



AZERBAIJAN SUPPLEMENTAL BRIEFING

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by the Oklahoma State University

Wes Watkins Center for International Trade Development



WES WATKINS CENTER FOR
**INTERNATIONAL
TRADE DEVELOPMENT**
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I. Azerbaijani History and Government, Society and Culture

1. HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

A) History to 1993

The Republic of Azerbaijan is situated in the Caucasus region of Eurasia, north of Iran and east of the Caspian Sea.



Islam spread rapidly in Azerbaijan following the Arab conquests during the seventh and eighth centuries. After the power of the Arab Caliphate waned, several semi-independent states formed; the Shirvanshah kingdom being one of them. In the eleventh century, the conquering Seljuk Turks laid the ethnic foundation of contemporary Azerbaijan. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the country sustained Mongol-Tatar invasions.

The first state with the name "Azerbaijan" was proclaimed in July 1501, when Shah Ismail Safavi, the founder of the Turkic-speaking Persian Safavid Dynasty, crowned himself as the shah of Azerbaijan. A year later, **Azerbaijan became part of the larger Safavid state of Persia.**

Azerbaijan underwent a period of feudal fragmentation in the mid-eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries and consisted of independent khanates. Following the two wars between the Qajar Iranian Empire, as well as the Ganja, Guba, Baku and other independent khanates, and the Russian Empire, **Azerbaijan was acquired by Russia through the Treaty of Gulistan in 1813, and the Treaty of Turkmenchay in 1828, and several earlier treaties.**

In 1873, oil ("black gold") was discovered in the city of Baku, which, by the beginning of the twentieth century, supplied almost half of the oil used in the world. After the collapse of the Russian Empire during World War I, Azerbaijan together with Armenia and Georgia became part of the short-lived Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic. The republic dissolved in May 1918, and Azerbaijan became independent as the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. This was the first parliamentary Muslim republic in the world but lasted only two years, from 1918 to 1920, before the Soviet Red Army invaded. In March 1922, Azerbaijan, along with Armenia and Georgia, became part of the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (TSFSR) within



the newly formed Soviet Union. In 1936, the TSFSR was dissolved, and Azerbaijan became a constituent republic of the USSR as the Azerbaijan SSR.

During World War II, Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Adolf Hitler sought to capture Azerbaijan's oil-rich capital of Baku. Soviet oil workers were obliged to work non-stop, and citizens were to dig entrenchments and anti-tank obstacles in order to block an invasion. However, the German army was stalled in the mountains of Caucasus and were then defeated at the Battle of Stalingrad.

In 1990, Azeris began to push for independence in demonstrations that were brutally suppressed by Soviet intervention, in what Azeris refer to as Black January. **In 1991, however, Azerbaijan reestablished its independence upon the collapse of the Soviet Union. When Azerbaijan declared its independence from the former Soviet Union on August 30, 1991, Ayaz Mutalibov, the former first secretary of the Azerbaijani Communist Party, became the country's first president.**

Following a massacre of Azerbaijanis at Khojali in Nagorno-Karabakh in March 1992, Mutalibov resigned, to be returned to power in May 1992. But less than a week later his efforts to suspend scheduled presidential elections and ban all political activity prompted the opposition Popular Front Party (PFP) to organize a resistance movement and take power. **The PFP dissolved the predominantly communist Supreme Soviet and transferred its functions to the 50-member upper house of the legislature, the National Council.**

Elections in June 1992 resulted in the selection of PFP leader Abulfaz Elçibay as the country's second president. The PFP-dominated government, however, proved incapable of managing the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, or managing the economy. Growing discontent culminated in June 1993 in an armed insurrection in Ganja, Azerbaijan's second-largest city. President Elçibay fled to his native province of Nakhichevan where he remained until his death in 2000. The National Council conferred presidential powers upon its new speaker, Heydar Aliyev, former first secretary of the Azerbaijani Communist Party (1969–1981) and later a member of the USSR Politburo, the KGB, and USSR Deputy Prime Minister (until 1987). Elçibay was formally deposed by a national referendum in August 1993, and Aliyev was elected to a five-year term as president in October.

