

Conflict, Trust, and Political Preferences*

Astghik Mavisakalyan[†] Anna Minasyan[‡]

January 2024

Abstract

Political trust in Armenia underwent a remarkable transformation, rising from 22 percent in 2017 to 71 percent in 2019 and then sharply dropping to 14 percent in 2021. This swift shift can be attributed to two pivotal events: the successful Velvet Revolution in 2018 and the military loss in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) War in 2020. This study explores the precise impact of these events, as shocks to institutions, on political trust by exploiting geographic disparities in exposure. Using an event study design and a unique pseudo-panel based on geo-referenced survey data from 2017, 2019, and 2021, with over 4,700 respondents across 182 locations, we find that exposure to the Velvet Revolution increased government trust by 40 percentage points in 2019, while exposure to the NK War reduced it by 20 percentage points in 2021 compared to the baseline. Exposure to both events further decreased government trust by seven percentage points in 2021. Voting results align with our findings, with the incumbent government gaining votes in positively affected regions and losing support in war-exposed areas. An investigation into the mechanisms revealed that, post-war, regions unaffected by the conflict but exposed to the Velvet Revolution prioritized concerns related to unemployment and poverty, contrasting with the conflict-related focus in the rest of the country. Hence, the effect of the negative institutional shock on political survival can be alleviated if it occurs following a positive shock, and if the exposure to the negative shock varies within the country, despite its national significance.

*This research was made possible through the support of Grant 62065 from the John Templeton Foundation. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the John Templeton Foundation. We appreciate the feedback and comments from the participants of the Symposium on Cultures of Trust and Institutions of Freedom at the Research Institute of Industrial Economics (IFN) in Stockholm in 2023, where the paper was first presented. We are grateful to GeoDienst at the University of Groningen, and especially Bridget Hebner, for research support in GIS tooling, mapping and visualization.

[†]Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre, Faculty of Business and Law, Curtin University, Australia. Postal address: GPO Bo1987, Perth WA 6845, Australia. E-mail: a.mavisakalyan@curtin.edu.au.

[‡]Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Groningen, The Netherlands. Postal address: Nettelbosje 2, 9747 AE Groningen, The Netherlands. E-mail: a.minasyan@rug.nl.

1 Introduction

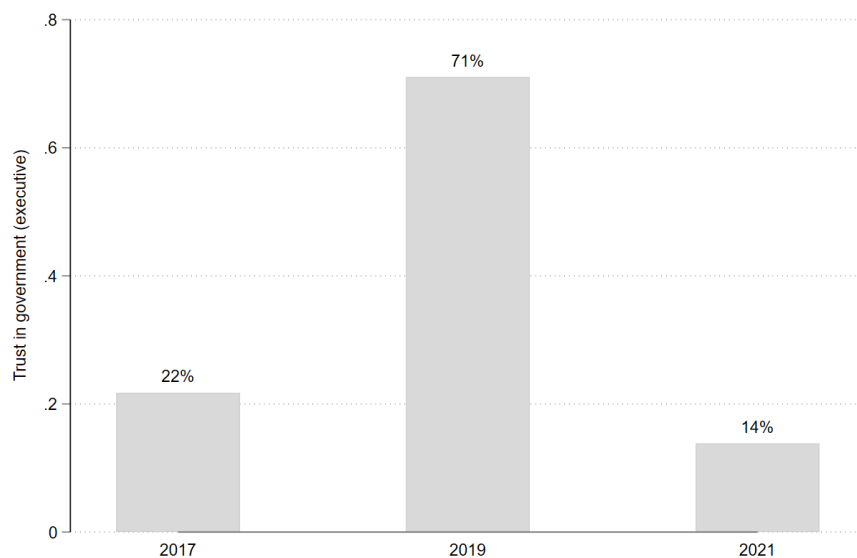
Political trust is crucial to the stability and prosperity of the societies (Bargain and Aminjonov, 2020; Brodeur et al., 2021; Fairbrother et al., 2019; Grönlund and Setälä, 2007; Newton and Norris, 2000). An influential line of inquiry into the drivers of trust construes it as a long-lasting cultural feature of societies that have been shaped by features of historical institutions and passed on through generations (Becker et al., 2016; Besley and Reynal-Querol, 2014; Grosjean, 2014; Nikolova et al., 2022; Nunn and Wantchekon, 2011). Political trust can be seen as the reflection of institutional quality in the country. Indeed, perceptions of institutional performance, fairness, and integrity are correlated with political trust (Christensen and Læg Reid, 2005; Dinesen, 2012; Espinal et al., 2006; Wang, 2016; Yang and Holzer, 2006). Thus, shocks to political institutions, such as a revolution or a war, may matter for political trust in the short run, suggesting fragility of such trust. Yet, there is limited evidence on whether and by how much political trust responds to positive and negative shocks. The existing literature mostly focuses on contexts with no shocks or a single shock, which do not offer sufficient exogenous variation and often fall short of establishing a causal relationship.

In this study we exploit two shocks to democratic institutions, a revolution and a war, drawing on the evidence from the post-Soviet republic of Armenia. These events in Armenia offer a unique experimental setting by nature. The first natural experiment featured a series of mass anti-government protests and marches from April-May 2018, culminating in a “Velvet Revolution” that overthrew the semi-authoritarian regime in place at the time. Observations of the post-revolutionary period highlight the new government’s achievements in domestic policy which “strongly resonated with the Armenian society” (Terzyan, 2020, p. 2). The second natural experiment is related to the simmering conflict with neighboring Azerbaijan over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) that erupted into a bloody 44-day war (the second NK war) in September 2020 and killed thousands in combat, resulting in a military debacle for Armenia (Kramer, 2020). The war revived concerns over Armenia’s national security, with many blaming Prime Minister Pashinyan for the defeat in the war (Mirovalev, 2021).

We observe significant changes in political trust over the periods surrounding these two events (shocks) in a rich nationally representative household survey conducted in the years 2017, 2019, and 2021. As Figure 1 shows, the government trust in Armenia saw a remarkable jump in the post-revolution period (first shock), but was followed by a dramatic fall in the post-war period (second shock). In particular, while in 2019, the trust in government more than tripled, surging from 22 percent in 2017 to 71 percent in 2019, in 2021 it plummeted to 14 percent, lower than the baseline trust level observed in 2017.

To investigate the impact of single and double shock, we geo-reference the locations of the last three Caucasus Barometer surveys (2017, 2019, 2021) in Armenia and construct a pseudo-panel based on repeated cross-sectional observations of individuals, where individuals are observed only

Figure 1: Trust in Government after Velvet Revolution (2018) and Second NK War (2020)



Source. Caucasus Barometer, Armenia 2017, 2019 and 2021 waves.

once but the (clusters of) locations where respondents reside are observed up to three times. This pseudo-panel allows us to employ a short-run event study design and evaluate the impact of single and double shocks based on the location's exposure level to each shock. We measure the location's exposure to each shock using two approaches. In the first approach, we assigned a location the status of being exposed to the Velvet Revolution, if at least one survey respondent from that location reports having participated in the April-May protest march. Similarly, we assign a location the status of being exposed to the NK war, if at least one survey respondent from that location reports to have household members who participated, were injured, or killed during the Second NK War. In the second approach, we use the geo-referenced information on the survey location and assign the location to be exposed to the Velvet Revolution based on the shortest distance between the location and the path of the protest march, hereafter called Protest Walk, which started in the second largest city of Armenia, Gyumri and ended in the capital, Yerevan. We geo-referenced the locations of the Protest Walk based on the reports from Armenian newspapers at the time. In terms of war exposure, we assign the location the status of being exposed to the Second NK War based on the shortest distance between the location and the Armenia-Azerbaijan official border. These two approaches are imperfect, yet complementary. We use two outcome variables to measure political trust, namely, trust in government and voting turnover. The results based on the second approach, geographic distance cutoffs, show that relative to the baseline, exposure to the Velvet Revolution

increased the government trust by an additional 40 percentage points in 2019 and exposure to the NK war decreased the government trust by 20 percentage points in 2021. Moreover, exposure to both the Velvet Revolution and the NK war reduced government trust by seven percentage points in 2021 relative to the baseline in 2017. We find consistent results with voting behavior.

What we study is far from being an isolated episode of history. Political trust does fluctuate in the short run and often in response to political contentions, e.g. Arab Spring and Arab Winter. But our study is the first to empirically document the fluctuations in political trust in a short period and demonstrate their causal links to different political contentions - a revolution and a war - with effects of opposing directions on trust. That political contentions have a range of possible impacts is acknowledged in theoretical studies, however, as Davenport et al., 2019 point out, one of the main shortcomings of the empirical literature is that it usually focuses on the impacts of specific forms of contention viewed at a time. Moreover, by documenting the short-lived effect of Armenia's Velvet Revolution on political trust, we re-affirm the propositions in the literature that such sudden changes are unlikely to produce democratically consolidated states (Huntington, 1993). Mitchell, 2022 confirms this point concerning the color revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan which did not produce the expected results (see also Kalandadze and Orenstein, 2009). Our study shows that Armenia's case isn't an exception, and provides a detailed analysis as to why and how the political trust went down after a significant yet short-lived rise following the revolution.

This study contributes to the empirical literature on the consequences of contentions for political outcomes and trust (see Davenport et al., 2019 for a review). While this literature looks at a single contention at a time, it offers several important insights into the impacts of contentions on political outcomes. When it comes to the revolutions, the empirical evidence on their impact on institutions and trust is relatively limited. The closest to our study is the paper by Ivanov, 2023 which exploits the 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia as a natural experiment to show that people exposed to post-revolutionary Georgian institutions had higher levels of political trust. Similarly, the analysis by Ishiyama and Pechenina, 2016 suggests that the color revolutions in post-communist countries have led to an increase in confidence in political institutions (Armenia is not part of their sample). On the other hand, in the spirit of studies that document the persistent nature of trust, Bai and Wu, 2020 show that individuals exposed to China's Cultural Revolution - a socio-political movement that involved nationwide conflict and political campaigns - in their impressionable years, reported lower levels of trust more than three decades later.

The literature on "conflict trap" highlight the persistent negative consequences of conflict for political institutions and stability (Collier and Sambanis, 2002; Collier et al., 2003, 2008).¹ The

¹It should be noted that the 'state-building' view on conflict emphasizes the potentially strengthening impact of conflict on states (Carneiro, 1970; Diamond, 1999; Tilly, 1985), and that in certain post-war contexts, people may behave more cooperatively (Bauer et al., 2016). Moreover, the theoretical studies by Besley and Persson, 2009, 2010 additionally suggest that external and internal conflicts may have opposite effects on the incentives to invest in state institutions. According to these studies, external conflict fosters while internal conflict weakens state capacity.

empirical evidence on the consequences of conflict documents its negative consequences for political trust in the long run (Barclay Child and Nikolova, 2020; Besley and Reynal-Querol, 2014; Grosjean, 2014; Hong and Kang, 2017). However, there is also evidence to suggest that conflict exposure shapes trust and participation in the short run - see e.g., Bellows and Miguel, 2006, 2009 on Sierra Leone civil war, Gilligan et al., 2014 on Nepal civil war, Blattman, 2009; Rohner et al., 2013 on civil conflict in Uganda, and Cassar et al., 2013 on Tajik civil war. However, most of these studies focus on social trust and cooperation, with research on political trust after the conflict “still relatively nascent and, hence, not yet well developed” (Fiedler, 2023, p. 13). Among the studies that do look at political trust, De Juan and Pierskalla, 2016 find that individuals in areas more exposed to Nepal civil war are less trusting of the government. Similarly, Hutchison and Johnson, 2011 document a negative link between recent experiences of violence and political trust in a sample of African countries. Particularly insightful for our work is the study by Gates and Justesen, 2020 on the immediate short-term consequences of a violent attack by a rebel group in Mali, where the findings suggest that individuals are capable of attributing responsibility for such events to individual politicians. A study by Koos and Traunmüller, 2022, on the other hand, suggests that the impact of conflict on political trust varies by context. Indeed, in some studies, there is evidence of a positive link between conflict exposure and political trust (Bakke et al., 2014).

