

IRAN

Arabs

Activity: 1965-2020

General notes

- Mostly Shia but with a significant Sunni population, the Arabs of Iran live in the province of Khuzestan otherwise known as Arabistan, at the northern part of the Persian gulf, bordering Iraq. The Sunnis suffer more persecution than the Shi'ites at the hands of the Iranian Government (MRGI). Also known as Ahwazis, Iranian Arabs, Khuzestan Arabs and Ahvasis (Minahan, 2002: 158) they number nearly 4 million (MRGI). They speak an Arab dialect (MAR).

Movement start and end dates

- The earliest evidence for organized separatism we could find is reported by the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (2014: 5): "During the 1960s and 1970s, the first Arab separatist parties, most notably the Ahwaz Liberation Front, emerged." Arab separatists proceeded to organize a variety of actions including strikes, demonstrations, and sabotage of oil refineries and pipelines (Minahan 2002: 162; MRGI). We could not find more exact information on the date when the first Arab separatist parties were formed and therefore tentatively code the start date in 1965.
- According to IHRDC (2014: 5), much of the Arab community was supportive of the Revolution in its early stages and the Ahwaz Liberation Front was dissolved. At the time, Arabs sought to achieve their goals within the framework of the Revolution. Ayatollah Khomeini, a local leader, sent a delegation to Tehran in April 1979 to negotiate for greater autonomy. The negotiations ultimately failed (IHRDC 2015: 6).
- According to UCDP: "In the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution of 1979, Arabs in the oil-rich province of Khuzestan formed APCO (Arab Political and Cultural Organization). They demanded more autonomy for the local Arabs and a greater share in oil revenues. They also demanded that Khuzestan reverted to its old name Arabistan. Violent clashes with government forces ensued."
- The Iran-Iraq War broke out in 1980 (and lasted until 1988). During that time, and beyond, Arabs in Iran experienced significant repression (IHRDC 2014: 9ff).
- In 1980 or 1981, depending on the source, the Arab Front for the Liberation of Ahvaz (AFLA) was established, an Iraqi-backed separatist movement led by Sayyid Hashim Sayyid Adnan (Iranwire 2018; Schmid Longman 1984: 577). According to Iranwire (2018), the group remained active as of 2018 "in Europe, Iraq and Iran" and is responsible for a series of bombings in Iran's oil-producing areas, including Khuzestan.
- According to Iranwire (2018), the Al-Ahwaz Arab Liberation Movement constituted the best-known and most violent secessionist Arab group in Khuzestan in 2018. We could not find evidence regarding this group's year of formation, but according to Iranwire, its armed wing (Brigades of the Martyrs of Al-Nasser Mohiuddin) was formed in 1997.
- In 1999, the Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahwaz (ASMLA) was formed by Ahwazi activists. The ASMLA is a separatist group that seeks an independent state in Iran's southwest Khuzestan province and it began military operations in Khuzestan after violent unrest in April 2005 (Donahue 2005). Despite the fact that this group's leadership is based in Europe, they are one of the main political groups that want Arabic-Khuzestan to separate from Iran (Rashidi-Kalhur 2022). ASMLA has carried out acts of violence to achieve Khuzestan's separation from Iran and the creation of an Arab state, including in 2013, when ASMLA claimed responsibility for an attack against a natural gas pipeline running from the towns of Shadegan and Sarbanda (Zambelis 2014).

- According to Iranwire (2018), another relevant separatist organization is Al-Ahvaz Liberation Organization, which is an exile group but the group “has taken credit for all armed actions Iran against the Islamic Republic.” Al-Ahwaz Arab Peoples Democratic Popular Front (AADPF) is a further exile group, founded in Canada, that has claimed certain violent activities in Iran (Iranwire 2018).
- There are several additional exile groups, including the Democratic Solidarity Party of Al-Ahwaz (DSPA) which was formed in 2003 in London. It makes claims for autonomy, but it is not clear whether the group has been active in Iran itself. Other autonomist or secessionist exile groups whose activities seem limited to countries other than Iran are Al-Arabistan Group, Party of Arab Movement for the Liberation of Al-Ahwaz, and National Liberation Movement of Ahwaz (NLMA) (Iranwire 2018).
- Further evidence for an ongoing movement comes from Roth (2015: 220), who describes the movement as “semi-active”.
- Overall, we did find evidence for continued activity of this movement since the 1960s, though it is worth noting that many of the groups are partly or even fully composed of people in exile. Therefore, it is not fully clear whether there was continued organized claim-making in Iran itself throughout 1965-2020. [start date: 1965; end date: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- The earliest evidence for organized separatism we could find is reported by the Iran Human Rights Documentation Center (2014: 5): “During the 1960s and 1970s, the first Arab separatist parties, most notably the Ahwaz Liberation Front, emerged.” While we could not find better evidence on the exact goals of the Ahwaz Liberation Front, it is likely that “separatist” in this context refers to outright secession.
- Several sources suggest a moderation to an autonomy claim after the onset of the Iranian Revolution (1978-79). According to IHRDC (2014: 5), much of the Arab community was supportive of the Revolution and the Ahwaz Liberation Front was dissolved. At the time, Arabs sought to achieve their goals within the framework of the Revolution. Ayatollah Khomeini, a local leader, sent a delegation to Tehran in April 1979 to negotiate for greater autonomy (IHRDC 2015: 6). Furthermore, according to UCDP: “In the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution of 1979, Arabs in the oil-rich province of Khuzestan formed APCO (Arab Political and Cultural Organization). They demanded more autonomy for the local Arabs and a greater share in oil revenues. They also demanded that Khuzestan reverted to its old name Arabistan. Violent clashes with government forces ensued.” According to Parsa (1989: 262), the Arabs demanded “autonomy, but not independence”. Regional autonomy was also the main demand of more than 100,000 demonstrators in Khorramshahr in April 1979.
- In 1980 or 1981, depending on the source, the Arab Front for the Liberation of Ahwaz (AFLA) was established, an Iraqi-backed separatist movement led by Sayyid Hashim Sayyid Adnan (Iranwire 2018; Schmid Longman 1984: 577). A variety of groups emerged after 1980, some of which made claims for autonomy and others for outright independence. The most prominent groups include the Al-Ahwaz Arab Liberation Movement ASMLA, which both make claims for independence. [1965-1978: independence claim; 1979-1980: autonomy claim; 1981-2020: independence claim]

Independence claims

- See above. [start date1: 1965; end date1: 1978; start date2: 1980; end date2: ongoing]

Irredentist claims

- Roth (2015: 220; see also MRGI) notes that there is some sympathy for irredentism within the movement, with the aim to join Iraq, but the evidence we came across suggests this is not a politically significant claim. [no irredentist claims]

Claimed territory

- The territory claimed by the Arabs is the Khuzestan province, also called Arabistan, in southeastern Iran. However, some Arab nationalists advocate also for a bigger territory, which extends from Khuzestan along the Persian Gulf (Arab Gulf) east to the Strait of Hormuz (Minahan 2002: 158). We code this claim based on Roth (2015: 206), using GADM for polygon definition.

Sovereignty declarations

- There was one in 1923, but this is outside the time period under investigation.

Separatist armed conflict

- The LVIOLSD coding for 1979-80 follows UCDP/PRIO's classification of the conflict as a minor war.
- Several sources report that a plan with proposals for resettling Arabs outside Khuzestan and bringing non-Arabs to the province (claimed to be a forgery by the Iranian government) led to protests in 2005, to which the government responded with force. Casualty estimates vary widely. A relatively detailed report is provided with by Amnesty International, which suggests a minimum of 31 deaths and possibly up to 54. Most of the casualties were on the protester side, though according to Amnesty International, "up to seven police or security forces had been killed by demonstrators." In addition to this, a bombing by Arab separatists on March 2 killed 6, and another bombing in June killed 10. Altogether from this, we code 2005 as LVIOLSD. We flag the violence as "ambiguous" because it is not fully clear based on the sources we consulted whether the protesters/rebels had separatist goals.
- We found another 12 deaths in 2006, but this is below the threshold.
- Further violence occurred in April 2011 (6 year anniversary of 2005 protest). According to a detailed report by Human Rights Watch, between 27-48 protesters were killed, depending on the source. However, this appears to be one-sided violence as we could not find any evidence for casualties on the security forces side (also see Iran Primer 2020). It should be noted that information is scarce. We do not code LVIOLSD because the reciprocity criterion is likely not met.
- In 2018, both the ASMLA (a separatist outfit) and IS took responsibility for the Ahvaz military parade attack, which resulted in the death of 25 people and injured 60 people (Yeranian 2018; Dabashi 2018). This attack involved gunmen firing on civilians and Revolutionary Guards and seems best described as an act of terrorism and not reciprocated separatist violence. UCDP/PRIO notably does not code an armed conflict in that year despite the event's significant publicity.
- [1965-1978: NVIOLSD; 1979-1980: LVIOLSD; 1981-2004: NVIOLSD; 2005: LVIOLSD; 2006-2020: NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- The Arabs of Iran first settled in the area of Khuzestan in the 8th century and by the 11th century, had largely replaced the indigenous Khuz people. They were part of the easternmost part of the Arab empire and the area was relatively advanced and wealthy, with sophisticated irrigation

systems, cities, and learning centres (Minahan 2002: 159) This wealth was destroyed by invading Mongols in the 13th century.

