[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) [Template:Pp-move-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-move-indef) [Template:Use dmy dates](/wiki/Template:Use_dmy_dates) [Template:Good article](/wiki/Template:Good_article) [Template:Infobox country](/wiki/Template:Infobox_country) **Azerbaijan** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en) [Template:Respell](/wiki/Template:Respell); [Template:Lang-az](/wiki/Template:Lang-az) [Template:IPA-tu](/wiki/Template:IPA-tu)), officially the **Republic of Azerbaijan** ([Template:Lang-az](/wiki/Template:Lang-az)), is a country in the [Transcaucasian](/wiki/Transcaucasia) region, situated at the crossroads of Southwest Asia and Southeastern Europe.[[1]](#cite_note-1) It is bounded by the [Caspian Sea](/wiki/Caspian_Sea) to the east, Russia to the north, Georgia to the northwest, Armenia to the west and Iran to the south. The [exclave](/wiki/Exclave) of [Nakhchivan](/wiki/Nakhchivan_Autonomous_Republic) is bounded by Armenia to the north and east, Iran to the south and west, while having a short border with Turkey in the north west.

The [Azerbaijan Democratic Republic](/wiki/Azerbaijan_Democratic_Republic) proclaimed its independence in 1918. The country was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1920 as the [Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic](/wiki/Azerbaijan_Soviet_Socialist_Republic).[[2]](#cite_note-2)[[3]](#cite_note-3) The modern Republic of Azerbaijan proclaimed its independence on 30 August 1991,[[4]](#cite_note-4) before the official [dissolution of the USSR](/wiki/Dissolution_of_the_Soviet_Union). In September 1991, the disputed Armenian-majority Nagorno-Karabakh region re-affirmed its willingness to create a separate state as the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.[[5]](#cite_note-5) The region and [seven adjacent districts outside it](/wiki/Armenian-controlled_territories_surrounding_Nagorno-Karabakh) became de facto independent since the ending of the [Nagorno-Karabakh War](/wiki/Nagorno-Karabakh_War) in 1994, these regions are internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan until a final solution to status of the Nagorno-Karabakh is found through negotiations facilitated by the [OSCE](/wiki/OSCE).[[6]](#cite_note-6)[[7]](#cite_note-7)[[8]](#cite_note-8)[[9]](#cite_note-9) Azerbaijan is a unitary [semi-presidential](/wiki/Semi-presidential_system) republic. The country is a member state of the [Council of Europe](/wiki/Council_of_Europe), the [OSCE](/wiki/Organization_for_Security_and_Co-operation_in_Europe) and the [NATO](/wiki/NATO) [Partnership for Peace](/wiki/Partnership_for_Peace) (PfP) program. It is one of the six independent [Turkic states](/wiki/List_of_Turkic_states_and_empires#Current_states), being an active member of the [Turkic Council](/wiki/Turkic_Council) and the [TÜRKSOY](/wiki/Joint_Administration_of_Turkic_Arts_and_Culture) community. Azerbaijan has diplomatic relations with 158 countries and holds membership in 38 international organizations.[[10]](#cite_note-10) It is one of the founding members of [GUAM](/wiki/GUAM_Organization_for_Democracy_and_Economic_Development), the [Commonwealth of Independent States](/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Independent_States) (CIS)[[11]](#cite_note-11) and [Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons](/wiki/Organization_for_the_Prohibition_of_Chemical_Weapons). A member of the United Nations since 1992, Azerbaijan was elected to membership in the newly established [Human Rights Council](/wiki/Human_Rights_Council) by the [United Nations General Assembly](/wiki/United_Nations_General_Assembly) on 9 May 2006 (the term of office began on 19 June 2006).[[12]](#cite_note-12) Azerbaijan is also a member state of the [Non-Aligned Movement](/wiki/Non-Aligned_Movement), holds observer status in [World Trade Organization](/wiki/World_Trade_Organization) and is a correspondent at the [International Telecommunication Union](/wiki/International_Telecommunication_Union).[[10]](#cite_note-10)[[13]](#cite_note-13) The [Constitution of Azerbaijan](/wiki/Constitution_of_Azerbaijan) does not declare an official religion, and all major political forces in the country are [secularist](/wiki/Secularism), but the majority of people and some opposition movements adhere to [Shia Islam](/wiki/Shia_Islam).[[14]](#cite_note-14) Azerbaijan has a high level of [human development](/wiki/Human_Development_Index) which ranks on par with most Eastern European countries.[[15]](#cite_note-15) It has a high rate of [economic development](/wiki/Economic_development)[[16]](#cite_note-16) and [literacy](/wiki/Literacy_rate),[[17]](#cite_note-17) as well as a low rate of [unemployment](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_unemployment_rate).[[18]](#cite_note-18) However, corruption in Azerbaijan is widespread, especially in the [public service](/wiki/Public_service).[[19]](#cite_note-19)[[20]](#cite_note-20) The ruling party, [New Azerbaijan Party](/wiki/New_Azerbaijan_Party), has been accused of authoritarianism and human rights abuses.[[21]](#cite_note-21)[[22]](#cite_note-22)

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## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