The evidence on the consequences of political contentions in the context of Armenia is limited. While Armenia’s political landscape and contentions have been discussed in the literature, to the best of our knowledge there are only two studies that offer evidence of the social consequences of political contentions. Mavisakalyan and Minasyan, 2023 investigate the role of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in son bias and skewed sex ratios among children in Armenia. Arbatli and Gomtsyan, 2019 evaluate the long-term impact of the political circumstances surrounding the Great Massacres against Armenians at the end of the 19th century and during the Armenian Genocide (1915–1917) on contemporary voting behaviors in Armenia. Our study complements this work by exploring the differential impact on political trust resulting from two shocks with opposite outcomes, namely, a successful revolution vis-à-vis a defeat in a conflict.

2 Background

Armenian Velvet Revolution

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, several revolutions have taken place in the former Soviet Republics, including the Orange Revolution and Euromaidan protests in Ukraine, the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, and the Rose Revolution in Georgia. Armenia joined the list in 2018, with a series of mass anti-government protests and marches taking place in April-May, led by journalist, former political prisoner, and MP Nikol Pashinyan. While the protests were provoked by then-

President Serzh Sargsyan’s decision to pursue a constitutional amendment that would allow him to serve a third term as prime minister, they were ultimately an outcome of the profound discontent with the deepening authoritarianism, poor economy, and high levels of corruption in the country in the years leading up to 2018 (Foster, 2019; Lansky and Suthers, 2019).

The protests culminated in a “Velvet Revolution” - in the spirit of the Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution of 1989 and unlike the violent uprisings in some of the other post-Soviet states - that peacefully overthrew the semi-authoritarian regime in place at the time. Pashinyan became the interim prime minister in May with his electoral alliance, My Step, winning over 70% of the vote in a subsequent snap elections that took place in December 2018.

In recognition of the rapid developments towards “democracy and renewal” that took place in Armenia following the revolution, *The Economist* named Armenia as its Country of the Year for 2018 (The Economist, 2018). The rule of law, democratic reforms, and anti-corruption initiatives were given priority by the new administration that came into power after the Velvet Revolution, contributing to the strong support extended by the population. Observations of the post-revolutionary period highlight the new government’s achievements in domestic policy and vision of the people’s government-led “New Armenia” - a country of law and justice, prosperity, and democracy - which “strongly resonated with the Armenian society” (Terzyan, 2020, p. 2).

Second Nagorno-Karabakh War

Despite the significant gains in domestic policy-making, Pashinyan’s administration had to face the challenge of managing the external pressures, especially in the context of Armenia’s relationship with neighboring Azerbaijan on the ongoing conflict over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh - a predominantly Armenian-populated region that was assigned to Soviet Azerbaijan in the 1920s by the government of the USSR. The conflict escalated into a full-scale war - the first Nagorno-Karabakh war - in the early 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union, leading to massive displacements and ethnic killings on both sides and resulting in the full control of most of the enclave and small parts of Azerbaijan’s territory outside the enclave by Armenians (De Waal, 2010, 2013).

The ceasefire agreement in May 1994, put a hold on full-scale war and was followed by two decades of relative stability without, however, resulting in a lasting resolution. However, things started gradually deteriorating in the 2010s, marked by intermittent clashes and negotiations, and in September 2020, the large-scale 44-day Second Nagorno-Karabakh War resulted in Azerbaijani victory, killing thousands in combat. In result Azerbaijan regained the territory surrounding the NK region and also part of the NK region, making official border aligned with the de-facto border.².

²In 2023, the conflict region, Nagorno-Karabakh and its surrounding territories, became Azerbaijani control. The de-facto Republic of Artsakh is set to dissolve by January 1, 2024. The loss of Artsakh resulted in mass exodus of all Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh in October, 2023.

While the public celebrated the Velvet Revolution of 2018, the 2020 war gave rise to public anger and despair in Armenia. It revived concerns over Armenia’s national security, with many blaming Prime Minister Pashinyan for the defeat in the war (Mirovalev, 2021). This, in turn, led to a political crisis including protests and demonstrations calling for accountability and demanding his resignation. As a response, Pashinyan announced his intention to step down in early 2021, calling a snap parliamentary election in June of the same year. Pashinyan’s Civil Contract party with him as the prime minister managed to retain the power, despite the opposition’s strong performance, however with a significantly reduced mandate compared to the previous election (Atanesyan et al., 2023).

3 Data and descriptive analysis

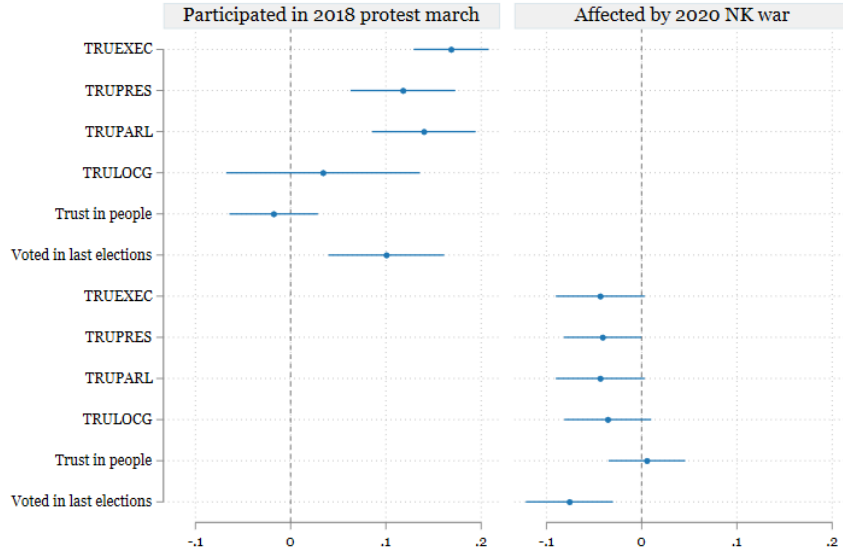
We use data from three consecutive waves of the Caucasus Barometer (CB) surveys conducted in Armenia, namely 2017 which serves as the baseline period, the 2019 wave, conducted after the “Velvet Revolution” and the snap elections of 2018, and the 2021 wave, conducted after the Second Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) war. The CB surveys include rich information at the individual level, which we complement with geo-referenced locations of the surveys in each wave. Each CB wave includes around 1,500 individual observations observed once. The combined sample includes over 4,700 individual observations, 182 survey locations, and 88 spatial clusters across the three waves, where clustered locations are observed up to three times.

In addition to the standard CB questionnaire, the 2019 CB wave includes information on participation in the protest rallies and the 2021 wave includes information on being affected by the war, which allows us to observe the correlations between being affected by these events and trust in institutions at the individual level. In particular, in Figure 2 we present the correlations of institutional trust and voting behavior with having participated in the rallies in 2018, and with having been affected by the war in 2020. In the latter case, the CB respondents are asked whether they or their family member(s) participated and/or were affected by the 2020 NK War.³

According to the estimated coefficients in Figure 2, those who participated in the protest rallies in 2018 were more likely to say they trust the government (TRUEXEC), president (TRUPRES), and the parliament (TRULOCG), and more likely to have voted in the last elections (i.e., post-revolution 2018 snap elections). On the other hand, those who were affected by the war were less likely to state that they trust any of the government institutions and less likely to have voted in the last snap elections (post-war). Interestingly, neither of these shocks is correlated with general trust in people. Given that there is little difference in trust levels for the executive government, president, and parliament, we focus on trust in the executive government, as one of the outcome

³Note that the Second NK War locations were outside the official borders of Armenia (see the map in Figure ??) but conscripts and volunteers from Armenia fought in the war as part of the NK defense.

Figure 2: Correlations of trust with exposure to protests and war at the individual level



variables in our analysis. This choice is mainly driven by the fact that Armenia has a parliamentary system and the prime minister is the executive head of the country. The second outcome variable we focus on is voting behavior as a measure of trust in democratic institutions, such as elections.

Individual-level correlations in Figure 2 suggest that the two political shocks with opposite outcomes likely had the expected impact on political trust. However, the increase in trust levels among the participants, relative to non-participants, in the case of the revolution, seems much larger in size and statistical significance, than in the case of the war, where the war may have also indirectly affected the political trust among those who were not directly impacted by the war. Yet, the individual-level data is only cross-sectional and does not allow for causal inference due to non-random selection into participation in the protest rallies.⁴ To mitigate this limitation and discern such direct and indirect effects, we determine exposure to each shock at the survey location level, which allows overtime comparison of individual responses within (clustered) locations before and after each shock.

We take two imperfect but complementary approaches to construct the location-level measures of exposure to shocks. First, we construct a proxy for the location’s exposure to protest rallies if at least one respondent in the surveyed location stated that they have personally participated in the rallies. Similarly, we construct a proxy for the location’s exposure to war if at least one respondent

⁴The participation in the NK war is partly non-random. At the time of the conflict escalation, Armenia’s prime minister called for a nation-wide military draft, where conscripts from Armenia along with volunteers fought for the NK defense army during the 2020 war.

in that location stated that they or their immediate family member had been affected by the war. This allows us to have locations that are treated and locations that are in the control group, the surveyed locations where zero respondents report having participated in the protest or having been affected by the war. The assignment to each of these “treatments” does not change over time. We depict the survey locations according to their assigned exposure to the two shocks on the maps shown in Figure 3.

However, the construction of measures of location’s exposure to protests or the second NK war based on individual reports is limited and may suffer from selection issues, especially in the case of participation in the protests. Therefore, we take a second approach and construct distance-based measures to proxy for indirect exposure to protests and the consequences of the second NK war. For this purpose, we geo-locate the route of the protest march, hereafter Protest Walk, led by Pashinyan, based on text analysis of (online) Armenian newspapers published in April-May 2018. We depict the locations of the Protest Walk, which started in the second-largest city of Armenia, Gyumri, and ended in the capital, the largest city of Armenia, Yerevan. The map shown in the upper part of Figure 4 denotes the locations on the route of Protest Walk. We then construct a location-level proxy for exposure to protests by calculating the closest geographic distance between each survey location and the locations of Protest Walk. Similarly, we construct a distance-based proxy for the exposure to war by calculating the closest distance between each survey location and the official Armenia-Azerbaijan border, as shown on the lower map of Figure 4.

In Figure 5 we present the distribution of each location’s distance from the Protest Walk and from the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. As the histogram shows, most of the locations are within 30km of the Protest Walk. Hence, in this case, the distribution is quite skewed. While the distance from each location to the Armenia-Azerbaijan border follows a normal distribution with a mean of 51km.

In Table 1 we provide summary statistics of the main variables used in this study across all three waves. The outcomes, trust in government and voting in the elections, are binary variables. Trust in government takes the value of 1 if the respondent expresses some or complete trust in government, otherwise, it takes the value of 0. If the respondent states that they have voted in the last elections, then the respective variable takes the value of 1, otherwise 0. Based on the CB survey data from the last three waves (2017, 2019, 2021), the sample average trust in government is 0.34 percent, with a large standard deviation (0.48) due to the spike in 2019. The sample average voting turnout in the same period is 74 percent.