Azerbaijan's first parliament was elected in 1995. The second 125-member unicameral parliament was elected in November 2000 in an election that some suggested did not meet international standards as free and fair. Most members were from the president's New Azerbaijan Party.¹

B) Recent History and Political Climate

Former President & National Leader Heydar Alirza oglu Aliyev (May 10, 1923 – December 12, 2003) studied at the USSR State Security Committee's (KGB) Senior Staff Training School, and was appointed as department head at the State Security Committee of Azerbaijan SSR in 1950, and served in various official Soviet capacities until the early 1990's. In January 1990, immediately after Soviet troops' bloody suppression of independence demonstrations in Baku on the night of January 19-20, 1990, Heydar visited the office of Azerbaijan's representative in Moscow. He demanded punishment for the organizers and perpetrators of the crime against the people of Azerbaijan. In July 1991, Heydar Aliyev left the Soviet Communist Party in protest against the USSR's policy towards the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. Having returned to Baku, Heydar left for Nakhchivan where he was elected as a member of the Supreme Council of Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. In May-June 1993, Azerbaijan



was on the verge of civil war and risked losing its independence. **Following a surge of popular support of his leadership, on June 15, 1993, Heydar was elected as chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and on June 24th took office as President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Heydar was elected as President of the Republic of Azerbaijan in nationwide voting held on October 3, 1993.** Heydar won reelection to another five-year term in 1998, amid reports of election irregularities. By the early 2000's, Heydar's health was beginning to fail, and Heydar's son Ilham, then a member of the Milli Majlis (Parliament) began to emerge as a likely successor.

On August 4, 2003, following the approval of Parliament, Ilham Heydar Oglu Aliyev was appointed as Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan. It proved to be a brief appointment, during which Ilham called Azerbaijan "a country who has made its choice to become a democratic society," and his first act was to announce that he would make no changes "in the policy of Heydar Aliyev," maintain the same advisers, and strive to "preserve stability".

The senior Aliyev, although in poor health, retained the presidency while his son Ilham became Prime Minister. This set off a dramatic series of events. Had Heydar died while President, Ilham, as Prime Minister, would have become acting president under constitutional changes pushed through the previous year. Instead, soon after Ilham was named Prime Minister, not only did Heydar step down as President, he withdrew his presidential candidacy for the upcoming October election, clearing the way for Ilham to run in his stead. However, the opposition soon uncovered a legal flaw: according to the Azerbaijani election code, Ilham could not be both Prime Minister and a presidential candidate. So, Ilham announced he was taking an unpaid leave from the Prime Minister post that would last until the election. Rasi-Zade, who at that time was said to be too ill to continue as Prime Minister, nevertheless became acting Prime Minister while Ilham was on leave.

On October 15, 2003, Ilham was elected as President of the Republic of Azerbaijan with more than 76 percent of votes. On December 12, 2003, the national leader and former President of the Azerbaijani people Heydar Aliyev died at Cleveland Hospital in the United States of America and was laid to rest at the Alley of Honors in Baku a few days later on December 15.

Some members of the political opposition characterized these events as a dynastic succession and the start of a new style monarchy. For example, Ali Kerimli, leader of the Azerbaijan Popular Front, viewed the transition as an affront to Azerbaijan's democratic aspirations by a leader who "at the end of his days appoints his successor, like an emperor or a king." Yet friends and allies, such as senior presidential aide Ali Hasanov, view Ilham Aliyev's rise as the advent of a Western-oriented "liberal with a global outlook."

