspaper of the Supreme Soviet, published in Armenian and Russian versions. *Golos Armenii* (The Voice of Armenia), published daily in Russian, is the official organ of the CPA. *Azatamart* (Struggle for Freedom) and *Hazatamart* (Battle for Freedom) are weekly organs of the ARF. *Hazg* (Nation) is published by the Party of Democratic Freedom. Other newspapers include *Grakan Tert* (Literary Paper), published by the Armenian Union of Writers; *Hayk* (Armenia), a publication of the APM; *Ria Taze* (New Way); and *Yerokoian Yerevan* (Evening Erevan). In 1993 thirteen major magazines and journals covered science and technology, politics, art, culture, and economics; the group also included

one satirical journal, one journal for teenagers, and one for working women.

Foreign Relations

While it has been engaged in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan, Armenia also has sought international status and security in new bilateral relations and membership in international organizations. In the first years of independence, Armenia became a member of the UN, the IMF, the World Bank, the CSCE, and the CIS. Located in a region that is already unstable, in the early 1990s the three republics of Transcaucasia gained the attention of world leaders because of the potential for a wider war on the northern tier of the Middle Eastern states. The resulting aid and efforts at mediation have had mixed results.

Azerbaijan

Since the outbreak of fighting in 1988, Nagorno-Karabakh has been the principal foreign policy issue for Armenia, creating a huge drain on its financial and human resources. By the end of 1993, estimates of the number killed in the conflict ranged from 3,000 to 10,000. The fighting between Armenians and Azerbaijanis repeatedly has threatened to involve not only other CIS member states but also Turkey and Iran, whose borders have been approached and even crossed during the conflict.

In a speech to the UN in September 1992, Ter-Petrosian stated his government's official position that Armenia had no territorial claims against Azerbaijan, but that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh could not be denied the right of self-determination. Advocating the protection of the region by means of permanent international guarantees, Armenia repeatedly called for cease-fires and negotiations between Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh, and between Armenia and Azerbaijan, to resolve the issue. In 1992 the Armenian parliament passed a law prohibiting the government from signing any document recognizing Azerbaijani authority over Karabakh. But at that point, Ter-Petrosian resisted advocating Armenian recognition of Karabakh's independence, which would raise yet another obstacle to peace.

The ARF, the party most supportive of the Nagorno-Karabakh government and its army, called for more forceful prosecution of the war and recognition of the independent status of

Karabakh. In early 1993, the ARF began advocating a binding referendum on the status of the region rather than its return to Armenia.

In 1993 the CSCE made repeated but fruitless efforts to maintain cease-fires and to bring the warring parties together for peace talks. Although years of preliminary discussions had finally resolved the details of how a conference would be held, the negotiations of the CSCE's multinational Minsk Group had not resulted in a single meeting by the end of 1993. There were other efforts at peacemaking. A joint meeting of thirty-three states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO—see Glossary) and the former Warsaw Pact (see Glossary) expressed its concern, Iran attempted separate mediation between Azerbaijan and Armenia, and Russian and CIS leaders (most notably Russia's President Boris N. Yeltsin) also negotiated brief cease-fires. In 1993 Ter-Petrosian also maintained telephone contact with Azerbaijan's president, Heydar Aliyev.

The situation was complicated by the often unpredictable actions of the government in Nagorno-Karabakh. In December 1991, Nagorno-Karabakh declared itself an independent state, and its armed forces often operated independently of the government of the Republic of Armenia. However, the region and its army remained largely dependent on food, medicine, weapons, and moral support from Armenia, especially from the ARF.

Georgia, Iran, and Turkey

Armenians have long been a significant part of the urban population of Georgia, particularly in Tbilisi. Two districts in southern Georgia are predominantly Armenian. The dictatorial regime of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, which ruled Georgia from late 1990 until early January 1992, was extremely intolerant of all ethnic minorities. More than 70,000 Armenians were caught in the crossfire of the Georgian government's conflict with Abkhazian separatists, which reached crisis proportions in the fall of 1993. In this struggle, extreme Georgian nationalists attempted to drive the Armenian population from the country in order to create a homogeneous Georgia. The crisis in Abkhazia had immediate repercussions for Armenia when fighting resulted in the severing of Georgia's Black Sea railroad, a lifeline from Russia to Armenia. The republic thus was cut off from many supplies, particularly grain. In early 1993, when a natural gas pipeline running through Georgia was repeatedly

blown up, the Armenian government sharply demanded that the Georgian leader, Eduard Shevardnadze, make a greater effort to secure the necessary flow of gas to Armenia.

Armenia has had better relations with Iran, although Iran has been worried about the presence of Armenian troops occupying Azerbaijani territory just across its border. Two-thirds of the world's Azerbaijanis live in Iran, and the Tehran government fears that émigrés would spread Azerbaijani nationalism among the Azerbaijani population of northern Iran. Armenian troops have at times been no more than twenty kilometers from the Iranian border. On several occasions, Iran attempted to mediate the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, but unforeseen actions by the Karabakh forces frustrated these efforts.

Armenia's traditional enemy in the twentieth century has been Turkey. Among outstanding sources of conflict, the most painful and long-lasting has been the Turkish refusal to recognize the deportations and massacres of Ottoman Armenians in 1915 as a deliberate, state-sponsored act of genocide. Many Armenians, particularly those associated with the ARF, aspire to restore Armenian control over the lands of historical Armenia that are now under Turkish sovereignty. Although many Armenian émigrés remain hostile toward Turkey today, the Ter-Petrosian government has made improved relations with Ankara a high priority because of the possibility of opening new supply routes and hard-currency markets for Armenian products.

Although no Armenian politician is willing to retract the demand that the Ottoman genocide of 1915 be acknowledged, those around the Armenian president have resisted raising issues likely to alienate Turkey. In late 1992, when Foreign Minister Raffi Hovannisian spoke about the outstanding differences between Turks and Armenians in a speech in Istanbul, he was swiftly removed from office. On the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, the Turkish government usually has sided with Azerbaijan, particularly during the time of the Azerbaijani Popular Front government in Baku (May 1992–June 1993). Nationalist voices in Turkey have protested Armenian advances against Azerbaijan, and periodically Turkey has prevented Western humanitarian aid from reaching Armenia. Turkish nationalist factions also have accused Armenia of aiding Kurdish rebels in eastern Turkey.

The Commonwealth of Independent States

Increasingly through the early 1990s, the Republic of Armenia's isolation led the government to look for allies beyond Transcaucasia. Ter-Petrosian appealed to foreign governments and to Armenians abroad for material aid to carry the people through the harsh winters. As the rapprochement with Turkey in 1991–92 brought few concrete benefits, Armenia steadily gravitated toward a closer relationship with Russia. Early in 1993, Ter-Petrosian met with Yeltsin in Moscow to discuss deliveries of oil and natural gas to the blockaded republic. The Russian minister of defense, Pavel Grachev, negotiated a brief cease-fire in Nagorno-Karabakh in April. Armenia remained in the ruble zone, the group of countries still using Russian rubles as domestic currency, often in parallel with a new national currency such as Armenia's dram. In 1992 and 1993, large-scale credit payments from the Central Bank of Russia were vital in supporting Armenia's national budget.

Immediately after Armenia declared itself independent, Ter-Petrosian joined in an economic community with seven other republics—but he refused to enter a political union at that point. In December 1991, however, he signed the Alma-Ata Declaration, making Armenia a founding member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). From that time, Armenia has played an active role in the CIS, signing an accord on military cooperation with Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.

In May 1993, Ter-Petrosian announced Armenia's support of a Russo-Turkish-American plan for settlement of the Karabakh conflict. When Aliyev returned to power in June, Ter-Petrosian spoke by telephone directly with the new leader of Azerbaijan, and together they agreed that Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabakh must begin direct negotiations. Azerbaijan's entry into the CIS in September 1993 was seen by some as giving Russia a mandate to solve the Karabakh problem. Ter-Petrosian reiterated his conditions for peace: Karabakh was to be recognized as a full party to the negotiations, all blockades were to be ended, and the CSCE-sponsored Minsk Group negotiations were to settle all political and legal questions on the status of Karabakh.

Russia was a logical mediator. Not only did it have military bases and equipment in the region, but Russian troops were still guarding the border between Armenia and Turkey. Russia consistently asserted its hegemonic role in Transcaucasia,

opposed the designs of Turkey and Iran in the region, and was even wary of the United States being a mediator in the region without specific Russian invitation or acquiescence. After Yeltsin won a struggle with the Russian parliament in September 1993 and both Georgia and Azerbaijan had joined the CIS, Russia resumed its role as the primary mediator of conflicts in Transcaucasia.

Russia has asserted hegemony in the region in several ways. It has repeatedly claimed the right to protect the major link from Russia to Armenia that passes through conflict-plagued Abkhazia and Georgia. In September 1993, Russia requested a revision of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE Treaty—see Glossary), which had been negotiated between NATO and the Warsaw Pact in 1990, in order to achieve an increase in the number of Russian tanks and heavy weapons in the Caucasus. Although NATO perceived an increased military influence in the formulation of this more assertive Russian policy, Western policy makers recognized that at the end of 1993 Russia was the only power in position to play a meaningful peacekeeping role in the region.

The United States

Independent Armenia enjoys good relations with the United States and the European Union (EU). The United States recognized the Republic of Armenia in December 1991, and a United States embassy opened in Erevan in February 1992. General United States and Armenian strategic interests in common include the promotion of internal democracy, just termination of the Karabakh conflict, and stability in the former Soviet Union that would prevent the resurgence of an authoritarian, imperialist Russia. United States policy toward Armenia must weigh the special relationships of the United States with Russia and NATO ally Turkey. In the first post-Soviet years, the United States has given more aid per capita to Armenia than to any other former Soviet republic. At the same time, the United States has withheld trade privileges from Azerbaijan because of that country's economic blockade of Armenia.

Armenians have been able to influence American policy to a limited degree through the diaspora in the United States, but their interests and those of the United States are not always congruent. Given its special relationship with Turkey, the United States has been reluctant to recognize the events of 1915 as genocide. On several occasions, the United States criti-

Loading butter from United States Department of Agriculture onto Armenian trucks at Zvartnots Airport, near Erevan, after collapse of Soviet Union, February 1992
Courtesy A. James Firth, United States Department of Agriculture

cized Armenian aggression against Azerbaijan outside of Karabakh. Yet both the United States and Russia, as well as the CSCE countries in general, agree that a solution to the Karabakh conflict must be based on recognition of existing borders and the rights of minorities.

In the first winters of the 1990s, many Armenians were on the brink of starvation, and the basic needs of the population were sustained only through foreign aid. In December 1991, the United States Department of Agriculture and the Diocese of the Armenian Church in America arranged for the diocese to distribute food shipments valued at US$15 million in Armenia. Through Operation Provide Hope, the United States government sent food and medical supplies worth over US$6 million to Armenia in the first eight months of 1992. When the

United States Agency for International Development (AID) authorized US$1 million to the American Bar Association for a program to provide legal experts to the member states of the CIS, Armenia became the first country where legislators worked with these legal specialists. The Peace Corps arrived in Erevan in August 1992, followed in the fall by AID and the United States Information Agency (USIA).

National Security

As a nation, Armenia has not had a great tradition of military success, even at the largest extent of the Armenian Empire. In the Soviet period, Armenian troops were thoroughly integrated into the Soviet army, and Armenian plants contributed sophisticated equipment to Soviet arsenals. After independence Armenia profited from some aspects of this close association, and a strong Russian military presence is expected to remain for some time.

Geopolitical Situation

As a small country, Armenia has had an unfavorable geopolitical situation, with no neighbors likely to provide support and security. Lacking an outlet to the sea, Armenia is surrounded by Muslim Turkey and Azerbaijan, both of which generally have been hostile to Armenia's interests; the militant Islamic republic of Iran; and a Georgia torn by civil war. By 1990 Armenia's traditional reliance on Russia had weakened because of internal political conditions—the Karabakh movement had an anti-Russian orientation—and because of the retreat of post-Soviet Russia from military involvement on many fronts.

In the early 1990s, the major external threat to Armenia came from Azerbaijan. A state with twice the population of Armenia, with significant unrecovered oil reserves in the Caspian Sea, and with great potential for securing Western capital for industrial development, Azerbaijan possessed considerable resources with which to fight a long war in Karabakh. In early 1994, the Armenian Army was considered the most combat-ready force in the three states of Transcaucasia. However, experts attributed Armenian combat successes in the conflict in 1992–93 to the political instability in Baku, to regional divisions within Azerbaijan, and to the greater unity and determination of the Armenian forces in Karabakh(see Forming a National Defense Force, ch. 2).

In the years following independence, Armenia saw its future security based on ending the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, improving its relations with all its neighbors, and gaining aid and support from the great global powers and organizations—the United States, Russia, the CSCE, and the UN. Once it joined the CIS, Armenia adhered to the organization's security arrangements. In March 1992, Armenia joined Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia in an agreement on the status of general-purpose forces, and it joined seven other CIS republics in an agreement on the financing, supply, production, and development of military equipment. On May 15, 1992, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan met in Tashkent and signed the Treaty on Collective Security. According to this pact, former Soviet armed forces were permitted to remain in the signatory republics by mutual agreement. Armenia and several other republics agreed to apportion former Soviet weapons to conform to the CFE Treaty. By that agreement, Armenia was to receive 875 units of heavy matériel (tanks, artillery, aircraft, and helicopters), the same number as Georgia and Azerbaijan.

Armenia's location between two larger states, Russia and Turkey, has long forced it to orient its policies to favor one or the other. Until the late Soviet period, Armenia generally favored its Orthodox neighbor and depended on the Russian or Soviet state for its national security. In 1945 Stalin raised the matter of regaining Armenian territory from Turkey, but the issue quietly expired with the dictator in 1953. After independence was officially proclaimed in 1991, Armenia's membership in the new CIS became a national security issue because it seemingly prolonged Russian occupation. The prevailing view in the early 1990s, however, was that isolation from reliable alliances was the greater threat.

In the decades after World War II, relations between Armenians and Turks degenerated. The Turks became embittered by acts of Armenian terrorism against Turkish citizens in other countries, especially in the 1970s, which served to remind the world of the genocide issue. Starting in the 1980s, Turkey began aspiring to play a major role in European affairs and to exert leadership among the Central Asian Muslim nations that emerged from the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. These foreign policy goals encouraged Turkish ambivalence toward Armenian objectives in Nagorno-Karabakh. However, traditional Turkish nationalism demanded alliance with Muslim

Azerbaijan, and eastern Turkey remained a heavily fortified area after the end of the Cold War—about 50,000 Turkish troops were on the Armenian border in early 1994. In turn, Armenia saw its collective security treaty with the CIS and the presence of Russian troops in Armenia as restraints on the nationalist impulse in Turkish policy making.

The Military

Influenced by the requirements of supporting the forces of Nagorno-Karabakh against Azerbaijan and the long-term objective of military self-reliance, Armenia has worked toward making the Armenian Army a small, well-balanced, combat-ready defense force. Chief architects of the force were General Norat Ter-Grigoriants, a former Soviet deputy chief of staff who became overall commander of the new Armenian Army; Vazgan Sarkisian, named the first minister of defense; and Vazgan Manukian, who replaced Sarkisian in 1992.

As expressed by the military establishment during the planning stage, Armenia's military doctrine called for maintenance of defensive self-sufficiency that would enable its army to repel an attack by forces from Azerbaijan or Turkey, or both. That concept was refuted, however, by radical nationalists who advocated a more aggressive posture, similar to that of the Israeli army in defending a "surrounded" land, of maintaining the armed forces at a high degree of readiness to inflict crippling losses on an enemy within days. Both doctrines emphasized small, highly mobile, well-trained units. The specific outcome of the debate over military doctrine has been concealed as a matter of national security. Although legislation on defense forces called for 1 percent of the population to be in the armed forces, active-duty strength in 1994 was estimated at 20,000, including border troops. By that time, the Ministry of Defense had increased its goal to a standing army of 50,000, to be supplemented in wartime by a reserve call-up.

A top defense priority in 1994 was improving control of the Zangezur region, the vulnerable, far southeastern corridor bordering Iran and flanked by Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic and Azerbaijan proper. The program for Zangezur includes new military installations, especially on the Iranian border, as well as a new bridge and a new natural gas pipeline into Iran.

The army and the Ministry of Defense have structures similar to those of their counterparts in the former Soviet Union,

except that the highest organizational level of the Armenian forces is a smaller unit, the brigade, rather than the traditional division, to maximize maneuverability. Plans call for brigades of 1,500 to 2,500 troops to be divided into three or four battalions, in the manner of the paramilitary forces of the Karabakh Armenians.

Regular Forces

In 1992 the Ministry of Defense appealed to Armenian officers who had had commissions in the Soviet army to help form the new force to defend their homeland against Azerbaijan and to build a permanent national army. Although substantial special benefits were offered, the new professional officer corps was not staffed as fully as hoped in its first two years. In especially short supply were officer specialists in military organizational development—a critical need in the army's formative stage. In 1994 most Armenian officers still were being trained in Russia; the first 100 Armenian-trained officers were to be commissioned in the spring of 1994. Plans called for officer training to begin in 1995 at a new national military academy.

Eighteen-year-old men constitute the primary pool of conscripts. New trainees generally are not sent into combat positions. The Armenian public was hostile to conscription in the Soviet period; the practice of assigning Armenian recruits to all parts of the Soviet Union prompted large demonstrations in Erevan. That attitude continued in the post-Soviet period. In the first two years of the new force, recruitment fell far short of quotas. The draft of the fall of 1992, for example, produced only 71 percent of the quota, and widespread evasion was reported.

Conscripts generally lack equipment and advanced training, and some units are segregated by social class. Officer elitism and isolation are also problems, chiefly because the first language of many officers is Russian. Desertion rates in 1992–93 were extremely high. In early 1994, the defense establishment considered formalizing the status of the large number of volunteers in the army by introducing a contract service system.

In 1992 the republic established the Babajanian Military Boarding School, which admitted qualified boys aged fourteen to sixteen for training, leading to active military service. By agreement with Russian military institutions, graduates could continue training in Russia at the expense of the Armenian Ministry of Defense. A class of 100 was expected to graduate in

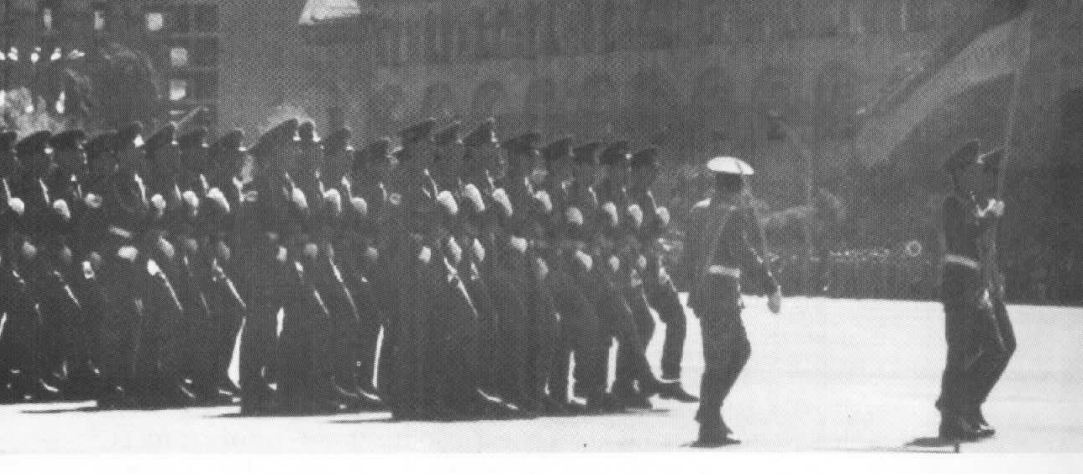
1994. The lack of military training schools is rated as a serious problem. Armenian cadets and junior officers study at military schools in Russia and other CIS states, and senior officers spend two to three years at academies in Russia and Belarus. A military academy for all armed services was in the planning stage in 1994.