- The area reverted to Persian control in the 16th century. While the area was in decline for several centuries, in 1821, they established an emirate with “considerable political autonomy” under the Persian rulers. (Minahan 2002: 160) while an 1857 treaty “recognized the internal autonomy of the region...and the right of Arabistanis to establish diplomatic relations with other states.” (Minhan 2002: 160) While the Arab lands to the west of Arabistan were under Turkish Ottoman rule, various conflicts between the Persians and the Ottomans over Arabistan erupted over the centuries since the late 1600s. Treaties signed in 1847 and 1913 demarcated the territory and most of Arabistan remained under Persian rule (Minhan 2002: 160).
- Oil was found in 1908 in the province, changing the landscape of the area permanently. Rural to urban migration followed (Minhan 2002: 160).
- Arab nationalist sentiment in the early 1920s spread to Arabistani, which declared independence in 1923. This was put down by Persian troops in 1924 (Minhan 2002: 160). Following the coming to power in Persia of the Pahlavi regime in 1925, the emirate status of Arabistani was revoked during a period of centralisation and modernization (MRGI). The next twenty years was marked by cultural and linguistic persecution, imprisonment and eventual killing of the last Arabistani Emirati, and settlement of Persians into the area (Minhan 2002: 161).
- Upon the death of Pahlavi in 1941 his son Reza Shah Pahlavi took over and continued policies of centralization, cultural assimilation of minorities, and industrialization. The continued rural to urban migration demonstrated to ethnic minorities how underdeveloped their home areas were compared to cities (Samii 2000: 129).
- No concessions or restrictions were found in the ten years before the first year we cover in the dataset.

Concessions and restrictions

- According to MAR and the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia, in April 1979, the Arab Political Cultural Organization (APCO) began to negotiate with the Iranian government, and the latter agreed to the formation of a provincial council in Khuzestan; however, both MAR and UCDP describe the rights of the council as “limited” and, more generally, the post-Revolutionary regime was highly centralized. Renewed negotiations in June 1979 led to another agreement between APCO and the Iranian government, which among other things regulated “the appointment of Arabs to local government posts, the release of prisoners detained during the May clashes and the bringing to trial of those who had attacked Arab property.” However, the agreement was not implemented. We do not code a concession.
- The 1979 constitution promises ethnic minority rights, in terms of religion, education, language and limited legal and administrative authority in areas where they live. However, “these constitutional measures have little meaning in reality, and the state is pursuing policies of religious, linguistic, and cultural unity at the expense of minority rights” (Samii, 2000: 128). [1979: cultural rights restriction]
 - o We code an onset of separatist violence in 1979. The narrative in the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia suggests that the violence started only after of the 1979 Revolution (<https://ucdp.uu.se/conflict/339>). The restriction thus appears to have preceded the outbreak of separatist violence.
- The more moderate government of Mohammad Khatami from 1997 to 2005 resulted in greater freedoms allowed throughout the country, including in ethnic minority regions. The Lejnat Al Wefagh, the only Arab political party, was thus established in 1999, participating in elections at parliamentary (2000) and municipal (2003) level (Nada, 2020). The Lejnat Al Wefagh was then banned by the judiciary in 2006 as a more hardline administration of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took power in 2005. While a form of political repression, bans of political parties do not constitute restrictions of ethnic rights as defined here.

Regional autonomy

NA

De facto independence

NA

Major territorial changes

NA

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Arabs
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Arabs
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	63001000

Power access

- We follow EPR. [1965-1979: powerless; 1980-2020: discriminated]

Group size

- We use EPR's estimate (3%). [0.03]

Regional concentration

- MAR codes the Arabs as “majority in one region, others dispersed” while noting that the Arabs make up the predominant proportion of the population of their regional base and that 25-50% of group members live outside the regional base. EPR, which though applies a lower bar, also suggests a regional concentration code. Minahan (2002: 158) suggests that a clear majority of Arabs live in the province of Khuzestan where they make up 74% of the local population. [regionally concentrated]

Kin

- Arabs form majorities (>100k) in Iraq, a neighboring country, as well as several other Arab states in the region. Notably, the majority of Arabs in Iraq is Shia, like Arabs in Iran (Minahan 2002: 159). Our coding matches EPR's and MAR's. [kin in adjacent country]

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Azerbaijanis

Activity: 1945-1946; 1979-2020

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- The northern part of the Azeri territories was annexed by the Russian Empire in the early 19th century. Henceforth, the northern part belonged to Russia and (later) the Soviet Union, while the southern part remained under Persian rule (Minahan 2002: 1767). Both Russia and Iran suppressed the awakening Azeri nationalism (Minahan 2002: 1768). In 1909 Russia occupied southern Azeri territories in the context of a revolution in Persia, but the territory was quickly returned (Minahan 2002: 1768). In 1911 an Azeri nationalist organization was formed, Musavat, with supporters in both Russian and Iranian Azerbaijan (Minahan 2002: 1768). The northern Azeris became de-facto independent with the collapse of tsarist Russia in 1917. In 1918 Russian Azerbaijan declared independence, fueling nationalism in Southern Azerbaijan. In 1920 a nationalist leader declared a separatist government in Southern Azerbaijan, Azadistan. The separatist attempt was quickly suppressed. The de-facto independent entity in northern Azerbaijan also collapsed in 1920 and the northern part of Azerbaijan was made a Soviet republic (Minahan 2002: 1768-1769).
- Under the Soviets, Azeri nationalism was heavily suppressed. Minahan (2002: 1769) reports that separatist activity now concentrated in the southern, Iranian part, but we could not find corroborating evidence of continued separatist activity. Possibly this is due to the significant repression against ethnic minorities in the period of 1925-1941 under Reza Shah Pahlavi (Samii 2000: 129).
- According to Minahan (2002: 1769), Iranian Azerbaijan was split in two provinces in 1938 to dilute growing Southern Azeri nationalism. In 1941 Southern Azerbaijan was occupied by the Soviet Union (Minahan 2002: 1769). In September 1945 Southern Azeri nationalists formed the Azerbaijan Democratic Party (ADP). ADP declared the independence of Southern Azerbaijan after a bloodless local coup d'état. Since this is the first clear-cut evidence of organized separatist activity we found since the aftermath of the First World War, 1945 is coded as start date. In late 1946 Soviet troops withdrew, giving Iran the opportunity to take back Southern Azerbaijan. The self-declared government surrendered to Iranian troops in December 1946 (Shaffer 2002: 56; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000: 131), thus ending the secessionist movement. [start date 1: 1945; end date 1: 1946]
- According to Minahan (2002: 1769), Southern Azerbaijani nationalism re-emerged after the fall of the shah in 1979. "Southern Azeri opposition to the Islamic Revolution fueled nationalist rioting in Tabriz and other large cities. The Azeri spiritual leader Ayatollah Shariamadari was placed under house arrest in Tabriz after his followers clashed with Revolutionary Guards during nationalist rioting in the city" (Minahan 2002: 1770). Minorities at Risk also reports a short resurgence of nationalist activity in 1979.
- Soon the Islamic regime cracked down on the Azeri nationalists: "[i]n 1983 the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan and the leftist Tudeh Party were officially dissolved by Iran's Islamic government. In a massive crackdown hundreds of party members and suspected Southern Azeri nationalists, including many women, were imprisoned. Of the many Azeri language publications that emerged after 1979, by 1984 only one remained" (Minahan 2002: 1770).
- Yet Southern Azeri nationalism appears to have re-emerged soon after: "[t]he relaxation of Soviet rule in the late 1980s began a series of events that fueled the rapid growth of Southern Azeri nationalism. Azeri demonstrators on the Iranian border tore down the border posts and the frontier fence that divided the two halves of the Azeri homeland, while the Northern Azeri leaders called for independence for a "Greater Azerbaijan" [...] In August 1991 the Soviet Union

collapsed, and Northern Azerbaijan became independent as the Azerbaijan Republic. The event led to a rise of Southern Azeri nationalism and diffusion of national identity into the higher social strata. The national movement in the region continued to win support. Three major groups emerged. The first consisted of religious leaders, industrialists, and bureaucrats closely tied to the Iranian state; this group supported the unification of Northern Azerbaijan with Iran. The second group, led by intellectuals, supported the democratization of Iran and national-territorial autonomy for the Southern Azeris. The third group was represented by a growing number of political organizations and nationalist groups that supported the independence of South Azerbaijan” (Minahan 2002: 1770).