[thumb|Azerbaijan and its main cities](/wiki/File:Azerbaijan_Republic_map.png) According to a modern etymology, the name of Azerbaijan derives from that of [*Atropates*](/wiki/Atropates),[[23]](#cite_note-23)[[24]](#cite_note-24) a [Persian](/wiki/Persian_people)[[25]](#cite_note-25)[[26]](#cite_note-26)[[27]](#cite_note-27) [satrap](/wiki/Satrap) under the [Achaemenid Empire](/wiki/Achaemenid_Empire), who was later reinstated as the satrap of [Media](/wiki/Medes) under [Alexander the Great](/wiki/Alexander_the_Great).[[28]](#cite_note-28)[[29]](#cite_note-29) The original etymology of this name is thought to have its roots in the once-dominant [Zoroastrian](/wiki/Zoroastrian) religion. In the [Avesta](/wiki/Avesta), Frawardin [Yasht](/wiki/Yasht) ("Hymn to the Guardian Angels"), there is a mention of *âterepâtahe ashaonô fravashîm ýazamaide*, which literally translates from [Avestan](/wiki/Avestan_language) as "we worship the [Fravashi](/wiki/Fravashi) of the holy [Atropatene](/wiki/Atropatene)."[[30]](#cite_note-30) [Atropates](/wiki/Atropates) ruled over the region of [Atropatene](/wiki/Atropatene) (present [Iranian Azerbaijan](/wiki/Iranian_Azerbaijan)). The name "Atropates" itself is the Greek transliteration of an Old Iranian, probably [Median](/wiki/Median_language), compounded name with the meaning "Protected by the (Holy) Fire" or "The Land of the (Holy) Fire".[[31]](#cite_note-31) The Greek name is mentioned by [Diodorus Siculus](/wiki/Diodorus_Siculus) and [Strabo](/wiki/Strabo). Over the span of millennia the name evolved to *Āturpātākān* (Middle Iranian) then to *Ādharbādhagān*, *Ādharbāyagān*, *Āzarbāydjān* (New Persian) and present-day *Azerbaijan*. In Armenia, the country is called *Adrbejan*, yet another archaic form. Ultimately, the name *Azerbaijan* comes from *Azar-Payegan*. This word is translatable as *Guardian of Fire*, "The Treasury" and "The Treasurer" of [fire](/wiki/Wikt:آذر#Persian) or "[The Land of Fire](/wiki/The_Land_of_Fire)"[[31]](#cite_note-31) in [Modern Persian](/wiki/Persian_language).[[32]](#cite_note-32)The name was changed to *Azerbaijan* following the Arab conquest in the 7th century AD; [Arabic](/wiki/Arabic) lacked the letters *G* and *P*, so Arabic speakers modified the spelling of *Azer-payegan*.

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

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### Antiquity[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Ancient_Azerbaijan_4.jpg)[Petroglyphs](/wiki/Petroglyphs) in [Gobustan](/wiki/Gobustan_State_Reserve) dating back to 10,000 BC indicating a thriving culture. It is a UNESCO [World Heritage Site](/wiki/World_Heritage_Site) considered to be of "outstanding universal value". The earliest evidence of human settlement in the territory of Azerbaijan dates back to the late [Stone Age](/wiki/Stone_Age) and is related to the [Guruchay culture](/wiki/Guruchay_culture) of the [Azykh Cave](/wiki/Azykh_Cave).[[33]](#cite_note-33) The [Upper Paleolithic](/wiki/Upper_Paleolithic) and late [Bronze Age](/wiki/Bronze_Age) cultures are attested in the caves of [Tağılar](/wiki/Tağılar), [Damcılı](/wiki/Damcılı), [Zar](/wiki/Zar,_Azerbaijan), Yataq-yeri and in the [necropolises](/wiki/Necropolis) of Leylatepe and Saraytepe.

Early settlements included the [Scythians](/wiki/Scythia) in the 9th century BC.[[31]](#cite_note-31) Following the Scythians, Iranian [Medes](/wiki/Medes) came to dominate the area to the south of the [Aras](/wiki/Aras_River).[[29]](#cite_note-29) The Medes forged a vast empire between 900–700 BC, which was integrated into the [Achaemenid Empire](/wiki/Achaemenid_Empire) around 550 BC. The area was conquered by the Achaemenids leading to the spread of [Zoroastrianism](/wiki/Zoroastrianism).[[34]](#cite_note-34) Later it became part of [Alexander the Great's](/wiki/Alexander_the_Great) [Empire](/wiki/Macedon) and its successor, the [Seleucid Empire](/wiki/Seleucid_Empire). During this period, Zoroastrianism spread in the Caucasus and Atropatene. [Caucasian Albanians](/wiki/Caucasian_Albania), the original inhabitants of northeastern Azerbaijan, ruled that area from around the 4th century BC, and established an independent kingdom that came under the cultural influence of the [Armenians](/wiki/Armenians).[[35]](#cite_note-35) In the 4th and 3rd centuries BC, following the overthrow of the Achaemenid Empire, the southwestern part of modern Azerbaijan was part of the Kingdom of Armenia ruled by the [Orontid Dynasty](/wiki/Orontid_Dynasty); between the years 189 BC and 428 AD the western half of modern Azerbaijan, including the exclave of [Nakhchivan](/wiki/Nakhchivan_Autonomous_Republic), were included into the [Kingdom of Greater Armenia](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Armenia_(antiquity)) ruled by Armenia's [Artaxiad](/wiki/Artaxiad) and [Arsacid](/wiki/Arsacid_dynasty_of_Armenia) dynasties,[[36]](#cite_note-36)[[37]](#cite_note-37) the latter itself a branch of the eponymous [Arsacid dynasty of Parthia](/wiki/Parthian_Empire).