The Karabakh Self-Defense Army consists mostly of Armenians from Karabakh or elsewhere in Azerbaijan, plus some volunteers from Armenia and mercenaries who formerly were Soviet officers. The Karabakh forces reportedly are well armed with Kalashnikov rifles, armor, and heavy artillery, a high percentage of which was captured from Azerbaijani forces or obtained from Soviet occupation troops. Significant arms and matériel support also came from Armenia, often at the expense of the regular army. By 1994 the Karabakh Self-Defense Army was building an infrastructure of barracks, training centers, and repair depots. Defeats that Armenians inflicted on Azerbaijan in 1993 were attributed by experts largely to the self-defense forces, although regular Armenian forces also were involved.

The Armenian air defense forces, virtually nonexistent in 1991, were equipped and organized as part of the military reform program of Ter-Grigoriants. Air defense units and the air force each had about 2,000 troops in 1994. The new military aviation program of the air force has been bolstered by the recruitment of Soviet-trained Armenian pilots, and new pilots receive training at the Aviation Training Center, run by the Ministry of Defense. Some modern training aircraft are available at the center. Pilots receive special housing privileges, although their pay is extremely low. Some Soviet-made Mi-8, Mi-9, and Mi-24 helicopters are available to support ground troops, but only one squadron of aircraft was rated combat-ready in 1994. Most of Armenia's fixed-wing aircraft, inherited from the Soviet Union, were unavailable because of poor maintenance.

Reserves

After independence the Soviet-era Volunteer Society for Assistance to the Army, Air Force, and Navy (see Glossary), part of the centralized reserve system of the Soviet army, was renamed the Defense Technical Sports Society. The new system trains personnel for specific military tasks in the Armenian forces, whereas previous training was a general preparation for



Members of Armenian Army parading in Victory Square, Erevan, Independence Day 1993
Courtesy Azarian Churukian

unknown assignments elsewhere in the Soviet Union. In 1993 the society's schools gave instruction in thirteen military occupational specialties,including tank driving and repair, radiotelegraphy, and artillery and small arms repair.

Like those of the regular military, the facilities of the reserves were cut back sharply at independence. At least nine reserve training facilities, including one technical school, were reassigned within the Ministry of Defense or to another ministry. The Defense Technical Sports Society supports itself by selling military gear and sports vehicles produced in its plants; it has established advisory relations with defense technical societies in other CIS countries.

The Russian Role

After Armenian independence, Russia retained control of the Russian 7th Army in Armenia, which numbered about 23,000 personnel in mid-1992. At that time, the 7th Army included three motorized rifle divisions. In the second half of 1992, substantial parts of two divisions—the 15th Division and the 164th Division—were transferred to Armenian control. The other division remained intact and under full Russian command at Gyumri in early 1994. Meanwhile, Russia completed withdrawal of the four divisions of its 4th Army from Azerbaijan in May 1993. Some Armenian warrant officers were assigned to the division at Gyumri, and the two countries discussed assignment of Armenian recruits to Russian units.

The Russian presence continued in 1994, with an operational command in Erevan providing engineer, communications, logistics, aviation, and training capabilities. Under the

1992 Treaty on Collective Security, which apportioned Soviet weaponry among the former Soviet republics, Armenia was allotted 180 T–72 tanks, 180 BMP–1K armored fighting vehicles, sixty BTR–60 and BTR–70 armored personnel carriers, twenty-five BRM–1K armored fighting vehicles, thirty 9P–138 and 9P–148 guided missiles, and 130 artillery pieces and mortars. An unknown number of weapons systems in the Osa, Strela, Igla, and Shilka classes were also designated for transfer. Much of this equipment was no longer serviceable by the time it was turned over, however.

Internal Security

In the early 1990s, internal security was endangered by growing radical opposition to the moderate domestic and foreign policies of the Ter-Petrosian government. By 1993 a widespread breakdown of law and order in the republic had eroded the authority of the Armenian state.

Shortly after independence, a special internal security force was formed under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, whose special status in the government alarmed many observers in the ensuing years. The original mission of the internal security force was to prevent guerrilla attacks on military installations in the first months of independence. Since that time, this militia also has acted as the sole general (and nominally apolitical) police force. As originally formed, the internal affairs unit had 1,000 troops, including one assault battalion, two motorized patrol battalions, and one armored patrol battalion. Three specialized companies, including a canine unit for drug detection, also were formed. Elements of the former KGB have remained active under Armenian direction. All police agencies are under the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Border patrols are administered by the Main Administration for the Protection of State Borders. Some of the patrols on the Iranian and Turkish borders are manned by Russian troops, whose presence is partially funded by Armenia. The rest of the border patrols are made up of Armenian troops serving under contract.

In early 1994, Armenia completely reorganized the State Administration for National Security (SANS), the umbrella agency of the Ministry of Internal Affairs that heads all national security activities. All agency activities except border patrols were suspended for three months while staff were reevaluated and an announced focus on intelligence and coun-

terintelligence was introduced. The controversial measure may have been instigated by the assassination of Marius Yuzbashian, a former chief of the Armenian branch of the KGB; SANS had failed to investigate the assassination fully when it occurred, in the fall of 1993.

Experts saw a serious long-term threat to internal security in the independent mercenary Fidain forces that had been trained and expanded by Armenian political parties to fight in Nagorno-Karabakh. The end of the Karabakh conflict would free these combat-hardened forces, which did the bulk of the fighting in Karabakh, for possible guerrilla activity within Armenia on behalf of their respective opposition parties.

Crime

Especially in the chaotic conditions that have existed during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Armenia has suffered steep increases in the gang activity of an organized mafia. Overall crime increased 11.5 percent from 1990 to 1991; then it increased 24.8 percent from 1991 to 1992. "Major" crimes (murder, robbery, armed robbery, rape, and aggravated assault) increased 3 percent from 1991 to 1992. The largest increases in that category were in murder, robbery, and armed robbery. White-collar crime (bribery and fraud) increased about 2 percent in that time, crimes by juveniles increased about 40 percent, and drug-related crimes increased 240 percent. According to one report, 80 percent of crimes committed in Armenia in 1992 were drug related.

In 1992 and 1993, a police campaign temporarily limited the activity of a few large gangs, but gang leaders, whose identities were commonly known in Armenian society, used influence in parliament to stymie the efforts of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Some deputies in parliament were implicated directly in white-collar crime, and some even had been convicted prior to their election. From 1991 to 1993, six convicts were sentenced to death, but by early 1994 none had been executed.

Prisons

Three major prisons are in operation, at Sovetashen, Artik, and Kosh. Local jurisdictions also have jails. All prisons and jails are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Soviet prison system remains intact in Armenia. That system includes two general categories: labor colonies,

and prison communities similar to Western prisons. Prison system reforms call for establishment of general and high-security reform schools for teenagers; general and high-security prisons for women; and four grades of prisons for men, from minimum to maximum security. The death penalty is applicable for military crimes, first-degree murder, rape of a minor, treason, espionage, and terrorism.

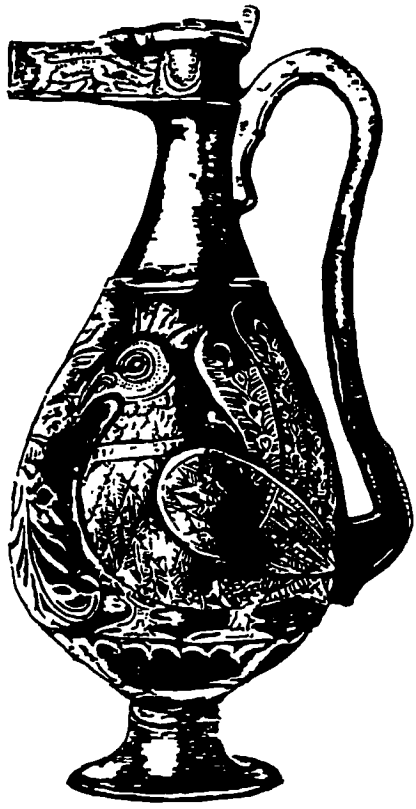
In 1993 Armenia remained a weak state whose legal system was severely challenged by the activities of regional and family clans, criminal gangs with diverse operations, widespread corruption, and occasional assassinations of political figures. In the absence of a secure rule of law, the stresses of war and material privation, uncertainty about the future, and popular suspicion about the legitimacy of the ruling elites threatened the stability of the new republic.

* * *

For general historical and cultural narratives on the Armenian nation and people, two books by David Marshall Lang are of special value: *The Armenians: A People in Exile* and *Armenia: Cradle of Civilization.* Ronald G. Suny's *Armenia in the Twentieth Century* covers that period, with an emphasis on social change. The *Economic Profile of Armenia* volume of the United States Department of Commerce's Business Information Service for the Newly Independent States and *Armenia,* an economic review by the International Monetary Fund, provide a picture of Armenia's economy after 1991; the latter source also includes tables on a variety of economic performance indicators in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

Current information on Nagorno-Karabakh and conditions in Armenia is provided in the *Monthly Digest of News from Armenia,* published by the Armenian Assembly of America, and the Foreign Broadcast Information Service's *Daily Report: Central Eurasia.* These two publications emphasize political, economic, and national security topics. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Chapter 2. Azerbaijan



Sixth-century water pitcher

Country Profile

Country

Formal Name: Republic of Azerbaijan.

Short Form: Azerbaijan.

Term for Citizens: Azerbaijani(s).

Capital: Baku.

Date of Independence: October 18, 1991.

Geography

Size: Approximately 86,600 square kilometers.

Topography: About half mountainous; surrounded by mountain ranges, most notably Greater Caucasus range to north. Flatlands in center and along Caspian Sea coast.

Climate: Dry, semiarid steppe in center and east, subtropical in southeast, cold at high mountain elevations to north, temperate on Caspian Sea coast.

Society

Population: Mid-1994 estimate 7,684,456; 1994 annual growth rate 1.4 percent. Density in 1994 approximately eighty-eight persons per square kilometer.

Ethnic Groups: Azerbaijanis 82.7 percent, Russians 5.6 percent, Armenians 5.6 percent, and Lezgians (Dagestanis) 3.2 percent, per 1989 census (Armenians and Russians much less in early 1990s).

NOTE—The Country Profile contains updated information as available.

Languages: Azerbaijani 82 percent, Russian 7 percent, and Armenian 5 percent, per 1989 census (Armenian and Russian much less in early 1990s).

Religion: In 1989 Muslim 87 percent (about 70 percent of which Shia), Russian Orthodox 5.6 percent, and Armenian Apostolic 5.6 percent (much less in early 1990s). Many mosques reopened or established after religious restrictions of Soviet period.

Education and Literacy: Compulsory education through eighth grade. In 1970 literacy estimated at 100 percent (ages nine to forty-nine). After 1991 major reform program was begun to modify Soviet system, eliminate ideology, increase use of Azerbaijani language, and reintroduce traditional religious instruction.

Health: Nominally universal health care available but facilities limited, especially after independence. Sanitation, pharmacies, health care delivery, and research and development at relatively low level; medicines and equipment in short supply.

Economy

Gross National Product (GNP): In 1992 estimated at US$18.6 billion, or US$2,480 per capita. Average growth rate 1.9 percent in 1980–91. Production dropped throughout early 1990s because of adjustments to post-Soviet system and because of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Agriculture: Main crops grapes, cotton, tobacco, citrus fruits, and vegetables. Livestock, dairy products, and wine also produced. Slow privatization hinders productivity increase, and production of most crops decreased in early 1990s. Irrigation and other equipment outmoded, although irrigation critical for many crops.

Industry and Mining: Principal industries oil extraction, oil equipment manufacture, petrochemicals, and construction. Besides oil, large natural gas deposits and some iron ore, bauxite, cobalt, and molybdenum. Oil production in decline since 1980s.

Energy: Abundant hydroelectric potential, but most of electric power generated by oil-fired plants. Domestic natural gas production meets 35 percent of domestic needs. Foreign

assistance sought to rejuvenate oil extraction industry.

Exports: In 1992 estimated at US$926 million to Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) nations and US$821 million outside CIS, of which 61 percent refined oil and gas products, 25 percent machinery and metal products, and 7 percent light industrial products (textiles and food products). Largest export markets Russia, Ukraine, Iran, Turkey, and Hungary.

Imports: In 1992 estimated at US$300 million from outside CIS, of which 36 percent machine parts, 21 percent processed foods, and 12 percent nonfood light industrial products. Largest import sources Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

Balance of Payments: In 1992 trade surplus approximately US$24 million.

Exchange Rate: Manat, established in mid-1992 at ten rubles to the manat, was used together with ruble until end of 1993, after which manat became sole currency. October 1993 exchange rate US$1=120 manats.

Inflation: Estimated at 1,200 percent for 1993.

Fiscal Year: Calendar year.

Fiscal Policy: State budget consists of central government budget and budgets of sixty-eight local and regional government budgets. Tax system revised in 1992 to improve state income, and budgetary expenditures tightly controlled to minimize budget deficits.

Transportation and Telecommunications

Highways: In 1990 about 36,700 kilometers of roads, of which 31,800 kilometers hard-surface. Generally poorly maintained.

Railroads: 2,090 kilometers of rail line in 1990. Lines connect Baku with Tbilisi, Makhachkala (in Dagestan), and Erevan; rail line in Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic goes to Tabriz (in Iran). Operating costs high because of poor condition of equipment. Service disrupted by Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in early 1990s.

Civil Aviation: Total of thirty-three usable airports, twenty-six with permanent-surface runways. Longest runway at Baku International Airport. National airline, Azerbaijan Airlines,

founded in 1992.

Inland Waterways: Most rivers not navigable.

Ports: Baku center of Caspian shipping lines to Iran and Turkmenistan.

Pipelines: In 1994 crude oil pipeline 1,130 kilometers, petroleum products pipeline 630 kilometers, and natural gas pipeline 1,240 kilometers.

Telecommunications: In 1991 total telephone lines 644,000 (nine per 100 persons). Connections to CIS countries by cable and microwave. Connections to other countries through Moscow. International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (Intelsat) station in Baku gives access to 200 countries through Turkey. Turkish and Iranian television stations received through satellite; domestic and Russian broadcasts received locally.

Government and Politics

Government: One autonomous republic, Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic; one autonomous region, Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region (under dispute with Armenia). Fifty-six districts and ten cities under direct central control. Executive branch includes president, elected by direct popular vote, and Council of Ministers, appointed by president with legislative approval; 350-member legislature, Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet, dissolved in May 1992, superseded by fifty-member Melli-Majlis (National Council). Regimes of early 1990s unstable. Adoption of new constitution delayed by political turmoil. Judicial branch remains substantially unchanged from Soviet system, which offered limited rights to those accused.

Politics: Azerbaijani Communist Party, previously only legal party, dissolved formally September 1991 but remained influential and was reconstituted December 1993. Major parties New Azerbaijan Party, led by President Heydar Aliyev; Azerbaijani Popular Front, major opposition party 1990–92; and National Independence Party, major opposition party 1992–94. Several smaller parties influential in coalition politics of Melli-Majlis.

Foreign Relations: Major goal countering worldwide Armenian

information campaign on Nagorno-Karabakh. Policy toward Turkey and Russia varies with perception of support and mediation of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict; Aliyev government closer to Russia. Blockade of Armenia brought United States restriction of relations and aid in 1992. Recognized by 120 countries by 1993.

International Agreements and Membership: Member of Commonwealth of Independent States, United Nations, Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and International Monetary Fund.

National Security

Armed Forces: Military affairs overseen by Defense Council reporting to president, not by Ministry of Defense. Armed forces consist of army, air force, air defense forces, navy, and National Guard. In 1994 total of about 56,000 troops (about half of which conscripts), 49,000 of which allocated to ground forces, 3,000 to navy, and 2,000 each to air force and air defense forces. Paramilitary groups extensively used in Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in early 1990s, and volunteers widely sought abroad. All Russian forces withdrawn by 1993. Forced recruitment reported in 1993; discipline poor.

Military Budget: Estimated expenditure in 1992 about 10.5 percent (US$125 million) of state budget.

Internal Security: Border Guards, established in 1992, limited; some Russian troops included. In 1993 major reform of Ministry of Internal Affairs, which controls 20,000 militia troops used as regular police. Customs service unable to prevent smuggling, especially of narcotics.

Figure 8. Azerbaijan, 1994

UNDER THE DOMINATION of the Soviet Union for most of the twentieth century, Azerbaijan began a period of tentative autonomy when the Soviet state collapsed at the end of 1991. A culturally and linguistically Turkic people, the Azerbaijanis have retained a rich cultural heritage despite long periods of Persian and Russian domination. In the 1990s, the newly independent nation still faced strong and contrary religious and political influences from neighbors such as Iran to the south, Turkey to the west, and Russia to the north (see fig. 8). Despite the country's rich oil reserves, Azerbaijan's natural and economic resources and social welfare system have been rated below those of most of the other former Soviet republics. Furthermore, in the early 1990s a long military and diplomatic struggle with neighboring Armenia was sapping resources and distracting the country from the task of devising post-Soviet internal systems and establishing international relations.

Historical Background

The territory of modern Azerbaijan has been subject to myriad invasions, migrations, and cultural and political influences. During most of its history, Azerbaijan was under Persian influence, but as the Persian Empire declined, Russia began a 200-year dominance, some aspects of which have persisted into the 1990s.

Early History

As a crossroads of tribal migration and military campaigns, Azerbaijan underwent a series of invasions and was part of several larger jurisdictions before the beginning of the Christian era.

Persian and Greek Influences

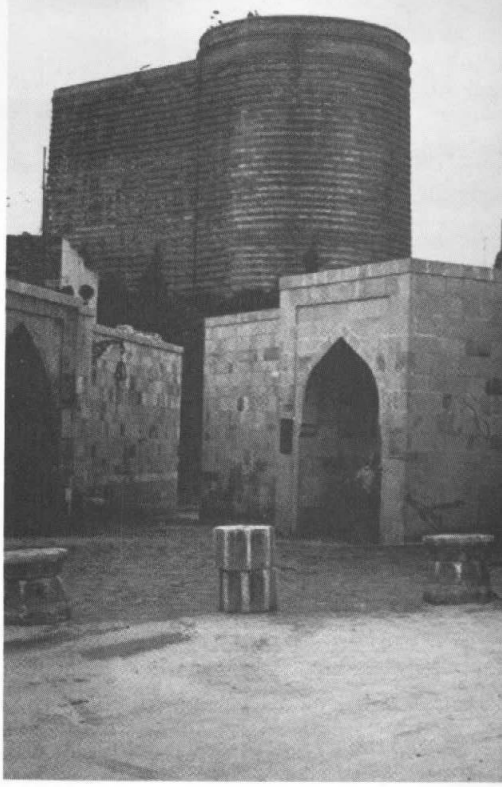
In the ninth century B.C., the seminomadic Scythians settled in areas of what is now Azerbaijan. A century later, the Medes, who were related ethnically to the Persians, established an empire that included southernmost Azerbaijan. In the sixth century B.C., the Archaemenid Persians, under Cyrus the Great, took over the western part of Azerbaijan when they subdued the Assyrian Empire to the west. In 330 B.C., Alexander

the Great absorbed the entire Archaemenid Empire into his holdings, leaving Persian satraps to govern as he advanced eastward. According to one account, Atropates, a Persian general in Alexander's command, whose name means "protected by fire," lent his name to the region when Alexander made him its governor. Another legend explains that Azerbaijan's name derives from the Persian words meaning "the land of fire," a reference either to the natural burning of surface oil deposits or to the oil-fueled fires in temples of the once-dominant Zoroastrian religion (see Religion, this ch.).

The Introduction of Islam and the Turkish Language

Between the first and third centuries A.D., the Romans conquered the Scythians and Seleucids, who were among the successor groups to the fragmented empire of Alexander. The Romans annexed the region of present-day Azerbaijan and called the area Albania. As Roman control weakened, the Sassanid Dynasty reestablished Persian control. Between the seventh and eleventh centuries, Arabs controlled Azerbaijan, bringing with them the precepts of Islam. In the mid-eleventh century, Turkic-speaking groups, including the Oghuz tribes and their Seljuk Turkish dynasty, ended Arab control by invading Azerbaijan from Central Asia and asserting political dominance. The Seljuks brought with them the Turkish language and Turkish customs. By the thirteenth century, the basic characteristics of the Azerbaijani nation had been established. Several masterpieces of Azerbaijani architecture and literature were created during the cultural golden age that spanned the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries. Among the most notable cultural monuments of this period are the writings of Nezami Ganjavi and the mausoleum of Momine-Khatun in Nakhichevan (see The Arts, this ch.).