- Azeri nationalist organizations are banned in Iran and their extent of activity in Iran is difficult to judge. Still, we found indications for a small ongoing movement. According to Minahan (2002: 1771), four Southern Azeri political parties merged under the Front for the Independence of South Azerbaijan in 1996. Minahan (2002: 1771) reports that the fall of the Islamic government of Afghanistan in 2001 led to calls for autonomy for the Southern Azerbaijanis. Separatist activity continued. Minorities at Risk reports that “Azeri grievances primarily revolve around a desire for greater cultural freedoms, such as teaching and publishing in their own language (CULGR04-06= 1). While the dominant political grievance seems to be a wish for some decentralization of decision-making or limited autonomy, there are demands for independence or incorporation into Azerbaijan (POLGR04-06 = 4).”
- According to MRGI (writing in 2017), the main demands revolve around cultural and in particular linguistic rights, but there have also been “calls for a more decentralized form of government” and “greater autonomy”.
- In addition to (limited) evidence of separatist mobilization in Iran itself, there is clear evidence of organization among expatriate groups. According to Roth (2015: 195), the movement’s most vocal promoters are expatriates in the West. According to MAR, there are several exile groups. A prominent one is the Southern Azerbaijan National Awakening Movement (SANAM), a nationalist organization represented at the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) and originally formed in 1995 in Baku. SANAM’s goals include the equality of cultural rights for Azerbaijanis in Iran, autonomy in Iran, and some elements even advocate secession from Iran (Souleimanov et al. 2013: 91). While SANAM’s activities are mainly outside of Iran, it is believed that there are “cells” or at least “sympathizers” in Iran itself (Souleimanov & Kraus 2017: 39).
- According to VoaNews (2022), protesters demanded autonomy in Iranian Azerbaijan in both 2021 and 2022.
- Overall, based on the evidence collected we code a second, ongoing phase of activity from 1979-2020. Our evidence is not clear whether or not there was continued mobilization in Iran itself throughout this period. However, it is not fully clear whether organized separatist activity had fully ceased and the interruptions are likely shorter than ten years. Furthermore, most of the activities in recent years seem to be outside of Iran, though there is some evidence for continued mobilization in Iran itself. This case would profit from more research. [start date 2: 1979; end date 2: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- The first period of separatist activity started in 1945, when the Azerbaijan Democratic Party (ADP), with Soviet support, declared the independence of Southern Azerbaijan as the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. The newly established republic collapsed one year later, following the Soviet’s withdrawal that allowed the Iranian troops to take back Southern Azerbaijan and end the secessionist movement (Minahan 2002: 1769). [1945-1946: independence claim]
- The second period of separatist activity started after the fall of the Shah in 1979. One important Azeri organization in Iran was the Anjuman-i Azerbaijan which demanded in its manifesto the recognition of the national language and culture of Azerbaijan, the establishment of schools and mass media in Turkish language, and the right to use Azeri mother tongue in courts and other government offices. The organization also demanded a confederate relationship with Teheran

(Shaffer, 2000: 455). Hence, a claim for autonomy seems to be dominant in these first years after the revolution.

- However, the picture changed with the relaxation of Soviet rule in the late 1980s, and ultimately with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of Northern Azerbaijan as the Republic of Azerbaijan. In Southern Azerbaijan, three major groups emerged: One seeking unification with newly-independent Azerbaijan, one supporting the democratization of Iran and regional autonomy for Southern Azerbaijan within Iran, and one seeking independence for Southern Azerbaijan. Although the ban of political parties demanding the advancement of Azeri claims makes it difficult to assess the activities and strengths of these groups, most sources suggest that autonomy within Iran remained the dominant claim. Minorities at Risk, for example, states that there are demands for independence and incorporation into Azerbaijan, but that “the dominant political grievance seems to be a wish for some decentralization of decision-making or limited autonomy.” This view is confirmed by Molavi (2003), who states that “the overwhelming majority of Iranian Azeris has displayed little interest in ethnic-inspired instability and virtually no interest in secession or unification with the Republic of Azerbaijan.” The goals of the most prominent Azeri nationalist organization, the South Azerbaijani National Awakening Movement (SANAM), which was established in Baku in 1995, has clear irredentist overtones (Souleimanov and Krause 2017: 35). However, its nominal leader, Mahmudali Chehregani, has stated that autonomy within a federal Iran is the aim (Souleimanov and Krause 2017: 35). The establishment of autonomous zones for Azeris in Iran is also the goal of exile groups and dissidents, such as Mahmoud Ali Chehregani or the Azerbaijani United Islamic Front (Minorities at Risk). [1979-2020: autonomy claim]

Independence claims

- In 1945 and with Soviet support, the Azeri’s declared independence, but this claim collapsed when control of the region returned to Iran. [start date: 1945; end date: 1946]
- According to MAR, following the collapse of the USSR and the independence of Azerbaijan, the Azeri movement split between autonomists, irredentists, and indepenentists. However, most sources suggest that claims for outright independence are rarely made (partly due to the nature of the Iranian regime) and has little public support (Molavi 2003; MAR; MRGI).

Irredentist claims

- According to MAR, following the collapse of the USSR and the independence of Azerbaijan, the Azeri movement split between autonomists, irredentists, and indepenentists. However, most sources agree that there is very limited support for irredentism (MRGI). Notably, the main organization calling for a merger with Azerbaijan is based in Baku (Souleimanov and Krause 2017: 35). Overall, irredentism is not a politically significant claim inside Iran (Molavi 2003). [no irredentist claims]

Claimed territory

- Azerbaijanis have claimed the South Azerbaijan region in northwestern Iran, which consists of the administrative regions East Azerbaijan, West Azerbaijan and Ardebil (Roth 2015: 194; Minahan 2002: 1769ff). We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database.

Sovereignty declarations

- On 20 November 1945, the Azerbaijan Democratic Party approved its ‘Declaration of the Constitutional Assembly’ which stated its intention to form an autonomous government. It was sent to the Shah of Iran and governments around the world (Raine, 2001: 19). Minahan (2016:

485) notes that this was in July 1945, but this is actually when the Soviet Union agreed to support the ADP. Rather, it was November 1945. [1945: independence declaration]

Separatist armed conflict

- Although many separatists managed to flee to the Soviet Union in 1946, “the end of the Azeri movement was a bloody one” (Raine 2001: 29). There was strong cultural and physical repression of Southern Azeris thereafter (Shaffer 2002: 57; Raine 2001). Following UCDP/PRIOD, 1946 is coded as LVIOLSD. 1945 is coded as NVIOLSD. [1945: NVIOLSD; 1946: LVIOLSD]
- Minahan (2002: 1771) reports several deaths resulting from student demonstrations in Southern Azerbaijan in early 2000. In support of Minahan, Samii (2000: 134) reports that nationalists claim that 50 people were wounded in a 2000 nationalist rally, but also says that these reports have not been independently confirmed. In any case, the LVIOLSD threshold appears not met. There are several other examples of ethnic clashes, but a) the deaths threshold is not met and b) it is not clear whether separatism was a motive (see e.g. Peuch 2006). [1979-2020: NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- The Azeris are the largest minority of Iran, constituting around 20% of the total population (Danver 2015: 264). They mostly live in the northwest provinces of East Azerbaijan, West Azerbaijan, and Ardebil (MAR). They are one of the most integrated into mainstream Iranian society, economics, and politics and are mostly Shi’ite – the dominant religion in Iran (MRGI). The Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is ethnic Azeri (EPR Atlas, 2021: 925) Their main source of grievance are linguistic and cultural rights (MRGI).
- The land of the Azerbaijanis was initially part of the Persian empire until the 7th century, before being conquered by the Arabs and being part of the Caliphate until the 11th century at which point Islam became the dominant religion. Turkish invasion and settlement occurred in the 12th century, after which the Trukic language of Azeri was adopted (Hewitt & Cheetham, 2000 32). Subsequently, hundreds of years of conflict between Persian and Turkish empires, with the Azerbaijani land in the middle, saw the territory change hands several times (Minahan 2002: 1767).
- The Russian empire annexed the northern parts of Azerbaijan from the Persians in the early 19th century, solidified in the treaties of Gulistan in 1813. This effectively divided what is now the independent state of Azerbaijan north of the Aras River, and the southern Azerbaijani region that is now in modern day Iran (Minahan 2002: 1767).
- In the early parts of the 20th century, Azerbaijani nationalist sentiment grew in both the Russian and Iranian sides. Hemmat, (Endeavour) formed in 1904, was a Muslim Marxist party that participated in the 1906 Iranian Revolution and put forward territorial demands in 1908-1909. (Minahan 2002: 1768)
- In 1920, Sheykh Khyabani led a revolt in South Azerbaijan, creating the separatist government of Azadistan, but this collapsed after he was arrested and executed. (Minahan 2002: 1768)
- Under Pahlavi’s regime (1925-1941) ethnic minorities including the Azeris suffered from centralization policies and force assimilation to Persian culture.
- In 1938 the Iranian province of Azerbaijan was split into two – East and West Azerbaijan – in order to dilute the nationalist movement in the south that had been growing throughout the 1920s and 1930s (Minahan 2002: 1769). It is possible that the bifurcation also implied centralization, but we could not find clear evidence.
- There was strong cultural and physical repression of Southern Azeris after 1946 (Shaffer 2002: 57; Raine 2001). According to Minahan (2002: 1769), Southern Azerbaijani nationalism re-emerged after the fall of the shah in 1979. “Southern Azeri opposition to the Islamic Revolution fueled nationalist rioting in Tabriz and other large cities. The Azeri spiritual leader Ayatollah Shariamadari was placed under house arrest in Tabriz after his followers clashed with Revolutionary Guards during nationalist rioting in the city” (Minahan 2002: 1770). Minorities at

Risk also reports a short resurgence of nationalist activity in 1979. No concessions or restrictions were found in the ten years before the 1979-2012 period that we cover in the dataset.