After the partition of the [Kingdom of Armenia](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Armenia_(antiquity)) by [Persia](/wiki/Persia) and [Byzantium](/wiki/Byzantium) in 387 AD, the provinces of [Artsakh](/wiki/Artsakh) and [Utik](/wiki/Utik), which had an ethnically mixed population, passed to [Caucasian Albania](/wiki/Caucasian_Albania).[[38]](#cite_note-38)[[39]](#cite_note-39)

### Feudal era[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[thumb|The](/wiki/File:Baku_Maiden_Tower_2010.jpg) [Maiden Tower](/wiki/Maiden_Tower_(Baku)) in [Old Baku](/wiki/Old_Baku) is a UNESCO World Heritage Site built in the 11th–12th century. The Persian [Sassanids](/wiki/Sassanid_Empire) turned Caucasian Albania into a [vassal state](/wiki/Vassal_state) in AD 252, while King Urnayr officially adopted Christianity as the state religion in the 4th century. Despite Sassanid rule, Albania remained an entity in the region until the 9th century, while fully subordinate to Sassanid Persia, and retained its monarchy.[[28]](#cite_note-28)In the first half of the 7th century AD, the Islamic [Umayyad Caliphate](/wiki/Umayyad_Caliphate) repulsed both the Sassanids and Byzantines from the Caucasus region and turned Caucasian Albania into a vassal state after the Christian resistance, led by King [Javanshir](/wiki/Javanshir), was suppressed in 667. Caucasian Albania however, came already under nominal Muslim rule through the [Muslim conquest of Persia](/wiki/Muslim_conquest_of_Persia), as it made up part of the Sassanid territory upon advent of the Muslim conquest. The power vacuum left by the decline of the [Abbasid Caliphate](/wiki/Abbasid_Caliphate) was filled by numerous local dynasties such as the [Sallarids](/wiki/Sallarid), [Sajids](/wiki/Sajids), [Shaddadids](/wiki/Shaddadid), [Rawadids](/wiki/Rawadid) and [Buyids](/wiki/Buyid_dynasty). At the beginning of the 11th century, the territory was gradually seized by waves of [Turkic](/wiki/Turkic_peoples) [Oghuz](/wiki/Oghuz_Turks) tribes from Central Asia. The first of these Turkic dynasties established was the [Seljuqs](/wiki/Seljuq_Empire), which entered the area now known as Azerbaijan by 1067.

The pre-Turkic population that lived on the territory of modern Azerbaijani Republic spoke several Indo-European and Caucasian languages, among them – [Armenian](/wiki/Armenian_language)[[40]](#cite_note-40)[[41]](#cite_note-41)[[42]](#cite_note-42)[[43]](#cite_note-43)[[44]](#cite_note-44) and an [Iranian language](/wiki/Iranian_language) called the [Old Azari language](/wiki/Old_Azari_language), which was gradually replaced by a [Turkic language](/wiki/Turkic_language), the early precursor of the [Azerbaijani language](/wiki/Azerbaijani_language) of today.[[45]](#cite_note-45) To distinguish it from the Turkic Azerbaijani or Azeri language, this Iranian language, is designated as the Azari language (or Old Azari language), because the Turkic language and people are also designated as "Azarbaijani" or "Azari" in the [Persian language](/wiki/Persian_language). However some linguists have also designated the [Tati dialects](/wiki/Tat_language_(Caucasus)) of [Iranian Azerbaijan](/wiki/Azerbaijan_(Iran)) and the Republic of Azerbaijan, like those spoken by the [Tats](/wiki/Tat_people_(Caucasus)), as a remnant of Azari.[[46]](#cite_note-46)[[47]](#cite_note-47) Locally, the possessions of the subsequent [Seljuq Empire](/wiki/Great_Seljuq_Empire) were ruled by [Atabegs](/wiki/Eldiguzids), who were technically vassals of the Seljuq sultans, being sometimes *de facto* rulers themselves. Under the [Seljuq Turks](/wiki/Seljuq_dynasty), local poets such as [Nizami Ganjavi](/wiki/Nizami_Ganjavi) and [Khagani Shirvani](/wiki/Khaqani) gave rise to a blossoming of [Persian literature](/wiki/Persian_literature) on the territory of present-day Azerbaijan. The next ruling state of the [Jalayirids](/wiki/Jalayirids) was short-lived and fell under the conquests of [Timur](/wiki/Timur).

The local dynasty of the [Shirvanshahs](/wiki/Shirvanshah) became a [vassal](/wiki/Vassal) state of [Timur's Empire](/wiki/Timurid_dynasty), and assisted him in his war with the ruler of the [Golden Horde](/wiki/Golden_Horde) [Tokhtamysh](/wiki/Tokhtamysh). Following Timur's death, two independent and rival states emerged: [Kara Koyunlu](/wiki/Kara_Koyunlu) and [Ak Koyunlu](/wiki/Ak_Koyunlu). The Shirvanshahs returned, maintaining a high degree of autonomy as local rulers and vassals from 861 until 1539. During their conquest and persecution by the Iranian [Safavids](/wiki/Safavid_dynasty) in 1501, the last dynasty imposed [Shia Islam](/wiki/Shia_Islam) upon the formerly [Sunni](/wiki/Sunni) population,[[48]](#cite_note-48)[[49]](#cite_note-49)[[50]](#cite_note-50) as it did over its territories in modern-day Iran, as it was battling against the Sunni [Ottoman Empire](/wiki/Ottoman_Empire).[[51]](#cite_note-51) This, in combination with another [series of events](/wiki/Safavid_conversion_of_Iran_to_Shia_Islam), the Safavids laid the foundation for the fact that both the contemporary Republic of Azerbaijan and Iran are the only Shia majority countries ever since.[[52]](#cite_note-52) Despite efforts of the Safavids, the Ottomans briefly managed to occupy swaths of present-day Azerbaijan twice over the centuries. Also, Baku and its environs were briefly managed by the Russians in the early 18th century through the consequences of the [Russo-Persian War](/wiki/Russo-Persian_War_(1722-1723)). Despite these very brief intermissions by Safavid Iran's neighboring rivals, the land of what is nowadays Azerbaijan remained under [intermittent](/wiki/Intermittent) [Iranian](/wiki/History_of_Iran) rule from the earliest advent of the Safavids up to the course of the 19th century.