We also present the summary statistics for individual-level controls such as respondent’s age, gender, employment, marital status, household size, years of education, and non-migrant (i.e., if the respondent was born in the location of the survey). Across all the waves, the sample average age of the respondents is 46, while 65 percent of respondents are females, 41 percent are employed and 14 percent are not married. The sample average household size is about 5, and the sample

Figure 3: Geo-referenced survey locations exposed to Velvet Revolution and Second NK War based on individual reports

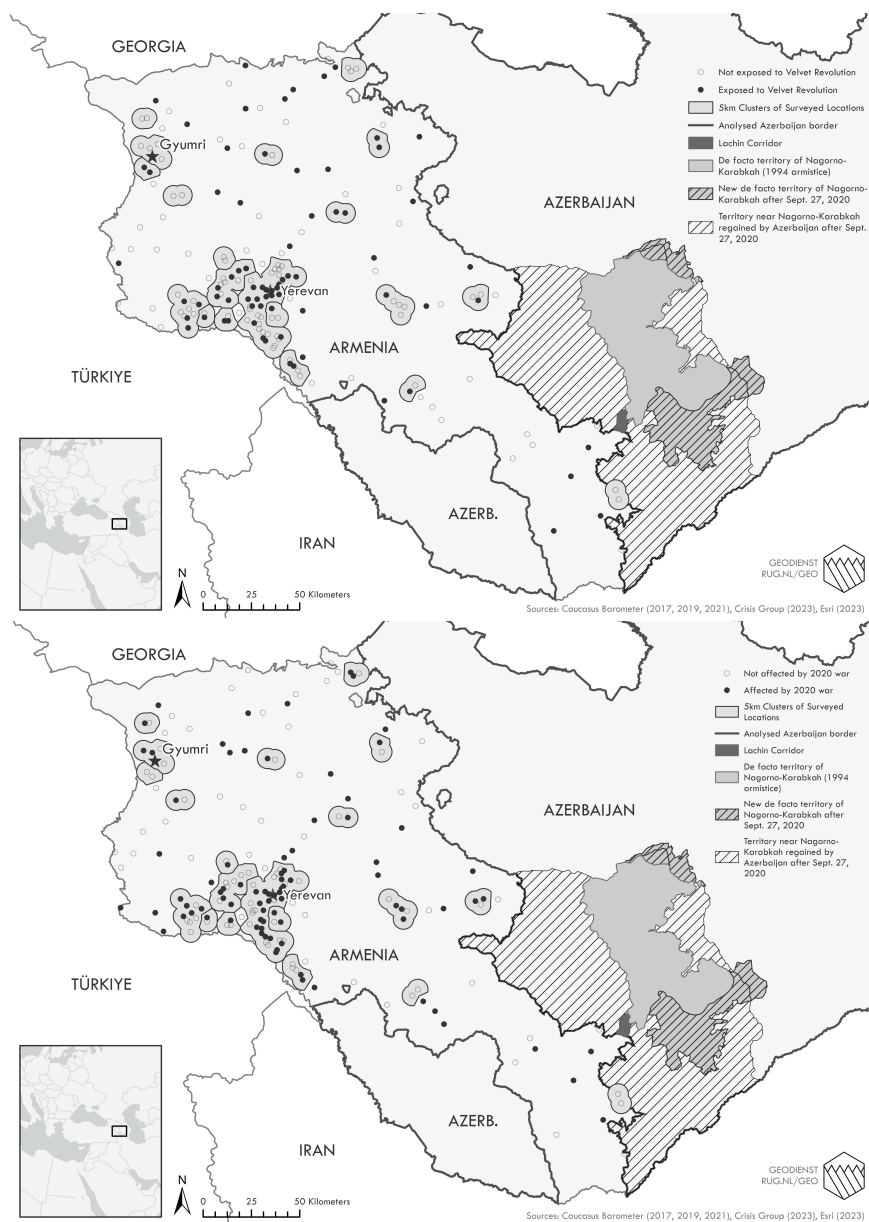
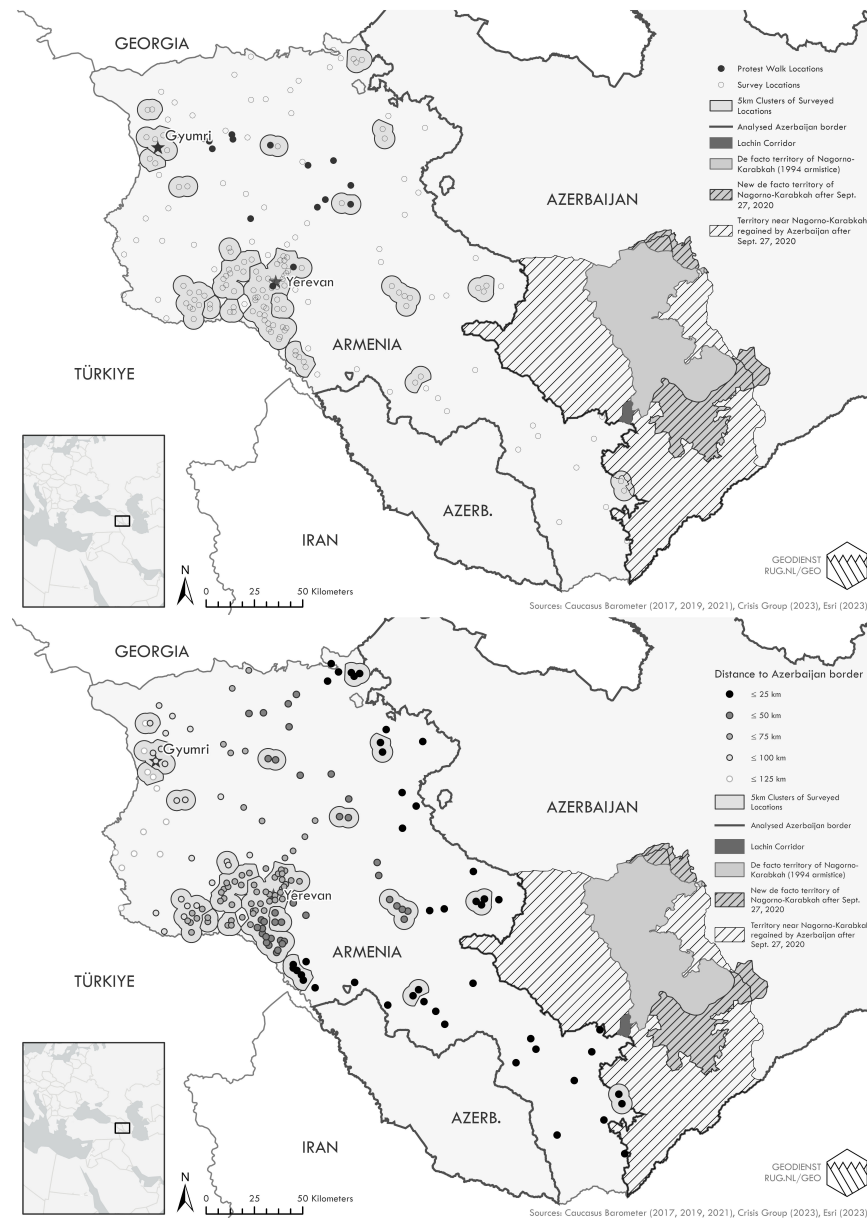


Figure 4: Geo-referenced locations of Protest Walk and distances to Armenia-Azerbaijan (AZ) border



average years of education is 14 years. More than half of the respondents in the sample were born in the place of survey locations (non-migrant). In addition to the individual level characteristics, in Table 1 we report that the average (shortest) distance from the survey location to the Armenia-

Figure 5: Survey location distance from Protest Walk and Armenia-Azerbaijan (AZ) border

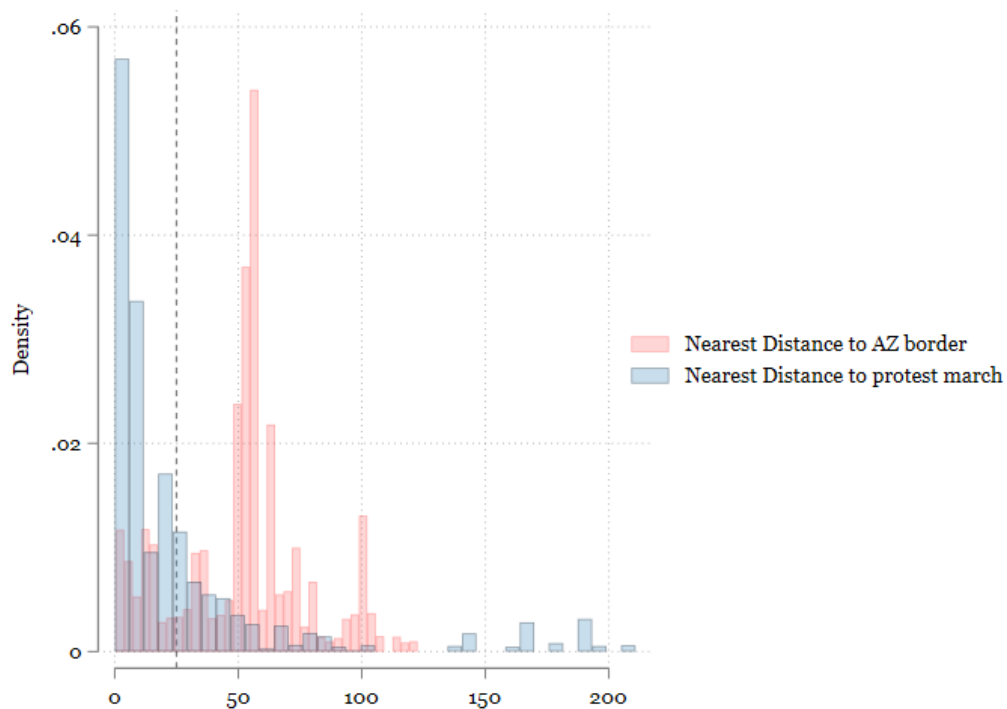
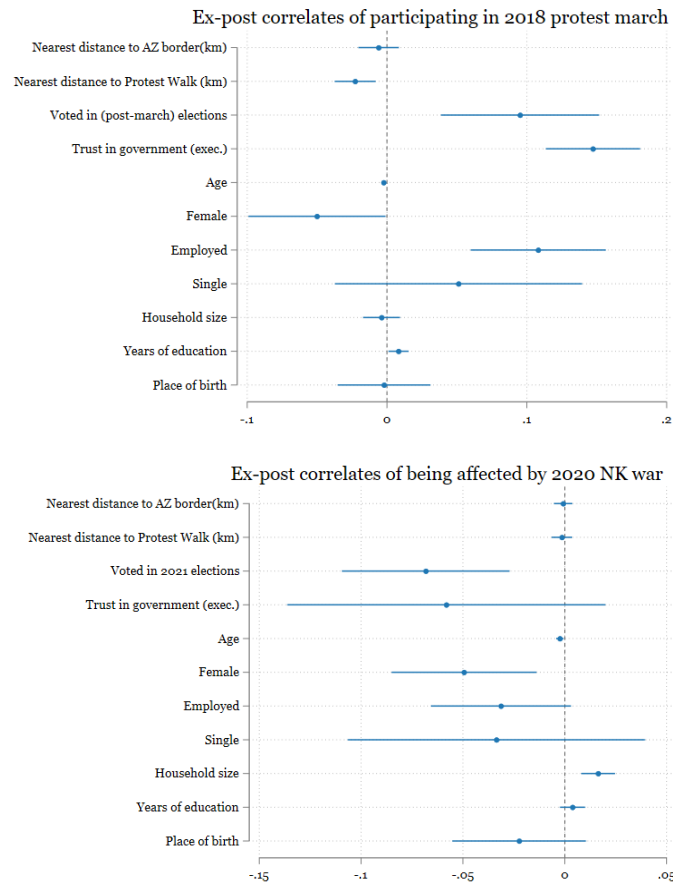