Concessions and restrictions

- The 1979 constitution promises ethnic minority rights, in terms of religion, education, language and limited legal and administrative authority in areas where they live. However, “these constitutional measures have little meaning in reality, and the state is pursuing policies of religious, linguistic, and cultural unity at the expense of minority rights.” (Samii, 2000: 128). [1979: cultural rights restriction]
- After the Iranian Revolution (1978-79) and the brief but public and widespread manifestation of Azerbaijani nationalism, the Iranian government cracked down on the movement. Thus “[i]n 1983 the Democratic Party of Azerbaijan and the leftist Tudeh Party were officially dissolved by Iran’s Islamic government” while Azeri language publications were also shut down (Minahan, 2002: 1770). [1983: cultural rights restriction]
- The Iranian Government allowed the publication of a weekly magazine in Azerbaijani language from 1991 (Shaffer 2000: 461). [1991: cultural rights concession]
- Two years later, the regime shut down the weekly Azerbaijani language magazine, despite its popularity (Shaffer 2000: 461). [1993: cultural rights restriction]
- The Iranian Government divided East Azerbaijan province, creating a new province named ‘Ardabil.’ This was opposed by Azerbaijanis as a tactic of trying to weaken Azerbaijani cultural attachment to the area (Shaffer, 2000: 464), but it is not clear whether Arabs’ autonomy rights were affected given the already limited level of autonomy of Iranian provinces. We do not code a concession.
- In his 2013 election campaign, President Hassan Rouhani pledged to end patterns of discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities and to introduce minority language courses in universities including courses in Azeri (Ceasfire Centre for Civillian Rights 2018). Classes in Azeri-Turkish languages were offered for the first time in June 2016 (Center for Human Rights in Iran 2021). [2013: cultural rights concession]

Regional autonomy

- As South Azerbaijan enjoyed de facto independence between November 1945 and December 1946, this is classed as regional autonomy. [1946: regional autonomy]

De facto independence

- In November 1945, the Azerbaijan Democratic Party (ADP) declared the independence of Southern Azerbaijan after a bloodless local coup d’état. As per the January 1st rule, this is coded from 1946. [1946: de facto independence]

Major territorial changes

- The above establishment of the Southern Azerbaijan Democratic Republic occurred in November 1945 (Raine, 2001: 19). [1945: establishment of de facto independence]
- In late 1946 Soviet troops withdrew, giving Iran the opportunity to take back Southern Azerbaijan. The self-declared government surrendered to Iranian troops in December 1946 (Shaffer 2002: 56; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000: 131). [1946: revocation of de facto independence]

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Azerbaijanis
<i>Scenario</i>	No match/1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Azeri
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	63004000

Power access

- 1945 is not coded in EPR and so needs to be manually coded. In 1941 Southern Azerbaijan was occupied by the Soviet Union (Minahan 2002: 1769). In September 1945 Southern Azeri nationalists formed the Azerbaijan Democratic Party (ADP), hence the start date. ADP then declared the independence of Southern Azerbaijan after a bloodless local coup d'état. At the time, Southern Azerbaijan was under Soviet occupation (Minahan 2002: 1769), which based on the narrative in Minahan implies that the Azeris were not represented in Iran's central government. [1945-1946: powerless].
- We follow EPR for 1979-2020. [1979-2020: junior partner]

Group size

- We draw on EPR and also apply the EPR estimate (24%) to 1945. [1945-1946, 1979-2012: 0.24]

Regional concentration

- MAR codes regional concentration while noting that the Azeris make the predominant proportion of the population of their regional base and that 50-75% of group members reside in their regional base. EPR also codes regional concentration. Minahan (2002: 1765) suggests that Azeris make up a majority – 72% – of their regional base (the region of Azerbaijan); however, according to Minahan only a minority of Azeris live in that region. However, Minahan also notes that it is difficult to determine the exact number of Southern Azeris in Iran, as there is no official data on ethnicity. We code regional concentration while noting that this coding is ambiguous based on the sources we consulted. [regional concentration]

Kin

- Azeris make up the majority of adjacent Azerbaijan (former Soviet Republic, now independent state). This coding matches EPR and MAR. [kin in adjacent state]

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Baluchis

Activity: 1945-2020

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- A Balochistan independence movement was crushed by the UK and Persia in the late 19th century, and the region was subsequently divided between the UK, Persia, and Afghanistan. Iran took full control of the region in 1928, and in early the Baloch chief Dust Mohamad Khan was arrested and executed (Czulda 2017). According to Czulda, “since this moment, the Baloch people started to engage in clandestine political activities, challenging central authorities and hoping to achieve sovereignty.” Minahan (2002: 257) similarly suggests local uprisings during the 1930s. On this basis, we code the start date in 1929.
- The evidence regarding mobilization in 1945-1978 is thin; however, the account in Czulda (2017) would suggest that the movement continued to be active throughout this time. Czulda reports outbursts of violence in 1979 and, although it appears that Iran has not allowed Baluchi political organizations to exist openly, news sources report separatist activity in the form of local uprisings and mass demonstrations from 1979 onward (BBC 2010; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000; Lexis Nexis; Keesing’s; Minahan 1996, 2002; MAR). Secessionists groups including Jaish al-Adl were active as of 2020 (Siddique 2019). [start date: 1929; end date: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- There is only limited information on Baloch separatism in Iran, as the central government has not allowed Baloch political organizations to exist openly. Overall, the claim for autonomy seems to have emerged as the dominant one. In 1994, the Baloch National Council called for a special status for the Sistan-Balochistan region (Minahan 2002: 259). The Balochistan Peoples Party, an exile organization established in 2003 and based in Stockholm, also favors autonomy and demands a federal Iran as one of its main platform issues (Minorities at Risk Project). This is confirmed by UNPO (2008), where it is also stated that the Balochistan Peoples Party is “campaigning to achieve [...] sovereignty within a federal Democratic Republic of Iran based on parity of its constituent parts”. Furthermore, Gulam Mohammad Khanzai, an Iranian Baloch political expert, says that “the Baloch of Iran are not secessionist” (Taheri 2009: 157). Groups like Jaish al-Adl remain active and have made claims for federalism (UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia; Mendez 2020: 49). [1945-2020: autonomy claim]

Independence claims

NA

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- The dominant Balochi claim concerns Iranian Baluchistan although some groups have also claimed a Greater Baluchistan, which includes territories in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Iranian Baluchistan mainly covers the province Sistan and Baluchistan (Minahan 2002: 255). In line with SDM coding rules, we only code those areas within Iran based on a map by Roth (2015: 302).