### Modern era[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|220px|left|Territories of the Northern and Southern Khanates (and Sultanates) in the 18th–19th centuries.](/wiki/File:Azerbaijan_khanates_all_XVIII-XIX.png)[[53]](#cite_note-53)

After the Safavids, the area was ruled by the Iranian dynasties of [Afshar](/wiki/Afsharid_dynasty) and [Zand](/wiki/Zand_dynasty) and briefly by the [Qajars](/wiki/Qajar_dynasty), until the latters forced ceding to Russian empire in the course of the 19th century. However self-ruling [khanates](/wiki/Khanates_of_the_Caucasus) with various forms of independence[[54]](#cite_note-54)[[55]](#cite_note-55)[[56]](#cite_note-56)[[57]](#cite_note-57)[[58]](#cite_note-58) emerged in the area, especially following the collapse of the Zand dynasty and in the early Qajar era. These khanates, though often self-ruling, were [vassals](/wiki/Vassals) and [subjects](/wiki/Commoners) of the Iranian shah (King).[[59]](#cite_note-59) The khanates exercised control over their affairs via international trade routes between Central Asia and the West.[[60]](#cite_note-60) From the late 18th century and on, Imperial Russia changed to a more aggressive geo-political stance towards its two neighbors (and rivals) to the south, namely Iran and Turkey.[[61]](#cite_note-61) Following a chain of events that started with the [re-subjugation of Georgia into Iran in 1795](/wiki/Battle_of_Krtsanisi), Russia would now actively contest and battle with the latter over possession of the Caucasus region which was, for most of its part, in the hands of Iran.<ref name=CAUCAIRANICA>[Template:Cite encyclopedia](/wiki/Template:Cite_encyclopedia)</ref> The successful Russian campaigns in the later stages of the [Russo-Persian War (1804–13)](/wiki/Russo-Persian_War_(1804–13)) were concluded with the [Treaty of Gulistan](/wiki/Treaty_of_Gulistan), in which the shah's claims to some of the Khanates of the Caucasus were dismissed by Russia on the ground that they had been *de facto* independent long before their Russian occupation.[[62]](#cite_note-62)[thumb|200px|right|](/wiki/File:Взятии_штурмом_крепости_Гянджи.jpg)[The siege of Ganja Fortress in 1804](/wiki/Battle_of_Ganja_(1804)) during the [Russo-Persian War (1804-1813)](/wiki/Russo-Persian_War_(1804-1813)) by the Russian forces under leadership of general [Pavel Tsitsianov](/wiki/Pavel_Tsitsianov). Following Qajar Iran's loss in the 1804–1813 war, it was forced to concede suzerainty over most of the khanates (alongside Georgia and Dagestan) to the [Russian Empire](/wiki/Russian_Empire) per the Gulistan treaty.[[63]](#cite_note-63) The area to the north of the river [Aras](/wiki/Aras_River), amongst which the territory of the contemporary Republic of Azerbaijan, was Iranian territory until it was occupied by Russia in the course of the 19th century.[[2]](#cite_note-2)[[64]](#cite_note-64)[[65]](#cite_note-65)[[66]](#cite_note-66)[[67]](#cite_note-67)[[68]](#cite_note-68) Under the [Treaty of Turkmenchay](/wiki/Treaty_of_Turkmenchay) which finalised the [Russo-Persian War](/wiki/Russo-Persian_War_(1826-1828)), [Qajar Iran](/wiki/Qajar_dynasty) was forced to recognize Russian sovereignty over the [Erivan Khanate](/wiki/Erivan_Khanate), the [Nakhchivan Khanate](/wiki/Nakhchivan_Khanate) and the remainder of the [Lankaran Khanate](/wiki/Lankaran_Khanate),[[63]](#cite_note-63) comprising the last parts of the soil of the contemporary Azerbaijani Republic that were still in Iranian hands. After incorporation of all Caucasian territories from Iran into Russia, the new border between the two was set at the [Aras River](/wiki/Aras_River), which, upon the Soviet Union's disintegration, subsequently became part of the border between Iran and the Azerbaijan Republic.

Qajar Iran was forced to cede its Caucasian territories to Russia in the 19th century, which thus included the territory of the modern-day Azerbaijan Republic, while as a result of that cession, the [Azerbaijani ethnic group](/wiki/Azerbaijanis) is nowadays parted between two nations: Iran and Azerbaijan.[[69]](#cite_note-69) Furthermore, the number of ethnic Azerbaijanis in Iran far outnumber those in neighbouring Azerbaijan.

After the collapse of the Russian Empire during [World War I](/wiki/World_War_I), Azerbaijan, together with Armenia and Georgia became part of the short-lived [Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic](/wiki/Transcaucasian_Democratic_Federative_Republic).