Table 1: Summary statistics

	mean	sd	min	max
Trust in government (TRUEXEC)	0.34	0.48	0	1
Voted in last elections	0.74	0.44	0	1
Age	45.79	18.87	4	96
Female	0.65	0.48	0	1
Employed	0.41	0.49	0	1
Single	0.14	0.35	0	1
Household size	4.85	2.63	1	17
Years of education	14.07	3.92	0	38
Birth location	0.54	0.50	0	1
Nearest distance to AZ border(km)	51.27	26.02	0	123
Nearest distance to Protest Walk (km)	27.14	42.60	0	211
War-affected(i)	0.29	0.45	0	1
Protest participant(i)	0.28	0.45	0	1
Observations	4787			

Azerbaijan border is 51km and 27km for the mean shortest distance to the the Protest Walk. We also report the summary statistics for the variables of participating in the protest march (2019 wave only) and being affected by the war (2021 wave only). The data shows that almost 30 percent of survey respondents in 2019 participated in the rallies and about as many respondents were directly affected by the war (28 percent). Hence, the scale of both events in terms of exposure and impact are comparable.

Figure 6: Event exposure at the individual level: Test for selection bias



In Figure 6, upper graph, we depict the individual level correlates of participating in 2018 protest marches based on the 2019 CB wave. The estimates are based on a linear probability model where the outcome variable equals 1 when a respondent states to have participated in the 2018 protest marches. The results show that a closer distance to the line of the Protest Walk is associated with a higher likelihood of participating in the rallies. Ex-post there is a statistically significant

relationship between participating in rallies and voting in the 2018 snap elections as well as having higher trust in government. In terms of individual-level characteristics, protest participants are slightly less likely to be female, more likely to be employed, and more likely to have a higher education level compared to those who did not participate in the protests.

In the lower graph of Figure 6 we show the ex-post correlates of being affected by the war at the individual level. The results show that those who report being affected by the war are less likely to have voted in the 2021 (last) elections, less likely to be female, and more likely to belong to larger households. Neither the distance to the line of Protest Walk nor the distance to AZ border have a statistically significant relationship with being directly affected by the war. The latter is likely because, during the NK war, a nationwide draft was announced, where volunteers and draftees from all locations in Armenia participated in the war as part of the NK defense army.

4 Estimation strategy

We employ an event study research design with double shock, where the identification comes from comparing outcomes across individuals but within locations in the post-Velvet Revolution and post-the Second NK War relative to the pre-shock period, before the two events took place.

We assume that the outcomes of both shocks were exogenous as the success versus failure of the protest rallies and the 2020 NK War was unknown both to participants and non-participants. However, direct participation and exposure to each shock at the individual level are not necessarily exogenous. For example, individuals who participated in both events may be relatively more patriotic or more politically engaged albeit those who were drafted as conscripts for the NK defense army were relatively at random. Nonetheless, among them were also volunteers, which we cannot differentiate in our sample. Therefore, we mitigate the individual-level selection bias by comparing individuals within (clustered) locations over time. Although each individual is observed once in the sample, the survey locations, and especially, clusters of survey locations are observed up to 3 times during the three waves of the CB surveys. This allows us to control for cluster-specific time-invariant unobservable characteristics based on repeated cross-sectional data at the individual level.

In particular, our empirical strategy is based on a linear probability model, where we estimate the impact of the single and double shock on trust in government and voting behavior. First, we estimate the single impact of the shock in 2018 and 2020 (survey waves 2019 and 2021) relative to the baseline in 2017 based on the following reduced form equation that resembles a difference-in-difference type of estimation.

$$PB_{i(cl,s)} = \alpha_{i(cl,s)} + Year_s \times Distance_{i(l)} + Distance_{i(l)} + Year_s + Cl_c + X'_{i(s)} + \epsilon_{i(l,s)}, \quad (1)$$

where PB denotes the outcome variable a) trust in government and b) voting behavior as defined in section 3. The unit of observation is individual i observed once in a clustered survey location cl in wave s . Survey locations within a 5-kilometer radius are grouped based on spatial clusters as shown in Figures 3 and 4. This spatial clustering overcomes the limitation that not every location is observed in each wave but the cluster of locations is more likely to be observed across the survey waves, which allows for overtime comparison within clusters.

Next, in equation 1, we include $Year$ variable, which includes binary variables for 2019 and 2021. The year variables correspond to the survey waves and capture the average changes in the outcome relative to 2017 before the two events took place. $Distance$ is included as a continuous variable in this specification, which denotes the shortest geographic distance between the survey location and a) Protest Walk and b) Armenia-Azerbaijan official border. The interaction term $Year \times Distance$ measures the effect of each shock ($Year$ 2019 and $Year$ 2021) relative to 2017, depending on the

location’s exposure proxied by the distance variable. The interaction terms are our parameters of interest. Cl denotes a set of dummy variables for the spatial clusters of survey locations, which absorb cluster-specific time-invariant factors. The vector of individual-level controls is denoted by X' , which includes age, years of education, marital status, employment, household size, place of birth, and gender. ϵ denotes the spatially clustered robust standard errors.

We estimate the impact of being exposed to double shock using triple interaction terms as follows:

$$PB_{i(l,s)} = \alpha_{i(l,s)} + Year_s \times ExposureProtest_{i(l)} \times War_{i(l)} + Year_s + L_l + X'_{i(s)} + \epsilon_{i(l,s)} \quad (2)$$

The dependent variable(s) PB in equation 2 is defined as in equation 1 and the unit of observation is the individual i observed once in each location L and survey year s . In the estimation with triple interaction terms based on equation 2, we do not cluster the locations as here the identification comes from assigning each location an exposure status, in other words, the locations are categorized along treatment and control groups based on their exposure to each of the events. We include a set of dummy variables for the location l , which absorb the time-invariant location-specific factors. The term X' denotes a vector of individual-level observable characteristics, which are the same as in equation 1. The term ϵ denotes robust standard errors clustered at the location level. The variable $Year$ denotes survey years 2019 and 2021 both coded as binary variables. The variables in the triple interaction term, *Exposure to protest*, and *Exposure to war* are at the location level, where we use two approaches to assign a location the status of being exposed to protest and/or to war. We describe the two approaches below.

In our first approach, we code locations as *exposed to Protest Walk* (=1), if at least one respondent from that location reports to have participated in the protest rallies, otherwise, we code the exposure status as zero, equivalent to the control group. Similarly, we assign locations as *exposed to war* (=1), if at least one respondent from that location reports to have been affected by the war. Otherwise, the location takes the value of 0. The status of the locations does not change over time. This means that in the year 2017, the locations that have the value of 1 have not yet been treated, while in 2019 they were treated by the Velvet Revolution, and/or in 2021, by the Second NK War. Therefore, we include the interaction terms with the years to capture the post-event effects relative to the pre-event year.

In our second approach we assign the exposure status to the location based on distance cutoffs as a proxy for the exposure to protest rallies and the consequences of the NK war in 2020.⁵ In

⁵Following the conflict literature (Mavisakalyan and Minasyan, 2023; Verwimp and Van Bavel, 2013; Voors et al., 2012), we use a distance cutoff as a proxy for exposure to conflict. While Mavisakalyan and Minasyan, 2023 focused on the period until 2011 and identified the treatment based on the distance to the regional center of Nagorno-Karabakh, we measure exposure based on the survey location’s distance to the official state border with Azerbaijan. This is because the outcome of the 2020 war changed the de-facto state borders of Armenia, as shown in Figure ??.

particular, for the exposure to protests, the status of the location takes the value of 1, if the location has less than the sample average distance to the survey locations (<21km). Otherwise, the location takes the value of zero. As a proxy for the exposure to war, the location takes the value of 1, if it has less than the sample average distance to the Armenia-Azerbaijan border (<51km). Otherwise, it takes the value of zero. ⁶ In the following section, we present the effect of single and double-shock on trust and voting behavior based on the specifications presented in equations 1 and 2

5 Results

In Table 2 we present the results based on equation 1, which estimates whether the exposure to protest rallies measured by the proxy variable based on the shortest distance from survey locations to the Protest Walk (continuous measure) has any differential impact on the trust in government and voting in the last (snap) elections. The results in column 1 show that relative to the trust level in 2017, the trust in government increased by 0.48 percentage points in 2019, post-revolution, and decreased by 0.05 percentage points in 2021, the post-war period, when controlling for cluster fixed effects, individual level controls and distance to the Protest Walk. The results also show that mere geographic distance to the Protest Walk is not associated with differential trust in government in the baseline year. That is, we do not see evidence that the locations of Protest Walk from Gyumri to Yerevan were selected based on particularly higher or lower trust levels in the government in these locations in the baseline year (Constant). The interaction term with the year 2021, the post-war period, shows that with the decrease in distance to Protest Walk, we observe a higher likelihood of reporting a higher level of trust in the government.

In column 2 of Table 2 we present the results of the voting behavior, i.e., whether the individual voted in the last elections or not. The results are quite similar to what we observe in the case of trust in government. While the average voting turnover is quite high in the sample, 74 percent, in 2017 (see the coefficient on Constant) it was 0.42 percent. In 2019, the turnover increased by 0.05 percentage points while in 2021, the post-war period, the likelihood of voting in the last snap elections of 2021 decreased by 0.03 percentage points, while controlling for individual-level characteristics and distance to the Protest Walk. Moreover, in terms of voting behavior we observe that the larger the distance between the survey location and the Protest Walk, the more likely the individual to vote in the last elections in the baseline. Thus, even though we do not observe differences in trust based on geographic location, we do observe differences in voting turnover. Yet, after 2021, the post-war period, we observe a similar pattern as in the case of trust, where living in

Communities that were de-facto far from the Azerbaijan border became official border communities as Armenian troops lost or withdrew from the previously held territories.

⁶In the case of the distance cutoff, some of the locations within the same spatial clusters of 5km fall above or below the cutoff, hence we estimate equation (2) at the location level. Aggregation at the cluster level leads to loss of variation in this case.

Table 2: Political trust and distance to Protest Walk.