Sovereignty declarations

NA

Separatist armed conflict

- In 1973 rebellion broke out in the Pakistani Baluchi province. Minahan (2002: 258) suggests that the rebellion soon spread to Iranian Baluchistan. We could not confirm this using other sources. For example, while Global Security (n.d.) suggests that Iran cooperated with Pakistan forces in suppressing the rebellion in Pakistan, we could not find evidence of substantial violence in Iran itself.
- There are indications that significant violence emerged after the 1978-1979 Iranian Revolution.
 - o First, MAR's rebellion score is three in 1975-1979 (indicating a "local rebellion", increasing to four in 1980 ("small-scale guerilla activity") and remaining that way until and including 1995.
 - o Second, there are qualitative accounts which appear to corroborate the outbreak of violence. On the one hand, according to Czulda (2017): "Violence returned to the region in 1979, when the fights between the Sunni Balochs and Shia Sistanis "escalated into gun battles [...] that left nearly one hundred dead and injured [...] Snipers targeted revolutionary militiamen and Pasdaran soldiers sent to protect the city while other Balochs attacked patrolling army tanks and armoured personnel carriers. Iran declared a state of emergency in the region and sent more troops into Balochistan before calming the situation." Based on this, 1979 is coded as LVIOLSD.
- We continue to code LVIOLSD in 1980-1995, in keeping with MAR. This is an ambiguous coding decision, but our sources suggest significant reporting difficulties and there are indications from qualitative sources (and MAR) that substantial violence was ongoing throughout the period.
 - o Specifically, Manghebati (2015) suggests that while the period before 1979 was free of substantial ethnic violence, "[since the Islamic revolution of 1979, Balochistan has been the scene of relative unrest and conflict (Doshoki, 2010a). Numerous "terrorist" organizations have carried out attacks in the region, which has left hundreds dead in Balochistan."
 - o Furthermore, Minahan (2002: 259) reports "serious clashes in Iran in the 1990s" which "where blamed on drug traffickers or bandits, but Baluch nationalists continue to fight for self-rule."
 - o Finally, the MAR chronology (which starts in 1990) reports several killings in 1990. In June 1991, "[c]lashes between Baluchi tribesmen and government forces in the Sistan-Baluchistan province result in the deaths of over 100 of Iran's revolutionary guards.", In July 1991, "[t]he Independent (July 16, 1991) reports that during 1990 in heavy fighting with Baluch tribesmen, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard lost at least 20 helicopters and "devastated" many Baluchi villages." Further clashes are reported in September 1991, and in November Iran claims to have killed 27 Baluchi rebels in a raid. Another 6 killings are reported in 1992, three in 1993, and 24 (21 protestors and 4 security forces) in 1994.
- Jundullah, a militant organization based in Balochistan, was formed in 2002. It is unclear whether Jundullah has separatist motives. The rebels claim they do not, but the government and media portray them as separatists. UCDP/PRIO lists at least 25 deaths per year from 2006-2010. Other attacks are attributed to Baluchi separatism, although not necessarily by Jundullah: In 2009, a suicide bombing killed 40, 12 policemen were killed in ambush, and another bombing kills 25

(Lexis Nexis). Based on this, we code LVIOLSD from 2006 until 2010 (using an “ambiguous” code since UCDP/PRIO considers this a conflict over government). Jundullah’s leader, Abdul Malik Rigi, was arrested and executed in 2010, and the group entered a decline.

- Several splinter groups emerged from Jundullah, the largest of which was Jaish al-Adl. Jaish-al-Adl was formed in 2012 and began attacking Iranian government targets in 2013. Jaish al-Adl is one of the main Baloch insurgent groups after Jundullah and its leader, Mullah Omar, said that his group is fighting for its people’s religious and national rights (Rehman 2014: 1, 4). According to the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia, Jaish al-Adl’s goal was the “establishment of a federal system in Iran”. According to UCDP/PRIO, the 25-deaths threshold was first the time met only in 2019; however, the conflict with Jaish al-Adl notably also caused casualties before that (3 in 2014, 16 in 2015, 10 in 2016, 17 in 2017, 23 in 2018) and after that (1 in 2020 and 14 in 2021). In February 2019, Jaish al-Adl claimed responsibility for a suicide attack in south-eastern Iran which killed at least 27 members of the Revolutionary Guards and wounded 13 others (BBC 2019).
- [1945-1978: NVIOLSD; 1979-1995: LVIOLSD; 1996-2005: NVIOLSD; 2006-2010: LVIOLSD; 2011-2018: NVIOLSD; 2019: LVIOLSD; 2020: NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- The Baluchis are made up of two sets of people, the Baluch, who were nomadic tribes that settled from Iran, and the Brahui, who were original inhabitants of the land. Muslim Arabs in the 7th century brought Islam to the Brahui while Baluch nomads settled in the 11th and 12th century after Turkish invasions (Minahan 1996: 58)
- In the 1500s, Baluchistan was split between the Persian empires to the west and the Mughal empires to the east. However, the tribes of Baluchistan managed to retain largely autonomous despite being nominally under Persian or Mughal empire rule between until the 17th century (Pillalamarri 2016).
- Persia brought its Baluchi provinces under its control in a treaty with the British in 1872, this was revised in 1895-1896 and split the Baluchi-populated area into Iran, British India, and Afghanistan. In reality, the Baluchi tribes continued to exercise considerable autonomy with a lack of state interference in their affairs (Shoup 2011: 38).
- The Baluchi are largely tribal and, unlike the majority Shi’ite population of Iran, Sunni Muslim. The Baluchi province of Sistan-Baluchistan is relatively isolated, and poor in terms of education and other social indicators. Due to its relative isolation, state control has always been more precarious than in other parts of Iran and the Baluchis had some limited form of (largely de facto) autonomy post-WWII (MAR).
- No concessions or restrictions were found in the ten years before the first year we cover in the dataset.

Concessions and restrictions

- The 1978-79 Revolution, while creating expectation for Iran’s minorities, in fact brought the opposite. According to MAR, after World War II, “a “patron-client” relationship with the Baluchis which afforded them some level of autonomy” was established. However from 1979, the new regime brought Balochistan under greater central control, erasing the little autonomy that the local tribes had previously enjoyed. [1979: autonomy restriction]
 - o We code an onset of separatist violence in 1979. The above narrative (see under Separatist armed conflict) suggests that violence emerged after the revolution and, thus, likely that the outbreak of separatist violence came after the restriction. The same applies analogously to the cultural rights restriction (see below).
- The 1979 Constitution promises ethnic minority rights, in terms of religion, education, language and limited legal and administrative authority in areas where they live. However, “these constitutional measures have little meaning in reality, and the state is pursuing policies of religious,

linguistic, and cultural unity at the expense of minority rights.” (Samii, 2000: 128). [1979: cultural rights restriction]

- Relatedly: According to a Human Rights Watch Report (1997), three Baluchi language publications that emerged after the revolution, *Mahtak*, *Graand*, and *Roshanal*, were closed down in 1980.

Regional autonomy

- While the tribal Baluchis still had some limited de facto autonomy leading up to the 1978-79 Revolution, this was not formalised in a regional government or other institutions. We do not code regional autonomy.

De facto independence

NA

Major territorial changes

NA

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Baluchis
<i>Scenario</i>	No match/1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Baloch
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	63006000

Power access

- We draw on EPR, which suggests the Balochs were powerless until and including 1979, and as discriminated against in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution in 1979. Because separatist violence emerged in the context of the revolution, we apply the discriminated code already in 1979. [1945-1978: powerless; 1979-2020: discriminated]

Group size

- We use EPR’s group size estimate (2%). [0.02]

Regional concentration

- EPR codes the group as concentrated. MAR does the same while noting that the Baloch make up the predominant proportion of the population of their regional base and that >75% of the group live in their regional base. [regional concentration]

Kin

- There are numerically significant Baloch populations (>100k) in Pakistan and Afghanistan (Minahan 2002: 255). This coding matches EPR and MAR. [kin in adjacent country]

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Gilakis

Activity: 1975-1985

General notes

- We found only limited information on the Gilakis beyond Minahan (2002, 2016). This case would therefore profit from more research.

Movement start and end dates

- Gilaki separatists rebelled in 1918, demanding autonomy, and declared their independence in 1920. The Persian state invaded the breakaway state and crushed the rebellion, thus putting an end to Gilaki separatist activity until 1975, when separatists made new appeals for regional autonomy. These appeals were met with a brutal crackdown by the Iranian secret police, which may explain why we find no further evidence of separatist activity. We therefore code this movement from 1975 to 1985, following our ten-year rule (Minahan 1996, 2002). [start date: 1975; end date: 1985]

Dominant claim

- Gilaki separatists started to demand self-determination for the Gilakis in 1918 and proclaimed an independent state in 1920. The Persian state crushed this rebellion. A renewed call for autonomy emerged in 1975. Faced again with an attack by the Iranian secret police, the movement subsequently fizzled out. [1975-1985: autonomy claim]

Independence claims

- Minahan (2002: 669; 2016: 161) notes that the demands for the Gilaki in 1975 were for greater autonomy. No independence claim is identified. [no independence claims]

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- The territory claimed by the Gilakis is the Gilan province, which borders the Caspian Sea in northwestern Iran and the Zanzan province (Minahan 2002: 666). We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database.

Sovereignty declarations

- The only sovereignty declaration, of May 1920, is before our timeframe.