It was followed by the [March Days](/wiki/March_Days) massacres[[70]](#cite_note-70)[[71]](#cite_note-71)[[72]](#cite_note-72) that took place between 30 March and 2 April 1918 in the city of [Baku](/wiki/Baku) and adjacent areas of the [Baku Governorate](/wiki/Baku_Governorate) of the [Russian Empire](/wiki/Russian_Empire).[[73]](#cite_note-73) When the republic dissolved in May 1918, Azerbaijan declared independence as the [Azerbaijan Democratic Republic](/wiki/Azerbaijan_Democratic_Republic) (ADR). The ADR was the first modern [parliamentary republic](/wiki/Parliamentary_republic) in the Muslim world.[[2]](#cite_note-2)[[74]](#cite_note-74)[[75]](#cite_note-75) Among the important accomplishments of the Parliament was the extension of suffrage to women, making Azerbaijan the first Muslim nation to grant women equal political rights with men.[[74]](#cite_note-74) Another important accomplishment of ADR was the establishment of [Baku State University](/wiki/Baku_State_University), which was the first modern-type university founded in Muslim East.[[74]](#cite_note-74)[thumb|222px|left|Map presented by delegation from Azerbaijan to](/wiki/File:1ST_AZ_REP.GIF) [Paris Peace Conference](/wiki/Paris_Peace_Conference,_1919) in 1919. By March 1920, it was obvious that Soviet Russia would attack the much-needed Baku. [Vladimir Lenin](/wiki/Vladimir_Lenin) said that the invasion was justified as [Soviet Russia](/wiki/Russian_Soviet_Federative_Socialist_Republic) could not survive without Baku's [oil](/wiki/Petroleum_industry_in_Azerbaijan).[[76]](#cite_note-76)[[77]](#cite_note-77) Independent Azerbaijan lasted only 23 months until the [Bolshevik](/wiki/Bolshevik) [11th Soviet Red Army](/wiki/11th_Soviet_Red_Army) invaded it, establishing the [Azerbaijan SSR](/wiki/Azerbaijan_Soviet_Socialist_Republic) on 28 April 1920. Although the bulk of the newly formed Azerbaijani army was engaged in putting down an Armenian revolt that had just broken out in [Karabakh](/wiki/Karabakh), Azerbaijanis did not surrender their brief independence of 1918–20 quickly or easily. As many as 20,000 Azerbaijani soldiers died resisting what was effectively a Russian reconquest.[[78]](#cite_note-78) On 13 October 1921, the Soviet republics of Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia signed an agreement with Turkey known as the [Treaty of Kars](/wiki/Treaty_of_Kars). The previously independent Naxicivan SSR would also become an autonomous ASSR within the Azerbaijan SSR by the treaty of Kars. On the other hand, Armenia was awarded the region of [Zangezur](/wiki/Syunik_Province) and Turkey agreed to return [Gyumri](/wiki/Gyumri) (then known as Alexandropol).

During [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II), Azerbaijan played a crucial role in the strategic energy policy of Soviet Union, with most of the Soviet Union's oil on the [Eastern Front](/wiki/Eastern_Front_(World_War_II)) being supplied by Baku. By the Decree of the [Supreme Soviet of the USSR](/wiki/Supreme_Soviet_of_the_USSR) in February 1942, the commitment of more than 500 workers and employees of the [oil industry](/wiki/Petroleum_industry) of Azerbaijan was awarded orders and medals. [Operation Edelweiss](/wiki/Operation_Edelweiss) carried out by the German [Wehrmacht](/wiki/Wehrmacht) targeted Baku because of its importance as the energy (petroleum) dynamo of the USSR.[[2]](#cite_note-2) A fifth of all Azerbaijanis fought in the Second World War from 1941 to 1945. Approximately 681,000 people with over 100,000 of them women went to the front, while the total population of Azerbaijan was 3.4 million at the time.[[79]](#cite_note-79) Some 250,000 people from Azerbaijan were killed on the front. More than 130 Azerbaijanis were named [Heroes of the Soviet Union](/wiki/Hero_of_the_Soviet_Union). Azerbaijani Major-General [Azi Aslanov](/wiki/Azi_Aslanov) was twice awarded the Hero of the Soviet Union.[[80]](#cite_note-80)