Under the leadership of Hulegu Khan, Mongols invaded Azerbaijan in the early thirteenth century; Hulegu ruled Azerbaijan and Persia from his capital in the Persian city of Tabriz. At the end of the fourteenth century, another Mongol, Timur (also known as Tamerlane), invaded Azerbaijan, at about the time that Azerbaijani rule was reviving under the Shirvan Dynasty. Shirvan shah Ibrahim I ibn Sultan Muhammad briefly accepted Timur as his overlord. (In earlier times, the Shirvan shahs had accepted the suzerainty of Seljuk overlords.) Another extant architectural treasure, the Shirvan shahs' palace in Baku, dates from this period. In the sixteenth century,



Icheri-Shekher Fortress, Baku Courtesy Tatiana Zagorskaya

the Azerbaijani Safavid Dynasty took power in Persia. This dynasty fought off efforts by the Ottoman Turks during the eighteenth century to establish control over Azerbaijan; the Safavids could not, however, halt Russian advances into the region.

Within the Russian Empire

Beginning in the early eighteenth century, Russia slowly asserted political domination over the northern part of Azerbaijan, while Persia retained control of southern Azerbaijan. In the nineteenth century, the division between Russian and Persian Azerbaijan was largely determined by two treaties concluded after wars between the two countries. The Treaty of Gulistan (1813) established the Russo-Persian border roughly along the Aras River, and the Treaty of Turkmanchay (1828) awarded Russia the Nakhichevan khanates (along the present-day border between Armenia and Turkey) in the region of the Talish Mountains. The land that is now Azerbaijan was split among three Russian administrative areas—Baku and Elizavetpol provinces and part of Yerevan Province, which also extended into present-day Armenia.

Russian Influences in the Nineteenth Century

In the nineteenth century, Russian influence over daily life in Azerbaijan was less pervasive than that of indigenous reli-

gious and political elites and the cultural and intellectual influences of Persia and Turkey. During most of the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire extracted commodities from Azerbaijan and invested little in the economy. However, the exploitation of oil in Azerbaijan at the end of the nineteenth century brought an influx of Russians into Baku, increasing Russian influence and expanding the local economy.

Although ethnic Russians came to dominate the oil business and government administration in the late 1800s, many Azerbaijanis became prominent in particular sectors of oil production, such as oil transport on the Caspian Sea. Armenians also became important as merchants and local officials of the Russian monarchy. The population of Baku increased from about 13,000 in the 1860s to 112,000 in 1897 and 215,000 in 1913, making Baku the largest city in the Caucasus region. At this point, more than one-third of Baku's population consisted of ethnic Russians. In 1905 social tensions erupted in riots and other forms of death and destruction as Azerbaijanis and Armenians struggled for local control and Azerbaijanis resisted Russian sovereignty.

The Spirit of Revolution

The growth of industry and political influences from outside prompted the formation of radical and reformist political organizations at the turn of the century. A leftist party calling itself Himmat, composed mainly of Azerbaijani intellectuals, was formed in 1903–4 to champion Azerbaijani culture and language against Russian and other foreign influences. A small Social Democratic Party (which later split into Bolshevik and Menshevik factions) also existed, but that party was largely dominated by Russians and Armenians. Some members of Himmat broke away and formed the Musavat (Equality party) in 1912. This organization aimed at establishing an independent Azerbaijani state, and its progressive and nationalist slogans gained wide appeal. Himmat's Marxist coloration involved it in wider ideological squabbles in the period leading up to the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. After several further splits, the remainder of Himmat was absorbed into the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) shortly before Azerbaijan was occupied by the Red Army in 1920.

World War I and Independence

After the Bolshevik Revolution, a mainly Russian and Armenian grouping of Baku Bolsheviks declared a Marxist republic

in Azerbaijan. Muslim nationalists separately declared the establishment of the Azerbaijan People's Democratic Republic in May 1918 and formed the "Army of Islam," with substantial help from the Ottoman Turkish army, to defeat the Bolsheviks in Baku. The Army of Islam marched into the capital in September 1918, meeting little resistance from the Bolshevik forces. After some violence against Armenians still residing in the city, the new Azerbaijani government, dominated by the Musavat, moved into its capital. Azerbaijan was occupied by Ottoman Turkish troops until the end of World War I in November 1918. British forces then replaced the defeated Turks and remained in Azerbaijan for most of that country's brief period of independence.

Facing imminent subjugation by the Red Army, Azerbaijan attempted to negotiate a union with Persia, but this effort was rendered moot when the Red Army invaded Azerbaijan in April 1920. Russian leader Vladimir I. Lenin justified the invasion because of the importance of the Baku region's oil to the Bolsheviks, who were still embroiled in a civil war. The Red Army met little resistance from Azerbaijani forces because the Azerbaijanis were heavily involved in suppressing separatism among the Armenians who formed a majority in the Nagorno-Karabakh area of south-central Azerbaijan. In September 1920, Azerbaijan signed a treaty with Russia unifying its military forces, economy, and foreign trade with those of Russia, although the fiction of Azerbaijani political independence was maintained.

Within the Soviet Union

The invasion of 1920 began a seventy-one-year period under total political and economic control of the state that became the Soviet Union in 1922. The borders and formal status of Azerbaijan underwent a period of change and uncertainty in the 1920s and 1930s, and then they remained stable through the end of the Soviet period in 1991.

Determination of Borders and Status

In late 1921, the Russian leadership dictated the creation of a Transcaucasian federated republic, composed of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, which in 1922 became part of the newly proclaimed Soviet Union as the Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (TSFSR). In this large new republic, the three subunits ceded their nominal powers over foreign

policy, finances, trade, transportation, and other areas to the unwieldy and artificial authority of the TSFSR. In 1936 the new "Stalin Constitution" abolished the TSFSR, and the three constituent parts were proclaimed separate Soviet republics.

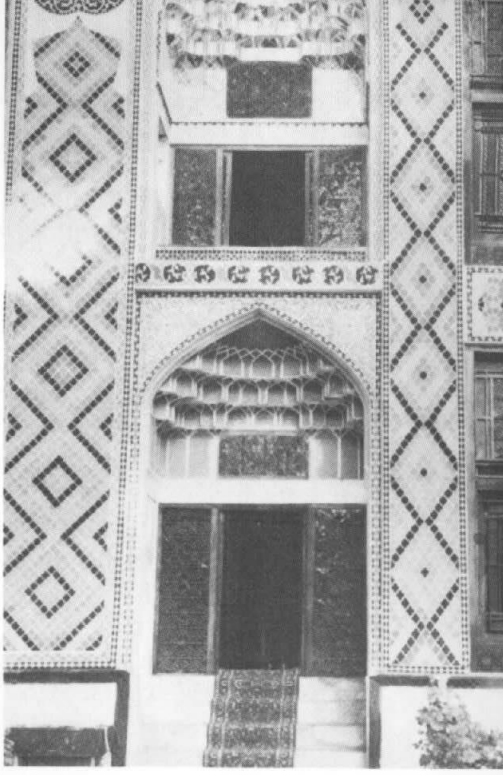
In mid-1920 the Red Army occupied Nakhichevan, an Azerbaijani enclave between Armenia and northwestern Iran. The Red Army declared Nakhichevan a Soviet socialist republic with close ties to Azerbaijan. In early 1921, a referendum confirmed that most of the population of the enclave wanted to be included in Azerbaijan. Turkey also supported this solution. Nakhichevan's close ties to Azerbaijan were confirmed by the Russo-Turkish Treaty of Moscow and the Treaty of Kars among the three Transcaucasian states and Turkey, both signed in 1921.

Lenin and his successor, Joseph V. Stalin, assigned pacification of Transcaucasia and delineation of borders in the region to the Caucasian Bureau of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik). In 1924, despite opposition from many Azerbaijani officials, the bureau formally designated Nakhichevan an autonomous republic of Azerbaijan with wide local powers, a status it retains today.

The existence of an Azerbaijani majority population in northern Iran became a pretext for Soviet expansion. In 1938 Soviet authorities expelled Azerbaijanis holding Iranian passports from the republic. During World War II, Soviet forces occupied the northern part of Iran. The occupiers stirred an irredentist movement fronted by the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan, which proclaimed the communist Autonomous Government of Azerbaijan at Tabriz at the end of 1945. The Western powers forced the Soviet Union to withdraw from Iran in 1946. Upon the subsequent collapse of the autonomous government, the Iranian government began harsh suppression of the Azerbaijani culture. From that time until the late 1980s, contacts between Azerbaijanis north and south of the Iranian-Soviet border were severely limited.

Stalin and Post-Stalin Politics

During Stalin's dictatorship in the Soviet Union (1926–53), Azerbaijan suffered, as did other Soviet republics, from forced collectivization and far-reaching purges. Yet during the same period, Azerbaijan also achieved significant gains in industrialization and literacy levels that were impressive in comparison



Sixteenth-century palace of the Sheki khans, Sheki
Courtesy Jay Kempen

with those of other Muslim states of the Middle East at that time.

After Stalin, Moscow's intrusions were less sweeping but nonetheless authoritarian. In 1959 Nikita S. Khrushchev, first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), moved to purge leaders of the Azerbaijani Communist Party (ACP) because of corruption and nationalist tendencies. Leonid I. Brezhnev, Khrushchev's successor, also removed ACP leaders for nationalist leanings, naming Heydar Aliyev in 1969 as the new ACP leader. In turn, Mikhail S. Gorbachev removed Aliyev in 1987, ostensibly for health reasons, although later Aliyev was accused of corruption.

After Communist Rule

Azerbaijan was strongly affected by the autonomy that spread to most parts of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev's liberalized regime in the late 1980s. After independence was achieved in 1991, conflict with Armenia became chronic, and political stability eluded Azerbaijan in the early years of the 1990s.

Demands for Sovereignty and the Soviet Reaction

In the fall of 1989, the nationalist opposition Azerbaijani Popular Front (APF) led a wave of protest strikes expressing

growing political opposition to ACP rule (see Government and Politics, this ch.). Under this pressure, the ACP authorities bowed to opposition demands to legalize the APF and proclaim Azerbaijani sovereignty. In September 1989, the Azerbaijani Supreme Court passed a resolution of sovereignty, among the first such resolutions in the Soviet republics. The resolution proclaimed Azerbaijan's sovereignty over its land, water, and natural resources and its right to secede from the Soviet Union following a popular referendum. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the legislative body of the Soviet Union, declared this resolution invalid in November 1989. Another manifestation of nationalist ferment occurred at the end of 1989, when Azerbaijanis rioted along the Iranian border, destroying border checkpoints and crossing into Iranian provinces that had Azerbaijani majorities. Azerbaijani intellectuals also appealed to the CPSU Politburo for relaxation of border controls between Soviet and Iranian Azerbaijan, comparing the "tragic" separation of the Azerbaijani nation to the divisions of Korea or Vietnam.

Meanwhile, Azerbaijanis unleashed a wave of violence against Armenian residents of Baku and other population centers, causing turmoil that seemed to jeopardize ACP rule. In response, in January 1990 Moscow deployed forces of its Ministry of Internal Affairs (Ministerstvo vnutrennikh del—MVD), Committee for State Security (Komitet gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti—KGB), and the military in a brutal suppression of these riots. Moscow also began a crackdown on the APF and other opposition forces in Baku and other cities, and Soviet forces cooperated with Iranian authorities to secure the Azerbaijani-Iranian border. These actions further alienated the population from Moscow's rule. Ironically, the Soviet crackdown targeted the large and increasingly vocal Azerbaijani working class. In this process, martial law was declared, and the ACP leader was replaced by Ayaz Mutalibov, a former chairman of the Azerbaijani Council of Ministers. In May 1990, while martial law remained in effect, Mutalibov was elected president by the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet; elections to the Supreme Soviet were held four months later. The APF, although declared illegal, retained immense popular appeal and visibility.

The Issue of Nagorno-Karabakh

The Soviet Union created the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region within Azerbaijan in 1924. At that time, more

Memorial to Azerbaijani victims of 1990 Russian invasion, Baku
Courtesy David Dallas, United States Information Agency
Soviet troops sent to quell Azerbaijani nationalist unrest, 1989–90
Courtesy Jay Kempen

than 94 percent of the region's population was Armenian (see fig. 3). (The term Nagorno-Karabakh originates from the Russian for "mountainous Karabakh.") As the Azerbaijani population grew, the Karabakh Armenians chafed under discriminatory rule, and by 1960 hostilities had begun between the two populations of the region.

On February 20, 1988, Armenian deputies to the National Council of Nagorno-Karabakh voted to unify that region with Armenia (see Population and Ethnic Composition, this ch.; Nagorno-Karabakh and Independence, ch. 1). Although Armenia did not formally respond, this act triggered an Azerbaijani massacre of more than 100 Armenians in the city of Sumgait, just north of Baku. 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 of Nagorno-Karabakh proclaimed the unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia. In mid-January 1990, Azerbaijani protesters in Baku went on a rampage against the remaining Armenians and the ACP. Moscow intervened, sending police troops of the MVD, who violently suppressed the APF and installed 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 from ACP rule. In a December 1991 referendum boycotted by local Azerbaijanis, Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh approved the creation of an independent state. A Supreme Soviet was elected, and Nagorno-Karabakh appealed for world recognition.

Independence

Mutalibov initially supported the August 1991 coup attempted in Moscow against the Gorbachev regime, drawing vehement objections from APF leaders and other political opponents. Once the coup failed, Mutalibov moved quickly to repair local damage and to insulate his rule from Moscow's retribution by announcing his resignation as first secretary of the ACP. These moves by Mutalibov and his supporters were in line

with the pro-independence demands of the APF, even though the two groups remained political adversaries. In September 1991, Mutalibov was elected president without electoral opposition but under charges from the APF that the election process was corrupt.

Azerbaijan began the process of achieving formal independence October 18, when the Supreme Soviet passed a law on state independence, ratifying that body's August declaration of independence. Then in December, over 99 percent of voters cast ballots in favor of independence in a referendum on that issue. The constitution was duly amended to reflect the country's new status. Immediately after the law was passed, the Supreme Soviet appealed to the world's nations and the United Nations (UN) for recognition of Azerbaijan. In December Mutalibov signed accords on Azerbaijan's membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS—see Glossary), a move criticized by many Azerbaijani nationalists who opposed all links to Russia and Armenia. A year later, the Azerbaijani legislature repudiated the signature, rejecting membership in the CIS. Azerbaijan maintained observer status at CIS meetings, however, and it resumed full membership in late 1993.

Political Instability

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. 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.

Taking advantage of the chaos, Aliyev returned to power, and an election in October 1993 confirmed him as president.

Efforts to Resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh Crisis, 1993

By the end of 1993, the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh had caused thousands of casualties and created hundreds of thousands of refugees on both sides. In a national address in November 1993, Aliyev stated that 16,000 Azerbaijani troops had died and 22,000 had been injured in nearly six years of fighting. The UN estimated that nearly 1 million refugees and displaced persons were in Azerbaijan at the end of 1993. Mediation was attempted by officials from Russia, Kazakhstan, and Iran, among other countries, as well as by organizations including the UN and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE—see Glossary), which began sponsoring peace talks in mid-1992. All negotiations met with little success, however, and several cease-fires broke down. In mid-1993 Aliyev launched efforts to negotiate a solution directly with the Karabakh Armenians, a step Elchibey had refused to take. Aliyev's efforts achieved several relatively long cease-fires within Nagorno-Karabakh, but outside the region Armenians occupied large sections of southwestern Azerbaijan near the Iranian border during offensives in August and October 1993. Iran and Turkey warned the Karabakh Armenians to cease their offensive operations, which threatened to spill over into foreign territory. The Armenians responded by claiming that they were driving back Azerbaijani forces to protect Nagorno-Karabakh from shelling.

In 1993 the UN Security Council called for Armenian forces to cease their attacks on and occupation of a number of Azerbaijani regions. In September 1993, Turkey strengthened its forces along its border with Armenia and issued a warning to Armenia to withdraw its troops from Azerbaijan immediately and unconditionally. At the same time, Iran was conducting military maneuvers near the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic in a move widely regarded as a warning to Armenia. Iran proposed creation of a twenty-kilometer security zone along the Iranian-Azerbaijani border, where Azerbaijanis would be protected by Iranian firepower. Iran also contributed to the upkeep of camps in southwestern Azerbaijan to house and feed up to 200,000 Azerbaijanis fleeing the fighting.

Fighting continued into early 1994, with Azerbaijani forces reportedly winning some engagements and regaining some ter-

ritory lost in previous months. In January 1994, Aliyev pledged that in the coming year occupied territory would be liberated and Azerbaijani refugees would return to their homes. At that point, Armenian forces held an estimated 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory outside Nagorno-Karabakh, including 160 kilometers along the Iranian border.

Physical Environment

Three physical features dominate Azerbaijan: the Caspian Sea, whose shoreline forms a natural boundary to the east; the Greater Caucasus mountain range to the north; and the extensive flatlands at the country's center (see fig. 2). About the size of Portugal or the state of Maine, Azerbaijan has a total land area of approximately 86,600 square kilometers, less than 1 percent of the land area of the former Soviet Union. Of the three Transcaucasian states, Azerbaijan has the greatest land area. Special administrative subdivisions are the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, which is separated from the rest of Azerbaijan by a strip of Armenian territory, and the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region, entirely within Azerbaijan. (The status of Nagorno-Karabakh was under negotiation in 1994.) Located in the region of the southern Caucasus Mountains, Azerbaijan borders the Caspian Sea to the east, Iran to the south, Armenia to the southwest and west, and Georgia and Russia to the north (see fig. 1). A small part of Nakhichevan also borders Turkey to the northwest. The capital of Azerbaijan is the ancient city of Baku, which has the largest and best harbor on the Caspian Sea and has long been the center of the republic's oil industry.

Topography and Drainage

The elevation changes over a relatively short distance from lowlands to highlands; nearly half the country is considered mountainous. Notable physical features are the gently undulating hills of the subtropical southeastern coast, which are covered with tea plantations, orange groves, and lemon groves; numerous mud volcanoes and mineral springs in the ravines of Kobystan Mountain near Baku; and coastal terrain that lies as much as twenty-eight meters below sea level.

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 Talish Mountains form part of the border with Iran. The highest elevations occur in the Greater Caucasus, where Mount Bazar-dyuzi rises 4,740 meters above sea level. Eight large rivers flow down from the Caucasus ranges into the central Kura-Aras lowlands, alluvial flatlands and low delta areas along the seacoast designated by the Azerbaijani name for the Mtkvari River and its main tributary, the Aras. The Mtkvari, the longest river in the Caucasus region, forms a delta and drains into the Caspian a short distance downstream from the confluence with the Aras. The Mingechaur Reservoir, with an area of 605 square kilometers that makes it the largest body of water in Azerbaijan, was formed by damming the Mtkvari in western Azerbaijan. The waters of the reservoir provide hydroelectric power and irrigation to the Kura-Aras plain. Most of the country's rivers are not navigable. About 15 percent of the land in Azerbaijan is arable.

Climate

The climate varies from subtropical and dry in central and eastern Azerbaijan to subtropical and humid in the southeast, temperate along the shores of the Caspian Sea, and cold at the higher mountain elevations. Baku, on the Caspian, enjoys mild weather, averaging 4°C in January and 25°C in July. Because most of Azerbaijan receives scant rainfall—on average 152 to 254 millimeters annually—agricultural areas require irrigation. Heaviest precipitation occurs in the highest elevations of the Caucasus and in the Lenkoran' Lowlands in the far southeast, where the yearly average exceeds 1,000 millimeters.

Environmental Problems

Air and water pollution are widespread and pose great challenges to economic development. Major sources of pollution include oil refineries and chemical and metallurgical industries, which in the early 1990s continued to operate as inefficiently as they had in the Soviet era. Air quality is extremely poor in Baku, the center of oil refining. Some reports have described Baku's air as the most polluted in the former Soviet Union, and other industrial centers suffer similar problems.

