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**AMERICAN THINKER: AZERBAIJAN TO LEAVE ITS MARK ON THE WORLD**

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By Elmira Tariverdiyeva – Trend

To talk of Azerbaijan only in terms of its energy resources is to do a disservice to the nation and its people, says Justin Amler, an Australian writer and commentator on international issues, in his article published by the American Thinker Oct. 29.

While those energy resources are critical to the future energy security of Europe and much of the region, it is only one aspect of this multidimensional country, says Amler.

The recent 5th Baku Humanitarian Forum showcased that which Azerbaijan most valuably has to offer the world – a model of a secular and modern Muslim-majority nation, where Shia, Sunni, Jew, Catholic, etc., live together absent the discord of much of the rest of the world, says the article.

Azerbaijani citizens worry not about what ethnic or religious group has more power, but about the economic downturn, education, life insurance, jobs, and juggling family with profession, says the author, adding that each distinct group has one commonality - they are all Azerbaijani.

Exploring Baku is taking a journey from a grand past to a cutting-edge future, according to Amler. Each street corner reveals grand buildings, their architecture harkening back to the eras of the famed Silk Road to Imperial Russia to today's staunchly independent Azerbaijan.

Towering behind them stand futuristic buildings that seem to leap from the ground, molded from the minds of artists and dreamers. Yet just a bit of the bland Soviet era remains, where functionality reigned supreme over style and where elegance gave way to insipidity, says Amler.

Over a millennium, perhaps this constant confluence of old and new/ancient and modern is what drives this quietness amongst its people, says the author, adding that throughout the history, Azerbaijanis have learned to adapt to numerous different worlds, peoples, and circumstances.

The pride of its citizens and their love for their nation and society is clear, he added.

While Azerbaijan is a Muslim-majority country, it is the polar opposite of the many Islamic and Muslim-majority nations of the neighboring Middle East, he says. Azerbaijan is a fierce defender of its state policy of secularism, yet also a vivacious proponent of religious freedom.

Despite the many ethnic tensions around the world, Azerbaijan has made pluralism a reality in ways the traditional western European countries can only dream about, according to him.

Western capitals would do well to study the fabric of Azerbaijani society, lest we improve our own, says Amler. Blessed with vast and critical energy resources, governed by stability and tolerance, driven by a modern and progressive outlook, embracing both a proud past and an exciting future, Azerbaijan may not always be easily found on a map, but its definitely leaving its mark on the world.

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