2. GOVERNMENT

Azerbaijan is a presidential republic, in which the legislative and judicial branches have only limited independence, and the president has a great deal of power. Some have raised concerns about censorship within the country and demonstrations are not encouraged. The president is elected by popular vote to a five-year term and is eligible re-election. The prime minister and first deputy prime ministers are appointed by the president and confirmed by the National Assembly. The Council of Ministers, or cabinet, is appointed by the president and confirmed by the National



Assembly. The National Assembly, or Milli Mejlis, consists of members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms on the 125-seat unicameral body. **Azerbaijan has universal suffrage for those above the age of 18.**

The judicial branch is headed by a constitutional court, which is a high court whose main role is to rule on challenged laws. The Supreme Court supervises the lower courts and applies the law as established by the constitution. There is also an economic court. The chair of the Supreme Court and the Economic Court are appointed and dismissed by the National Assembly on the recommendation of the president. The chair and deputy chair of the constitutional court are appointed solely by the president. The judiciary is only nominally independent. The justice system has changed little since the Soviet era. Azerbaijan is a secular state and has been a member of the Council of Europe since 2001, an EU's European Neighborhood Policy partner since 2006, a NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) member since 1994, a member of the NATO Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) since 2004, and a Commonwealth of Independent States member since 1991. The nation was elected to the newly established Human Rights Council of the United Nations in 2006.

The Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic (an exclave of Azerbaijan) borders Armenia to the north and east, Iran to the south and west, and Turkey to the northwest. The Nagorno-Karabakh region in the southwest of Azerbaijan proper declared itself independent from Azerbaijan in 1991, but it is not recognized by any nation and is considered a legal part of Azerbaijan (for more on recent developments and the conflict in this region, see the "Hot Topics" section starting on p.9).

The New Azerbaijan Party was founded on November 21, 1992, under the leadership of Heydar Aliyev. After his election as President of Azerbaijan on October 3, 1993, and party's victory at 1995 parliamentary elections, YAP became the ruling party, a position it has maintained since that time. The party's stated ideologies are lawfulness, secularism, and Azerbaijani nationalism.

3. SOCIETY

A) Religion in Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan is mostly Shia Muslim, although there are Russian Orthodox and Jewish communities. Although most of the Azerbaijan's population is classified as Muslim, **very few Azeris would describe themselves as religious**. Azerbaijan is a secular state and religion is viewed as a very private matter. **The country observes freedom of religion**. Nevertheless, it's best to be respectful about religion and around religious sites. This includes **avoiding taking photos of mosques and churches**, unless the photographer has explicitly asked permission.²

B) Language in Azerbaijan

The official language is Azerbaijani or "Azeri", a Turkic language. It is estimated that some **82% of Azerbaijan's citizens speak Azerbaijani as their first language**. In addition, **38% of Azerbaijanis speak Russian fluently** as a direct result of Russian influence in the economy and politics.



The Azerbaijani language is part of the 'Oghuz', or 'Western Turkic', group of Turkic languages, together with Anatolian Turkish (spoken in Turkey) and Turkmen (spoken in Turkmenistan). Dialectical differences between Azerbaijani and Anatolian Turkish have been attributed to Mongolian and Turkic influences. **Despite these differences, Anatolian Turkish speakers and Azerbaijanis can often understand one another if they speak carefully.**

Spoken Azerbaijani includes several dialects. Since the nineteenth century, Russian loanwords (particularly technical terms) and grammatical and lexical structures have entered the Azerbaijani language (especially in Russian-controlled areas of Azerbaijan) as have Persian words in Iranian influenced areas of Azerbaijan. The resulting variants remain mutually intelligible, however.

C) Social Structures

i. Family

The family forms the basic social structure in Azerbaijan. This goes back to many Azeris' history as rural dwellers where a **clan (hoj)** would share land and work together to form a tight circle. A hoj would sometimes consist of up to 40 members. Today, the family unit is typically smaller - usually a married couple with children and possibly grandparents. Families still work as an interdependent unit and expect to receive both financial and emotional support from others. **Gender roles are traditional in much of Azerbaijan, with the man being the breadwinner and the woman taking care of domestic matters.**

ii. Hierarchical Society

Azeris are a very hierarchical society. Culture, traditions, family, and religious affiliation often take precedence over official laws. In fact, when the government has trouble resolving an issue, the president often appeals to the "agh sakkal" (prominent and respected people) to help find a solution. **"Agh sakkal" means "white beard".**