The Caspian Sea, including Baku Bay, has been polluted by oil leakages and the dumping of raw or inadequately treated sewage, reducing the yield of caviar and fish. In the Soviet period, Azerbaijan was pressed to use extremely heavy applica-

tions of pesticides to improve its output of scarce subtropical crops for the rest of the Soviet Union. Particularly egregious was the continued regular use of the pesticide DDT in the 1970s and 1980s, although that chemical was officially banned in the Soviet Union because of its toxicity to humans. Excessive application of pesticides and chemical fertilizers has caused extensive groundwater pollution and has been linked by Azerbaijani scientists to birth defects and illnesses. Rising water levels in the Caspian Sea, mainly caused by natural factors exacerbated by man-made structures, have reversed a decades-long drying trend and now threaten coastal areas; the average level rose 1.5 meters between 1978 and 1993. Because of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, large numbers of trees were felled, roads were built through pristine areas, and large expanses of agricultural land were occupied by military forces.

Like other former Soviet republics, Azerbaijan faces a gigantic environmental cleanup complicated by the economic uncertainties left in the wake of the Moscow-centered planning system. The Committee for the Protection of the Natural Environment is part of the Azerbaijani government, but in the early 1990s it was ineffective at targeting critical applications of limited funds, establishing pollution standards, and monitoring compliance with environmental regulations. Early in 1994, plans called for Azerbaijan to participate in the international Caspian Sea Forum, sponsored by the European Union (EU).

Population and Ethnic Composition

The majority of Azerbaijan's population consists of a single ethnic group whose problems with ethnic minorities have been dominated by the Armenian uprisings in Nagorno-Karabakh. Nevertheless, Azerbaijan includes several other significant ethnic groups. The population of the country is concentrated in a few urban centers and in the most fertile agricultural regions.

Population Characteristics

In mid-1993 the population of Azerbaijan was estimated at 7.6 million. With eighty-eight persons per square kilometer, Azerbaijan is the second most densely populated of the Transcaucasian states; major portions of the populace live in and around the capital of Baku and in the Kura-Aras agricultural area. Baku's population exceeded 1.1 million in the late 1980s, but an influx of war refugees increased that figure to an estimated 1.7 million in 1993. In 1993 the estimated population

growth rate of Azerbaijan was 1.5 percent per year. Gyandzha (formerly Kirovabad), in western Azerbaijan, is the second most populous city, with a population of more than 270,000, followed by Sumgait, just north of Baku, with a population of 235,000; figures for both cities are official 1987 estimates. Since that time, Gyandzha and Sumgait, like Baku, have been swollen by war refugees. With 54 percent of Azerbaijanis living in urban areas by 1989, Azerbaijan was one of the most urbanized of the Muslim former Soviet republics. According to the 1989 census, the population of Nagorno-Karabakh was 200,000, of which over 75 percent was ethnically Armenian.

In 1989 life expectancy was sixty-seven years for males and seventy-four years for females. According to legend and to Soviet-era statistics, unusually large numbers of centenarians and other long-lived people live in Nagorno-Karabakh and other areas of Azerbaijan. In 1990 the birth rate was twenty-five per 1,000 population. The fertility rate has declined significantly since 1970, when the average number of births per woman was 4.6. According to Western estimates, the figure was 2.8 in 1990.

In 1987 Azerbaijan's crude death rate was about twelve per 1,000. As in other former Soviet republics, the rate was somewhat higher than in 1970. In Azerbaijan, however, the death rate continued rising through 1992 because of the escalating number of accidents, suicides, and murders; fatalities caused by the conflict with Armenia were also a factor.

According to the 1989 census, about 85 percent of the population was Azerbaijani (5.8 million), 5.8 percent was Russian (392,300), and 5.8 percent was Armenian (390,500). The percentage of Azerbaijanis has increased in recent decades because of a high birth rate and the emigration of Russians and other minorities. Between 1959 and 1989, the Azerbaijani share of the population rose by 16 percent. Since that time, however, growth of the Azerbaijani share of the population has accelerated with the addition of an estimated 200,000 Azerbaijani deportees and refugees from Armenia and the quickening rate of Armenian emigration. About 13 million Azerbaijanis reside in the northern provinces of neighboring Iran. Smaller groups live in Georgia, the Dagestan Autonomous Republic of Russia to Azerbaijan's north, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine.

The Role of Women

Although religious practice in Azerbaijan is less restrictive of women's activities than in most of the other Muslim countries, vestiges of the traditional female role remain. Particularly in rural communities, women who appear in public unaccompanied, smoke in public, drive automobiles, or visit certain theaters and restaurants are subject to disapproval. Nevertheless, the majority of Azerbaijani women have jobs outside the home, and a few have attained leadership positions. In July 1993, Aliyev appointed surgeon Lala-Shovket Gajiyeva as his state secretary (a position equivalent at that time to vice president), largely because of her outspoken views on Azerbaijani political problems. Gajiyeva was a champion of women's rights and in late 1993 founded a political party critical of Aliyev's policies. In January 1994, she was moved from state secretary to permanent representative to the UN, presumably because of her controversial positions.

Smaller Ethnic Minorities

After the Azerbaijanis, Russians, and Armenians, the next largest group is the Lezgians (Dagestanis), the majority of whom live across the Russian border in Dagestan, but 171,000 of whom resided in northern Azerbaijan in 1989 (see fig. 9). The Lezgians, who are predominantly Sunni (see Glossary) Muslims and speak a separate Caucasian language, have called for greater rights, including the right to maintain contacts with Lezgians in Russia. In October 1992, President Elchibey promised informally that border regulations would be interpreted loosely to assuage these Lezgian concerns.

In 1989 another 262,000 people belonging to ninety other nationalities lived in Azerbaijan. These groups include Avars, Kurds, Talish, and Tats. The Talish in Azerbaijan, estimates of whose numbers varied from the official 1989 census figure of 21,000 to their own estimates of 200,000 to 300,000, are an Iranian people living in southeastern Azerbaijan and contiguous areas of Iran. Like the Lezgians, the Talish have called for greater rights since Azerbaijan became independent.

In 1992 Elchibey attempted to reassure ethnic minorities by issuing an order that the government defend the political, economic, social, and cultural rights and freedoms of non-Azerbaijanis, and by setting up the Consultative Council on Interethnic Relations as part of the presidential apparatus. At

Figure 9. Ethnic Groups in Azerbaijan

no point, however, were Armenians mentioned among the protected ethnic minorities.

Language, Religion, and Culture

Although Azerbaijan's history shows the mark of substantial religious and cultural influence from Iran, linguistically and ethnically the country is predominantly Turkic. The republic was part of the Soviet Union for seventy years, but Russian culture had only an incidental impact.

Language

The official language is Azerbaijani, a Turkic tongue belonging to the southern branch of the Altaic languages. In

1994 it was estimated that some 82 percent of Azerbaijan's citizens speak Azerbaijani as their first language. In addition, 38 percent of Azerbaijanis speak Russian fluently, reflecting Russian domination of the economy and politics. Although official Soviet figures showed that about 32 percent of Russians living in Azerbaijan spoke Azerbaijani, the Russian population generally was reluctant to learn the local language. Most Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh use Russian rather than Azerbaijani as their second language.

The Azerbaijani language is part of the Oghuz, or Western Turkic, group of Turkic languages, together with Anatolian Turkish (spoken in Turkey) and Turkmen (spoken in Turkmenistan). The Oghuz tribes of Central Asia spoke this precursor language between the seventh and eleventh centuries. The three descendent languages share common linguistic features. Dialectical differences between Azerbaijani and Anatolian Turkish have been attributed to Mongolian and Turkic influences. Despite these differences, Anatolian Turkish speakers and Azerbaijanis can often understand one another if they speak carefully. Spoken Azerbaijani includes several dialects. Beginning in the nineteenth century, Russian loanwords (particularly technical terms) and grammatical and lexical structures entered the Azerbaijani language in Russian-controlled Azerbaijan, as did Persian words in Iranian Azerbaijan. The resulting variants remain mutually intelligible, however.

In the immediate pre-Soviet period, literature in Azerbaijan was written in Arabic in several literary forms that by 1900 were giving way to a more vernacular Azerbaijani Turkish form. In 1924 Soviet officials pressured the Azerbaijani government into approving the gradual introduction of a modified Roman alphabet. Scholars have speculated that this decision was aimed at isolating the Muslim peoples from their Islamic culture, thus reducing the threat of nationalist movements. In the late 1930s, however, Soviet authorities reversed their policy and dictated use of the Cyrillic alphabet, which became official in 1940. Turkey's switch to a modified Roman alphabet in 1928 may have prompted Stalin to reinforce Azerbaijan's isolation from dangerous outside influences by switching to Cyrillic. This change also made it easier for Azerbaijanis to learn Russian.

When the Soviet Union disintegrated, the alphabet question arose once again. Iran reportedly advocated use of Arabic as part of a campaign to expand the influence of Shia (see Glos-

sary) Islam in Azerbaijan. Most Azerbaijani intellectuals ultimately rejected switching to Arabic, however, noting that Iran had not allowed proper study of the Azerbaijani language in northern Iran. Instead, the intellectuals preferred a modified Roman alphabet incorporating symbols for unique Azerbaijani language sounds. In December 1991, the legislature approved a gradual return to a "New Roman" alphabet.

Religion

The prophet Zoroaster (Zarathustra), who was born in the seventh century B.C. in what is now Azerbaijan, established a religion focused on the cosmic struggle between a supreme god and an evil spirit. Islam arrived in Azerbaijan with Arab invaders in the seventh century A.D., gradually supplanting Zoroastrianism and Azerbaijani pagan cults. In the seventh and eighth centuries, many Zoroastrians fled Muslim persecution and moved to India, where they became known as Parsis. Until Soviet Bolsheviks ended the practice, Zoroastrian pilgrims from India and Iran traveled to Azerbaijan to worship at sacred sites, including the Surakhany Temple on the Apsheron Peninsula near Baku.

In the sixteenth century, the first shah of the Safavid Dynasty, Ismail I (r. 1486–1524), established Shia Islam as the state religion, although large numbers of Azerbaijanis remained followers of the other branch of Islam, Sunni. The Safavid court was subject to both Turkic (Sunni) and Iranian (Shia) influences, however, which reinforced the dual nature of Azerbaijani religion and culture in that period. As elsewhere in the Muslim world, the two branches of Islam came into conflict in Azerbaijan. Enforcement of Shia Islam as the state religion brought contention between the Safavid rulers of Azerbaijan and the ruling Sunnis of the neighboring Ottoman Empire.

In the nineteenth century, many Sunni Muslims emigrated from Russian-controlled Azerbaijan because of Russia's series of wars with their coreligionists in the Ottoman Empire. Thus, by the late nineteenth century, the Shia population was in the majority in Russian Azerbaijan. Antagonism between the Sunnis and the Shia diminished in the late nineteenth century as Azerbaijani nationalism began to emphasize a common Turkic heritage and opposition to Iranian religious influences. At present, about three-quarters of Azerbaijani Muslims are at

least nominally Shia (and 87 percent of the population were Muslim in 1989).

Azerbaijan's next largest official religion is Christianity, represented mainly by Russian Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic groups. Some rural Azerbaijanis retain pre-Islamic shamanist or animist beliefs, such as the sanctity of certain sites and the veneration of certain trees and rocks.

Before Soviet power was established, about 2,000 mosques were active in Azerbaijan. Most mosques were closed in the 1930s, then some were allowed to reopen during World War II. In the 1980s, however, only two large and five smaller mosques held services in Baku, and only eleven others were operating in the rest of the country. Supplementing the officially sanctioned mosques were thousands of private houses of prayer and many secret Islamic sects. Beginning in the late Gorbachev period, and especially after independence, 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 Qurans (Korans) and religious instructors to the new Muslim states. A Muslim seminary has also been established since 1991. As in the other former Soviet Muslim republics, religious observances in Azerbaijan do not follow all the traditional precepts of Islam. For example, drinking wine is permitted, and women are not veiled or segregated.

During World War II, Soviet authorities established the Muslim Spiritual Board of Transcaucasia in Baku as the governing body of Islam in the Caucasus, in effect reviving the nineteenth-century tsarist Muslim Ecclesiastical Board. During the tenures of Brezhnev and Gorbachev, Moscow encouraged Muslim religious leaders in Azerbaijan to visit and host foreign Muslim leaders, with the goal of advertising the freedom of religion and superior living conditions reportedly enjoyed by Muslims under Soviet communism.

In the early 1980s, Allashukur Humatogly Pashazade was appointed sheikh ul-Islam, head of the Muslim board. With the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Muslim board became known as the Supreme Religious Council of the Caucasus Peoples. In late 1993, the sheikh blessed Heydar Aliyev at his swearing-in ceremony as president of Azerbaijan.

The Arts

Azerbaijanis have sought to protect their cultural identity from long-standing outside influences by fostering indigenous

forms of artistic and intellectual expression. They proudly point to a number of scientists, philosophers, and literary figures who have built their centuries-old cultural tradition.

Literature and Music

Before the eleventh century, literary influences included the Zoroastrian sacred text, the *Avesta*, Turkish prose-poetry, and oral history recitations (called *dastans*), such as *The Book of Dede Korkut* and *Koroglu*, which contain pre-Islamic elements. Among the classics of medieval times are the *Astronomy* of Abul Hasan Shirvani (written in the eleventh or twelfth century) and *Khamseh*, a collection of five long romantic poems written in Persian by the twelfth-century poet Nezami Ganjavi. Fuzuli (1494–1556) wrote poetry and prose in Turkish, most notably the poem *Laila and Majnun*, the satire *A Book of Complaints*, and the treatise *To the Heights of Conviction*. Fuzuli's works influenced dramatic and operatic productions in the early twentieth century. Shah Ismail I, who was also the first Safavid shah, wrote court poems in Turkish. Fuzuli and Ismail are still read in their original Turkish dialects, which are very similar to modern literary Azerbaijani.

In music an ancient tradition was carried into modern times by *ashugs*, poet-singers who presented ancient songs or verses or improvised new ones, accompanied by a stringed instrument called the *kobuz*. Another early musical form was the *mugam*, a composition of alternating vocal and instrumental segments most strongly associated with the ancient town of Shusha in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Decorative Arts and Crafts

Carpet and textile making, both of which are ancient Azerbaijani crafts, flourished during the medieval period, and Azerbaijani products became well known in Asia and Europe. Azerbaijani carpets and textiles were known for their rich vegetation patterns, depictions from the poetry of Nezami Ganjavi, and traditional themes. Each region produced its own distinctive carpet patterns. Silk production became significant in the eighteenth century. During the Soviet period, carpets, textiles, and silk continued to be made in factories or at home. In medieval times, ornately chased weaponry was another major export. Azerbaijan was also famed for miniature books incorporating elaborate calligraphy and illustrations.

Man and woman in traditional costume
Courtesy Embassy of Azerbaijan, Washington

Architecture

Azerbaijani architecture typically combines elements of East and West. Many ancient architectural treasures survive in modern Azerbaijan. These sites include the so-called Maiden Tower in Baku, a rampart that has been dated variously from the pre-Christian era to the twelfth century, and from the top of which, legend says, a distraught medieval maiden flung herself. Among other medieval architectural treasures reflecting the influence of several schools are the Shirvan shahs' palace in Baku, the palace of the Sheki khans in the town of Sheki in north-central Azerbaijan, the Surakhany Temple on the Apsheron Peninsula, a number of bridges spanning the Aras River, and several mausoleums. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, little monumental architecture was created, but distinctive residences were built in Baku and elsewhere. Among the most recent architectural monuments, the Baku subways are noted for their lavish decor.

The Cultural Renaissance

In the second half of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, Azerbaijan underwent a cultural renaissance that drew on the golden age of the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries and other influences. The patronage of the arts and education that characterized this movement was

fueled in part by increasing oil wealth. Azerbaijan's new industrial and commercial elites contributed funds for the establishment of many libraries, schools, hospitals, and charitable organizations. In the 1880s, philanthropist Haji Zeinal Adibin Taghiyev built and endowed Baku's first theater.

Artistic flowering in Azerbaijan inspired Turkic Muslims throughout the Russian Empire and abroad, stimulating among other phenomena the establishment of theaters and opera houses that were among the first in the Muslim world. Tsarist authorities first encouraged, then tolerated, and finally used intensified Russification against this assertion of artistic independence.

Several artists played important roles in the renaissance. Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzade (also called Akhundov; 1812–78), a playwright and philosopher, influenced the Azerbaijani literary language by writing in vernacular Azerbaijani Turkish. His plays, among the first significant theater productions in Azerbaijan, continue to have wide popular appeal as models of form in the late twentieth century. The composer and poet Uzeir Hajibeyli (1885–1948) used traditional instruments and themes in his musical compositions, among which were the first operas in the Islamic world. The poet and playwright Husein Javid (1882–1941) wrote in Turkish about historical themes, most notably the era of Timur.

Under Soviet rule, Azerbaijani cultural expression was circumscribed and forcibly supplanted by Russian cultural values. Particularly during Stalin's purges of the 1930s, many Azerbaijani writers and intellectuals were murdered, and ruthless attempts were made to erase evidence of their lives and work from historical records. Cultural monuments, libraries, mosques, and archives were destroyed. The two forcible changes of alphabet in the 1920s and 1930s further isolated Azerbaijanis from their literary heritage. Never completely extinguished during the Soviet period, however, Azerbaijani culture underwent a modest rebirth during Khrushchev's relaxation of controls in the 1950s, when many who had been victims of Stalin's purges were posthumously rehabilitated and their works republished. In the 1970s and 1980s, another rebirth occurred when Moscow again loosened cultural restrictions. Under Aliyev's first regime, publication of some mildly nationalist pieces was allowed, including serialization of Aziza Jafarzade's historical novel *Baku 1501.*

In the late 1980s, Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* (see Glossary) energized a major movement among Azerbaijani writers and historians to illuminate "blank pages" in the nation's past, such as Azerbaijani resistance to tsarist and Soviet power and Stalin's crimes against the peoples of the Soviet Union. Reprints of Azerbaijani historical and literary classics became more plentiful, as did political tracts on topics such as Azerbaijani claims to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Education, Health, and Welfare

When the Soviet Union crumbled, Azerbaijan, like other former Soviet republics, was forced to end its reliance upon the uniform, centralized system of social supports that had been administered from Moscow. In the early 1990s, however, Azerbaijan did not have the resources to make large-scale changes in the delivery of educational, health, and welfare services, so the basic Soviet-era structures remained in place.

Education

In the pre-Soviet period, Azerbaijani education included intensive Islamic religious training that commenced in early childhood. Beginning at roughly age five and sometimes continuing until age twenty, children attended *madrasahs*, education institutions affiliated with mosques. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, *madrasahs* were established as separate education institutions in major cities, but the religious component of education remained significant. In 1865 the first technical high school and the first women's high school were opened in Baku. In the late nineteenth century, secular elementary schools for Azerbaijanis began to appear (schools for ethnic Russians had been established earlier), but institutions of higher education and the use of the Azerbaijani language in secondary schools were forbidden in Transcaucasia throughout the tsarist period. The majority of ethnic Azerbaijani children received no education in this period, and the Azerbaijani literacy rate remained very low, especially among women. Few women were allowed to attend school.

In the Soviet era, literacy and average education levels rose dramatically from their very low starting point, despite two changes in the standard alphabet, from Arabic to Roman in the 1920s and from Roman to Cyrillic in the 1930s (see Language, this ch.). According to Soviet data, 100 percent of males and females (ages nine to forty-nine) were literate in 1970.

During the Soviet period, the Azerbaijani education system was based on the standard model imposed by Moscow, which featured state control of all education institutions and heavy doses of Marxist-Leninist ideology at all levels. Since independence, the Azerbaijani system has undergone little structural change. Initial alterations have included the reestablishment of religious education (banned during the Soviet period) and curriculum changes that have reemphasized the use of the Azerbaijani language and have eliminated ideological content. In addition to elementary schools, the education institutions include thousands of preschools, general secondary schools, and vocational schools, including specialized secondary schools and technical schools. Education through the eighth grade is compulsory. At the end of the Soviet period, about 18 percent of instruction was in Russian, but the use of Russian began a steady decline beginning in 1988. A few schools teach in Armenian or Georgian.