### Republic era[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[thumbnail|](/wiki/File:RedArmy_Paratroops_Baku_1990.jpg)[Red Army](/wiki/Red_Army) [paratroops](/wiki/Paratroops) during the [Black January](/wiki/Black_January) tragedy in 1990. Following the politics of [*glasnost*](/wiki/Glasnost), initiated by [Mikhail Gorbachev](/wiki/Mikhail_Gorbachev), civil unrest and ethnic strife grew in various regions of the Soviet Union, including [Nagorno-Karabakh](/wiki/Nagorno-Karabakh_Autonomous_Oblast),<ref name=Croissant>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref> an autonomous region of the Azerbaijan SSR. The disturbances in Azerbaijan, in response to Moscow's indifference to already heated conflict, resulted in calls for independence and secession, which culminated in [Black January](/wiki/Black_January) in Baku.[[81]](#cite_note-81) Later in 1990, the [Supreme Council of the Azerbaijan SSR](/wiki/Supreme_Soviet_of_Azerbaijan_SSR) dropped the words "Soviet Socialist" from the title, adopted the Declaration of Sovereignty of the Azerbaijan Republic and restored flag of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic as the state flag.[[82]](#cite_note-82) On 18 October 1991, the Supreme Council of Azerbaijan adopted a Declaration of Independence which was affirmed by a nationwide referendum in December 1991, when the Soviet Union officially ceased to exist on 26 December 1991.[[82]](#cite_note-82) The early years of independence were overshadowed by the [Nagorno-Karabakh war](/wiki/Nagorno-Karabakh_war) with the ethnic Armenian majority of Nagorno-Karabakh backed by Armenia.[[83]](#cite_note-83) The armed forces have three branches: the [Land Forces](/wiki/Army_of_Azerbaijan), the [Air Forces](/wiki/Azerbaijani_Air_Forces) and the [Navy](/wiki/Azerbaijan_Navy). Additionally the armed forces embrace several military sub-groups that can be involved in state defense when needed. These are the [Internal Troops](/wiki/Internal_Troops_(Azerbaijan)) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the [State Border Service](/wiki/Azerbaijan_Border_Guard), which includes the [Coast Guard](/wiki/Azerbaijan_Coast_Guard) as well.[[84]](#cite_note-84) The [Azerbaijan National Guard](/wiki/Azerbaijan_National_Guard) is a further paramilitary force. It operates as a semi-independent entity of the Special State Protection Service, an agency subordinate to the President.[[131]](#cite_note-131) [thumb|Contingent from the Azerbaijani military during the](/wiki/File:Парад_в_честь_70-летия_Великой_Победы_-_33.jpg) [Moscow Victory Day Parade](/wiki/2015_Moscow_Victory_Day_Parade), 9 May 2015 Azerbaijan adheres to the [Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe](/wiki/Treaty_on_Conventional_Armed_Forces_in_Europe) and has signed all major international arms and weapons treaties. Azerbaijan closely cooperates with [NATO](/wiki/NATO) in programs such as [Partnership for Peace](/wiki/Partnership_for_Peace) and [Individual Partnership Action Plan](/wiki/Individual_Partnership_Action_Plan). Azerbaijan has deployed 151 of its Peacekeeping Forces in Iraq and another 184 in Afghanistan.[[132]](#cite_note-132) The defense budget of Azerbaijan for 2011 was set at US$3.1 billion.[[133]](#cite_note-133) In addition to that, $1.36 billion was planned to be used for the needs of the [defense industry](/wiki/Ministry_of_Defence_Industry_of_Azerbaijan), which bring up the total military spending to billion.[[133]](#cite_note-133)[[134]](#cite_note-134) Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev said on 26 June 2011 that the defence spending reached $3.3 billion that year.[[135]](#cite_note-135) Azerbaijan's defense budget for 2013 is $3.7 billion.[[136]](#cite_note-136)[[137]](#cite_note-137) Azerbaijani defense industry manufactures small arms, artillery systems, tanks, armors and noctovision devices, aviation bombs, pilotless vehicles, various military vehicles and military planes and helicopters.[[138]](#cite_note-138)[[139]](#cite_note-139)[[140]](#cite_note-140)[[141]](#cite_note-141)

## Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

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After gaining independence in 1991, Azerbaijan became a member of the [International Monetary Fund](/wiki/International_Monetary_Fund), the [World Bank](/wiki/World_Bank), the [European Bank for Reconstruction and Development](/wiki/European_Bank_for_Reconstruction_and_Development), the [Islamic Development Bank](/wiki/Islamic_Development_Bank) and the [Asian Development Bank](/wiki/Asian_Development_Bank).[[142]](#cite_note-142) The banking system of Azerbaijan consists of the [Central Bank of Azerbaijan](/wiki/Central_Bank_of_Azerbaijan), [commercial banks](/wiki/Commercial_bank) and non-banking credit organizations. The National (now Central) Bank was created in 1992 based on the Azerbaijan State Savings Bank, an affiliate of the former State Savings Bank of the USSR. The Central Bank serves as Azerbaijan's central bank, empowered to issue the national currency, the [Azerbaijani manat](/wiki/Azerbaijani_manat), and to supervise all commercial banks. Two major commercial banks are UniBank and the state-owned [International Bank of Azerbaijan](/wiki/International_Bank_of_Azerbaijan), run by [Dr. Jahangir Hajiyev](/wiki/Jahangir_Hajiyev).

Pushed up by spending and demand growth, the 2007 [Q1](/wiki/First_quarter_of_a_calendar_year) inflation rate reached 16.6%.[[143]](#cite_note-143) Nominal incomes and monthly wages climbed 29% and 25% respectively against this figure, but price increases in non-oil industry encouraged inflation in the country.[[143]](#cite_note-143) Azerbaijan shows some signs of the so-called "[Dutch disease](/wiki/Dutch_disease)" because of the fast-growing energy sector, which causes inflation and makes non-energy exports more expensive.

In the early years of this century the chronically high inflation was brought under control and this led to the launch of a new currency, the new Azerbaijani manat, on 1 January 2006, to cement the acquisition of the economic reforms and erase the vestiges of an unstable economy.[[144]](#cite_note-144)[[145]](#cite_note-145) In 2008, Azerbaijan was cited as one of the top 10 reformers by the World Bank's [Doing Business Report](/wiki/Doing_Business_Report).[[146]](#cite_note-146) [Template:Quote](/wiki/Template:Quote)