Separatist armed conflict

- We found no reports of separatist violence, we classify the movement as NviolSD. [NviolSD]

Historical context

- The Gilakis region was part of the ancient Persian empire before Alexander the Great of the Greeks conquered the area in 334-331 BC. The Persians retook the area in the 2nd century BC and Persianisation began (Minahan 2002: 667). The Arabs, as with other parts of Iran conquered the region in the 7th century, bringing Islam, and the Turks in the 11th century. (Shoup 2011: 109)
- After a series of Mongolian raids starting in the 13th century, by the time Gilan came under the Persian empire again in 1592, it was impoverished and underdeveloped (Minahan 2016: 161). In the 1600s and 1700s Russian expansion into the Caucasuses meant that Gilan was disputed and the treaties of 1813 and 1828 granted the Russians naval and economic establishments in Gilan (Minahan 2002: 668)
- Late 19th century silk production and trading links with Russians and British merchants meant that Gilan became more prosperous and advanced than the rest of Persia. Also forming in this time period was “an intellectual elite that embraced nationalist ideals.” (Minahan 2002: 668)
- Rebellion broke out in 1905, led by Gilaki farmers and using the forested area as cover they were called Jangali. After a British-Russian pact divided Persia into spheres of influence in 1907, the Russians moved to suppress the Jangali movement in 1909. In 1912 the Jangali movement became an anti-Russian rebellion. In 1917 the Russians withdrew from Gilan and the Gilaki rebels took control of the countryside (Minahan 2002: 668).
- The Persians, now technically in control of the Gilan, refused to accede to the Gilaki Jangali demands for autonomy, and led by Mirza Kuchek Khan, the Gilaki intensified their rebellion, spreading all over Gilan and into neighbouring Mazanderan. (Minahan 2002: 669). In 1919, the Gilakis fought Cossacks, paid for by the Persians to seize the region. They also fought the British who were in the area fighting Bolsheviks from Russia. In May 1920, the Bolshevik-supported Gilaki rebels forced the British out of their base at Enzeli, and Kuchek Khan, supported by the Soviet Red Army, declared the independence of the Persian Soviet Socialist Republic of Gilan. (Minhan 2002: 669)
- In 1921, after a coup installing a new Persian regime in Tehran, oil concessions were granted to Soviet Union in exchange for their withdrawal from Gilan. In Autumn 1921, the Persians retook Gilan by force (Afary 1995: 14), captured their leader Kuchek Khan, and beheaded him, displaying his head in Tehran (Minahan 1996: 201)
- No concessions or restrictions were found in the ten years before the first year we cover in the dataset.

Concessions and restrictions

- The 1979 Constitution promises ethnic minority rights, in terms of religion, education, language and limited legal and administrative authority in areas where they live. However, “these constitutional measures have little meaning in reality, and the state is pursuing policies of religious, linguistic, and cultural unity at the expense of minority rights” (Samii 2000: 128). [1979: cultural rights restriction]

Regional autonomy

NA

De facto independence

NA – the only time of de facto independence (1920-1921) is before our coding period.

Major territorial changes

NA

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Gilakis
<i>Scenario</i>	No match
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	-
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	-

Power access

- The Gilakis speak their own language, Gilani. Many Gilakis are bilingual, however, and also speak (Western) Farsi. The Gilaki are mostly Shia Muslims (Minahan 2002: 666-667). EPR does not include the Gilakis.
- The EPR coding notes suggest that Iran's theocratic regime which has existed since 1979 is open to all Shia and, on this basis, codes both the Persians and the Azeri as included (the latter as junior partner). The same coding scheme is also applied in 1975-1979. To what extent this extends to the Gilakis is not fully clear. Minahan (2002: 669f) suggests that most Gilakis had supported the 1979 revolution, though some Gilaki factions were soon involved in a rebellion against the theocratic regime. However, Minahan's account suggests the Gilakis are overall well-integrated in Iranian society, even though he is ambiguous regarding Gilaki government representation. Additional evidence comes from Asgharzadeh (2007: 18), who states that "the closeness and affinity of their [the Gilakis'] language to Farsi, on the one hand, and their adherence to Shi'ism, on the other, the community has been integrated successfully into the Fars-centered sphere and enjoys a comparatively high level of socioeconomic and cultural development". Overall, while we note that this case would profit from additional research, the evidence we were able to collect points to a junior partner code. [1975-1985: junior partner]

Group size

- There are approximately 3.55 million Gilakis in Iran in 2002 (Minahan 2002: 666), which in combination with the WB estimate of Iran's population for 2002 (68 mio) yields the noted group size. [0.052]

Regional concentration

- According to Minahan (2002: 666), the Gilakis make up 72% of the province of Gilan, where around two thirds of all Gilakis in Iran live. [regionally concentrated]

Kin

- No evidence found. [No kin]

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Kurds

Activity: 1945-2020

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) was formed in 1945, hence the start date of the movement. It has maintained a constant policy of demanding democracy for Iran and autonomy for the Kurds. It has not demanded a separate state, perhaps because of the close historical and cultural ties between Iran and its Kurds. Most of its support comes from the urban middle class, intellectuals, merchants and government employees. In 1946, Kurdish rebels had declared the autonomous Republic of Mahabad. The republic lasted only for a year, when it was overthrown by Iranian troops (Hewitt & Cheetham 2000: 131).
- The KDPI remains active along with the Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), founded in 2004, and its political wing, the Free and Democratic Society of East Kurdistan (KODAR) (Degenhardt 1988; Goldstone 1998; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000; Hewitt et al. 2008; Minahan 2002; MAR; Marshall & Gurr 2003). Both organizations had separatist goals as of 2020 (Nada and Crahan 2020; Ekurd Daily 2022; Reuters 2022). [start date: 1945; end date: ongoing]

Dominant claim

- We code the beginning of Kurdish separatist activity in 1945, with the establishment of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI). The Kurds declared independence in 1946 and established the Mahabad Republic under the leadership of the KDPI, supported by the Soviet Union (Olson 1992: 484) The new republic was overthrown one year later by Iranian troops. [1945-1946: independence claim]
- After the collapse of the Mahabad Republic, the dominant claim seems to have been autonomy within Iran, as argued by numerous sources. Minorities at Risk, the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia, and Minahan (2002: 1060) all state that the Iranian Kurds, mostly from bases in northern Iraq, have been campaigning for regional autonomy. Also, the KDPI defines self-determination for the Kurdish people “within the framework of Iran” as one of its objectives in its program (Van Bruinessen 1986: 17). Autonomy within Iran was or is also the goal of other Kurdish organizations, such as Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) or the Parti Jiyani Azadi Kurdistan/The Free Life Party of Kurdistan (PJAK) (UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia). The Kurdish claim for autonomy has continued after 2012, as renewed clashes between KDPI and Iranian military in 2015 illustrate (UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia). Autonomy for Kurds in Iran remained the dominant claim amongst the KDPI and PJAK as of 2020 (Middle East Eye 2021; UK Government 2022). [1947-2020: autonomy claim]

Independence claims

- See above. [start date: 1945; end date: 1946]
- The two main organizations associated with the movement, KDPI and PJAK, both worked towards greater autonomy for Kurds after 1946 and no longer held independence ambitions (UCDP; Middle East Eye 2021; UK Government 2022)

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- The territory claimed by the Kurds in Iran is the Mahabad Republic, which briefly existed in the mid-1940s. We code this claim based on Roth (2015: 198).

Sovereignty declarations

- On January 22, 1946, the Mahabad Republic was declared (Minahan 2016: 483). [1946: independence declaration]

Separatist armed conflict

- The HVIOLSD coding for 1979-1984 follows Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl (2019).
- Sources differ on the Kurds' involvement in low-level violence before 1979.
 - o UCDP/PRIO, on the one hand, code armed conflict in 1946 and 1966-1968.
 - o Marshall & Gurr (2003) do not code armed conflict at all before 1979.
 - o At the other extreme is MAR, which suggests an ongoing rebellion throughout in 1945-1978.
 - o MAR's codes are not backed up by qualitative evidence. After the 1946 rebellion, many PDKI leaders were arrested and executed, and we found no evidence for substantial violence until the 1960s, in agreement with UCDP/PRIO (see their coding notes). It is generally suggested that the Kurdish insurgency re-ignited after the Iranian Revolution in 1979 (see e.g. SSW coding notes). We therefore follow UCDP/PRIO here.
 - o [1945: NVIOLSD; 1946: LVIOLSD; 1966-1968: LVIOLSD; 1969-1978: 1979-1984: HVIOLSD]
- UCDP/PRIO reports several periods of minor war after 1984 including 1985-1988, 1990, 1993, and 1996. There are reporting difficulties in Iran and indications that substantial violence was sustained throughout most or even all of the intervening years. First, UCDP/PRIO does not record any battle-related deaths in 1989 or 1991, but the MAR rebellion score is five in both years (indicating intermediate guerilla activity). The MAR rebellion score remains at five in 1992 and UCDP/PRIO records 4 battle-related deaths. In 1994 and 1995, UCDP/PRIO reports a combined 35 deaths (18 vs 17). Furthermore, the MAR rebellion score remains at five in 1994 (though it subsequently drops below three). Based on this, we code LVIOLSD in 1985-1996. [1985-1996: LVIOLSD]
- We found no reports of violence in 1997-2004. [1997-2004: NVIOLSD]
- UCDP/PRIO codes an armed conflict involving the PJAK, a Kurdish party described as having secessionist goals, from 2005-2009. In 2010, the number of deaths reported by UCDP/PRIO was just under the 25-deaths threshold (23), while in 2011 UCDP/PRIO reports more than 200 deaths. As there was sustained fighting, we code LVIOLSD throughout 2005-2011. UCDP/PRIO codes the conflict as mainly over government, thus we apply an ambiguous code. [2005-2011: LVIOLSD]
- We found no evidence for violence above the threshold in 2012-2015. [2012-2015: NVIOLSD]
- UCDP/PRIO reports that KDPI re-launched its armed struggle in 2016, and that the 25 deaths threshold was met in 2016 and 2018 (there are a further 2 deaths attributed to the Iran-KDPI dyad in 2017, 18 in 2019, and 7 in 2020). PJAK also renewed its armed conflict in 2016, with UCDP/PRIO reporting more than 25 deaths in 2018 and 2020, and a further 23 in 2016, 13 in 2017, 13 in 2019, and 35 in 2021. Overall, the 25-deaths threshold was met throughout 2016-2021 when the two insurgencies are combined except for 2017 (15 deaths). As there was sustained fighting, we code LVIOLSD throughout 2016-2020. UCDP/PRIO codes the PJAK

conflict as mainly over government (but not the KDPI one), thus we apply an ambiguous code.
[2016-ongoing: LVIOLSD]