Azerbaijan has more than a dozen institutions of higher education, in which enrollment totaled 105,000 in 1991. Because Azerbaijani culture has always included great respect for secular learning, the country traditionally has been an education center for the Muslim peoples of the former Soviet Union. For that reason and because of the role of the oil industry in Azerbaijan's economy, a relatively high percentage of Azerbaijanis have obtained some form of higher education, most notably in scientific and technical subjects. Several vocational institutes train technicians for the oil industry and other primary industries.

The most significant institutions of higher education are the University of Azerbaijan in Baku, the Institute of Petroleum and Chemistry, the Polytechnic Institute, the Pedagogical Institute, the Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzade Pedagogical Institute for Languages, the Azerbaijan Medical Institute, and the Uzeir Hajibeyli Conservatory. Much scientific research, which during the Soviet period dealt mainly with enhancing oil production and refining, is carried out by the Azerbaijani Academy of Sciences, which was established in 1945. The University of Azerbaijan, established in 1919, includes more than a dozen departments, ranging from physics to Oriental studies, and has the largest library in Azerbaijan. The student population numbers more than 11,000, and the faculty over 600. The Institute of Petroleum and Chemistry, established in 1920, has more than 15,000 students and a faculty of about 1,000. The institute

History class in elementary school, Sheki
Courtesy Jay Kempen

trains engineers and scientists in the petrochemical industry, geology, and related areas.

Health

Azerbaijan's health care system was one of the least effective in the Soviet republics, and it deteriorated further after independence. On the eve of the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, the number of physicians per 1,000 people in Azerbaijan was about four, the number of hospital beds about ten, and the number of pharmacists about seven—all figures below the average for the Soviet Union as a whole (see table 2, Appendix). According to reports, in the late 1980s some 736 hospitals and clinics were operating in Azerbaijan, but according to Soviet data some of those were rudimentary facilities with little equipment. Medical facilities also include several dozen sanatoriums and special children's health facilities. The leading medical schools in Azerbaijan are the Azerbaijan Medical Institute in Baku, which trains doctors and pharmacists, and the Institute for Advanced Training of Physicians. Several research institutes also conduct medical studies.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan's declining economy made it impossible for the Azerbaijani government to provide full support of the health infrastructure. Shortages of medicines and equipment have occurred, and

some rural clinics have closed. In 1993 a Western report evaluated Azerbaijan's sanitation, pharmacies, medical system, medical industry, and medical research and development as below average, relative to similar services in the other former Soviet republics.

In 1987 the leading causes of death in order of occurrence were cardiovascular disease, cancer, respiratory infection, and accidents. The official 1991 infant mortality rate—twenty-five per 1,000 population—was by far the highest among the Transcaucasian nations. International experts estimated an even higher rate, however, if the standard international definition of infant mortality is used.

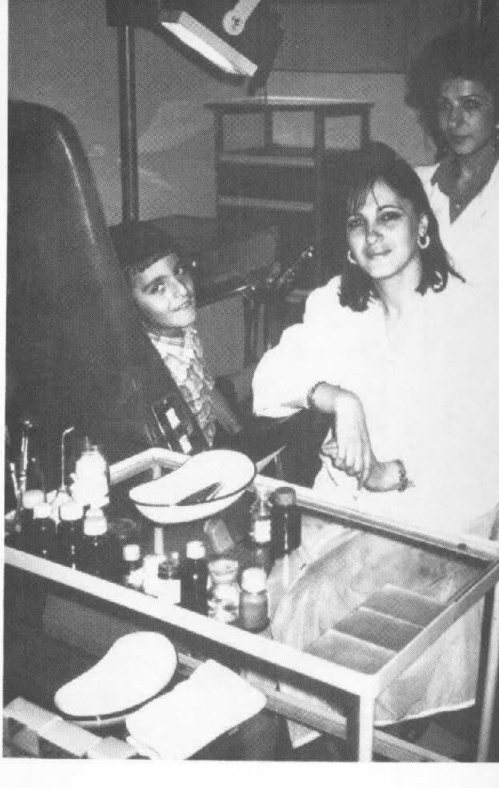
Social Welfare

The traditional extended family provides an unofficial support system for family members who are elderly or who are full-time students. The official social safety net nominally ensures at least a subsistence income to all citizens, continuing the practice of the Soviet era. Stated benefits include old-age, disability, and survivor pensions; additional allowances for children and supported family members; sick and maternity leave; temporary disability and unemployment compensation for workers; food subsidies; and tax exemptions for designated social groups. Most of these benefits are financed by extrabudgetary funds; in 1992 more than 4.2 million rubles were transferred from the budget to the State Pension Fund, however.

The actual effect of the social welfare system has differed greatly from its stated goals. During the late Soviet period, Azerbaijanis complained that their social benefits ranked near the bottom among the Soviet republics. The economic dislocations that followed independence eroded those benefits even further. In December 1993, the government estimated that 80 percent of the Azerbaijani population was living below the poverty level, even though about 15 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary) was spent on social security benefits.

The minimum monthly wage is set by presidential decree, but several increases in the minimum wage in 1992–93 failed to keep pace with the high rate of inflation. Retirement pensions, based on years of service and average earnings, also fell behind the cost of living in that period.

In the postcommunist era, government price controls have also been used to ease the transition from the centrally



Dentist's office, Baku
Courtesy Oleg Litvin,
Azerbaijan International

planned economy. In 1992 subsidies were introduced to keep prices low for such items as bread, meat, butter, sugar, cooking oil, local transportation, housing, and medical care (see table 9; table 10, Appendix). At that point, the price-support safety net was expected to absorb at least 7 percent of the projected national budget. At the end of 1993, major increases in bread and fuel prices heightened social tensions and triggered riots because compensation to poor people, students, and refugees was considered inadequate.

The Economy

Azerbaijan possesses fertile agricultural lands, rich industrial resources, including considerable oil reserves, and a relatively developed industrial sector. Utilization of those resources in the Soviet period, however, was subject to the usual distortions of centralized planning. In the early 1990s, economic output declined drastically. The major factors in that decline were the deterioration of trade relations with the other former Soviet republics, the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, erosion of consumer buying power, and retention of the ruble alongside the national currency. In 1994 the economy remained heavily dependent on the other former republics of the Soviet Union, especially Russia.

The Work Force

According to Azerbaijani statistics, the work force numbered 2.7 million individuals in 1992. Agriculture was the largest area of employment (34 percent), followed by industry (16 percent) and education and culture (12 percent). In the industrial sector, the oil, chemical, and textile industries were major employers (see table 11, Appendix). In spite of the standard communist proclamation that employment was a right and employment was virtually full, large-scale, chronic unemployment had already emerged in the late 1980s, especially among youth and the growing ranks of refugees and displaced persons (see table 12, Appendix). In 1992 unemployment was still officially characterized as a minor problem, affecting some 200,000 people, but in fact the Azerbaijani government vastly underreported this statistic. Underreporting was facilitated by the practice of keeping workers listed as employees in idled industries. Funds set aside by the government to deal with unemployment proved woefully inadequate. One Western economic agency estimated the 1992 gross national product (GNP—see Glossary) as US$18.6 billion and the average per capita GNP as US$2,480, placing Azerbaijan sixth and eighth in those respective categories among the former Soviet republics.

Economic Dislocations

The general economic dislocations within the Soviet Union in the late Gorbachev period hurt Azerbaijan by weakening interrepublic trade links. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, trade links among the former republics weakened further. Azerbaijani enterprises responded by establishing many new trade ties on an ad hoc basis. Although some moves were made toward a market economy, state ownership of the means of production and state direction of the economy still dominated in early 1994.

Despite the economic turmoil caused in 1992 and 1993 by the demise of the Soviet Union and the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Azerbaijani economy remained in better condition than those of its neighbors Armenia and Georgia and some of the Central Asian states. According to estimates by Western economists, gross industrial production plunged at least 26 percent in 1992 and 10 percent in 1993.

In 1992 poor weather contributed to a decline in production of important cash crops. Crude oil and refinery produc-

Cultivation of tea in Lenkoran' Lowlands
Courtesy Embassy of Azerbaijan, Washington

tion continued a recent downward spiral, reflecting a lack of infrastructure maintenance and other inputs. Inflation took off in early 1992, when many prices were decontrolled, and accelerated throughout the year, reaching an annual rate of 735 percent by October. Inflation for 1993 was estimated at 1,200 percent, a figure exceeded only by rates for Russia and a few other CIS states. Officials tried unsuccessfully to protect the standard of living from inflation by periodically increasing wage payments and taking other measures. In his New Year's message in January 1994, Aliyev acknowledged that during 1993 Azerbaijan had faced a serious economic crisis that led to further declines in the standard of living, but he promised that 1994 would witness positive changes.

Agriculture

The major agricultural cash crops are grapes, cotton, tobacco, citrus fruits, and vegetables. The first three crops

account for over half of all production, and the last two together account for an additional 30 percent. Livestock, dairy products, and wine and spirits are also important farm products (see table 13, Appendix).

In the early 1990s, Azerbaijan's agricultural sector required substantial restructuring if it were to realize its vast potential. Prices for agricultural products did not rise as fast as the cost of inputs; the Soviet-era collective farm system discouraged private initiative; equipment in general and the irrigation system in particular were outdated; modern technology had not been introduced widely; and administration of agricultural programs was ineffective.

Most of Azerbaijan's cultivated lands, which total over 1 million hectares, are irrigated by more than 40,000 kilometers of canals and pipelines. The varied climate allows cultivation of a wide variety of crops, ranging from peaches to almonds and from rice to cotton. In the early 1990s, agricultural production contributed about 30 to 40 percent of Azerbaijan's net material product (NMP—see Glossary), while directly employing about one-third of the labor force and providing a livelihood to about half the country's population. In the early postwar decades, Azerbaijan's major cash crops were cotton and tobacco, but in the 1970s grapes became the most productive crop. An anti-alcohol campaign by Moscow in the mid-1980s contributed to a sharp decline in grape production in the late 1980s. In 1991 grapes accounted for over 20 percent of agricultural production, followed closely by cotton.

Production of virtually all crops declined in the early 1990s. In 1990 work stoppages and anti-Soviet demonstrations contributed to declines in agricultural production. The conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, the site of about one-third of Azerbaijan's croplands, substantially reduced agricultural production beginning in 1989. In 1992 agriculture's contribution to NMP declined by 22 percent. This drop was attributed mainly to cool weather, which reduced cotton and grape harvests, and to the continuation of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The conflict-induced blockade of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic also disrupted agriculture there.

An estimated 1,200 state and cooperative farms are in operation in Azerbaijan, with little actual difference between the rights and privileges of state and cooperative holdings. Small private garden plots, constituting only a fraction of total cultivated land, contribute as much as 20 percent of agricultural

production and more than half of livestock production. Private landholders do not have equal access, however, to the inputs, services, and financing that would maximize their output.

The Azerbaijani Ministry of Agriculture and Food runs procurement centers dispersed throughout the country for government purchase of most of the tobacco, cotton, tea, silk, and grapes that are produced. The Ministry of Grain and Bread Products runs similar operations that buy a major portion of grain production. Remaining crops are sold in the private sector.

Industry

During World War II, relocated and expanded factories in Azerbaijan produced steel, electrical motors, and finished weaponry for the Soviet Union's war effort. The canning and textile industries were expanded to process foodstuffs and cotton from Azerbaijan's fields. Azerbaijan's postwar industrial economy was based on those wartime activities. Among the key elements of that base were petrochemical-derived products such as plastics and tires, oil-drilling equipment, and processed foods and textiles (see table 14, Appendix). In 1991 the largest share of Azerbaijan's industrial output was contributed by the food industry, followed by light industry (defined to include synthetic and natural textiles, leather goods, carpets, and furniture), fuels, and machine building. Significant food processing and cotton textile operations are located in Gyandzha in western Azerbaijan, and petrochemical-based industries are clustered near Baku. The city of Sumgait, just north of Baku, is the nation's center for steel, iron, and other metallurgical industries.

The Soviet-era Azerbaijan Oil Machinery Company (Azneftemash) controls virtually all of Azerbaijan's oil equipment industry. Once a major exporter of equipment to the rest of the Soviet Union, Azneftemash has remained dependent since 1991 on imports of parts from the other former Soviet republics. The economic decline and the breakup of the union has disrupted imports and caused an estimated output reduction of 27 percent in the Azerbaijani oil equipment industry in 1992.

Energy

Azerbaijan has ample energy resources, including major hydroelectric generating capacity and offshore oil reserves in

the Caspian Sea. Despite what amounts to an overall excess of production capacity, fuel shortages and transport problems disrupted generation in the early 1990s. In 1991 Azerbaijan produced 23 billion kilowatt-hours, but near the end of 1992 the country had produced only 16 billion kilowatt-hours. Electricity is generated at major hydroelectric plants on the Mtkvari, Terter (in western Azerbaijan), and Aras rivers (the last a joint project with Iran). A larger share of power comes from oil-fired electric power plants, however. In the late Soviet period, Azerbaijan's power plants were part of the Joint Transcaucasian Power Grid shared with Armenia and Georgia, but Azerbaijan cut off power to Armenia as a result of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Azerbaijan has exported oil and gas to Russia since the late nineteenth century. The birthplace of the oil-refining industry at the beginning of the twentieth century, Azerbaijan was the world's leading producer of petroleum. During World War II, about 70 percent of the Soviet Union's petroleum output came from the small republic. After World War II, when oil output from the Volga-Ural oil fields in Russia increased, Azerbaijan lost its position as a dominant producer of Soviet oil. When the Soviet Union disintegrated, Azerbaijan was producing 60 percent of Soviet oil extraction machinery and spare parts but less than 2 percent of the union's oil.

Azerbaijan's four major offshore oil fields in the Caspian Sea are Gunesli, Cirak, Azeri, and Kepez. In 1992 the Gunesli field accounted for about 60 percent of Azerbaijani oil production. Crude oil production has decreased in recent years, mainly because of a weak global market, well maturity, inadequate investment, and outdated equipment. According to Azerbaijani estimates, for the first seven months of 1993 compared with the same period in 1992, crude oil production declined 7.1 percent, gasoline refining 2.8 percent, and diesel fuel production 19.9 percent. These rates of decline compare favorably, however, with those experienced in the oil production and refining industries of Russia, Turkmenistan, and other former Soviet republics in the early 1990s.

Some oil is shipped by train to Black Sea ports in Russia and Ukraine, and some is shipped by tanker to northern Iran. Pipeline shipment has been slowed by infrastructure problems. One old oil pipeline from Azerbaijan to the Georgian port of Batumi on the Black Sea is inoperable, and the Russian pipeline is unavailable because that line is already at capacity. Azer-

Baku Harbor
Courtesy Azerbaijan International

baijan's oil production is processed at two refineries near Baku. Because domestic oil production has not matched refining capacity in recent years, the refineries also process Kazakh and Russian oil.

Russia, Ukraine, and other former Soviet republics have been involved in contentious negotiations with Azerbaijan over oil payment. Azerbaijan has sought prices close to world market rates for its oil as large payment arrearages have developed with several customer states. Azerbaijanis seek "fair payment" for their oil from Russia, pointing out that during the Soviet period Azerbaijani oil was sold far below market prices to support the Soviet economy.

Azerbaijan has encouraged joint ventures and other agreements with foreign oil firms, and a consortium has been formed with Russia, Kazakhstan, and Oman to build an oil pipeline to Mediterranean, Persian Gulf, or Black Sea ports. In

the planning stage, Russia advocated a Black Sea route, whereas Western oil companies, also interested in Azerbaijan's oil, preferred a Mediterranean terminus for a pipeline used in common. In March 1993, Turkey and Azerbaijan agreed on a pipeline traversing Iran, the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, and southern Turkey to reach the Mediterranean. In 1993 other negotiations defined terms of exploitation by eight Western oil companies in two Caspian oil fields and established a profit-sharing ratio between Azerbaijan and its partners. In late 1993, Russia's role in the oil industry also increased with the signing of new bilateral agreements.

Azerbaijan has proven natural gas reserves of 2 trillion cubic meters, and a much larger amount is present in association with offshore oil deposits. Although the price of natural gas in Azerbaijan has remained low compared with world prices, in 1991 about half the gas brought to the surface was burned off or vented, while consumption of fuel oil increased. Since 1991 Azerbaijan's production has declined to a level that meets only about 35 percent of domestic needs, which amounted to 17 billion cubic meters per year in 1993. The major sources of natural gas imports are Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Iran. Experts consider that exploitation of untapped natural gas deposits would enhance Azerbaijan's domestic fuel balance and provide substantial export income.

Economic Reform

Azerbaijan's prospects for movement toward a market economy are enhanced by a fairly well-developed infrastructure, an educated labor force, diversity in both agricultural and industrial production, and yet-untapped oil reserves. Obstacles to reform include the rigidity of remaining Soviet economic structures, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, continued trade dependence on the other former Soviet republics, insufficient economic expertise to guide the transition, and capital stock that is inefficient and environmentally hazardous.

Price Liberalization

In January 1992, about 70 to 80 percent of producer and consumer prices were decontrolled, although prices for commodities such as gasoline were artificially increased. Further rounds of price liberalization took place in April, September, and December 1992. Because most industries are still monopolies, price-setting is supervised by the Antimonopoly Commit-

tee, which approves requests for price increases. Because the state still procures much of Azerbaijan's agricultural production, prices are set by negotiations between the state and producers.

Retail price inflation surged after the first round of price liberalization in January 1992. Thereafter, the monthly rate eased somewhat, averaging about 24 percent during most of 1992. According to official figures, in 1993 average living expenses exceeded income by about 50 percent. The ratio of expenses to income was about the same in Kazakhstan and worse in Armenia and Turkmenistan. Although prices for items such as bread and fuel remained controlled during 1993, in November 1993 the government announced price rises because commodities were being smuggled out of Azerbaijan to be sold elsewhere where prices were higher. By the end of 1993, it was reported that the minimum weekly wage would not even buy one loaf of bread and that hundreds of thousands of refugees in Azerbaijan "simply face starvation," a situation that heightened social and political instability.

Privatization

From the earliest days of Azerbaijan's independence, the country had a vigorous, small-scale private economy whose most urgent need was unambiguous legislation that would legitimize its operations and allow expansion. A privatization law passed in January 1993 was not implemented fully in the year following. Privatization plans envisioned sales, auctions, and joint-stock enterprises. Small retail establishments would be privatized by auction, and medium-sized and large enterprises would be privatized by a combination of auctions and joint-stock programs. Retail establishments were supposed to be privatized fully by the end of 1993, but this goal was not met. Housing was also to be privatized by transferring ownership to the present tenants. At the end of 1993, land redistribution was stalled by disagreement over the choice between private ownership and long-term leaseholding, over optimum terms for either of those arrangements, and over the distribution of agricultural equipment.

The Budget

To lessen the budgetary impact of losing subsidies from the Soviet Union, beginning in 1992 a value-added tax (VAT—see Glossary) and excise taxes were introduced to replace sales and

turnover taxes. The new taxes enabled Azerbaijan to maintain only a small state budgetary deficit for 1992 (see table 15, Appendix). The deficit came mainly from increases in wages and from defense and refugee expenses related to the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. State-owned enterprises continued to survive on liberal bank credits and interenterprise borrowing, which caused the accumulation of sizable debts. Substantial increases in defense expenditures (from 1.3 percent of GDP in 1991 to 7.6 percent in 1992) drastically reduced expenditures for consumer subsidies in bread and fuels, as well as government investment and other support for enterprises. Increased salaries for civil servants also increased the 1992 deficit.

In mid-1992 Azerbaijan was not receiving enough printed rubles from Moscow to meet wage payments, so it introduced its own currency, the manat (for value of the manat—see Glossary). Because domestic financial transactions still involved Russian banks and because many rubles remained in circulation, the ruble remained as an alternate currency. After ruble notes became more plentiful in late 1992, the manat remained a small fraction of circulating currency. In September 1993, Azerbaijan planned to make the manat the sole national currency, but the weakness of the Azerbaijani monetary and financial systems forced postponement of that move. The manat finally became the sole currency in January 1994.

