
Identifying A Strategy Of The Future : A New Policy Towards Modernization

Day.Az - 10/1/2008

Lincoln's legacy

"The work of a state in the long run is the work of the individuals composing it" (John Stuart Mill, 1806-1873; an ideologue of liberalism)

On 19 November 1863 the American politician and statesman Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) delivered a speech on the occasion of the opening of a memorial cemetery near Gettysburg for the victims of the Civil War in the USA which became an outstanding example of political eloquence. It was in this speech that Lincoln found a definition for democracy which has since become a classic. A former lumberjack and surveyor, the US president said the following: "We must swear our allegiance here to the great task facing us, and that is to do everything we possibly can to ensure that the sacrifices brought by those from whom we have accepted the baton of loyalty to the cause to which they fully devoted themselves, in hide and hair, that these sacrifices were not in vain, and that this nation before God will bring the beginning of a new birth of freedom and that the rule of people by the people and for the people will never disappear from the face of the earth."

Today, about 200 years after the time when these remarkable and historically important words were spoken, the concept of democracy as "the rule of people, by the people and for the people" is as topical and crucial as ever. The world order, which is so often associated with unilateralism, is shaping a new concept of social reality, transferring to a new plane the place and role of the processes of global integration. It is becoming obvious that our "post-mankind future", as [the American philosopher] Francis Fukuyama recently wrote, is being modified and is changing under the influence of the new local factors derived from the general global system of coordinates.

That is why here it is hard not to recall Friedrich Nietzsche, who wrote: "Enough! The time is coming when politics acquires a new meaning." And if [George] Hegel in 1806 and Fukuyama in 1999 were claiming the end of history, the former, basing himself on the lack of movement beyond the French Revolution, and the latter, being confident of the total triumph of liberalism after the collapse of the USSR, then in the new conditions of mondialism the question arises as to in what direction is history as a whole moving? This question is extremely topical for societies in transformation for which history predetermined the opportunity to formulate a new strategy of the future at the end of the last century.

Reforms in Azerbaijan

In the 20th century Azerbaijan experienced not only a change in its socioeconomic system, but also intensive reforms in political and public institutions. After Gorbachev's "democratisation", which brought with it a process of complete stagnation and the collapse of the communist system, which was already on the brink of total regress, there followed years of "Brown's" formation of statehood and the

breakdown and decentralization of the power hierarchy connected with this. This period, which affected all the states of the post-Soviet space, remained in the memory of millions as an era of dashed hopes, frustrated illusions and lost positions.

The optimism in relation to the global socialist stranglehold was very quickly replaced by uncertainty and pessimism over the future.

As the well-known American transitologist V.Bunce points out, "post-communism is something considerably larger than a transition to democracy; it is a revolution extending to politics, economics and social life". (V.Bunce: Comparing East and West. "Journal of Democracy", Vol 6, No 3, 1995. p92).

The discovery of independence set before the country the tasks of a transition from dictatorship to democracy, from a command economy to a free market, from being part of an empire with two centuries of history of expansionism to a nation state. The results of the social and geo-strategic realities of the epoch of Gorbachev's failings, as well as the subsequent institutional transformation gave rise to a syndrome of marginality which latently, but purposefully had an impact on shaping social, political and economic institutions.

As time passed it was not only the way of life and people's standards of behaviour that changed, but the mechanisms of the inter-action between the governing and the governed, the "highs" and "lows" of society, as a whole were modified. At the same time, the institutional order which had been established by the epoch of communism, having suffered collapse, gave birth to the desire to use the world experience of political institutionalisation, having inevitably raised the question of the legitimacy and the means of borrowing this experience.

In Azerbaijan in the middle of the 1990s [late President] Heydar Aliyev began socio-political and economic changes aimed at creating an independent state and strengthening statehood, the centralization of the processes of government and a slowing down the process of the stagnation of the national economy. This period of national history became the basis and the primary source of the firm etatistic approach to building national statehood that was necessary at that time, the basic concept of which was Realpolitik as a priority component of the political, economic and socio-cultural modernization of Azerbaijani society. This approach radically cancelled out the aspirations, based on political romanticism and short-sightedness, of those who saw Azerbaijan as an arena of a clash of interests and a platform for carrying out the experiments of various client groups.