Historical context

- The Kurds make up the fourth largest population in the middle east, straddling Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria. They are the largest ethnic group without a state. (Minahan 2002: 1056). They are united by ties to the mountains, but there are a great many tribes and differences, resulting in a splintered movement with differing aims and strategies. (Minahan 2002: 1056). They live mostly in the provinces of West Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, Ilam, and Kermanshah and are around 75% Sunni Muslim (Samii 2000: 130) with a significant Shi'ite minority (Shoup 2011: 160). They number around 5-6 million in Iran (Danver, 2015: 544).
- The Kurds have a history of valuing their independence and have, whenever possible, resisted domination by outside powers and have occasionally managed to maintain autonomy in parts of the region in which they live. In classical and early medieval times, a series of independent "princdoms" ruled Kurdistan (Shoup, 2011: 159). However, like many other areas of the region, Kurdistan fell under Arab rule in the 7th century (Minahan 2002: 1058). The Kurds were pushed to the mountains as Arabs settled in the lowlands. The Arabs also brought Islam to the Kurds. Again like other parts of Iran, Turkish invasion in the 11th century ended Arab rule. This resulted in a brief period of Kurdish independence, where it produced one of Islam's heroes, Saladin, who led resistance and fought off Christian Crusaders in the 12th century. (Minahan 2002: 1058)
- Following wars over the control of Kurdistan between the Ottoman and Persian empires, Kurdistan was partitioned in 1514 with Turkish victory. The Kurdish areas under Turkish rule enjoyed more autonomy than those under the Persians. (Minahan 2002: 1058).
- MAR suggests that in the mid 19th century, the Kurds in Iran had a level of autonomy but this had ended by the end of the century (MAR).
- After the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War, the Kurds were promised independence in the Treaty of Sèvres that partitioned the Ottoman Empire but the Iranian Kurds were not included (Natali, 2005: 118). After World War I both Iran and Turkey sought to crush Kurdish nationalist movements which had enjoyed success, particularly between 1918 and 1922 (MRGI) By 1925, resistance in both countries had been crushed, political activities banned, and Kurdish language restricted. (Olson 1992: 476) In Iran and Turkey, the suppression of any signs of a Kurdish nationalist movement continued, and Kurdish leaders were assassinated. This corresponds with hostility towards ethnic minorities, centralisation policies and forced assimilation to Persian culture, that characterised the Pahlavi regime from 1925 to 1941. (Samii 2000: 129) This repression of Kurdish nationalism is in contrast with neighbouring Iraq, where British sought to stoke Kurdish nationalism as a way of entrenching their control of Iraq (Olson 1992: 476) as well as to pressure the Turks to give up their attempts to control Mosul in Iraq (Minhan 2002: 1059)
- An agreement was signed in 1937, the Saadabad Peace, between the colonial power in the region, Britain, with Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan and Iraq. For the British, the agreement was aimed at styming communism, but for the regional countries it was a tool to suppress Kurdish insurgencies (Minahan 2002: 1059).
- A committee to hear Kurdish land grievances and return unjustly confiscated land was set up in 1941. [1941: autonomy concession]

Concessions and restrictions

- The 1979 Constitution promises ethnic minority rights, in terms of religion, education, language and limited legal and administrative authority in areas where they live. However, "these constitutional measures have little meaning in reality, and the state is pursuing policies of religious, linguistic, and cultural unity at the expense of minority rights" (Samii 2000: 128). Indeed, after consolidating power post-revolution, Supreme Leader Khomeini ended negotiations with Kurdish

leaders, “banned discussions of Kurdish autonomy, and removed Kurds from their political posts” (Natali 2005: 149). [1979: cultural rights restriction]

- We code an onset of separatist violence in 1979. Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl (2019) code the onset of the war in March 1979, and thus two months after the Shah had fled Iran in January 1979 and the new theocratic team started to take over. This narrative suggests that ethnic rights restrictions precede violence rather than the other way around.
- The ‘reformist’ government of Khatami (1997-2005) authorized a new Kurdish radio station and the creation of new Kurdish publications (Natali 2005: 157). [1997: cultural rights concession]
- Under the more hardline President Ahmadinejad the Kurds experienced more violence and suppression. Just before Ahmadinejad took office in 2005, However, student-led protests in Summer 2005, in which a Kurdish activist was detained, tied to a car and dragged through the streets until he died, resulted in weeks of demonstrations (Human Rights Watch, 2009: 8). These ended with violence, arrests, and killing at the hands of authorities. Six Kurdish media outlets that reported on the killing and the subsequent crackdown were closed down. The government also sought to limit the circulation of books in Kurdish language (Human Rights Watch, 2009: 10ff). [2005: cultural rights restriction]
 - Note: we code a violence onset in 2005. The above narrative suggests that the restriction occurred in response to the violence and not the other way round. This is consistent with UCDP, which records the first fatalities in July and August 2005.
- Minority Rights Group International stated that in 2014, Kurdish-language publications were banned, schools were barred from teaching the Kurdish language, and Kurdish names for children were not allowed to be registered at official registries (MRGI). [2014: cultural rights restriction]

Regional autonomy

- In January 1946, backed by the Soviet Union, Kurdish separatists declared the Mahabad Republic in Iranian Kurdistan. However, by December of the same year, the Soviets withdrew their support, Iran retook control of the region, executing the leaders, the Qazi brothers (Hewitt and Cheetham 2000: 131). The Mahabad Republic enjoyed de facto independence between January and December 1946. Strictly speaking, the Mahabad Republic was established only after January 1, but we apply the rules flexibly here so as to better reflect case dynamics. [1946: regional autonomy]

De facto independence

- See above. [1946: de facto independence]

Major territorial changes

- The establishment of the Mahabad Republic occurred in January 1946 (Minahan, 2016: 483). [1946: establishment of de facto independence]
- In December 1946 after withdrawal of Soviet troops, the Iranian government took back the area of Mahabad, defeating the secession attempt and executing its leaders. (Hewitt & Cheetham 2000: 131). [1946: revocation of de facto independence]

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Kurds
<i>Scenario</i>	No match/1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Kurd
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	63008000

Power access

- We adopt data from EPR, which codes Iran's Kurds as powerless in 1947-1979 and discriminated against thereafter. In 1946, EPR codes the Kurds as "self-excluded", which per SDM's coding scheme becomes a powerless code. Sunnis including Kurds generally had little power in Iran during the 20th century. We found no evidence for government inclusion in 1945 and so extend the powerless code to 1945. [1945-1979: powerless; 1980-2020: discriminated]

Group size

- We draw on EPR data for 1946-2012 and apply the 8% estimate also to 1945. [0.08]

Regional concentration

- MAR codes the Kurds as regionally concentrated while noting that they make up the predominant proportion of the population of their regional base and that 50-75% of Kurds live in their regional base. EPR also codes regional concentration. [regionally concentrated]

Kin

- There are millions of Kurds living in Iraq, Turkey, and Syria; and smaller communities among others in Lebanon, Armenia, and Azerbaijan (Minahan 2002: 1055). This coding matches EPR's and MAR's. [kin in adjacent country]

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Turkmen

Activity: 1979-1982; 2004-2019

General notes

- The Turkmen minority makes up around 2% of the Iranian population. The Turkmen primarily live in the northeastern part of Iran along the border with Turkmenistan and in the region of Golestan with smaller settlements in Razavi Khorasan and North Khorasan (Fee and Soltani 2010). According to Samii (2000: 133), the Turkmen resent the fact that there are three Turkmen provinces rather than one; local observers believe that the main motive for the division of what used to be two provinces into three was the diffusion of nationalist sentiment. The Turkmen are Sunni Muslims and speak local dialects of Turkmeni.