Dependent variable:	(1) Trust in government	(2) Voted in elections
2019	0.4875*** (0.0439)	0.0513* (0.0272)
2021	-0.0587*** (0.0155)	-0.0364** (0.0160)
Nearest distance to Protest Walk (km)	0.0001 (0.0008)	0.0009*** (0.0001)
2019 \times Nearest distance to Protest Walk (km)	0.0006 (0.0008)	-0.0006 (0.0004)
2021 \times Nearest distance to Protest Walk (km)	-0.0010* (0.0005)	-0.0008** (0.0004)
Constant	0.2287*** (0.0471)	0.4207*** (0.0381)
Observations	4655	4682
No. of clusters	88	88
No. of locations	182	182
R-squared	0.309	0.074
Mean Dep. Var	0.34	0.74
Cluster FE	x	x
Individual controls	x	x

Spatially clustered robust standard errors are in parentheses

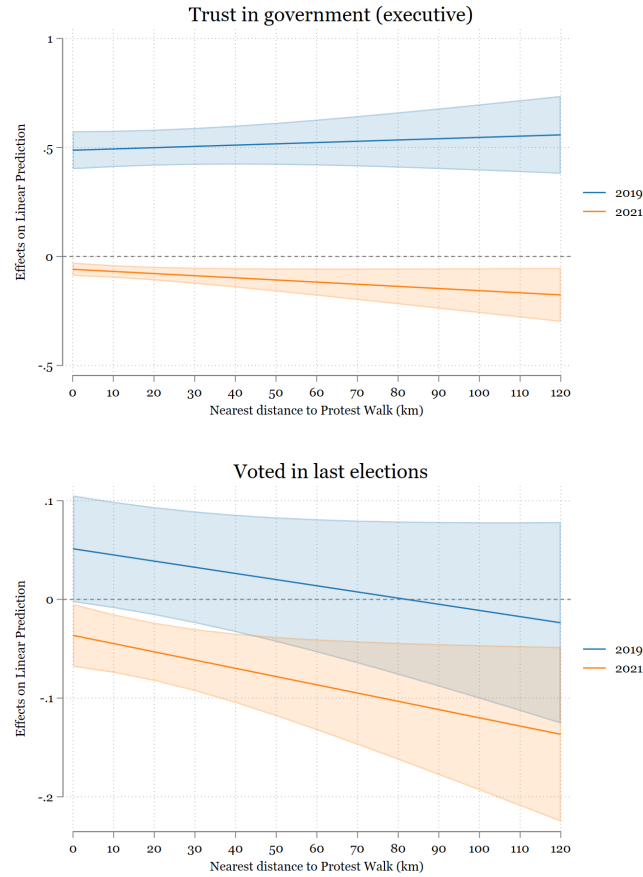
* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

proximity to Protest Walk is associated with a higher likelihood of voting in the last election. We do not observe such a statistically significant difference in 2019, after the protest rallies and 2018 snap elections. *Thus, the loss in the 2020 NK War, reduced the political trust to a lesser extent in places that are located in proximity to the Protest Walk.*

Figure 7 depicts the marginal effects of the interaction terms in columns 1 and 2 in Table 2. In particular, the upper graph in Figure 7 shows that distance to the Protest Walk has no statistically significant relationship with trust in government both in 2019 and 2021, relative to the year 2017. The lower graph in 7 shows that relative to 2017, individuals living closer to the Protest Walk were more likely to vote in the last snap elections than the individuals living further away from the Protest Walk.

In Table 3 we present the results of equation 1 where we estimate the likelihood of government trust and voting turnover depending on the level of exposure to the 2020 NK War measured by the shortest distance between the survey location and the Armenia-Azerbaijan official border. The results in column 1 confirm the previous results, showing that the trust in government increased by 0.45 percentage points in 2019 relative to 2017. While in 2017 36 percent of the survey respondents expressed trust in government, in 2019 about 80 percent of the respondents expressed trust in government, all else equal in the model. But in 2021, the post-war period the trust level decreased

Figure 7: Marginal effects: Political trust and distance to Protest Walk.



by 0.2 percentage points relative to the 2017. That is, in this *distance-to-border model* we observe that in 2021, the trust level fell below the baseline, where only 16 percent of people expressed trust in government. *This striking difference in trust within three years is more observable in the specification where we include distance to the Armenia-Azerbaijan border in the model.*

Furthermore, in column 1 of Table 3, the estimated coefficients for the baseline trust levels in government are higher the closer the location is to the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. While in 2019 in the pre-war but post-protest period, we do not see any differences in trust depending on the distance from the AZ border, in 2021 post-war period and post-protest period, we observe statistically significant differences in the opposite direction. Namely, the interaction term between 2021 and the distance to AZ border is positive and statistically significant, implying that the further an individual is from the Armenia-Azerbaijan border the more likely they trust in the

Table 3: Political trust and distance to Armenia-Azerbaijan (AZ) border

	(1)	(2)
	Trust in government	Voted in elections
2019	0.4528*** (0.0984)	-0.0278 (0.0461)
2021	-0.2027*** (0.0540)	-0.1228*** (0.0389)
Nearest distance to AZ border(km)	-0.0024*** (0.0007)	-0.0012 (0.0007)
2019 × Nearest distance to AZ border(km)	0.0010 (0.0021)	0.0013 (0.0008)
2021 × Nearest distance to AZ border(km)	0.0024*** (0.0008)	0.0013* (0.0007)
Constant	0.3605*** (0.0734)	0.5035*** (0.0532)
Observations	4655	4682
No. of clusters	88	88
No. of locations	182	182
R-squared	0.309	0.074
Mean Dep. Var	0.34	0.74
Cluster FE	x	x
Individual controls	x	x

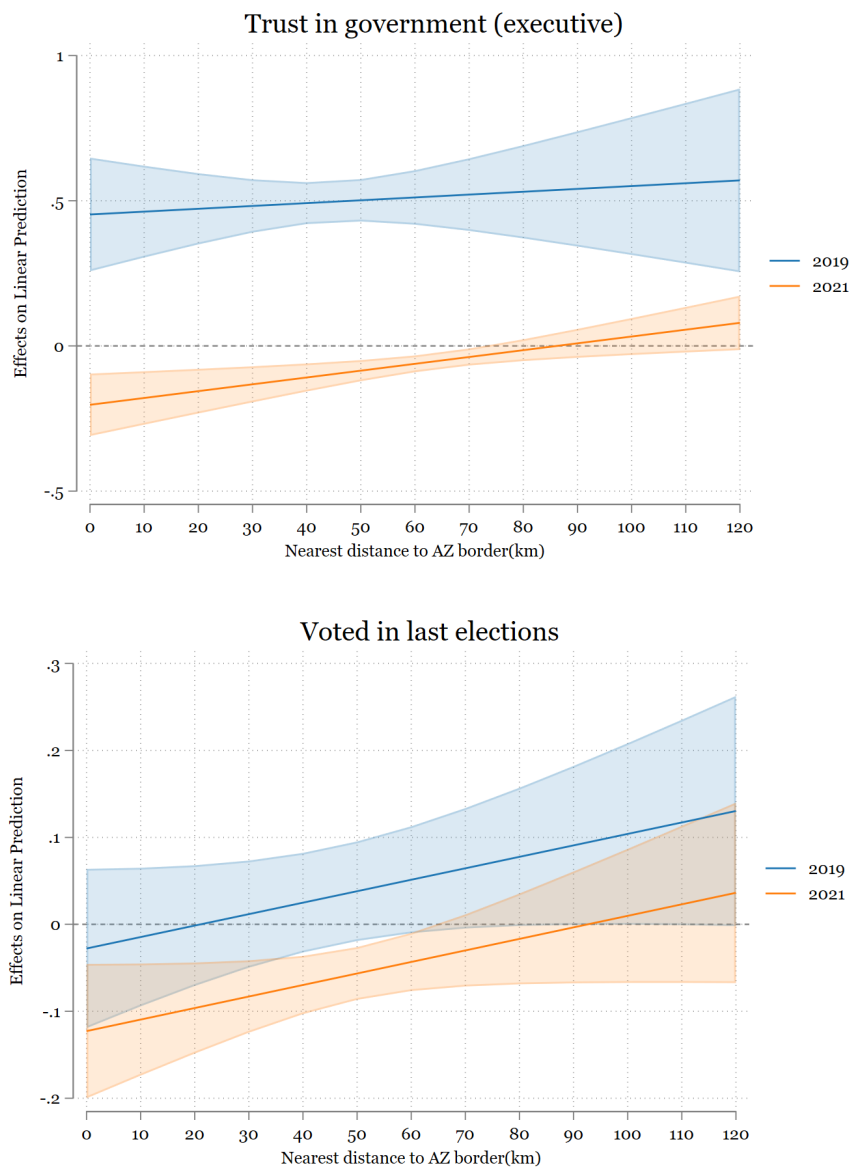
Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

government. Conversely, *the closer one lives to the AZ border, the more likely they have lower trust in government after the NK war (and post-revolution) when de-facto borders became aligned with the official borders.* In Table 3, column 2, we present the results of the estimation equation 1, where the dependent variable equals 1 if the respondent voted in the last elections, else zero. The results show that there is no statistically significant difference in voting in the last elections in 2019 relative to 2017 but there is a negative and statistically significant relationship for the relative voting turnover in 2021. In particular, while in 2017, fifty percent of respondents reported that they voted in the last elections, in 2021 the share of people who voted decreased by 0.12 percentage points, that is only 38 percent of people reported having voted in the last elections, i.e., the 2021 post-war snap elections. *Moreover, those living further away from the border were more likely to vote in the elections in 2021 relative to those living closer to the official border with Azerbaijan. This result is also consistent with the result on trust in government reported in column 1.*

On the upper graph of Figure 8 we show the marginal effects of the interaction terms reported in Table 3. We observe that relative to 2017, in 2019 the individual's trust in government did not change depending on the distance from the Armenia-Azerbaijan (AZ) border. But in 2021, relative to 2017, we observe a positive and statistically significant relationship between the distance to AZ border and trust in government. Namely, in 2021 the closer one lives to AZ border the lower is

Figure 8: Marginal effects: Political trust and distance to Armenia-Azerbaijan (AZ) border.

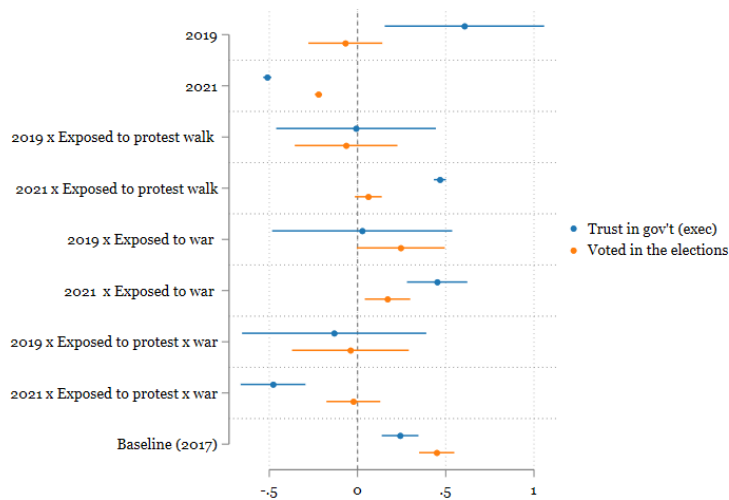


Note.

trust in government relative to the year 2017. This relationship becomes statistically insignificant for individuals living in locations further than 75km from the AZ border (see the map in Figure 4).

In the lower graph of Figure 8 we also depict the marginal effects in the case of voting behavior. The blue shaded area and the fitted line in the figure shows that in 2019, relative to 2017, being close or further from the AZ border did not affect one's voting behavior. *But in 2021, the post-war (and post-revolution) period, those living within 50km of the AZ border were less likely to vote in elections, relative to 2017.* Thus, the results of Table 3 are consistent with those in Table 2, showing that the major drop in political trust in the post-2020 period was sizeable in places close to the Azerbaijan border. Yet, we are also interested in exploring differential changes in political trust in the case of double exposure. Therefore, we present the results of the models based on the triple interaction terms as stated in equation 2. Based on this specification we identify the effect of double-shock on the outcome by comparing individuals in locations, which are both exposed to protests and to war. In Figure 9 we plot the estimates for both outcome variables, trust in government (in blue) and voting in the last elections (in orange) based on the first approach described in the section 3. To recall, in this approach, a location takes the value of 1, in terms of exposure, if at least one respondent from that location a) reports to have participated in the protests, and/or b) reports to have been affected by the war.