Banking

Under the Soviet system, Azerbaijani banks were subordinate to central banks in Moscow and elsewhere in Russia. Bank funds were distributed according to a single state plan, and republic banks had little input into the raising or allocation of funds. In early 1992, former Soviet banks were incorporated into the National Bank of Azerbaijan (NBA). The 1992 Law on Banks and Banking Activity and the Law on the National Bank established the NBA as the top level of the new system and commercial banks (state- and privately owned) on the second level. However, in 1993 the system was undermined by poor technology, large unresolved debts among state-owned enterprises, irregular participation by enterprises, and bank delays in transferring funds. The main bank for the exchange of funds among private and state enterprises is the Industrial Investment Joint Stock Commercial Bank.

Foreign Trade

As during the Soviet era, Azerbaijan's economy depends heavily on foreign trade, including commerce with the other former Soviet republics. In the late 1980s, exports and imports averaged about 40 percent of GDP. At that time, Azerbaijan's exports to other Soviet republics averaged 46 percent of GDP and over 90 percent of total exports; its imports from those republics averaged 37 percent of GDP and nearly 80 percent of total imports. In the early 1990s, Azerbaijan's main trading partners in the CIS were Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus, in that order.

In the last years of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan showed a net trade surplus. After a sharp decline in the net trade surplus in 1990, oil sales outside the Soviet Union boosted the surplus in 1991 and 1992. In 1992 Azerbaijan made major gains in hard- currency exports, mainly from selling refined oil products abroad at world prices. Trade with CIS countries, determined by yearly bilateral agreements, declined significantly after 1991. Although products from those countries still dominated Azerbaijan's imports, less than half of exports went to them. Important obstacles were the bypassing of the state order system in the Baltic states and Russia, the high VAT on some items, and the complexity of central-bank credit systems in the transitional period. Trade agreements were negotiated for 1993 with Belarus, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Ukraine.

In 1990 Azerbaijan's major trading partners outside the Soviet Union were led by Germany and Poland (see table 16, Appendix). In 1992 Azerbaijan's main non-CIS trading partners were Britain and Iran. According to government statistics for 1993, Azerbaijan had a large trade surplus with Russia, and more than US$60 billion was owed Azerbaijan by customers in Greece, Iran, and Turkey. Through 1993 Turkish enterprises, considered a primary source of new foreign capital, refrained from large-scale investment in Azerbaijan because of concerns about political instability in Baku. Disagreements with Russia and Turkey delayed construction of an oil pipeline that would connect Baku with the Mediterranean through Turkish territory (see Energy, this ch.).

In the early 1990s, increasing numbers of products were sold directly by Azerbaijani enterprises to foreign enterprises without government export licenses, although the inefficient state-managed trade system of the Soviet era remained in place.

In 1993 the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations monitored all foreign trade and supervised the export of petroleum products and other strategic items. In late 1993, government control was tightened because most private firms were keeping hard-currency foreign-trade earnings outside Azerbaijan.

Transportation and Telecommunications

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. The system is burdened by an extensive bureaucracy, however, that makes prompt equipment repair difficult, and the country's economic problems have delayed replacement of aging equipment and facilities.

In 1990 Azerbaijan had 36,700 kilometers of roads, 31,800 kilometers of which were paved. One of the country's two main routes parallels the Caspian Sea coast from Russia to Iran, passing through Baku (see fig. 10). The other, Route M27, leads west out of the capital to the Georgian border. A major branch from this route heads south through Stepanakert, capital of Nagorno-Karabakh. All major towns have a paved road connection with one of the principal routes. An extensive intercity bus service is the primary mode of intercity travel. Maintenance of the system has deteriorated since independence in 1991, however, and one study estimated that 60 percent of the main highways were in bad condition, resulting in excessive wear on vehicles and tires and in poor fuel consumption.

Azerbaijan had 2,090 kilometers of rail lines in 1990, excluding several small industrial lines. Most lines are 1.520-meter broad gauge, and the principal routes are electrified. In the 1990s, the rail system carried the vast majority of the country's freight. As with the highway system, one of the two main lines parallels the Caspian Sea coast from Russia to Iran before heading west to Turkey, and the other closely parallels Route M27 from Baku to the Georgian border. A major spur also parallels the highway to Stepanakert. Another smaller rail line begins just west of Baku and hugs the Iranian border to provide the only rail link to Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, isolated southwest of Armenia. Passenger service from Baku to Erevan has been suspended, and service from Baku to Tbilisi has sometimes been disrupted because of the Nagorno-Kara-

bakh conflict. In 1994 passenger service from Baku to Iran also was halted. Trains making the forty-three-hour trip to Moscow, however, still operate three times daily. The government estimates that 700 kilometers, or about one-third, of the rail system are in such poor condition that reconstruction is necessary. Much of the system has speed restrictions because of the poor condition of the rails.

Baku has a modest subway system with twenty-nine kilometers of heavy-rail lines. The system has eighteen stations and is arranged in two lines that cross in the center of the city. Another seventeen kilometers, under construction in 1994, would add twelve more stations to the system.

In 1992 Azerbaijan had twenty-six airfields with paved surfaces. Baku International Airport, twenty-eight kilometers southwest of the city, is the country's principal airport. The number of international air passengers is higher in Azerbaijan than in Armenia and Georgia, with most air traffic moving between Baku and cities in the former Soviet Union. Besides flights to Russia, Azerbaijan Airlines provides service to Turkey and Iran, and direct flights on foreign carriers are available to Pakistan and Tajikistan.

Although situated on an excellent natural harbor, Baku has not developed into a major international port because of its location on the landlocked Caspian Sea. The port serves mostly as a transshipment point for goods (primarily petroleum products and lumber) crossing the Caspian Sea and destined for places to the west, or for passenger service to ports on the eastern or southern shores of the Caspian Sea. The port has seventeen berths, of which five are dedicated for transport of crude oil and petroleum products, two are used for passengers, and the remaining ten handle timber or other cargo. The port can accommodate ships up to 12,000 tons, and its facilities include portal cranes, tugboats, and equipment for handling petroleum and petroleum products. The port area has 10,000 square meters of covered storage and 28,700 square meters of open storage.

Baku is the center of a major oil- and gas-producing region, and major long-distance pipelines radiate from the region's oil fields to all neighboring areas. Pipelines are generally high-capacity lines and have diameters of either 1,020 or 1,220 millimeters. The main petroleum pipeline pumps crude oil from the onshore and offshore Caspian fields near Baku west across Azerbaijan and Georgia to the Black Sea port of Batumi.

Figure 10. Transportation System of Azerbaijan, 1994

There, the oil is either exported in its crude form or processed at Batumi's refinery. Two natural gas lines parallel the petroleum line as far as Tbilisi, where they turn north across the Caucasus Mountains to join the grid of natural gas pipelines that supply cities throughout Russia and Eastern Europe. A spur extends off these main gas pipelines in western Azerbaijan to deliver gas to Nakhichevan. This spur crosses Armenian territory, however, and in 1994 its status was unclear. Altogether, in 1994 Azerbaijan had 1,130 kilometers of crude oil pipeline, 630 kilometers of pipeline for petroleum products, and 1,240 kilometers of natural gas pipeline.

In 1991 some 644,000 telephone lines were in operation, providing nine telephones per 100 persons. At that time, 200,000 Azerbaijanis were on waiting lists for telephone instal-

lation. Azerbaijan's telephone system is connected with other CIS republics by cable and microwave, but connections to non-CIS countries go through Moscow. In 1992 Turkey provided support for installation of an International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (Intelsat) satellite station in Baku, providing access to 200 countries through Turkey. Azerbaijan receives Turkish and Iranian television programming by satellite, and domestic and Russian broadcasts are received locally.

Government and Politics

In the late 1980s, the advent of Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* in Moscow encouraged vocal opposition to the ruling Azerbaijani Communist Party (ACP). In 1989 the central opposition role went to the Azerbaijani Popular Front (APF), which was able to capture the presidency in the 1992 election. But failure to resolve the disastrous conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh continued to destabilize Azerbaijani regimes throughout the early 1990s. Growing masses of disaffected refugees pressed vociferously for military victory and quickly shifted their support from one leader to another when losses occurred, negating efforts to establish solid political institutions at home or to make concessions that might provide a diplomatic solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In 1993 the APF leadership was overthrown, and former communist official Heydar Aliyev was installed as president.

The Appearance of Opposition Parties

The political and social groups that sprang up in Azerbaijan in the late 1980s were initially termed "informal organizations" because they were not yet recognized as legal under Soviet practice. By the end of 1988, about forty such organizations had emerged, many of them focused on nationalism or anti-Armenian issues. The ACP was increasingly regarded as illegitimate by the population, especially after the Soviet army intervened to protect the communist regime in January 1990.

The Azerbaijani Popular Front

Widespread discontent with 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 Abulfaz Elchibey party chairman. The APF characterized itself as an umbrella organization composed of smaller parties and groups

and like-minded individuals. A central plank of its program was rejection of self-determination for Nagorno-Karabakh and defense of Azerbaijani territorial integrity. In its initial policy statements, the APF advocated decentralization of economic and political power from Moscow to Baku rather than Azerbaijani independence from the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the ACP refused to recognize the APF.

Within months of its founding, the APF had hardened its position, launching a series of industrial strikes and rail service disruptions calculated to force recognition by the ACP. By the fall of 1989, the APF was at the forefront of Azerbaijani public opinion on the issue of national sovereignty for Nagorno-Karabakh, and the ACP recognized the APF as an opposition party. The APF used its influence on the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet, the republic's parliament, in advocating the Law on Sovereignty that was passed in October 1989. In January 1990, APF-led demonstrations against the ACP brought Soviet military intervention. In early 1992, the APF played an important role in organizing demonstrations against then-president Ayaz Mutalibov.

Party Configuration after 1991

Two small parties, the Independent Democratic Party (IDP) and the National Independence Party (NIP), were formed by former members of the APF in early 1992. The IDP was led by Leyla Yunosova, a prominent intellectual who had helped form the APF, and the NIP was led by Etibar Mamedov, a frequent critic of Elchibey's rule and APF domination of the electoral process. Azerbaijani military defeats in March 1993 led Mamedov to call for Elchibey's resignation. Mamedov initially approved Elchibey's ouster by Aliyev and the subsequent referendum on his rule.

The ACP formally disbanded in September 1991 during a wave of popular revulsion against the role it played in supporting the Moscow coup attempted against Gorbachev the previous month. Nevertheless, former leaders and members of the ACP continue to play a role in the family- and patronage-based political system, and Aliyev's faction regained its preeminent position. The ACP was revived formally in December 1993 at a "restorative" congress, after which it reported having 3,000 members. When Aliyev ran for president in 1993, he combined former communists and other minor groups into the New

Azerbaijan Party, which became the governing party when Aliyev was elected.

Under election legislation passed since Aliyev's accession, a party must have at least 1,000 members to be legally registered by the Ministry of Justice. Party membership is forbidden to government officials in agencies of the judiciary, law enforcement, security, border defense, customs, taxation, finance, and the state-run media. The president and members of the clergy are likewise enjoined. Parties are not allowed to accept foreign funding or to establish cells in government agencies. The government has banned parties that reject Azerbaijan's territorial integrity or inflame racial, national, or religious enmity.

Legislative Politics

Parliamentary elections were held in September 1990, under a state of martial law (see After Communist Rule, this ch.). The opposition coalition led by the APF gained only about forty seats in the 350-seat Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet. Communists received the balance of seats in what the APF and others described as fraudulent elections. Most would-be international observers had been expelled from the republic by September. Bowing to massive popular demonstrations calling for the dissolution of the communist-dominated Supreme Soviet and to concerted pressure by the APF and other oppositionists, in November 1991 the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet voted to establish a fifty-deputy National Council, or Melli-Majlis. This council, a "mini-legislature" that met in continuous session, was divided equally between former communists and the opposition. Because of the Supreme Soviet's complicity in the effort to bring Mutalibov back to power in May 1992, the APF forced the Supreme Soviet to convene, elect APF official Isa Gambarov as acting president, dissolve itself, and cede its power to the Melli-Majlis pending new parliamentary elections.

Having repeatedly postponed the elections, the Melli-Majlis remained the sole legislative authority within Azerbaijan in early 1994. The Melli-Majlis proved generally amenable to Elchibey's policies, but in 1993 the worsening military situation in Nagorno-Karabakh brought increasing criticism. In his first six months as president, Aliyev gained support from the Melli-Majlis for most of his proposals.

The Presidential Election of 1992

The presidential election of June 1992 was the first in more than seventy years not held under communist control. Five can-

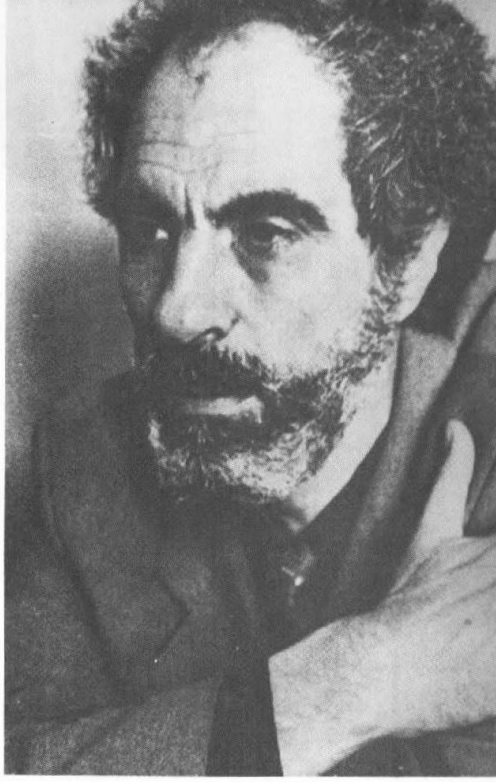
didates were on the ballot, seeking election to a five-year term. The election featured the unprecedented use of television, posters, and other media by multiple candidates to communicate platforms and solicit votes. The candidates included APF leader Elchibey, former parliament speaker Yakub Mamedov, Movement for Democratic Reforms leader and Minister of Justice Ilias Ismailov, National Democratic Group leader Rafik Abdullayev, and Union of Democratic Intelligentsia candidate Nizami Suleymanov. Two other candidates, from the NIP and the APF, withdrew from the race during the campaign. To register, each candidate had to collect at least 20,000 signatures and present them to the Central Electoral Commission. Aliyev was unable to run because of a constitutional provision barring candidates over sixty-five years of age. The government agreed to allow international observers to monitor the election. Etibar Mamedov, Elchibey's main rival in the polls, dropped out of the race a few days before the election, calling for rule by a coalition government and the postponement of balloting until Azerbaijan's state of war with Armenia ended.

Elchibey's election as president signaled a break in communist party dominance of Azerbaijani politics. He received 59.4 percent of more than 3.3 million votes cast. The runner-up, Suleymanov, made a surprise showing of 33 percent of the vote by promising Azerbaijanis instant wealth and victory in Nagorno-Karabakh. No other candidate garnered as much as 5 percent of the vote.

Elchibey had been a student of Arabic philology, a translator, and a college instructor. In 1975 the KGB imprisoned him for two years for anti-Soviet activities. In a postelection address to the nation, he announced a stabilization phase based on the transfer of power to his democratic faction. When that phase ended in 1993, constitutional, economic, and cultural reforms would be implemented, according to this plan. His top domestic policy priorities—creation of a national army and a national currency backed by gold reserves—were seen as necessary elements for national sovereignty. Despite the new president's intentions, the war in Nagorno-Karabakh dominated politics, and Elchibey and his party steadily lost influence and popular appeal because of continual military losses, a worsening economy, political stalemate, and government corruption.

The Coup of June 1993

In June 1993, an unsuccessful government attempt to disarm mutinous paramilitary forces precipitated the fall of Azer-



Abulfaz Elchibey, first elected president of Azerbaijan, 1992
Courtesy S. Rasimindir,
Azerbaijan International

baijan's fourth government since independence and provided the opportunity for Aliyev's return to power. The erstwhile communist's reappearance was part of a trend in which members of the former elites in various parts of the old Soviet sphere reclaimed authority. Suret Huseynov, a one-time troop commander in Nagorno-Karabakh dismissed by Elchibey, led the paramilitary forces that triggered the president's removal. In support of one of Elchibey's rivals, Huseynov had amassed troops and weaponry (largely obtained from the departing Russian military) in his home territory. He then easily defeated army forces sent to defeat him and precipitated a government crisis by marching toward Baku with several thousand troops.

Huseynov's exploits thoroughly discredited the Elchibey APF government in the minds of most Azerbaijanis. After several top government officials were fired or resigned and after massed demonstrators demanded a change in government, Elchibey endorsed Aliyev's election as chairman of the Melli-Majlis. After a brief attempt to retain the presidency, Elchibey fled Baku in mid-June as Huseynov's forces approached.

Aliyev announced his immediate assumption of power as acting head of state, and 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 Talish-Mugan.

Early in his tenure as acting president, Aliyev stated that his political goals were to prevent civil war, regain territory lost to Armenia during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and ensure the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. Aliyev claimed that freedom of speech and human rights would be respected in Azerbaijan, although he also called for continuing a state of emergency that would ban political rallies. Huseynov had stated in June that the Azerbaijani government would pursue a negotiated settlement in Nagorno-Karabakh, but, if that failed, a military victory was the goal. He added that the government focus would be on improving the Azerbaijani armed forces, stabilizing the economy, and securing food for the population.

Aliyev and the Presidential Election of October 1993

Aliyev and two minor party candidates ran in presidential elections held in October 1993. 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.

Aliyev was born in 1923 in Nakhichevan of blue-collar Azerbaijani parents. He crowned a career in Soviet intelligence and

counterintelligence services by reaching the post of chairman of the Azerbaijani branch of the KGB in 1967. Appointed first secretary of the ACP Central Committee beginning in 1969, Aliyev purged Azerbaijani nationalists and directed Russification and state economic development activities with notable success through the 1970s. His support of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 brought recognition in Moscow and the Order of Lenin from First Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, and in 1982 Aliyev became a full member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. From 1982 to 1987, he was also first deputy chairman of the Soviet Council of Ministers.

In 1987 Gorbachev ousted Aliyev from the Politburo and relieved him as party leader in Azerbaijan. Soon after returning to Nakhichevan in 1990, Aliyev was elected overwhelmingly to the Supreme Soviet of the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic on a nationalist platform. The next year, he resigned his communist party membership. After the failed August 1991 coup in Moscow, he called for total independence for Azerbaijan and denounced Mutalibov, who was then aspiring to the presidency, for supporting the coup. In late 1991, Aliyev built a power base as chairman of the Nakhichevan Supreme Soviet, from which he asserted Nakhichevan's near-total independence from Baku.

The Constitution

The preparation of a new constitution to replace the 1978 document (which had been based on the 1977 Soviet constitution) began in 1992, but adoption has been repeatedly delayed by civil and political turmoil. Pending the adoption of a new constitution, the fundamental document in the early 1990s was the October 18, 1991, Act of Independence, which government authorities have described as the basis for a new constitution. Meanwhile, the provisions of the 1978 constitution are valid if they do not violate or contradict the Act of Independence. The act declares that Azerbaijan is a secular, democratic, and unitary state, with equality of all citizens before the law. Freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights documents are upheld, and the right to form political parties is stipulated. The Act of Independence also proclaims Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and its sovereignty over all its territory. In October 1993, the Melli-Majlis revised the existing constitution of 1978, retaining it for the time being. Finally deleted were the document's many ref-

erences to "Soviet" and "communist" institutions and philosophy.

The Court System

The legal system of Azerbaijan has changed little from the system of the Soviet period. The national Supreme Court serves as a court of appeals; below it are two levels of judicial jurisdiction, the district and municipal courts. These courts, supposedly independent, are not immune to political manipulation, as evidenced by Aliyev's ouster of the chief justice of the Supreme Court in July 1993 because of the judge's support for Elchibey and the APF.

Trials are generally public, and defendants have the right to choose their own attorney, to be present at their own trials, to confront witnesses, to present evidence, and to appeal the verdict. In cases involving national security or sex offenses, a judge may decide to hold a closed trial. Despite the other stipulated rights of the defendant, the presumption of innocence has not been incorporated specifically into the criminal code. Thus the decision of the state prosecutor to bring a case to trial has considerable bearing on the final verdict.

