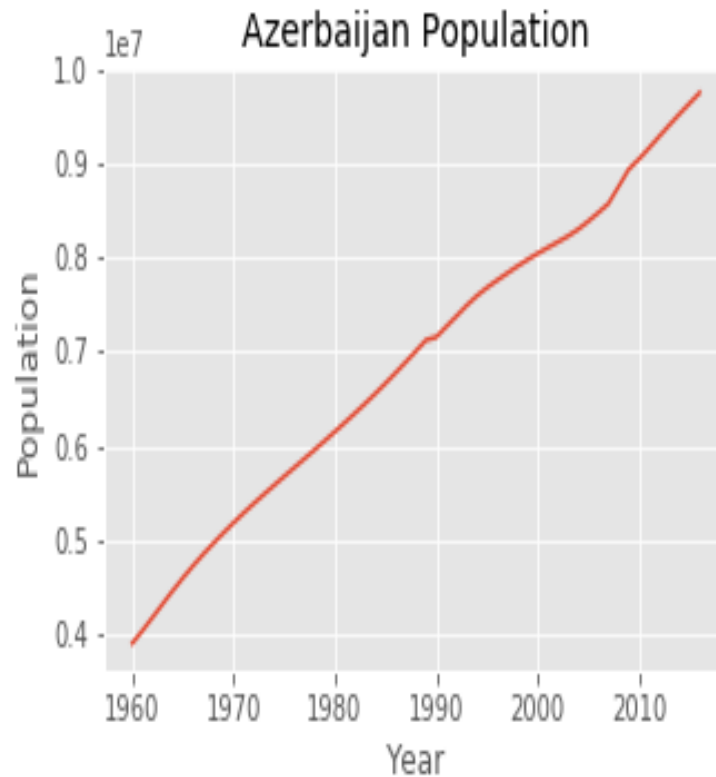


Azerbaijan



Azerbaijan (/ˈæzərbaɪˈdʒən/ AZ-ər-by-JAHN; Azerbaijani: Azərbaycan [ˈɑzæɾbɑjˈdʒɑn]), officially the Republic of Azerbaijan (Azerbaijani: Azərbaycan Respublikası [ˈɑzæɾbɑjˈdʒɑn ɾespublikɑsɪ]), is a country in the South Caucasus region of Eurasia at the crossroads of Eastern Europe and Western Asia. It is bound by the Caspian Sea to the east, Russia to the north, Georgia to the northwest, Armenia to the west and Iran to the south. The exclave of Nakhchivan is bound by Armenia to the north and east, Iran to the south and west, and has an 11 km long border with Turkey in the north west. The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic proclaimed its independence in 1918 and became the first democratic state in the Muslim-oriented world. The country was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1920 as the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic. The modern Republic of Azerbaijan proclaimed its independence on 30 August 1991, prior to the official dissolution of the USSR in December 1991. In September 1991, the Armenian majority of the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region seceded to form the Republic of Artsakh. The region and seven adjacent districts outside it became de facto independent with the end of the Nagorno-Karabakh War in 1994. These regions are internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan pending a solution to the status of the Nagorno-Karabakh, found through negotiations facilitated by the OSCE.