4. CULTURE

Azerbaijan's name means "Guardians of Fire" which was derived from the Persian "Azar," meaning "fire," and "Baijan," "protector or guardian." Azerbaijan's culture is heavily influenced by Europe and Islam with Russian, Turkish and Iranian heritage. The Azerbaijanis of today inherited the customs and practices of different ancient civilizations such as the Iranian Scythian tribe, the indigenous Caucasian Albanians, the Oghuz Turks, and the Alans, while western influence continues to seep in. Russian influence is more recent, as **the country was colonized by the Russian Empire for 80 years until the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was established in 1918.** The Soviets invaded the nation in 1920, and Azerbaijan remained under its rule until 1991, when the Soviet Union finally collapsed.³



Baku's Flame Towers (designed by American architecture, engineering, and urban planning firm HOK) pay homage to the country's name "Guardians of Fire."

II. Azerbaijani Customs, Etiquette, and Protocol

1. Social Conventions in Azerbaijan

Foreign women should dress modestly, especially in the rural areas, and cultivate a certain **coolness of manner**. Both men and women should avoid wearing shorts as this will attract unwelcome attention. Although mostly Muslim in population, Azerbaijan is a largely secular society that views religion as a private matter. **Handshaking is the normal form of greeting**. Business cards are invariably exchanged at any kind of official meeting, and not infrequently on first meeting socially as well. It's always a good idea to give gifts to people you meet, including business contacts. Flowers, post-cards, picture books and alcohol make excellent presents.⁴

2. Azeri Customs and Etiquette (Do's and don'ts)

A. Meeting and Greeting

- Like most cultures in the area, Azeris like warm and friendly greetings.
- **Men greet each other with a handshake, a kiss on the cheek and "salaam" (literally 'peace' but meaning 'hello').**
- **Women hug and kiss each other once on the left cheek. Azeri women do not generally shake hands among themselves, although many will shake hands with a foreigner.**
- **Males should wait and see if a woman extends her hand (although most will, the more religious may not) - if they do, shake it lightly.**
- Always take a moment to ask about family, health and business.
- **First names are generally used in social situations if the speakers are of similar ages.**
- **If you do not know the person well, use their first name followed by an appropriate title. For women, use "hanum" ("woman"). For men, use "bey" ("Mr").**
 - For example, Ahsan bey (Mr. Ahsan), Aiesha hanum (Ms. Aiesha).
- **Younger people always initiate greetings with older people.**



3. Business Etiquette, Customs and Protocol

A. Direct vs. Diplomatic Communication

- Information should always be presented in a way that is diplomatic and sensitive so as not to cause loss of face.
- The level of directness you can use is dictated by who you are speaking with.
- If it is a new, formal or important relationship, diplomacy is critical. If the relationship is well developed and a level of openness has been established a little more honesty is fine.
- **Although direct communication is seen as a positive in Azerbaijan, one must also be careful when employing directness.**

B. Business Cards

- There is no formal ritual surrounding exchange of cards.
- **It is a good idea to take plenty with you as it still forms the basic means of keeping contact details as opposed to electronic means.**
- **Give and receive cards with your right hand.**

C. Business Meetings

- There is a certain amount of protocol one must follow in meetings, as the Azerbaijan culture is formal. This means that **Azeris tend to be sensitive to status, title, who sits down first, enters the room first, etc. It is best to follow the lead.**
- Politeness is important and is all part of the relationship building process.
- **Discussions will often start slowly over tea and the topics of discussion may be completely irrelevant. However, this is the make-or-break part of your relationship - if you cannot strike up a rapport the chances of doing business together are slim.**
- **Always maintain eye contact while speaking since Azeris take this as a sign of sincerity.** If someone does not look them in the eye while speaking, they think the person has something to hide.
- **Decisions are reached slowly.**
- Never appear impatient or attempt to rush an Azeri to decide.
- **Expect a great deal of bargaining and haggling. - Azeris are tough negotiators.**