Human Rights and the Media

Ethnic conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis has resulted in widespread human rights violations by vigilante groups and local authorities. During the Elchibey period, the minister of internal affairs was replaced after admitting to numerous human rights abuses. Lezgians in Azerbaijan have complained of human rights abuses such as restrictions on educational opportunities in their native language (see Smaller Ethnic Minorities, this ch.). In the early 1990s, Amnesty International and Helsinki Watch cited numerous cases of arbitrary arrest and torture, including incidents that had occurred since Aliyev assumed power in 1993. These organizations and several foreign governments protested against the arrest and beating of hundreds of APF and other political and government officials and raids on APF offices, all after the change of government in mid-1993. At one point, Isa Kamber, a former speaker of the Melli-Majlis, was seized in the legislative chamber and held for two months. In late 1993, other APF officials were reportedly arrested for antigovernment activity, and Aliyev asserted that APF members were plotting an armed uprising against him.

Refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, summer 1993
Courtesy Oleg Litvin, Azerbaijan International

Based on these and other incidents, in late 1993 the international human rights monitoring group Freedom House downgraded Azerbaijan to the rank of world states adjudged "not free." Nevertheless, Aliyev has proclaimed Azerbaijani adherence to international human rights standards, and in December 1993 he signed the CSCE Paris Accords on democracy and human rights.

News media censorship and other constraints on human rights, tightened after Aliyev came to power, were eased somewhat in September 1993 with the lifting of the national state of emergency. In the face of a growing political crisis in late 1993 caused by heavy military losses, however, many in the Azerbaijani government urged Aliyev to declare another period of emergency rule. Instead, he announced several measures to "tighten public discipline," including curfews and the creation

of military tribunals to judge military deserters and draft evaders.

In late November 1993, the legislature refused to pass an Aliyev-backed press bill restricting news media freedom in the name of ensuring national unity. Nevertheless, efforts to restrict the media continued, and passage of a law on military censorship in December 1993 raised concerns among journalists that new restrictions would be imposed on a broad scale. At the end of 1993, the only newspaper publishing house, Azerbaijan, was under government control. The state was able to curtail the supply of printing materials to independent publishers because most of those items came from Russia. Meanwhile, rising prices cut newspaper and magazine subscriptions by over 50 percent in early 1994. Television, the preferred information source for most Azerbaijanis, was controlled by the government, which operated the only national television channel.

Foreign Relations

Azerbaijan carried out some diplomatic activities during its troubled first independence period between 1918 and 1920. In September 1920, newly formed Soviet Azerbaijan signed a treaty with Russia unifying the military forces, the economy, and the foreign trade of the two countries, although the fiction of Azerbaijani autonomy in conducting foreign affairs was maintained. At that time, Azerbaijan established diplomatic relations with six countries, sending diplomatic representatives to Germany and Finland. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow initially used Azerbaijani diplomats to increase Soviet influence in the Middle East through missions in Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan, but most transborder contacts by Azerbaijanis had been eliminated by the 1930s. In the post-World War II period, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Foreign Affairs could issue limited visas for travel to Iran only. Iran also maintained a consulate in Baku.

The Foreign Policy Establishment

After regaining its independence in 1991, Azerbaijan faced reorganization of its minuscule foreign policy establishment. This process involved creating or upgrading various functional and geographical departments within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, recruiting and training diplomats, and establishing and staffing embassies abroad. Because of the complexity of these tasks, few embassies were established during the first months of

independence. Full diplomatic relations, including mutual exchanges of missions, were first established with Turkey, the United States, and Iran.

Post-Soviet Diplomacy

Even before the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Azerbaijani diplomatic establishment had become more active, primarily with the goal of countering a worldwide Armenian information campaign on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Initiatives in this policy included establishing contacts with Azerbaijani émigrés living in the United States and reinforcing diplomatic connections with Turkey, Iran, and Israel.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, most nations moved quickly to recognize Azerbaijan's independence, and several established full diplomatic relations within the first year. The first to do so was Turkey in January 1992. During his presidency, Elchibey stressed close relations with Turkey, which he saw as the best hope for arbitrating an end to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. He also endorsed unification of the Azerbaijani populations of his country and northern Iran and, to that end, autonomy for the Iranian Azerbaijanis—a stand that alienated the Iranian government.

During the June 1993 coup, Turkey expressed support for Elchibey, but Aliyev and Turkish authorities subsequently expressed willingness to continue cordial relations. Relations did cool somewhat in the second half of 1993 as Aliyev sought to improve relations with Iran and Russia, which had flagged under Elchibey.

Meanwhile, the failure of arbitration efforts by the Minsk Group, which included Russia, Turkey, and the United States, had frustrated both Armenia and Azerbaijan by mid-1993. The Minsk Group was sponsored by the CSCE, which in the early 1990s undertook arbitration in several Caucasus conflicts under the organization's broad mandate for peacekeeping in Europe (see Threats of Fragmentation, ch. 3). Aliyev's alternative strategies included requesting personal involvement by Russia's President Boris N. Yeltsin, who began six months of shuttle diplomacy among the capitals involved, and initiation of direct talks with Armenian leaders in Nagorno-Karabakh, a step that Elchibey had avoided. Throughout the last half of 1993, the new contacts ran concurrently with formal meetings convened by the Minsk Group to arrange a cease-fire.

To broaden its relations with nations both East and West, Azerbaijan joined a number of international and regional organizations, including the UN, the CSCE, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the International Monetary Fund (IMF—see Glossary), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization. Azerbaijan has observer status in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

In the early 1990s, the primary criterion governing Azerbaijan's relations with foreign states and organizations was their stance on Azerbaijani sovereignty in Nagorno-Karabakh. Most governments and international organizations formally support the concept of territorial integrity, so this criterion has not restricted most of Azerbaijan's diplomatic efforts. Relations with some states have been affected, however. For example, in 1992 the United States Congress placed restrictions on United States aid to Azerbaijan pending the lifting of the Azerbaijani economic blockade on Armenia and cessation of offensive military actions against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh.

In messages and interviews early in his administration, Aliyev asserted that his new government would not alter Azerbaijan's domestic and foreign policies and that his country would seek good relations with all countries, especially its neighbors, including Russia. He criticized the uneven relations that existed between Azerbaijan and Russia during the Elchibey regime. At the same time, Aliyev stressed that he viewed Azerbaijan as an independent state that should never again be "someone's vassal or colony." In the summer of 1993, Aliyev issued a blanket plea to the United States, Turkey, Russia, the UN, and the CSCE to work more resolutely toward settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Later that year, he sought repeal of the Azerbaijan clause of the United States Freedom Support Act, which had been amended in 1992 to prohibit United States government assistance to Azerbaijan.

Relations with Former Soviet Republics

Although Elchibey stressed Azerbaijani independence from Moscow, he signed a friendship treaty with Russia on October 12, 1992, calling for mutual assistance in the case of aggression directed at either party and pledging mutual protection of the rights of the other's resident citizens. Between that time and the coup of 1993, however, Elchibey accused Russia of aiding Armenia in Nagorno-Karabakh, and Russia accused Elchibey of

mistreating the Russian minority in Azerbaijan. Relations improved with the return to power of Aliyev, who pledged to uphold and strengthen Azerbaijan's ties to Russia. Russia's official position on Nagorno-Karabakh was strict nonintervention barring an invitation to mediate from both sides; in the Russian view, Azerbaijani territory seized by Armenia was to be returned, however. In early 1994, seizure of property from Russian citizens in Azerbaijan (mostly to house refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh) remained a source of irritation.

Azerbaijan's role in the CIS changed drastically in the early 1990s. After Azerbaijan signed the Alma-Ata Declaration as a founding member of the CIS in December 1991, the legislature voted in October 1992 against ratifying this membership. However, Azerbaijan retained observer status, and its representatives attended some CIS functions. Aliyev's announcement in September 1993 that Azerbaijan would rejoin the CIS brought a heated debate in the legislature, which finally approved membership. Aliyev then signed the CIS charter, its Treaty on Collective Security, and an agreement on economic cooperation. Relations with former Soviet republics in Central Asia also were uneven after independence. Elchibey's advocacy of the overthrow of President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan caused particular diplomatic problems with that country. In keeping with the policy of rapprochement with the CIS, Aliyev began improving ties with Central Asian leaders in the second half of 1993.

National Security

From the very beginning of its existence as a post-Soviet independent republic, Azerbaijan faced a single compelling national security issue: its enduring struggle with Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding territory. The withdrawal of Russian troops and matériel left an Azerbaijani army ill-equipped and poorly disciplined. Government efforts to build a new national defense force achieved only limited results, and Armenian forces continued to advance into Azerbaijani territory during most of 1993. By the end of that year, the Aliyev regime had bolstered some components of the Azerbaijani military, however.

Forming a National Defense Force

Even before the formal breakup of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, Azerbaijan had created its own Ministry of

Defense and a Defense Council to advise the president on national security policy. The national armed forces of Azerbaijan were formed by presidential decree in October 1991. Subsequently, the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet declared that the Soviet 4th Army, which included most of the Soviet troops based in Azerbaijan, would be placed under Azerbaijani jurisdiction. About the same time, the Azerbaijani Supreme Soviet summoned Azerbaijanis serving in the Soviet armed forces outside Azerbaijan to return and serve in their homeland. By the end of 1991, the Supreme Soviet had enacted independently several statutes governing military matters.

Formed in mid-1992, the Azerbaijani navy has about 3,000 personnel in sixteen units from the former Soviet Caspian Flotilla and Border Guards. The navy has five minesweepers, four landing ships, and three patrol boats. The air force has about 2,000 troops, forty-eight combat aircraft, and one helicopter squadron.

According to legislation and a decree both promulgated in 1991, the president serves as the commander in chief of the Azerbaijani armed forces. In this capacity, the president oversees defense and security efforts undertaken by the prime minister and the ministers of defense, internal affairs, and security. Between 1991 and 1993, Azerbaijani presidents exercised this power by ousting several defense ministers because of alleged incompetence. Despite propitious legislation and decrees, however, efforts to field a national army faced many challenges.

In the pre-Soviet period, many Azerbaijanis graduated from Russian military academies, and Azerbaijani regiments of the imperial army were noted for their fighting skill. In the Soviet military system, however, 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.

Russian Troop Withdrawal

The continued presence of Russian forces in Azerbaijan

became problematic when Russian troops were alleged to have assisted Armenians in an attack that killed hundreds of civilians in the town of Khodzhaly, in southwestern Azerbaijan, in February 1992. In the face of widespread demands from the political opposition in Baku, components of a 62,000-member Russian force began to withdraw from Azerbaijan almost immediately. Striking a contrast to the protracted withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic states, the last Russian unit, the 104th Airborne Division, withdrew from Azerbaijan in May 1993, about a year ahead of the schedule that the two countries had set in 1992.

According to an agreement between Russia and the Transcaucasian states calling for distribution of former Soviet military assets among the participating parties, Azerbaijan would receive most of the matériel of the 4th Army that had been stationed there, together with part of the Caspian Flotilla. The Russians destroyed or removed much of their weaponry upon withdrawing, but a substantial amount was stolen, exchanged, or handed over to Azerbaijani forces. Some Russians answered appeals from Azerbaijani military leaders to serve in the Azerbaijani armed forces. By agreement with Russia, many former members of the Soviet Border Guards also continued their duties under Azerbaijani jurisdiction, with Russian assistance in training and weapons supplies. In January 1994, Russia and Azerbaijan discussed possible use of Russian forces to bolster Azerbaijan's border defenses.

Force Levels and Performance

During the late Soviet period, Azerbaijan had supplied as many as 60,000 conscripts per year to the Soviet armed forces. In August 1992, Elchibey announced projected personnel levels for the Azerbaijani armed forces. His projection called for a force of 30,000 troops by 1996, divided into ground units, air force and air defense units, and a navy. Half of this force would consist of conscripts, half of individuals serving under contract. In 1994 estimated total troop strength had reached 56,000, of which 49,000 were in the army, 3,000 in the navy, 2,000 in the air force, and 2,000 in the air defense forces.

According to training plans, officers would graduate from a revamped Combined Forces Command School (formerly the Baku Higher Arms Command School) and the Caspian High Naval School. The new Azerbaijani armed forces would rely almost exclusively on transferred or purchased Soviet equip-

ment, although Azerbaijani machine industries have the capability to do some manufacturing and repairs. According to most Azerbaijani accounts, defense strategy for the near term is focused on territorial defense, the goals of which are defeating separatism in Nagorno-Karabakh and defending Azerbaijan's borders with Armenia.

Despite Elchibey's ambitious plan, in 1992 and 1993 Azerbaijan was forced to seek military assistance elsewhere. Reportedly, a group of American mercenary advisers arrived in Azerbaijan in 1992, and some Americans were believed still in the country in early 1994. Iranian, Russian, and Turkish officers also were training Azerbaijani forces in the early 1990s. In early 1993, Azerbaijan was able to field no more than a few thousand well-trained troops against Armenia, according to most accounts. In 1993 continued military defeats brought mass desertions.

To meet the need for troops, Azerbaijani authorities encouraged the organization and fielding of up to thirty paramilitary detachments, which in late 1993 were heavily criticized by Aliyev for their lack of military discipline. Aliyev reported to the legislature that these detachments were abandoning positions and weapons to the Armenians without an effort to defend them. About 1,000 former Afghan freedom fighters were hired in 1993, and volunteers from other Muslim countries also reportedly enlisted. In late 1993, the government began forced recruitment of teenagers, who were said to be used in human-wave attacks against Armenian positions.

Supply and Budgeting

Azerbaijan reportedly receives weapons of uncertain origin from various Islamic nations to assist in the struggle to retain Nagorno-Karabakh. In late 1993, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made an official report to the CSCE on the weapons at Azerbaijan's disposal, fulfilling the requirement of the 1991 Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE Treaty—see Glossary). According to this report, during 1992 and 1993 Azerbaijan received more than 1,700 weapons—including tanks, armored personnel carriers, aircraft, artillery systems, and helicopters—from Russia and Ukraine, far above the CFE Treaty limits.

According to IMF and Azerbaijani government data, defense expenditures placed a severe burden on the national budget. In 1992 some US$125 million, or 10.5 percent of the

total budget, went to defense. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict also raised expenses for internal security to 4 billion rubles in 1992. By 1994 military expenditures officially reached US$132 million, although unofficial estimates were much higher.

Aliyev's National Security Reform

In November 1993, Aliyev created the Defense Council to provide him direct oversight of military affairs and to curtail the loss of considerable Azerbaijani territory outside Nagorno-Karabakh. The new council, which reports 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 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 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.

Crime and Crime Prevention

In the early 1990s, crime in Azerbaijan generally intensified and expanded to new parts of society. In the confusion of economic reform, white-collar criminals absconded with investment and savings funds entrusted to new and unproven financial institutions, and mass refugee movements and territorial occupation promoted the activities of armed criminal groups. At the same time, law enforcement agencies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs underwent several reorganizations that hindered effective crime prevention.

Narcotics Trade

According to United States and Russian sources, illegal narcotics, including opium, hashish, and marijuana, are assuming a large role in Azerbaijani exports, although official economic indicators do not reflect such commerce. In 1993 the United States Department of State reported that Azerbaijani criminal networks controlled 80 percent of drug distribution in Moscow. Only seven kilograms of narcotics were confiscated by customs officials at border points in 1993, however. According to official Russian sources, in 1993 some 38.6 percent of illegal drugs entering Russia from former Soviet republics came from Azerbaijan, and 82 percent of drug arrests in Moscow were of Azerbaijanis. The Russian government and Armenian authorities have alleged that Azerbaijani government officials are involved in drug trafficking, which they assert helps support Azerbaijani military operations in Nagorno-Karabakh. In 1993 Azerbaijan joined the International Association Against Narcotics Abuse and the Narcobusiness.

Wartime conditions and expanded trade relations also increased other types of smuggling dramatically. Widespread corruption and poor organization in the Azerbaijani customs service fostered customs violations; in one two-month period in 1994, customs officals seized 6,300 Iranian rials, US$23,700, forty truckloads of iron pipe, 1,633 tons of metal, 620 grams of mercury, and batches of military optics equipment.

Crime Prevention Agencies

Azerbaijan established a separate contingent of border troops in 1992, but the demands of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict have limited staffing. In 1993 liaison was established with the border troop commands of Russia, Kazakhstan, and

Ukraine for cooperative drug control and exchange of methodology. A small officer training program for border troops has been established at the Combined Forces Command School, with the intention of increasing enrollment once the issue of Nagorno-Karabakh is resolved. Long-term plans call for European-style checkpoints after war damage is repaired and official borders are recognized.

In 1993 the Ministry of Internal Affairs underwent a major reform, a significant aspect of which was abolition of its Administration for the Struggle Against Terrorism and Banditry. That agency, nominally the spearhead of national crime prevention, had proven ineffective because of unclear jurisdiction and poor professional performance. Law enforcement cooperation with other CIS countries has been irregular. In restructuring its law enforcement operations, however, the government has consulted the ministries of internal affairs of Georgia, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Russia, and Turkey. In 1993 the Ministry of Internal Affairs sent ninety employees to study law enforcement at education institutions in Russia and Ukraine. Also, contacts were strengthened with the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) and the national law enforcement agencies of neighboring countries.

Despite Aliyev's reforms, the delicate state of Azerbaijani national security continued to affect all other aspects of the new nation's activities. Normal foreign relations and trade were blocked by the ramifications of other nations dealing with one side or the other of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. But despite the clear need for action, extreme nationalists sharply limited the president's range of options by holding the threat of ouster over his head for any step that might appear to be conciliatory toward the traditional enemy, Armenia.

* * *

For historical background on Azerbaijan, the best source is Audrey L. Alstadt's *The Azerbaijani Turks: Power and Identity under Russian Rule.* Earlier sources covering specific historical topics include J.D. Henry's *Baku: An Eventful History* (covering the exploitation of oil in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries); *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905–1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community* by Tadeusz Swietochowski (including an introductory chapter covering nineteenth-century Russian rule); Ronald G. Suny's *The Baku Commune, 1917–1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolu-*

tion; and *The Struggle for Transcaucasia, 1917–1921* by Firuz Kazemzadeh. Overviews of nationality issues include Tamara Dragadze's "Azerbaijanis" in *The Nationalities Question in the Soviet Union*, edited by Graham Smith, and Frank Huddle, Jr.'s "Azerbaidzhan and the Azerbaidzhanis" in *Handbook of Major Soviet Nationalities*, edited by Zev Katz. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Chapter 3. Georgia

Religious medallion bearing likeness of Saint George

Country Profile

Country

Formal Name: Republic of Georgia.

Short Name: Georgia.

Term for Citizens: Georgian(s).

Capital: Tbilisi.

Date of Independence: April 9, 1991.

Geography

Size: Approximately 69,875 square kilometers.

Topography: Extremely varied; Greater Caucasus and Lesser Caucasus ranges dominate northern and eastern regions. Many rivers flow through mountain gorges into Black Sea and Caspian Sea. Narrow lowland area along Black Sea. Plains region in east.

Climate: Subtropical, humid along coast. Mountains protect country from northern influences and create temperature zones according to elevation. Eastern plains, isolated from sea, have continental climate. Year-round snow in highest mountains.

Society

Population: Mid-1994 estimate 5,681,025. Annual growth rate 0.81 percent in 1994. Density seventy-nine persons per square kilometer in 1994.

NOTE—The Country Profile contains updated information as available.

Ethnic Groups: In early 1990s, Georgians 70.1 percent, Armenians 8.1 percent, Russians 6.3 percent, Azerbaijanis 5.7 percent, Ossetians 3 percent, and Abkhaz 1.8 percent.

Languages: In 1993 official language, Georgian, spoken by 71 percent of population. Russian spoken by 9 percent, followed by Armenian with 7 percent and Azerbaijani with 6 percent.

Religion: In 1993 Georgian Orthodox 65 percent, Muslim 11 percent, Russian Orthodox 10 percent, and Armenian Apostolic 8 percent.

Education and Literacy: Free and compulsory through secondary school. Previous Soviet system modified to eliminate ideology and strengthen Georgian language and history. Some teaching continues in minority languages. Nineteen institutions of higher learning. Literacy estimated at 100 percent by 1980s.

