

The Caucasus

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. Many groups have ruled and influenced the Caucasus during its long history.
2. Today the Caucasus republics are working to improve their economies but struggle with ethnic unrest and conflict.

The Big Idea

In an area long ruled by outside groups, the Caucasus republics are struggling to strengthen their economies and to deal with ethnic unrest.

Key Places

Tbilisi, p. 508

Yerevan, p. 509

Baku, p. 510

TAKING NOTES

As you read, use a chart like the one here to take notes on the three countries of the Caucasus. Include information about history and government.

Georgia	Armenia	Azerbaijan

If YOU lived there...

You live in Tbilisi, the capital of the country of Georgia. Several years ago, your sister and her college friends joined the Rose Revolution, a political protest that forced a corrupt president to resign. The protestors' symbol was a red rose. Since the protest, you have become more interested in politics.

What kind of government do you want?

BUILDING BACKGROUND Georgia is one of three republics in the area called the Caucasus. In 1991, when the Soviet Union ended, the Caucasus republics gained independence. Since then, the republics have struggled to become democracies with market economies.

History

The Caucasus lies in the rugged Caucasus Mountains between the Black and Caspian seas. Located where Europe blends into Asia, the Caucasus reflects a range of cultural influences. At one time or another, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Turks, and Mongols have all ruled or invaded the area. The Russians took control of much of the Caucasus in the early 1800s.

Russian control in the Caucasus did not include what is now western Armenia. The Ottoman Turks held this area. Over time, the Turks grew to distrust the Armenians, however; and in the late 1800s began abusing and killing them. During World War I (1914–1918), the Turks forced all Armenians to leave. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians died during this ethnic cleansing, or attempt to remove an ethnic group. The Turks lost World War I, though, and had to give up western Armenia.

After World War I, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia gained independence—but not for long. By the early 1920s they were part of the vast Soviet Union. Finally in 1991, when the Soviet Union fell, the Caucasus republics achieved true independence.

READING CHECK **Finding Main Ideas** Why do the countries in the Caucasus reflect a range of cultural influences?



The snow-capped peaks of the Caucasus Mountains rise above a mountain village and the remains of a fortress built in the 900s.



The Caucasus Today

The Caucasus may have a long history, but the Caucasus countries do not. Like other former Soviet republics, these young countries have had to create new governments and economies. Meanwhile, ethnic unrest and conflicts have slowed progress.

The Caucasus republics have similar governments. An elected president governs each nation, and an appointed prime minister runs each government. An elected parliament, or legislature, makes the laws.

Georgia

The country of Georgia lies in the Caucasus Mountains east of the Black Sea. **Tbilisi** is the capital. About 70 percent of the people are ethnic Georgians, and most belong to the Georgian Orthodox Church. The official language is Georgian, a unique language with its own alphabet. However, many other languages are also spoken.

Since 1991 Georgia has struggled with unrest and civil war. In 2003 Georgians forced out their president in the peaceful Rose Revolution. Meanwhile, ethnic groups in northern Georgia were fighting for independence. Because these groups now hold parts of northern Georgia, division and unrest continues.

Although unrest has hurt Georgia's economy, international aid is helping it improve. Georgia's economy is based on services and farming. Major crops include citrus fruits, grapes, and tea. In addition, Georgia produces steel and mines copper and manganese. Georgia is also famous for its wines. The Black Sea is a resort area, and tourism contributes to the economy, too.

Armenia

South of Georgia is the small, landlocked country of Armenia. The tiny country is slightly larger than the state of Maryland. **Yerevan** (yer-uh-VAHN) is the capital. Almost all the people are ethnic Armenian. Armenia prides itself as being the first country to adopt Christianity, and most people belong to the Armenian Orthodox Church.

- Location** South of western Russia, the Caucasus is located where Europe blends into Asia.
- 1. Name** What two seas border the Caucasus?
 - 2. Contrast** Based on the map, how does Armenia differ from Azerbaijan and Georgia?



Baku

Located on the Caspian Sea, the city of Baku is the capital and chief port of Azerbaijan.

This conflict has greatly hurt Armenia's economy. However, international aid is helping Armenia's economy recover and expand. For example, diamond processing is now a growing industry in Armenia.

Azerbaijan

East of Armenia is Azerbaijan. In contrast to the other Caucasus republics, Azerbaijan is largely Muslim. The Azeri (uh-ZE-ree) make up 90 percent of the population.

Azerbaijan's economy is based on oil, found along and under the Caspian Sea. **Baku**, the capital, is the center of a large oil-refining industry. This industry has led to strong economic growth. Corruption is high, though; and many people are poor. In addition, Azerbaijan has many refugees as a result of its conflict with Armenia.

FOCUS ON READING

What general statements can you make about the Caucasus as a whole?

In the early 1990s, Armenia fought a bitter war with its neighbor Azerbaijan. The war involved an area of Azerbaijan where most people are ethnic Armenian. Armenia wanted this area to become part of its country. Although a cease-fire stopped the fighting in 1994, Armenian armed forces still control the area. The issue remained unsettled as of the early 2000s.

READING CHECK Summarizing What challenges do the Caucasus republics face?

SUMMARY The Caucasus republics face challenges but are working to develop democracy and build their economies.

Section 4 Assessment

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Online Quiz
KEYWORD: S17 HP20

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and Places

- a. Identify** Which country controlled much of the Caucasus for most of the 1800s?

b. Identify Cause and Effect How did Turkish rule affect Armenians in the Ottoman Empire?

c. Elaborate How has location affected the history and culture of the Caucasus area?
- a. Recall** How does **Baku** contribute to the economy of Azerbaijan?

b. Compare and Contrast How is religion in Georgia and Armenia similar? How does religion in these countries differ from that in Azerbaijan?

c. Elaborate How has the war that occurred between Armenia and Azerbaijan affected each country?

Critical Thinking

- Comparing and Contrasting** Draw a Venn diagram like the one here. Use your notes to identify the ways in which Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan are similar and different.



FOCUS ON WRITING

- Collecting Details about the Caucasus** You have narrowed Russian locations to one possibility. What features do the Caucasus countries have that might be attractive to potential buyers? Identify one Caucasus location you might use in your ad.