4. Dining Etiquette

A. If you are invited to an Azeri home for food

- **Remove your shoes before entering the house. You may be offered slippers to wear**
- Punctuality is not paramount. **Arriving within 30 minutes of the stipulated time is socially acceptable.**



- **Dress casually but smartly. Never wear tight or revealing clothing.**
- **If there are many people present shake hands with everyone.**
- Table manners are formal. If in doubt watch what others do.
- **Remain standing until invited to sit down. You may be shown to a particular seat.**
- **Keep your elbows off the table and your hands above the table when eating.**
- **The hostess generally serves the food. The elderly is served first, then the guests, and finally the children.**
- **Use your right hand only to eat and to pass things.**⁵

III. Hot Topics & Recent Events

1. Background: Azerbaijan-Armenian Conflict

"The Caucasus is a strategically important mountainous region in south-east Europe. For centuries, different powers in the region - both Christian and Muslim - have vied for control there. Modern-day Armenia and Azerbaijan became part of the Soviet Union when it formed in the 1920s. Nagorno-Karabakh was an ethnic-majority Armenian region, but the Soviets gave control over the area to Azerbaijani authorities.

It was only as the Soviet Union began to collapse in the late 1980s that Nagorno-Karabakh's regional parliament officially voted to become part of Armenia. Azerbaijan sought to suppress the separatist movement, while Armenia backed it. This led to ethnic clashes, and - after Armenia and Azerbaijan declared independence from Moscow - a full-scale war. Tens of thousands died and up to a million were displaced amid reports of ethnic cleansing and massacres committed by both sides. Most of those displaced in the war were Azerbaijanis. Armenian forces gained control of Nagorno-Karabakh and areas adjacent to it before a Russian-brokered ceasefire was declared in 1994. After that deal, Nagorno-Karabakh remained part of Azerbaijan, but since then has mostly been governed by a separatist, self-declared republic, run by ethnic Armenians and backed by the Armenian government. It also established the Nagorno-Karabakh Line of Contact, separating Armenian and Azerbaijan forces.

Peace talks have taken place since then, mediated by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group - a body set up in 1992 and chaired by France, Russia and the United States. But clashes continued, and a serious flare-up in 2016 saw the deaths of dozens of troops on both sides.

The conflict is further complicated by geopolitics. NATO member-state Turkey was the first nation to recognize Azerbaijan's independence in 1991. Former Azeri President Heydar Aliyev once described the two as "one nation with two states". Both share a Turkic culture and populations. Moreover, Turkey has no official relations with Armenia. In 1993 Turkey shut its border with Armenia in support of Azerbaijan during the war over Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia meanwhile has had good relations with Russia. There is a Russian military base in Armenia, and both are members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) military alliance. However, President Vladimir Putin also has maintained good relations with Azerbaijan.



Despite a 1994 cease-fire, Azerbaijan has not resolved its conflict with Armenia over the largely Armenian populated Nagorno-Karabakh region. Azerbaijan has lost 16 percent of its territory and must support some 528,000 internally displaced persons as a result of the conflict.⁶

In 2018, Armenia underwent a peaceful revolution, sweeping long-time ruler Serzh Sargsyan from power. Protest leader Nikol Pashinyan became the prime minister after free elections that year. Mr. Pashinyan agreed with Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev to de-escalate tensions and set up the first military hotline between the two countries. But in August 2019 Mr. Pashinyan told crowds of ethnic Armenians assembled in the main city in Karabakh, Stepanakert, that "Artsakh is Armenia, full stop." Artsakh is the Armenian name for Karabakh. The remarks angered Azerbaijan and were repeatedly condemned by President Aliyev. Fighting broke out in July 2020 on the international border between Armenia and Azerbaijan, some 300 km (185 miles) away from Nagorno-Karabakh. By the end of the month Turkey's military was taking part in large-scale joint exercises in Azerbaijan.