Figure 9: Effects of double shock on political trust based on individual reports.



The results in Figure 9 show that, relative to the baseline year (2017), there is a large positive and statistically significant increase in trust in government in 2019 but no difference in terms of voting behavior, when location-specific fixed effects are absorbed. However, in the post-war year of 2021, we observe both a sizeable decrease in trust and voting, relative to the 2017 baseline. In the double-shock specification, those living in locations where a positive number of people reported to have participated in protest rallies were more likely to trust the government and vote in the last

election in 2021, relative to those locations where no such reports exist in the surveyed sample. The interaction term 2019 and *Exposure to war* is equivalent to a pre-trend estimate, where one would expect a statistically insignificant result. We observe such a result in the case of trust in government but in terms of voting, we observe that locations with a positive number of reports about being affected by the war, had slightly higher voter turnout in 2019, statistically significant at the 10 percent level. This may suggest that some locations may have had more people self-selecting to participate in the war voluntarily than others. Furthermore, when we compare the trust in government and voting behavior in 2021 for those living in locations that were affected by the war ($2021 \times \textit{Exposure to war}$), we observe lower trust levels and lower voting turnout relative to those locations that were not affected by the war based on the survey responses. The parameter of our interest, the triple interaction term with the year 2021 estimates the effects of the double shock ($2021 \times \textit{Exposed to protest} \times \textit{war}$) on trust and voting behavior. *The estimated coefficients show that individuals living in locations exposed to both shocks reported lower government trust relative to those that experienced only a single shock, statistically significant at the 5 percent level.*

Figure 10: Effects of double shock on political trust based on distance cutoff.



We re-estimate the equation 2 using a proxy variable based on distance cutoffs for exposure to protests and the Second NK War, as described in section 3 and 4. To recall, in these specifications, a survey location is defined as *exposed to protests* if the shortest distance between the location and the Protest Walk is below the sample mean (<27km). In this case, the location takes the value of 1, otherwise, it takes the value of 0. Similarly, the survey location is defined as *exposed to the war*, if the distance between the survey location and the official Armenia-Azerbaijan border

is less than the sample mean ($<51\text{km}$).⁷ We plot the results in Figure 10., where we observe that in 2021 in the “control” group both trust in government and voting behaviour declined relative to 2017. Conversely, as the double interaction terms with 2019 and 2021 show, being exposed to only either of the single events is associated with a relatively higher likelihood of trusting the government and voting in the elections. However, being exposed to the double shock, as estimated by the triple interaction term with 2021, leads to lower trust in government and voting turnover. More specifically, relative to the baseline year, exposure to the Velvet Revolution increased the government trust by an additional 40 percentage points in 2019 and exposure to the NK war decreased the government trust by 20 percentage points in 2021. Moreover, exposure to both the Velvet Revolution and the NK war reduced the government trust by seven percentage points in 2021 relative to the baseline in 2017.

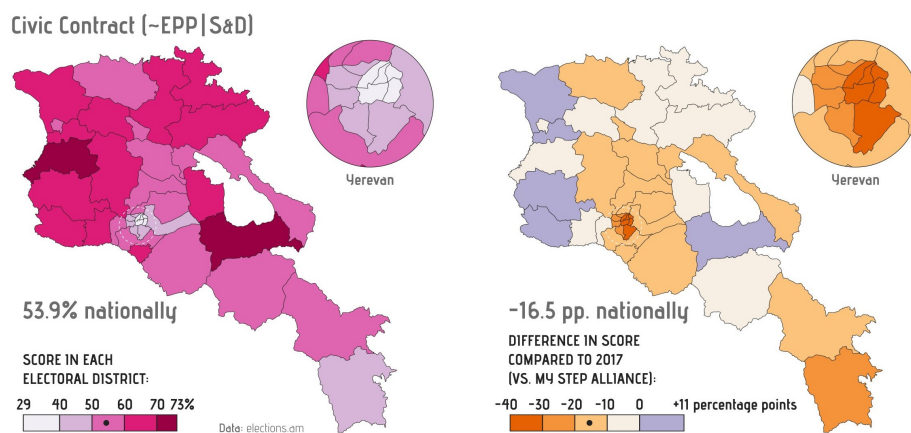
6 Voting Outcomes

Despite the military loss in the war with Azerbaijan in 2020 and the mass rage and protests in the capital calling for government resignation, the snap election in the post-war period, secured the incumbent government’s survival. Figure 11 depicts the maps of 2021 election outcomes by electoral districts (constituencies) in Armenia. The results show that while in 2018 Pashinyan’s alliance gained substantial votes in all districts, 54 percent nationally, it lost 16.5 percentage points relative to the 2018 elections. Thus, there was loss in political trust but not large enough to overturn the government either, possibly due to lack of better alternatives as the opponents of Pashinyan were the leaders of the old regime.

In terms of distance to border with Azerbaijan, we observe that while in most electoral districts the incumbents lost votes relative to 2018, they actually gained votes in four regions and three of those regions are the furthest away from Azerbaijan border. Moreover, the largest number of votes were lost in the capital city Yerevan and the southern most electoral district in Syunik. In the latter case, the population experienced the actual consequences of de-jure borders becoming de-facto borders, i.e., installments of Azerbaijan’s military posts along the road on the border. Noteworthy to mention, that besides the southern most region, even more disappointed were the voters in parts of the capital, Yerevan, where Pashinyan’s party (Civil Contract) occurred the largest loses. During both the revolution and the war, Yerevan was the center of action and hope for democracy and national price, which likely led to the largest disappointment due to the military loss. Nonetheless, there is one region that remains true to Pashinyan and scored increases in both elections, which is situated south of the Lake Sevan and has the shortest borderline with Azerbaijan relative to other districts on the border with Azerbaijan.

⁷Note we use the sample mean for each distance as using one cutoff for both assumes that the distribution is the same, but as shown in descriptive statistics these two distances have very different distributions.

Figure 11: 2021 Election Results by Electoral Districts in Armenia.



Source: Europe Elects, verified by authors based on the official data from elections.am.

7 Mechanisms

The election results showed that despite the loss in war, the political party of Pashinyan could still retain majority votes after the demanded snap elections and secure political survival. In Figure 12 we plot the top four issues that were raised by survey respondents to understand mechanisms behind their political survival. We dig deeper to understand what concerns set apart those in the capital and close to conflict region, where the largest losses occurred, and those further away from the Azerbaijan’s border, where increases were observed. The bar graph summarized the responses for top four reasons mentioned, which include income (equal 1 if respondents mentions unemployment or poverty as most or second most pressing issue); peace or conflict (equals 1 if respondent mentions this), corruption (equals 1 when mentioned by the respondent), and emigration (equals 1 when mentioned by the respondent).

In 2017 before the Velvet Revolution and the Second NK War, the most pressing issue on the table was related to unemployment and poverty, followed by concerns over unresolved conflict, emigration and corruption in that order. In 2019, after the Velvet, the pressing issue remained unemployment and poverty but it decreased from about 75 percent of respondents mentioning it to about 45 percent of people mentioning this as a concern. Yet, we see slight increase in people we report that peace/conflict is the pressing issue facing the country, while issues such as corruption and emigration become less important in 2019. This reflects the policies led by the new government that tackled emigration and corruption actively. In 2021 after the Second NK War, we see a completely different picture, where the most pressing issue for the country has become peace/conflict, while concerns over income and corruption see further declines. The concern over emigration remains

roughly unchanged. Thus, we observe that at the national level, concerns over conflict became the most pressing issue after the military loss. This indicates that lack of national security and unity likely distorted trust in the national government and resulted in loss of votes.

Figure 12: Most pressing issues facing the country, pre- and post periods.

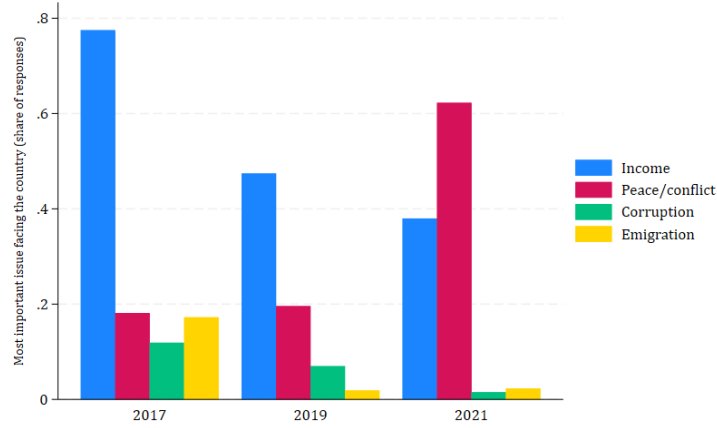
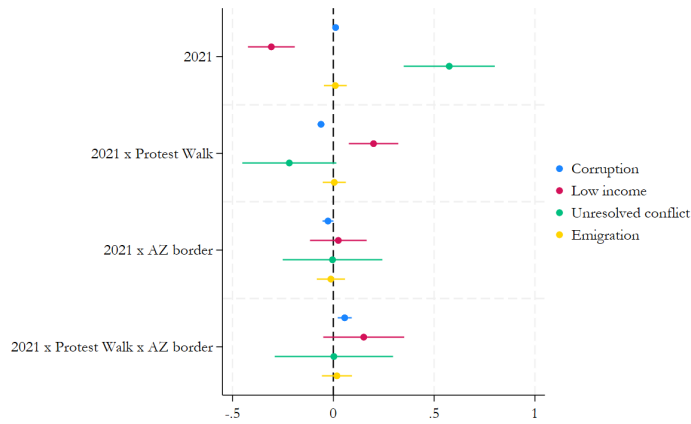


Figure 13: Most pressing issues by exposure (distance).



Furthermore, to understand the mechanisms that helped the incumbent to gain gain votes in some electoral districts and have manageable losses, we investigate how the concerns over these issues changed depending on respondents' distance to AZ border and protest marches. In Figure 13, we depict estimated coefficients from a regression analysis with a triple interaction term on year 2021, close distance to Protest Walk (less than the mean) and close distance to AZ Border (less than the mean), where the dependent variables are each of the four concerns raised by the

respondents in 2017. In this regressions we compare 2021 to 2019, hence the sample in 2017 is not included. The results indicate that in 2021 on average concern over unemployment and poverty decreased and the concern over conflict increased relative to 2019. While we see no different on this matter for locations that are closer than the average to the Azerbaijan border, we see the opposite picture for locations that are closer than average to the route of Protest Walk and further than average from the Azerbaijan border (this is also where we observe largest increase in votes based on Figure 11). Namely, in these locations the concerns over unemployment and poverty (low income) increased, while the concern over conflict remained statistically the same as in 2019. These results suggest that for a substantial amount of voters far from AZ border, their main concerns over low incomes were not altered by the outcome of the war.

In sum, after the military loss, the concern over the peace and unresolved conflict in the post-war Armenia has been spatially heterogeneous. Our results suggest that exposure to conflict led to substantial losses in political trust as many people became highly concerned about the consequences. Yet, this concern did not spread over the whole country, which explains the survival of the incumbent government in the follow-up elections.