Azerbaijan is also ranked 57th in the [Global Competitiveness Report](/wiki/Global_Competitiveness_Report) for 2010–2011, which is above other CIS countries.[[147]](#cite_note-147) By 2012 the GDP of Azerbaijan increased 20-fold relative to its 1995 level.[[148]](#cite_note-148) All foreign broadcasts are banned in the country.[[254]](#cite_note-254) According to the 2013 [Freedom House](/wiki/Freedom_House) [Freedom of the Press report](/wiki/Freedom_of_the_Press_(report)), Azerbaijan's press freedom status is "not free," and Azerbaijan ranks 177th out of 196 countries.[[255]](#cite_note-255) [BBC](/wiki/British_Broadcasting_Corporation), [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](/wiki/Radio_Free_Europe/Radio_Liberty) and [Voice of America](/wiki/Voice_of_America) are banned in Azerbaijan.[[256]](#cite_note-256) During the last few years, three journalists were killed and several prosecuted in trials described as unfair by international human rights organizations. Azerbaijan has the biggest number of journalists imprisoned in Europe and Central Asia in 2015, according to the [Committee to Protect Journalists](/wiki/Committee_to_Protect_Journalists), and is the 5th most censored country in the world, ahead of Iran and China.[[257]](#cite_note-257) A report by an [Amnesty International](/wiki/Amnesty_International) researcher in October 2015 points to '...the severe deterioration of human rights in Azerbaijan over the past few years. Sadly Azerbaijan has been allowed to get away with unprecedented levels of repression and in the process almost wipe out its civil society'.[[258]](#cite_note-258) Amnesty's 2015/16 annual report[[259]](#cite_note-259) on the country stated ' ... persecution of political dissent continued. Human rights organizations remained unable to resume their work. At least 18 prisoners of conscience remained in detention at the end of the year. Reprisals against independent journalists and activists persisted both in the country and abroad, while their family members also faced harassment and arrests. International human rights monitors were barred and expelled from the country. Reports of torture and other ill-treatment persisted.'

### Sports[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=35)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|150px|](/wiki/File:Shakhriyar_Mamedyarov_2013.jpg)[Shakhriyar Mamedyarov](/wiki/Shakhriyar_Mamedyarov) was the 2013 [World Rapid Chess](/wiki/World_Rapid_Chess_Championship) and two-time [European Team Chess](/wiki/European_Team_Chess_Championship) champion.

Sport in Azerbaijan has ancient roots, and even now, both traditional and modern sports are still practiced. [Freestyle wrestling](/wiki/Freestyle_wrestling) has been traditionally regarded as Azerbaijan's [national sport](/wiki/National_sport), in which Azerbaijan won up to [fourteen medals](/wiki/Azerbaijan_at_the_Olympics), including four golds since joining the [National Olympic Committee](/wiki/National_Olympic_Committee). Currently, the most popular sports include [football](/wiki/Association_football) and [chess](/wiki/Chess).[[260]](#cite_note-260) Football is the most popular sport in Azerbaijan, and the [Association of Football Federations of Azerbaijan](/wiki/Association_of_Football_Federations_of_Azerbaijan) with 9,122 registered players, is the largest sporting association in the country.[[261]](#cite_note-261)[[262]](#cite_note-262) The [national football team](/wiki/Azerbaijan_national_football_team) of Azerbaijan demonstrates relatively low performance in the international arena compared to the nation football clubs. The most successful Azerbaijani football clubs are [Neftchi Baku](/wiki/Neftchi_Baku_PFC), [Inter Baku](/wiki/Inter_Baku), [Qarabağ](/wiki/FK_Qarabağ), and [Khazar Lankaran](/wiki/Khazar_Lankaran). In [2012](/wiki/2012-13_UEFA_Europa_League), Neftchi Baku became the first Azerbaijani team to advance to the group stage of a European competition, beating [APOEL](/wiki/APOEL_F.C.) of Cyprus 4-2 on aggregate in the play-off round of the [2012-13 UEFA Europa League](/wiki/2012-13_UEFA_Europa_League).[[263]](#cite_note-263)[[264]](#cite_note-264) In [2014](/wiki/2014-15_UEFA_Europa_League), Qarabağ became the second Azerbaijani club advancing to the group stage of [UEFA Europa League](/wiki/UEFA_Europa_League). [Futsal](/wiki/Futsal) is another popular sport in Azerbaijan. The [Azerbaijan national futsal team](/wiki/Azerbaijan_national_futsal_team) reached fourth place in the [2010 UEFA Futsal Championship](/wiki/2010_UEFA_Futsal_Championship), while domestic club [Araz Naxçivan](/wiki/Araz_Naxçivan) clinched bronze medals at the [2009–10 UEFA Futsal Cup](/wiki/2009–10_UEFA_Futsal_Cup) and [2013–14 UEFA Futsal Cup](/wiki/2013–14_UEFA_Futsal_Cup).[[265]](#cite_note-265) Azerbaijan is the main sponsor of Spanish football club [Atlético de Madrid](/wiki/Atlético_de_Madrid), a partnership that the club describes should 'promote the image of Azerbaijan in the world'.[[266]](#cite_note-266) Azerbaijan is one of the traditional powerhouses of world chess,[[267]](#cite_note-267) having hosted many international chess tournaments and competitions and became [European Team Chess Championship](/wiki/European_Team_Chess_Championship) winners in 2009 and 2013.[[268]](#cite_note-268)[[269]](#cite_note-269)[[270]](#cite_note-270) Notable chess players from country's chess schools that made a great impact on the game in world, includes [Teimour Radjabov](/wiki/Teimour_Radjabov), [Shahriyar Mammadyarov](/wiki/Shahriyar_Mammadyarov), [Vladimir Makogonov](/wiki/Vladimir_Makogonov), [Vugar Gashimov](/wiki/Vugar_Gashimov) and former [World Chess Champion](/wiki/World_Chess_Champion) [Garry Kasparov](/wiki/Garry_Kasparov). [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), country's home of [Shamkir Chess](/wiki/Shamkir_Chess) a category 22 event and one of the highest rated tournaments of all time.[[271]](#cite_note-271) [Backgammon](/wiki/Backgammon) also plays a major role in Azerbaijani culture.[[272]](#cite_note-272) The game is very popular in Azerbaijan and is widely played among the local public.[[273]](#cite_note-273) There are also different variations of backgammon developed and analyzed by Azerbaijani experts.[[274]](#cite_note-274)[thumb|left|](/wiki/File:The_opening_ceremony_of_the_first_European_games_7.jpg)[Baku National Stadium](/wiki/Baku_National_Stadium) was used for the first [European Games](/wiki/European_Games) in June 2015. Azerbaijan is one of the leading volleyball countries in the world and its [Azerbaijan Women's Volleyball Super League](/wiki/Azerbaijan_Women's_Volleyball_Super_League) is one of strongest women leagues in world. Its women's national team came fourth at the [2005 European Championship](/wiki/2005_Women's_European_Volleyball_Championship).[[275]](#cite_note-275) Over the last years, clubs like [Rabita Baku](/wiki/Rabita_Baku) and [Azerrail Baku](/wiki/Azerrail_Baku) achieved great success at European cups.[[276]](#cite_note-276) Azerbaijani volleyball players include likes of [Valeriya Korotenko](/wiki/Valeriya_Korotenko), [Oksana Parkhomenko](/wiki/Oksana_Parkhomenko), [Inessa Korkmaz](/wiki/Inessa_Korkmaz), [Natalya Mammadova](/wiki/Natalya_Mammadova) and [Alla Hasanova](/wiki/Alla_Hasanova).