The latest conflict broke out on September 27, 2020. Armenia said Azerbaijan fired the first shots. Azerbaijan said it was launching a "counter-offensive" in response to Armenian aggression. Fighting came to an end in November when both sides agreed to sign a Russian-brokered peace deal. Under its terms, Azerbaijan holds on to several areas that it gained control of during the conflict and Armenia will withdraw troops from them. Almost 2,000 Russian peacekeepers will monitor the truce."⁷

2. Effects of Pandemic

"Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Azerbaijan, the U.S. Government has provided over \$5 million for Azerbaijan's COVID-19 response, over \$4 million of which is from USAID, to support the immediate and longer-term health and economic effects of the pandemic. These funds have contributed to the provision of food and hygiene supplies to vulnerable families and individuals across the country; communications to educate people on steps they can take to prevent and respond to the spread of the virus; and efforts to help improve local hospitals and health systems' ability to manage the pandemic, while continuing to provide critical health services including maternal and child health. This money funds efforts by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the national Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society, the World Health Organization, and UNICEF. In addition, USAID's flagship Private Sector Activity works to help Azerbaijan respond to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy and help small and medium-sized agriculture and agritourism enterprises succeed through the challenges presented by the pandemic."⁸

3. The US-Azerbaijan diplomatic relationship

Located at the crossroads of European-Asian trading routes, Azerbaijan was fought over by Russian, Persian and Ottoman forces for centuries. After the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917, Azerbaijan briefly became an independent state, but when the Red Army arrived in April of 1920 that status was terminated, and it became a constituent republic of the USSR. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States recognized Azerbaijan's independence.⁹

In 1992, the United States established diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan. "Together, the two countries work to promote European energy security, expand bilateral trade and investment, and combat terrorism and transnational threats. The United States is committed to strengthening democracy and promoting economic diversification in Azerbaijan. The United States strongly supports efforts to pursue a lasting and sustainable political solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh



conflict through the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and promote regional stability, peace, and prosperity."¹⁰

Navigating the diplomatic tensions in the region is a complex matter, as was made clear in the responses to a recent announcement. On April 24, 2021, President Joe Biden released a statement declaring that the killing and deportation of up to 1.5 million Armenians during World War I constituted genocide. The statement, released on Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day, marked the first time a U.S. president formally equated the violence against Armenians with atrocities on the scale of those committed in Nazi-occupied Europe.

Turkey, the modern-day successor of the Ottoman Empire, adamantly denies that the killings were part of a systematic plan to erase the Armenian population that would meet the U.N. definition of genocide. Authors and journalists in Turkey who use the term "genocide" have been prosecuted for "insulting Turkishness."

During World War One, the Germany-aligned Ottoman government accused the Armenians of treachery after suffering a heavy defeat at the hands of Russian forces. On April 24, 1915, Ottoman authorities arrested several hundred Armenian leaders and intellectuals, an event seen by many as the beginning of the massacre. One and a half million Armenians were killed by soldiers and police, or died of starvation and exhaustion in long, cruel marches to concentration camps in what is now northern Syria and Iraq. About 500,000 Armenians survived, and many eventually emigrated to Russia, the U.S. and elsewhere. Turkey claims that 300,000 Armenians died of disease and hunger as they were being deported."¹¹

The responses to President Biden's declaration were divergent, with Turkish representatives renouncing or rejecting the claim, Armenian representatives enthusiastically welcoming it, and the Foreign Ministry of Azerbaijan calling the statement "unfortunate" and suggesting it "distorted the historical facts."¹²