8 Conclusions

Political trust, essential for societal stability, undergoes dynamic shifts in response to institutional changes. While existing literature often perceives trust as a long-lasting cultural feature shaped by historical institutions, this study delves into the impact of contemporary institutional shifts on political trust. Focusing on post-Soviet Armenia, the research leverages two natural experiments—the Velvet Revolution in 2018 and the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020—as catalysts for positive and negative shocks to institutional perceptions.

Utilizing nationally representative surveys from 2017, 2019, and 2021, the study unveils substantial fluctuations in political trust. A post-revolution surge in government trust in Armenia is succeeded by a dramatic decline post-war, indicating the fragility of freshly built political trust. We investigate the differential impact of the revolution and the war on political trust by exploiting the spatial variation in the exposure to these two shocks. We employ an event study design and use a unique pseudo-panel, based on geo-referenced survey data from 2017, 2019, and 2021, for over 4700 individuals observed in 182 locations. Based on the results of determining the exposure based on a distance cutoff, we find that relative to the baseline year, exposure to the Velvet Revolution increased the government trust by an additional 46 percentage points in 2019 and exposure to the NK war decreased the government trust by 20 percentage points in 2021. Moreover, temporal exposure to both the Velvet Revolution and the NK war reduced government trust by additional seven percentage points in 2021 relative to the baseline in 2017. We find consistent results with voting behavior.

The voting results align with our findings, indicating that, on average, the incumbent government garnered votes in regions exposed to the positive shock, while in areas affected by the negative shock (war), the incumbent government experienced a decline in support. Our investigation into the underlying mechanisms revealed that, in the post-war period, while the rest of the country grappled with the primary issue related to the conflict, regions not exposed to the war but exposed to the positive shock (Velvet Revolution) reported pressing concerns related to unemployment and poverty. Consequently, following the positive shock, the adverse impact of the negative shock on political trust can be mitigated if individual exposure to the negative shock varies within the country, despite the national-level significance of the shock.

Results highlight the nuanced relationship between political trust and positive and negative shocks to democratic institutions. This study contributes empirically to understanding the intricate interplay between cultural and contemporary factors, emphasizing the transient nature of political trust dynamics in response to varied political contentions.

References

- Arbatli, C. E., & Gomtsyan, D. (2019). Voting retrospectively: Critical junctures and party identification. *European Economic Review*, *119*, 356–390.
- Atanesyan, A. V., Reynolds, B. M., & Mkrtichyan, A. E. (2023). Balancing between russia and the west: The hard security choice of armenia. *European Security*, 1–23.
- Bai, L., & Wu, L. (2020). Political movement and trust formation: Evidence from the cultural revolution (1966–76). *European Economic Review*, *122*, 103331.
- Bakke, K. M., O’Loughlin, J., Toal, G., & Ward, M. D. (2014). Convincing state-builders? disaggregating internal legitimacy in abkhazia. *International Studies Quarterly*, *58*(3), 591–607.
- Barclay Child, T., & Nikolova, E. (2020). War and social attitudes. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, *37*(2), 152–171.
- Bargain, O., & Aminjonov, U. (2020). Trust and compliance to public health policies in times of covid-19. *Journal of public economics*, *192*, 104316.
- Bauer, M., Blattman, C., Chytilová, J., Henrich, J., Miguel, E., & Mitts, T. (2016). Can war foster cooperation? *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *30*(3), 249–74.
- Becker, S. O., Boeckh, K., Hainz, C., & Woessmann, L. (2016). The empire is dead, long live the empire! long-run persistence of trust and corruption in the bureaucracy. *The Economic Journal*, *126*(590), 40–74.
- Bellows, J., & Miguel, E. (2006). War and institutions: New evidence from Sierra Leone. *American Economic Review*, *96*(2), 394–399.
- Bellows, J., & Miguel, E. (2009). War and local collective action in Sierra Leone. *Journal of Public Economics*, *93*(11-12), 1144–1157.
- Besley, T., & Persson, T. (2009). The origins of state capacity: Property rights, taxation, and politics. *American Economic Review*, *99*(4), 1218–44.
- Besley, T., & Persson, T. (2010). State capacity, conflict, and development. *Econometrica*, *78*(1), 1–34.
- Besley, T., & Reynal-Querol, M. (2014). The legacy of historical conflict: Evidence from africa. *American Political Science Review*, *108*(2), 319–336.
- Blattman, C. (2009). From violence to voting: War and political participation in Uganda. *American Political Science Review*, *103*(2), 231–247.
- Brodeur, A., Grigoryeva, I., & Kattan, L. (2021). Stay-at-home orders, social distancing, and trust. *Journal of Population Economics*, *34*(4), 1321–1354.
- Carneiro, R. L. (1970). A theory of the origin of the state: Traditional theories of state origins are considered and rejected in favor of a new ecological hypothesis. *Science*, *169*(3947), 733–738.
- Cassar, A., Grosjean, P., & Whitt, S. (2013). Legacies of violence: Trust and market development. *Journal of Economic Growth*, *18*, 285–318.
- Christensen, T., & Læg Reid, P. (2005). Trust in government: The relative importance of service satisfaction, political factors, and demography. *Public performance & management review*, *28*(4), 487–511.
- Collier, P., Elliott, V., Hegre, H., Hoeffler, A., Reynal-Querol, M., & Sambanis, N. (2003). Breaking the conflict trap: Civil war and development policy.
- Collier, P., Hoeffler, A., & Söderbom, M. (2008). Post-conflict risks. *Journal of Peace Research*, *45*(4), 461–478.

- Collier, P., & Sambanis, N. (2002). Understanding civil war: A new agenda. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 46(1), 3–12.
- Davenport, C., Mogleiv Nygård, H., Fjelde, H., & Armstrong, D. (2019). The consequences of contention: Understanding the aftereffects of political conflict and violence. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 22, 361–377.
- De Juan, A., & Pierskalla, J. H. (2016). Civil war violence and political trust: Microlevel evidence from nepal. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 33(1), 67–88.
- De Waal, T. (2010). Remaking the nagorno-karabakh peace process. *Survival*, 52(4), 159–176.
- De Waal, T. (2013). *Black garden: Armenia and azerbaijan through peace and war*. NYU press.
- Diamond, J. (1999). *Guns, germs and steel: The fate of human societies*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Dinesen, P. T. (2012). Parental transmission of trust or perceptions of institutional fairness: Generalized trust of non-western immigrants in a high-trust society. *Comparative Politics*, 44(3), 273–289.
- Espinal, R., Hartlyn, J., & Kelly, J. M. (2006). Performance still matters: Explaining trust in government in the dominican republic. *Comparative Political Studies*, 39(2), 200–223.
- Fairbrother, M., Sevä, I. J., & Kulin, J. (2019). Political trust and the relationship between climate change beliefs and support for fossil fuel taxes: Evidence from a survey of 23 european countries. *Global Environmental Change*, 59, 102003.
- Fiedler, C. (2023). What do we know about how armed conflict affects social cohesion? a review of the empirical literature. *International Studies Review*, 25(3), viad030.
- Foster, K. (2019). Armenia’s velvet revolution: Lessons from the caucasus. *Harvard International Review*, 29, 2019.
- Gates, S., & Justesen, M. K. (2020). Political trust, shocks, and accountability: Quasi-experimental evidence from a rebel attack. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 64(9), 1693–1723.
- Gilligan, M. J., Pasquale, B. J., & Samii, C. (2014). Civil war and social cohesion: Lab-in-the-field evidence from Nepal. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(3), 604–619.
- Grönlund, K., & Setälä, M. (2007). Political trust, satisfaction and voter turnout. *Comparative European Politics*, 5, 400–422.
- Grosjean, P. (2014). Conflict and social and political preferences: Evidence from World War II and civil conflict in 35 European countries. *Comparative Economic Studies*, 56(3), 424–451.
- Hong, J. Y., & Kang, W. C. (2017). Trauma and stigma: The long-term effects of wartime violence on political attitudes. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 34(3), 264–286.
- Huntington, S. P. (1993). *The third wave: Democratization in the late twentieth century* (Vol. 4). University of Oklahoma press.
- Hutchison, M. L., & Johnson, K. (2011). Capacity to trust? institutional capacity, conflict, and political trust in africa, 2000–2005. *Journal of Peace Research*, 48(6), 737–752.
- Ishiyama, J., & Pechenina, A. (2016). Colored revolutions, interpersonal trust, and confidence in institutions: The consequences of mass uprisings. *Social Science Quarterly*, 97(3), 748–770.
- Ivanov, D. (2023). Institutional reforms and social trust: Quasi-experimental evidence from the caucasian states. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 214, 829–859.
- Kalandadze, K., & Orenstein, M. A. (2009). Electoral protests and democratization beyond the color revolutions. *Comparative political studies*, 42(11), 1403–1425.
- Koos, C., & Traunmüller, R. (2022). *The social and political consequences of wartime sexual violence: New evidence from list experiments in three conflict-affected populations* (WIDER Working Paper No. 2022/11). Helsinki, The United Nations University World Institute

- for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER). <https://doi.org/10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2022/142-6>
- Kramer, A. E. (2020). Armenia and Azerbaijan: What sparked war and will peace prevail? *The New York Times*. Dec. 1. *Url: https://nyti.ms/2IjbSNt*. <https://nyti.ms/2IjbSNt>
- Lanskoy, M., & Suthers, E. (2019). Armenia’s velvet revolution. *J. Democracy*, 30, 85.
- Mavisakalyan, A., & Minasyan, A. (2023). The role of conflict in sex discrimination: The case of missing girls. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 71(2), 443–484. <https://doi.org/10.1086/716101>
- Mirovalev, M. (2021). *Armenia’s pm faced mass protests. why is he still leading polls?* Retrieved April 16, 2021, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/16/armenias-pm-faced-mass-protests-why-is-he-still-leading-polls>
- Mitchell, L. A. (2022). The color revolutions. successes and limitations of non-violent protest. In *Handbook of revolutions in the 21st century: The new waves of revolutions, and the causes and effects of disruptive political change* (pp. 435–445). Springer.
- Newton, K., & Norris, P. (2000). Confidence in public institutions. *Disaffected democracies. What’s troubling the trilateral countries*, 52–73.
- Nikolova, M., Popova, O., & Otrachshenko, V. (2022). Stalin and the origins of mistrust. *Journal of Public Economics*, 208, 104629.
- Nunn, N., & Wantchekon, L. (2011). The slave trade and the origins of mistrust in africa. *American economic review*, 101(7), 3221–3252.
- Rohner, D., Thoenig, M., & Zilibotti, F. (2013). Seeds of distrust: Conflict in uganda. *Journal of Economic Growth*, 18, 217–252.
- Terzyan, A. (2020). New government, new discourse and old constraints: Armenia after the “velvet revolution”. *Post-Soviet Politics Research Papers*, 3/2020.
- The Economist. (2018). *The economist’s country of the year 2018 - which country improved the most in the past year?* Retrieved December 22, 2018, from <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2018/12/22/the-economists-country-of-the-year-2018>
- Tilly, C. (1985). War making and state making as organized crime. In P. B. Evans, D. Rueschemeyer, & T. Skocpol (Eds.), *Bringing the state back in* (pp. 169–191). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511628283.008>
- Verwimp, P., & Van Bavel, J. (2013). Schooling, violent conflict, and gender in Burundi. *The World Bank Economic Review*, 28(2), 384–411.
- Voors, M. J., Nillesen, E. E., Verwimp, P., Bulte, E. H., Lensink, R., & Van Soest, D. P. (2012). Violent conflict and behavior: A field experiment in Burundi. *American Economic Review*, 102(2), 941–64.
- Wang, C.-H. (2016). Government performance, corruption, and political trust in east asia. *Social science quarterly*, 97(2), 211–231.
- Yang, K., & Holzer, M. (2006). The performance–trust link: Implications for performance measurement. *Public administration review*, 66(1), 114–126.