Movement start and end dates

- According to Ahmadi (2023), Turkmen began to mobilize in the early months of the 1979 Revolution and, according to several sources, made demands for autonomy, official recognition of their language, and representation in local revolutionary councils dominated by Shia Muslims (Minorities at Risk Project; also see Minahan 2002: 1931). As this is the first evidence of organized separatist activity we found, 1979 is coded as start date. The uprising soon turned into violence, which is sometimes referred to as the first war of Gonbad. The Turkmen rebels initially emerged victorious. Autonomy was hailed until 1982 when the Turkmen lost the second war of Gonbad against Khomeini's troops (Rashidvash 2013). Thus, 1982 is coded as end date. [start date 1: 1979; end date 1: 1982]
- According to Minorities at Risk, the Turkmen were relatively unorganized in subsequent years, but "this appears to be changing." According to MAR, several organizations emerged in recent years, including Turkmentsahra Freedom Organization, the National Democratic Movement of Turkmenia (Turkmenlik) and Organization for Defense of the Rights of Turkmen People. Very little information on these organizations can be found, which may have to do with Iran's highly repressive system. However, there is some indication that these organizations made claims for a federal Iran. Specifically, all three signed a 2009 declaration for a federal Iran (UNPO 2009). At least one of them, the Organization for Defense of the Rights of Turkmen People, appears to have signed another 2005 manifesto, also for a federal Iran (Congress of Iranian Nationalities for a Federal Iran). It is not fully clear when the three above-mentioned organizations were formed. Minorities at Risk appears to suggest that they were formed at some point between 2004-2006. We could not find a clearer indication, thus 2004 is coded as second start date. We could not find any evidence for continued mobilization after 2009 and so code the second end date in 2019 following the ten-year rule. [start date 2: 2004; end date 2: 2019]

Dominant claim

- We code the start of the first period of Turkmen separatist activity in 1979 when the Turkmen rebelled against the new government and demanded "autonomy, official recognition of their language, and representation in local revolutionary councils dominated by Shi'i Muslims" (Minahan 2002: 1931). Minorities at Risk confirms the autonomy claim as does Asgharzadeh who states that upon the fall of the Pahlavi regime, "the community became a hotbed of revolutionary uprisings, ethnic demands, and nationalistic activism centered on the revival of Turkmeni identity." (Asgharzadeh 2007: 20). [1979-1982: autonomy claim]
- The main representatives of the Turkmen claim in the second period of activity were the Turkmentsahra Freedom Organization, the National Democratic Movement of Turkmenia (Turkmenlik), and Organization for Defense of the Rights of Turkmen People. As a result of Iran's repressive system, there is only very little information on these organizations, their

demands and strength. An exception is their signing of a declaration for a federal Iran in 2009 (UNPO 2009) or the 2005 manifesto by the Organization for Defense of the Rights of Turkmen People that also demanded a federal Iran (Congress of Iranian Nationalities for a Federal Iran). [2004-2019: autonomy claim]

Indendence claims

NA

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- This territorial claim remains somewhat ambiguous due to the scarcity of information on this particular movement, so we flag this claim as ambiguous. However, it seems that Turkmen claims mainly refer to the Mandarazan, Khorasan and Gholestan regions near the Caspian Sea. For example, Samii (2000: 135) notes that the Turkmen would like to create a single Turkmen province out of these three provinces. Based on this information, we code the three provinces as claimed territory, using the Global Administrative Areas database.

Sovereignty declarations

NA

Separatist armed conflict

- As noted above, Turkmen rebelled in 1979, in part to demand autonomy (MAR). The rebellion was put down in 1982. Battles in 1979 and 1982 are referred to as the two wars of Gonbad by Rashidvash (2013) and, in keeping with its notion of there being a rebellion, MAR's rebellion quinquennial rebellion score is four from 1975-1984, which points to "small-scale guerilla activity". This conflict is not in UCDP/PRIo, but Ahmadi (2023: 65) suggests that there were dozens of casualties in 1979. We could not find casualty counts for 1980-1982, but qualitative accounts as well as MAR would suggest that significant violence continued. We code LVIOLSD throughout 1979-1982 on this basis. [1979-1982: LVIOLSD]
 - o Note: the above account (see movement start and end dates) suggest sthe movement was nonviolent initially and then quickly escalated.
- As we found no evidence of separatist violence in the second phase, we code the entire second phase as NVIOLSD. [2004-2019: NVIOLSD]

Historical context

- The Turkmen, mostly Sunni Muslim, live in some of the poorest parts of Iran. They are a tribal group, whose tribes stretch into neighbouring Turkmenistan. (Shaffer, 2021: 11) The live mostly in Golestan, Razavhi Khorasan and North Khorasan Provinces, an area sometimes called Turkmen Sahra (Minahan 2016: 433).
- The Turkmen of Iran largely arrived in the 7th and 8th centuries as Islam was on the rise. The invasion of the Seljuk Turks in the 11th century followed by the Mongolia raids of the 13th century

resulted in their subjugation although they were more closely linked to the Seljuk Turks through ethnicity (Hewitt and Cheetham 2000: 304).

- The Persian Safavid Empire ruled what is now the Turkmen part of Iran from the 16th century. However in the 18th century, a revival of Turkmen identity resulted in a rebellion against the Safavids (West, 2009: 836). The Qajar dynasty which succeeded the Safavids in Persia, had Turkic origins (Asgharzadeh 2007: 10) and the Turkmen were thus largely free of outside control until the end of the Qajar dynasty in the 19th century. (MAR)
- The Russians invaded and conquered northern Turkmenistan in 1881, and the historic Turkmen lands was divided between Russia, Iran, and Afghanistan. (Minahan 2016: 433)
- In 1925, the new Shah of the Pahlavi dynasty ordered a pacification campaign against the Turkmen who had rebelled and controlled parts of Khorasan (Olson 1991: 217), causing many to flee to Soviet Russia (MAR).
- As with many other ethnic minorities the Pahlavi dynasty until the 1978-1979 Revolution treated the Turkmen with hostility, centralisation policies and forced assimilation to Persian culture. (Samii 2000: 129).
- In 1997, the province of Gulistan (Gorgan) was created, split off from the Turkmen populated Khorasan and Mazandaran Provinces. According to Samii, “local observers believe the main motivation was to divide the roughly 1.35 million Turkmen and decrease the chances of ethnic identities superseding identification with the state.” (Samii 2000: 133). This is tricky to see as a restriction as defined here as Iranian provinces do not have a lot of powers anyway.

Concessions and restrictions

- The 1979 Constitution promises ethnic minority rights, in terms of religion, education, language and limited legal and administrative authority in areas where they live. However, “these constitutional measures have little meaning in reality, and the state is pursuing policies of religious, linguistic, and cultural unity at the expense of minority rights.” (Samii, 2000: 128). [1979: cultural rights restriction]
 - o We code an onset of separatist violence in 1979. The above narrative (see under Separatist armed conflict) suggests that violence emerged after the revolution. This narrative suggests that ethnic rights restrictions preceded the outbreak of violence rather than the other way around.
- As with other minorities, the 1978-79 Iranian Revolution was welcomed as an opportunity to attain greater political and cultural rights. However, this was soon dashed as the realities of a centralized regime intolerant of alternative political demands was soon established (Samii 2000: 132). Rebellion in the area meant that the Turkmen were able to assert limited power and achieved a level of autonomy between 1979 and 1982 (Rashidvash 2013: 90); however, the limited autonomy enjoyed by the Turkmen was of a de facto nature and not a result of government concessions. We do not code a concession.
- In September 2020, Tehran closed down the Turkmen language newspaper, Sakhra, after 22 years of existence, by revoking its license (Annayev 2020). We would code a restriction, but the movement is coded as ended in 2019.

Regional autonomy

NA

De facto independence

NA

Major territorial changes

NA

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Turkmen
<i>Scenario</i>	1:1
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	Turkmen
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	63010000

Power access

- EPR codes the Turkmen as powerless until and including 1979, and as discriminated against after the 1979 revolution. Due to the first of January rule, this change is only reflected in 1980 in EPR, but we also code 1979 with “discriminated” because the Turkmen SDM started only after the overthrow of the government in February 1979 – specifically, the first instance of separatist activity we found is from MAR, which states that: “Shortly after the Iranian revolution in 1979, the Turkmen rebelled against the new government demanding autonomy, official recognition of their language, and representation in local revolutionary councils dominated by Shi'i Muslims”. [1979-1982; 2004-2019: discriminated]

Group size

- We use EPR's population estimate (2%). [0.02]

Regional concentration

- Both MAR and EPR code the group as concentrated. MAR in addition notes that >75% of the group live in their regional base. It is not fully clear whether the Turkmen make up >50% of their base (called Turkmen Sahra), though this seems likely. [regionally concentrated]

Kin

- Numerically significant kin in Iraq and Turkey (Minahan 2002: 1928). This coding matches EPR and MAR. [kin in adjacent country]

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