



# Historical Dictionary of Azerbaijan

*Tadeusz Swietochowski, Brian C. Collins*

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The history of Azerbaijan is a chronology of its domination. Its most recent ruler was the USSR, but Azerbaijan has been within the boundaries of many conquerors from the Medians to Alexander the Great to the Arabs and Turks. Through the long history of foreign occupations, the Azeris have preserved a national identity and they have periodically generated local leaders. With the recent break up of the USSR, Azerbaijan can once again assert itself as an independent nation. Strategically located and of economic interest to other nations, Azerbaijan cannot be ignored.

The Azeris are united by their language, Azeris, their religion, Islam, and a common history. However, since the Russian conquest of northern Azerbaijan in the first half of the nineteenth century, they have been divided by politics. Azerbaijan is a divided land; its cultural boundaries stretch beyond the geopolitical ones so that a large portion of what was once Azerbaijan is currently part of Iran, and more Azerbaijanis live within Iran (in Iranian Azerbaijan) than in the independent Republic of Azerbaijan.

The contemporary history of Azerbaijan has been a complicated story. There is an on-going conflict with neighboring Armenia which has shaped not only foreign policy and relations, but the domestic politics of the nation. Those politics have been further complicated by Western interest in Azerbaijani off-shore oil deposits.

Given its history, Azerbaijan is certainly not the easiest country to describe. This historical dictionary does an excellent job despite the difficulties. It provides entries on persons, institutions and events, with some emphasis on recent periods, but with a view of the earliest history. There are other entries on the important aspects of the economy, society, religion and culture. Also useful are an introduction for context, and a helpful chronology. A select bibliography of works in English and other languages completes the volume.

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