9 Appendix

Table 4: Trust in government and voting: Individual level regression results (Figure 6). CB wave 2019.

DV:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Trust government	president	parliament	local government	people	Voted
Protest participant(i)	0.168*** (0.020)	0.118*** (0.027)	0.140*** (0.027)	0.034 (0.050)	-0.018 (0.023)	0.100*** (0.030)
Observations	1455	1440	1434	1433	1485	1430
No. of clusters	43	43	43	43	43	43
No. of locations	83	83	83	83	83	83
R-squared	0.133	0.089	0.178	0.136	0.093	0.086
Mean Dep. Var	0.71	0.83	0.38	0.54	0.49	0.82
Cluster FE	x	x	x	x	x	x
Individual controls	x	x	x	x	x	x

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 5: Trust in government and voting. Individual level regression results (Figure 6). CB wave 2021.

DV:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Trust government	president	parliament	local government	people	Voted
War-affected(i)	-0.043* (0.023)	-0.041** (0.020)	-0.043* (0.023)	-0.036 (0.023)	0.005 (0.020)	-0.076*** (0.023)
Observations	1618	1609	1618	1628	1646	1638
No. of clusters	50	50	50	50	50	50
No. of locations	91	91	91	91	91	91
R-squared	0.059	0.082	0.059	0.050	0.055	0.087
Mean Dep. Var	0.14	0.32	0.14	0.19	0.15	0.67
Cluster FE	x	x	x	x	x	x
Individual controls	x	x	x	x	x	x

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 6: Regression results for Figure 9.

	(1)	(2)
	Trust in government	Voted in last elections
2019	0.6059*** (0.2289)	-0.0691 (0.1062)
2021	-0.5114*** (0.0118)	-0.2213*** (0.0105)
Exposed to protests × 2019	-0.0084 (0.2293)	-0.0647 (0.1475)
Exposed to protests × 2021	0.4670*** (0.0175)	0.0610 (0.0386)
Exposed to war × 2019	0.0263 (0.2586)	0.2450* (0.1264)
Exposed to war × 2021	0.4515*** (0.0867)	0.1699*** (0.0652)
Exposed to: protests × war × 2019	-0.1323 (0.2644)	-0.0402 (0.1677)
Exposed to: protests × war × 2021	-0.4786*** (0.0930)	-0.0236 (0.0773)
Constant	0.2412*** (0.0528)	0.4488*** (0.0506)
Observations	4655	4682
No. of locations	182	182
R-squared	0.335	0.101
Mean Dep. Var	0.34	0.74
Locations FE	x	x
Individual controls	x	x

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 7: Regression results for Figure 10

	(1)	(2)
	Trust in government	Voted in elections
2019	-0.1045 (0.1038)	-0.2176*** (0.0624)
2021	-0.5098*** (0.0116)	-0.2212*** (0.0107)
2019 × Protest Walk (<mean)	0.6158*** (0.1218)	0.3104*** (0.0721)
2021 × Protest Walk (<mean)	0.4650*** (0.0310)	0.2270*** (0.0388)
2019 × AZ border (<mean)	0.6731*** (0.1365)	0.2426*** (0.0790)
2021 × AZ border (<mean)	0.3347*** (0.0819)	0.0741 (0.0476)
2019 × Protest Walk × AZ border (<mean)	-0.7298*** (0.1637)	-0.3623*** (0.0918)
2021 × Protest Walk × AZ border (< mean)	-0.3612*** (0.0947)	-0.1343* (0.0713)
Constant	0.2666*** (0.0502)	0.4486*** (0.0502)
Observations	4655	4682
No. of locations	182	182
R-squared	0.338	0.101
Mean Dep. Var	0.34	0.74
Locations FE	x	x
Individual controls	x	x

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Figure 14: Distance to Protest Walk and government trust measures

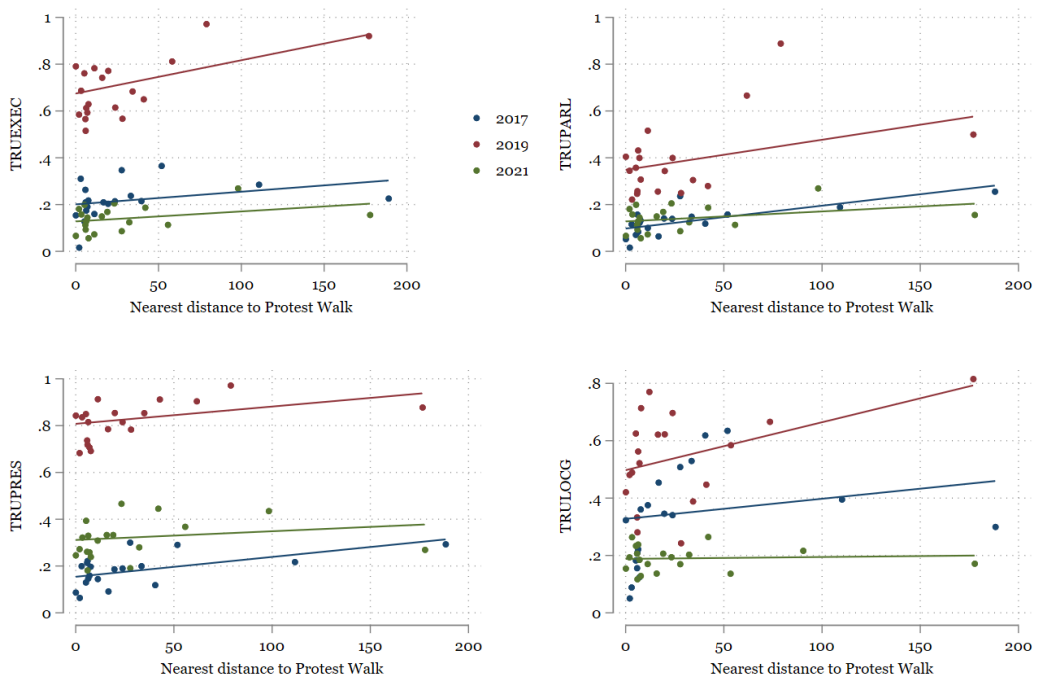


Figure 15: Distance to Protest Walk and other institutional trust measures

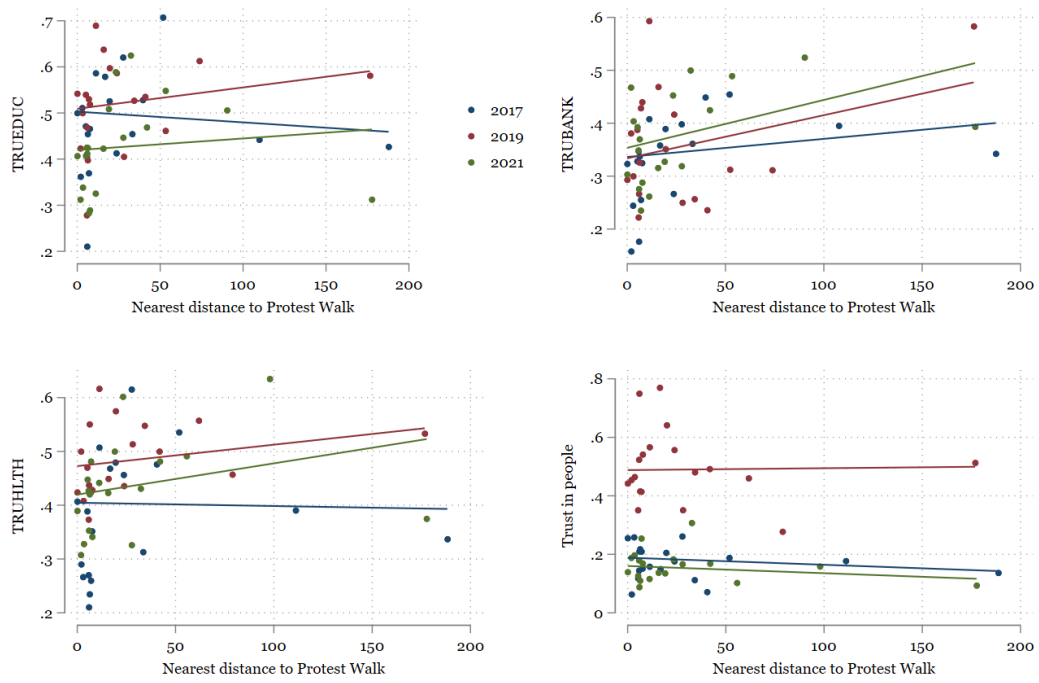


Figure 16: Distance to Armenia-Azerbaijan border and government trust measures

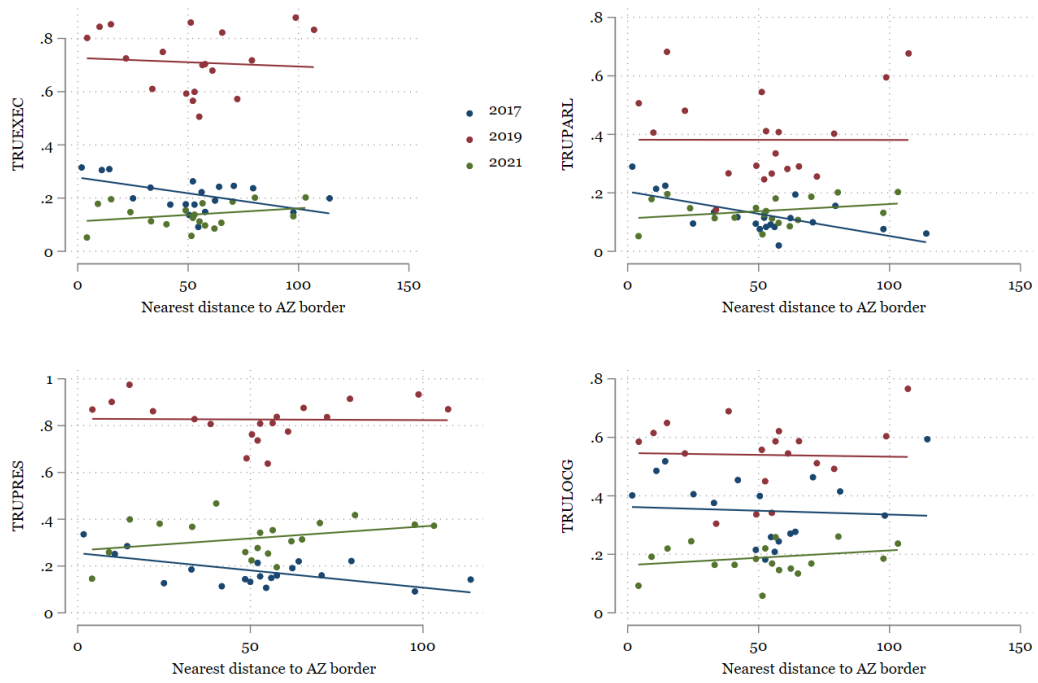


Figure 17: Distance to Armenia-Azerbaijan border and other institutional trust measures