Azerbaijan has a [Formula One race-track](/wiki/Baku_City_Circuit) and country hosted its first [Formula One](/wiki/Formula_One) Grand Prix on 19 June 2016.[[277]](#cite_note-277) Other well-known Azerbaijani athletes are [Namig Abdullayev](/wiki/Namig_Abdullayev), [Toghrul Asgarov](/wiki/Toghrul_Asgarov), [Rovshan Bayramov](/wiki/Rovshan_Bayramov), [Sharif Sharifov](/wiki/Sharif_Sharifov), [Mariya Stadnik](/wiki/Mariya_Stadnik) and [Farid Mansurov](/wiki/Farid_Mansurov) in [wrestling](/wiki/Amateur_wrestling), [Elnur Mammadli](/wiki/Elnur_Mammadli), [Elkhan Mammadov](/wiki/Elkhan_Mammadov_(judoka)) and [Nazim Huseynov](/wiki/Nazim_Huseynov) in judo, [Rafael Aghayev](/wiki/Rafael_Aghayev) in [karate](/wiki/Karate), [Magomedrasul Majidov](/wiki/Magomedrasul_Majidov) and [Aghasi Mammadov](/wiki/Aghasi_Mammadov) in [boxing](/wiki/Boxing), [Nizami Pashayev](/wiki/Nizami_Pashayev) in [Olympic weightlifting](/wiki/Olympic_weightlifting), [Azad Asgarov](/wiki/Azad_Asgarov) in [pankration](/wiki/Pankration), [Eduard Mammadov](/wiki/Eduard_Mammadov) in kickboxing, and [K-1](/wiki/K-1) fighter [Zabit Samedov](/wiki/Zabit_Samedov).

Azerbaijan hosted several major sport competitions in last decade, including the [2013 F1 Powerboat World Championship](/wiki/2013_F1_Powerboat_World_Championship_season), [2012 FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup](/wiki/2012_FIFA_U-17_Women's_World_Cup), [2011 AIBA World Boxing Championships](/wiki/2011_AIBA_World_Boxing_Championships), [2010 European Wrestling Championships](/wiki/2010_European_Wrestling_Championships), [2009 Rhythmic Gymnastics European Championships](/wiki/2009_Rhythmic_Gymnastics_European_Championships), [2014 European Taekwondo Championships](/wiki/European_Taekwondo_Championships).[[278]](#cite_note-278) On 8 December 2012, [Baku](/wiki/Baku) was selected to host the [2015 European Games](/wiki/2015_European_Games), the first to be held in competition's history.[[279]](#cite_note-279) The most important annual sporting events held in the country are [Baku Cup](/wiki/Baku_Cup) and [Tour d'Azerbaïdjan](/wiki/Tour_d'Azerbaïdjan) cycling race. [Template:Clear](/wiki/Template:Clear)

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=36)]

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* [Outline of Azerbaijan](/wiki/Outline_of_Azerbaijan)
* [Index of Azerbaijan-related articles](/wiki/Index_of_Azerbaijan-related_articles)

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General information

* [Azerbaijan International](http://AZER.com)
* [Heydar Aliyev Foundation](http://www.azerbaijan.az)
* [Template:Dmoz](/wiki/Template:Dmoz)
* [Template:CIA World Factbook link](/wiki/Template:CIA_World_Factbook_link)
* [Azerbaijan](http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/govpubs/for/azerbaijan.htm) at [University of Colorado at Boulder](/wiki/University_of_Colorado_at_Boulder)
* [Country profile](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1235976.stm) from [BBC](/wiki/BBC)
* [Key Development Forecasts for Azerbaijan](http://www.ifs.du.edu/ifs/frm_CountryProfile.aspx?Country=AZ) from [International Futures](/wiki/International_Futures)
* [Template:Osmrelation-inline](/wiki/Template:Osmrelation-inline)

Major government resources

* [President of Azerbaijan website](http://www.president.az/?locale=en)
* [Azerbaijan State Statistical Committee](http://www.azstat.org/indexen.php)
* [United Nations Office in Azerbaijan](http://www.un-az.org)

Major news media

* [Azerbaijan Today](http://today.az/)
* [Azerbaijan Press Agency](http://en.apa.az/)
* [Trend News Agency](http://en.trend.az/)
* [News.Az](http://www.news.az/)

Tourism

* [Azerbaijan Tourism Portal](http://azerbaijan.tourism.az/?/en/)
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