IV. Appendices

Republic of Azerbaijan Cabinet of Ministers¹³

1. Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Ali Asadov
2. First Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Yagub Eyyubov
3. Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Ali Ahmadov
4. Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan - Shahin Mustafayev
5. Minister of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Vilayat Eyvazov
6. Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Mukhtar Babayev
7. Minister of Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Parviz Shahbazov
8. Minister of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Fikrat Mammadov
9. Minister of Labor and Social Protection of Population of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Sahil Babayev
10. Minister of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Kamaladdin Heydarov
11. Minister of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Azad Rahimov
12. Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Jeyhun Bayramov
13. Minister of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Mikayil Jabbarov
14. Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Inam Karimov
15. Minister of Finance of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Samir Sharifov
16. Minister of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Anar Karimov
17. Minister of Defense of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Zakir Hasanov
18. Minister of Defense Industry of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Madat Guliyev
19. Minister of Transport, Communications and High Technologies of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Rashad Nabiyeu
20. Minister of Health of the Republic of Azerbaijan –
21. Minister of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Emin Amrullayev
22. Chairperson of the State Committee on Family, Women`s and Children`s Problems – Bahar Muradova
23. Chairman of the State Committee on Diaspora Affairs – Fuad Muradov
24. Chairman of the State Committee for Work with Religious Associations – Mubariz Gurbanli
25. Chairman of the State Customs Committee – Safar Mehdiyev
26. Chairman of the State Statistics Committee – Tahir Budagov
27. Chairman of the State Urban Planning and Architecture Committee – Anar Quliyev
28. Chairman of the State Committee on Refugee and IDP Affairs – Rovshan Rzayev
29. Chief of the State Migration Service – Vusal Huseynov
30. Chief of the State Border Service – Elchin Guliyev
31. Chief of the State Security Service – Ali Naqiyev
32. Chief of the Foreign Intelligence Service – Orkhan Sultanov
33. Chief of the State Mobilization and Conscription Service – Arzu Rahimov
34. Chairman of the Food Safety Agency – Goshgar Tahmazli
35. Chairman of the State Tourism Agency – Fuad Naghiyev

Key Public Figures

Current President Ilham Heydar oglu Aliyev (1961-)¹⁴



Ilham was born in the city of Baku on December 24, 1961. **From 1994 to August 2003, Ilham was vice-president and first vice-president of the State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR). He has been actively involved in the implementation of the oil strategy put in place by national leader Heydar. In 1995 and 2000, Ilham was elected as a member of the Milli Majlis (Parliament) of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In 1999, he was elected as deputy chairman, in 2001 as first deputy chairman and in 2005 as chairman of the New Azerbaijan Party. He has been president of the National Olympic Committee of Azerbaijan since 1997.**

He is a reserved man who wears a mustache and favors conservative blue suits, an accomplished linguist (Azerbaijani, Russian, English, French, and Turkish languages) who trained to

be a Soviet diplomat. **Ilham is married to Mehriban Arif gizi Aliyeva, and they have three children (Leyla, Arzu, and Heydar).**

Vice President & First Lady Mehriban Arif Gizi Aliyeva (1964-)¹⁵

Vice President & First Lady Mehriban Arif gizi Aliyeva was appointed the First Vice President of Azerbaijan on February 21, 2017. This office was created through a constitutional referendum in 2016. **This appointment terminated the role she had previously held as a Member of Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan.**



Mehriban Aliyeva (née Pashayeva) was born in Baku in 1964 and is from a very influential Azerbaijani family. Trained as an eye doctor, in 1988-1992, she worked at the Eye Diseases Scientific Research Institute in Moscow. In 1995, Mehriban founded "Azerbaijani Culture Foundation", which she currently heads. Mehriban has headed the Heydar Aliyev Foundation since 2004, which was founded to study the rich political legacy and promote the national statehood ideas of national leader of Azerbaijan Heydar Aliyev. **In August 2004, Mehriban was named Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO for her role in protection and development of Azerbaijan's intangible folk literature and national musical legacy. In December 2004, Mehriban was elected as a member of the Executive Committee of NOC at the 4th General Assembly of the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Mehriban has been a member of the New Azerbaijan Party's Political Council since 2004, and deputy chairman of the party since 2013. In 2005, 2010 and 2015, Mehriban was elected as a Member of Parliament at the third, fourth and fifth convocations of the Milli Mejlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In June 2016, Mehriban was elected as a member of the World Azerbaijanis Coordination Board.**

Former President & National Leader Heydar Alirza Oglu Aliyev (1923-2003)¹⁶



Prime Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Ali Asadovk (1956-)¹⁷

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