Health: Universal free health care, among best systems in Soviet period, but under severe stress after 1991. Reform program blocked by civil war and political instability in early 1990s. Facilities overtaxed by refugee and emergency care requirements.

Economy

Gross National Product (GNP): Estimated at US$4.7 billion in 1992, or approximately US$850 per person. Economic growth negative in early 1990s because of destruction of infrastructure, unavailability of inputs, and failure of economic reorganization.

Agriculture: Very productive with irrigation of western lowlands, but efficiency hindered by post-Soviet misallocation of land and materials. Tea and citrus fruits produced in subtropical areas; also grain, sugar beets, fruits, wine, cattle, pigs, and sheep. Over half of cultivated land privatized as of early 1994.

Industry and Mining: Industry heavily dependent on inputs from other members of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and from abroad. Main products semifinished metals, vehicles, textiles, and chemicals. Coal, copper, and manganese principal minerals.

Energy: Scant domestic fuel reserves; 95 percent imported

(mostly oil and natural gas) in 1990. Coal output dropped sharply through early 1990s. Hydroelectric potential high, but mainly untapped. Power output does not meet domestic needs.

Exports: Estimated at US$32.6 million in 1992. Major exports citrus fruits, tea, machinery, ferrous and nonferrous metals, and textiles. Main markets Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Poland, Russia, and Turkey.

Imports: Estimated at US$43.8 million in 1992. Major imports machinery and parts, fuels, transportation equipment, and textiles. Main suppliers Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine.

Balance of Payments: Estimated as US$23.7 million deficit in 1992.

Exchange Rate: Coupon introduced in early 1993. November 1994 exchange rate 1,625,000 coupons per US$1.

Inflation: Estimated in January 1993 at 50 percent per month.

Fiscal Year: Calendar year.

Fiscal Policy: Centralized decision making, but large underground economy limits economic control. Extensive manipulation of tax structure in 1992–93 to shrink large budget deficits. Deficits remained high as revenue estimates fell short. Enterprise privatization slow.

Transportation and Telecommunications

Highways: In 1990 about 35,100 kilometers of roads, of which 31,200 kilometers hard-surface. Four main highways radiate from Tbilisi, roughly in the cardinal directions, to Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Black Sea. Tbilisi hub of Caucasus region's highway system.

Railroads: 1,421 kilometers of track in 1993. Main links with Russia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. Substantial disruption in 1992–93 by civil war and fuel shortages. Tbilisi hub of Caucasus region's rail transport.

Civil Aviation: National airline, Orbis, provides direct flights from Tbilisi to some West European cities. Passenger and cargo service limited by fuel shortages in 1991–94. Nineteen of twenty-six airports with permanent-surface runways in 1993; longest runway, at Novoalekseyevka near Tbilisi, about 2,500

meters long.

Inland Waterways: None navigable by commercial shipping.

Ports: Batumi, Poti, and Sukhumi on Black Sea, with international shipping connections to other Black Sea ports and Mediterranean ports.

Pipelines: In 1992 approximately 370 kilometers of pipeline for crude oil, 300 kilometers for refined products, and 440 kilometers for natural gas. Subject to disruption.

Telecommunications: About 672,000 telephone lines in use in 1991, or twelve per 100 persons; long waiting list for installation. International links overland to CIS countries and Turkey; low-capacity satellite earth station in operation. Three television stations and numerous radio stations broadcast in Georgian and Russian.

Government and Politics

Government: Two autonomous republics, Abkhazian Autonomous Republic and Ajarian Autonomous Republic; one autonomous region, South Ossetian Autonomous Region. Strong executive (head of state, who is also chairman of parliament) with extensive emergency powers in civil war period of 1992–93. Cabinet of Ministers selected by head of state; power of prime minister secondary to that of head of state. Unicameral parliament (Supreme Soviet, 225 deputies) elects head of state and has legislative power, but is plagued by disorder and fragmentation. Judicial branch, weak in communist era, under reform in early 1990s.

Politics: Twenty-six parties represented in parliament in 1993, of which most seats held by Peace Bloc, October 11 Bloc, Unity Bloc, Green Party, and National Democratic Party. Shifting coalitions back individual programs. Reform slowed by influence of former communists, who are gradually dispersing. Union of Citizens of Georgia formed in November 1993 to support Eduard Shevardnadze government programs. Shevardnadze remained most popular politician in late 1994.

Foreign Relations: In 1992–94 broad diplomatic campaign to establish relations with CIS nations, other neighbors, and West after isolation created by Zviad Gamsakhurdia government in 1991. Balanced position maintained between warring Armenia

and Azerbaijan. Joined CIS in October 1993, after refusing to do so at first, to ensure Russian aid in ending civil war.

International Agreements and Memberships: Member of United Nations, Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, International Monetary Fund, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

National Security

Armed Forces: Defense policy made by Council for National Security and Defense, chaired by head of state. Main forces—National Guard (15,000 troops) and paramilitary Rescue Corps (about 1,000 troops formerly known as the Mkhedrioni)—not fully under government control in 1994. Plans call for national force of 20,000 with two-year compulsory service. About 15,000 Russian troops remained in mid-1993, supplemented in fall of 1993 to prevent widening of civil war and to guard borders. In 1993 Georgia joined CIS mutual security agreements.

Major Military Units: Emphasis in early 1990s on establishing national ground forces, with small air force using training aircraft. Most equipment obtained from Soviet (later Russian) occupation forces—both legally, under official 1992 quota agreement, and illegally.

Military Budget: In 1992 estimated at US$23.6 million, or 8.3 percent of budgeted expenditures.

Internal Security: Since 1992 intelligence operations under Information and Intelligence Service, chaired by head of state. Ministry of Internal Affairs combined security agencies in 1993. Government police authority uneven; white-collar and highway crime rampant in some regions.

Figure 11. Georgia, 1994

GEORGIA'S LOCATION AT a major commercial crossroads and among several powerful neighbors has provided both advantages and disadvantages through some twenty-five centuries of history. Georgia comprises regions having distinctive traits. The ethnic, religious, and linguistic characteristics of the country as a unit coalesced to a greater degree than before under Russian rule in the nineteenth century. Then, beneath a veneer of centralized economic and political control imposed during seventy years of Soviet rule, Georgian cultural and social institutions survived, thanks in part to Georgia's relative distance from Moscow. As the republic entered the post-Soviet period in the 1990s, however, the prospects of establishing true national autonomy based on a common heritage remained unclear.

Historical Background

Although Saint George is the country's patron saint, the name *Georgia* derives from the Arabic and Persian words, *Kurj* and *Gurj*, for the country. In 1991 Georgia—called *Sakartvelo* in Georgian and *Gruziia* in Russian—had been part of a Russian or Soviet empire almost continuously since the beginning of the nineteenth century, when most of the regions that constitute modern Georgia accepted Russian annexation in order to gain protection from Persia. Prior to that time, some combination of the territories that make up modern Georgia had been ruled by the Bagratid Dynasty for about 1,000 years, including periods of foreign domination and fragmentation.

Early History

Archaeological evidence indicates a neolithic culture in the area of modern Georgia as early as the fifth millennium B.C. Between that time and the modern era, a number of ethnic groups invaded or migrated into the region, merging with numerous indigenous tribes to form the ethnic base of the modern Georgian people. Throughout history the territory comprising the Georgian state varied considerably in size as foreign forces occupied some regions and as centrally ruled federations controlled others.

Christianity and the Georgian Empire

In the last centuries of the pre-Christian era, Georgia, in the form of the kingdom of Kartli-Iberia, was strongly influenced by Greece to the west and Persia to the east. After the Roman Empire completed its conquest of the Caucasus region in 66 B.C., the kingdom was a Roman client state and ally for some 400 years. In A.D. 330, King Marian III's acceptance of Christianity ultimately tied Georgia to the neighboring Byzantine Empire, which exerted a strong cultural influence for several centuries. Although Arabs captured the capital city of Tbilisi in A.D. 645, Kartli-Iberia retained considerable independence under local Arab rulers. In A.D. 813, the Armenian prince Ashot I became the first of the Bagrationi family to rule Georgia. Ashot's reign began a period of nearly 1,000 years during which the Bagratids, as the house was known, ruled at least part of what is now Georgia.

Western and eastern Georgia were united under Bagrat V (r. 1027–72). In the next century, David IV (called the Builder, r. 1099–1125) initiated the Georgian golden age by driving the Turks from the country and expanding Georgian cultural and political influence southward into Armenia and eastward to the Caspian Sea. That era of unparalleled power and prestige for the Georgian monarchy concluded with the great literary flowering of Queen Tamar's reign (1184–1212). At the end of that period, Georgia was well known in the Christian West (and relied upon as an ally by the Crusaders). Outside the national boundaries, several provinces were dependent to some degree on Georgian power: the Trabzon Empire on the southern shore of the Black Sea, regions in the Caucasus to the north and east, and southern Azerbaijan (see fig. 12).

Occupation and Inclusion in the Russian Empire

The Mongol invasion in 1236 marked the beginning of a century of fragmentation and decline. A brief resurgence of Georgian power in the fourteenth century ended when the Turkic conquerer Timur (Tamerlane) destroyed Tbilisi in 1386. The capture of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks in 1453 began three centuries of domination by the militant Ottoman and Persian empires, which divided Georgia into spheres of influence in 1553 and subsequently redistributed Georgian territory between them (see fig. 13). By the eighteenth century, however, the Bagratid line again had achieved substantial independence under nominal Persian rule. In this period,

Georgia was threatened more by rebellious Georgian and Persian nobles from within than by the major powers surrounding the country. In 1762 Herekle II was able to unite the east Georgian regions of Kartli and Kakhetia under his independent but tenuous rule. In this period of renewed unity, trade increased and feudal institutions lost influence in Georgia.

In 1773 Herekle began efforts to gain Russian protection from the Turks, who were threatening to retake his kingdom. In this period, Russian troops intermittently occupied parts of Georgia, making the country a pawn in the explosive Russian-Turkish rivalry of the last three decades of the eighteenth century. After the Persians sacked Tbilisi in 1795, Herekle again sought the protection of Orthodox Russia.

Within the Russian Empire

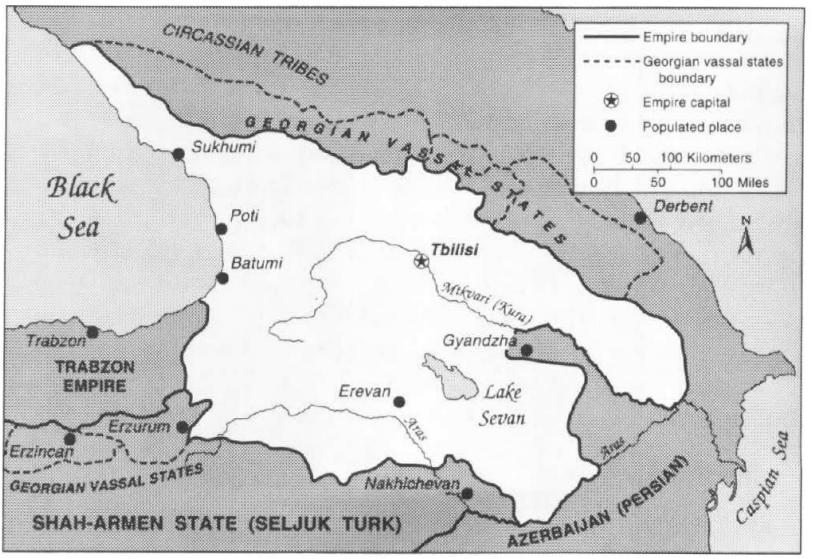
Annexation by the Russian Empire began a new stage of Georgian history, in which security was achieved by linking Georgia more closely than ever with Russia. This subordinate relationship would last nearly two centuries.

Russian Influence in the Nineteenth Century

Because of its weak position, Georgia could not name the terms of protection by the Russian Empire. In 1801 Tsar Alexander I summarily abolished the kingdom of Kartli-Kakhetia, and the heir to the Bagratid throne was forced to abdicate. In the next decade, the Russian Empire gradually annexed Georgia's entire territory. Eastern Georgia (the regions of Kartli and Kakhetia) became part of the Russian Empire in 1801, and western Georgia (Imeretia) was incorporated in 1804. After annexation Russian governors tried to rearrange Georgian feudal society and government according to the Russian model. Russian education and ranks of nobility were introduced, and the Georgian Orthodox Church lost its autocephalous status in 1811. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Russification intensified, as did Georgian rebellions against the process.

Social and Intellectual Developments

By 1850 the social and political position of the Georgian nobility, for centuries the foundation of Georgian society, had deteriorated. A new worker class began to exert social pressure in Georgian population centers. Because the nobility still represented Georgian national interests, its decline meant that the Armenian merchant class, which had been a constructive part

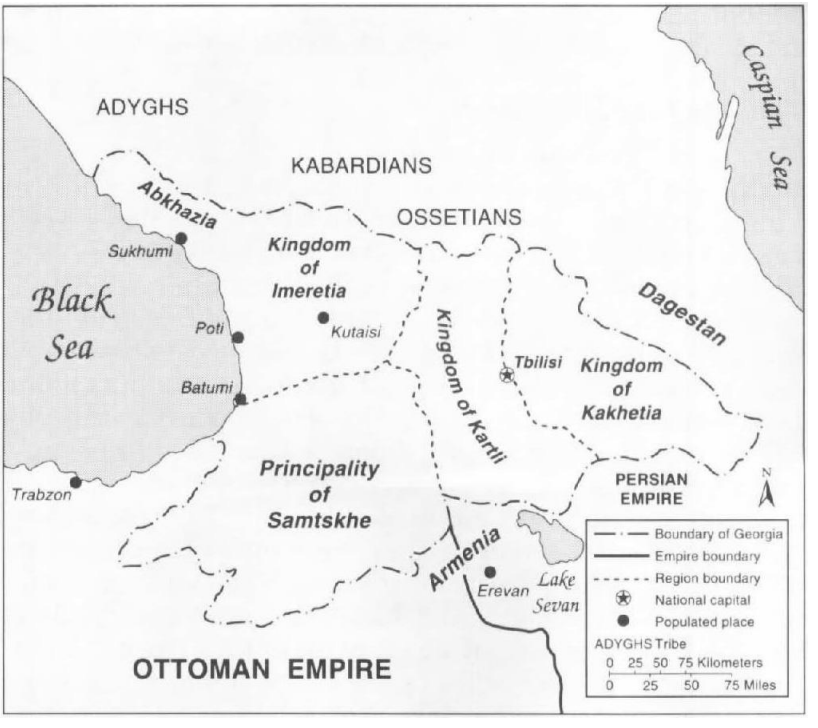


Source: Based on information from Kalistrat Salia, *History of the Georgian Nation*, Paris, 1983, 182–83.

Figure 12. The Georgian Empire of Queen Tamar, ca. 1200

of urban life since the Middle Ages, gained greater economic power within Georgia. At the same time, Russian political hegemony over the Caucasus now went unopposed by Georgians. In response to these conditions, Georgian intellectuals borrowed the thinking of Russian and West European political philosophers, forging a variety of theoretical salvations for Georgian nationalism that had little relation to the changing economic conditions of the Georgian people.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Russia, fearing increased Armenian power in Georgia, asserted direct control over Armenian religious and political institutions. In the first decade of the twentieth century, a full-fledged Georgian national liberation movement was established by Marxist followers of the Russian Social Democrat Party. Marxist precepts fell on fertile soil in Georgia; by 1900 migration from rural areas and the growth of manufacturing had generated a fairly cohesive working class led by a new generation of Georgian intellectuals, who called for elimination of both the Armenian bourgeoisie and the Russian government bureaucracy. The main foe, however, was tsarist autocracy.



Source: Based on information from Kalistrat Salia, *History of the Georgian Nation*, Paris, 1983, 253.

Figure 13. Georgia in the Sixteenth Century

The Spirit of Revolution

In 1905 a large-scale peasant revolt in western Georgia and general strikes in industrial centers throughout the Caucasus caused Russia to declare martial law. As elsewhere in the Russian Empire, the political reforms of 1905 temporarily eased tensions between the Georgian population and the Russian government. For the next decade, the Georgian revolutionaries of the Social Democrat Party were split between the gradualist Menshevik and the radical Bolshevik factions, and the incidence of strikes and mass demonstrations declined sharply between 1906 and 1917. Mensheviks, however, occupied all the Georgian seats in the first two seatings of the Duma, the Russian parliamentary institution established in 1905. In this period, Joseph V. Stalin (a Georgian who changed his name from Ioseb Jugashvili around 1910) became a leader of Bolshe-

vik conspiracies against the Russian government in Georgia and the chief foe of Menshevik leader Noe Zhordania.

World War I and Independence

Because Turkey was a member of the Central Powers in World War I, the Caucasus region became a major battleground in that conflict. In 1915 and 1916, Russian forces pushed southwest into eastern Turkey from bases in the Caucasus, with limited success. As part of the Russian Empire, Georgia officially backed the Allies, although it stood to gain little from victory by either side. By 1916 economic conditions and mass immigration of war refugees had raised social discontent throughout the Caucasus, and the Russian Empire's decade-old experiment with constitutional monarchy was judged a failure.

The revolution of 1917 in Russia intensified the struggle between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks in Georgia. In May 1918, Georgia declared its independence under the protection of Germany. Georgia turned toward Germany to prevent opportunistic invasion by the Turks; the move also resulted from Georgians' perception of Germany as the center of European culture. The major European powers recognized Georgia's independence, and in May 1920, Russian leader Vladimir I. Lenin officially followed suit.

To gain peasant support, Zhordania's moderate new Menshevik-dominated government redistributed much of Georgia's remaining aristocratic landholdings to the peasants, eliminating the long-time privileged status of the nobility. The few years of postwar independence were economically disastrous, however, because Georgia did not establish commercial relations with the West, Russia, or its smaller neighbors.

Within the Soviet Union

In seven decades as part of the Soviet Union, Georgia maintained some cultural independence, and Georgian nationalism remained a significant—though at times muted—issue in relations with the Russians. In economic and political terms, however, Georgia was thoroughly integrated into the Soviet system.

The Interwar Years

After independence was declared in 1918, the Georgian Bolsheviks campaigned to undermine the Menshevik leader Zhordania, and in 1921 the Red Army invaded Georgia and forced him to flee. From 1922 until 1936, Georgia was part of a united

Transcaucasian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (TSFSR) within the Soviet Union. In 1936 the federated republic was split up into Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, which remained separate Soviet socialist republics of the Soviet Union until the end of 1991.

Although Stalin and Lavrenti Beria, his chief of secret police from 1938 to 1953, were both Georgians, Stalin's regime oppressed Georgians as severely as it oppressed citizens of other Soviet republics. The most notable manifestations of this policy were the execution of 5,000 nobles in 1924 as punishment for a Menshevik revolt and the purge of Georgian intellectuals and artists in 1936–37. Another Georgian Bolshevik, Sergo Ordzhonikidze, played an important role in the early 1920s in bringing Georgia and other Soviet republics into a centralized, Moscow-directed state. Ordzhonikidze later became Stalin's top economic official.

World War II and the Late Stalin Period

Georgia was not invaded in World War II. It contributed more than 500,000 fighters to the Red Army, however, and was a vital source of textiles and munitions. Stalin's successful appeal for patriotic unity eclipsed Georgian nationalism during the war and diffused it in the years following. Restoration of autonomy to the Georgian Orthodox Church in 1943 facilitated this process.

The last two decades of Stalin's rule saw rapid, forced urbanization and industrialization, as well as drastic reductions in illiteracy and the preferential treatment of Georgians at the expense of ethnic minorities in the republic. The full Soviet centralized economic planning structure was in place in Georgia by 1934. Between 1940 and 1958, the republic's industrial output grew by 240 percent. In that time, the influence of traditional village life decreased significantly for a large part of the Georgian population.

Post-Stalin Politics

Upon Stalin's death in 1953, Georgian nationalism revived and resumed its struggle against dictates from the central government in Moscow. In the 1950s, reforms under Soviet leader Nikita S. Khrushchev included the shifting of economic authority from Moscow to republic-level officials, but the Russian Khrushchev's repudiation of Stalin set off a backlash in Georgia. In 1956 hundreds of Georgians were killed when they