Entering new millennium

In short, the end of the 20th century was a starting-off point for national transformation, and Azerbaijan entered the new millennium with a still unestablished institutional design, but at a level of political-economical development which today enables one to make judgements about real and effective steps in building a system of effective statehood. In recent years a whole raft of decisions aimed at modernization have been carried out enabling Azerbaijan to be transformed from a society with a weak and backward economic system, a decadent political institutional system and a marginalized public awareness into a country of new behavioural standards and stereotypes, a sound political system and gradually shaping democratic institutions, characteristic of the market system of an economic structure.

The main thesis that was laid in the foundation of the structure of effective statehood consisted of a desire to ensure Azerbaijan's ability to compete in the market place in the regional processes and its full-fledged economic leadership of the South Caucasus.

The formation of a sound political system required an understanding of one of the results of the 20th century, a lesson which was extracted at the price of colossal social cataclysms. It was the relative, but extremely important advantage of the democratic model of socio-political institutions. The possibility of social consolidation, the optimisation of government and inter-action between the social and political factors, which is created by a fine, graded and well-oiled system of democratic representative institutions substantially consolidates a situation that enables even more effective work of the market a most important factor of a democratically developed state.

Today two aspects of national transition economic and political modernization determine socio-cultural transformation. Its substance in the main lies in transparency, new management stereotypes and other behavioural and socio-cultural standards and archetypes which have been "imported" to societies which are diverse in their stage of development and level of political and economic preparedness in the light of the broadening of the "third democratic wave" (see S.

Huntington: "The Third Wave").

Being a part of the "global democratic invasion", the changes in the socio-cultural background encourage the institutionalisation of post-industrial values, the formation of effective administrative factors and the building of a transparent social order. Democracy, a market economy and the ideal of a civic society have gradually been turned into the main reference point of the strategy of the development of society, thus becoming the fundamental links of a contemporary national state.

>From economics to democracy

"Politics is the same science as any other; it knows certain provisions, laws, rules, and also endless different combinations; it demands constant study and deep and long thought." (Jean-Paul Marat, 1743-1793)

The year 2003 saw the beginning of a new stage of national transformation, shifting the carefully aligned stable political system to an environment of the intensive formation of an advancing economic structure. The basic concept of Ilham Aliyev's presidency was the formation of a strong economic base to encourage the gradual transformation of the mass consciousness and the socio-cultural basis of society towards a course of post-industrial values and democratic traditions. Along with this, it was necessary to resolve a complex of geo-strategic and geo-economic tasks, to provide stability and solidity of national growth and to turn the country into a subject and not an object - of international relations, because in an age of the worldwide transformations which shape the New World Order, it was extremely important to ensure Azerbaijan's participation in the global processes.

In the context of understanding this fact, the country's political elite carried out a number of fateful projects which became

an important factor in ensuring Azerbaijan's participation in integration initiatives. In recent years such global projects as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan main export pipeline, which has enabled Azerbaijani oil to enter world markets, have been launched and the construction has begun of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway, which will become an important link of regional economic cooperation, opening up future prospects for wide-scale cooperation between North and South.

Within the context of the regeneration of the Great Silk Road, Azerbaijan is being turned not only into a transit country, but is frequently itself becoming an exporter, thus creating new opportunities and prospects for the national economy.

At the same time, Azerbaijan is actively signing up to such projects as Nabucco, which provides for the transit of Azerbaijani natural gas through Georgia, Turkey, Greece and Italy and on to the countries of the European Union, and is cooperating closely with the EU within the framework of the New Neighbourhood programme. Azerbaijani gas is already being supplied to the markets of the EU to Greece. Being at the crossroads of two continents, Azerbaijan fulfils the role of a bridge which can span not only cultures and civilizations, but also the main economies of Europe and Asia. Taking advantage of its favourable geographical position, Azerbaijan is trying to make effective use of its potential. In the conditions of global competition, an active economic policy is a most important factor in the effective solution of national tasks.

Growth of GDP

At a national level measures have been taken in recent years which create preconditions: first, for a substantial reduction in the level of poverty in the country (it today stands at about 17 per cent), which helps to form a middle class in the country and is a most important aspect of a democratic developed society: second, for an increase in the role and significance of the national manufacturer, which qualitatively changes the character of the Azerbaijani economy; third, for changing the nature of mutual relations between the state and the private sector, which occurs in an evolutionary way, but in reality typifies the desire to build an effective and transparent system of relations, where the interests of all sides are taken into account, and law and order and legality are seen as priority factors.

On the whole, the adoption of comprehensive measures, starting with the denomination of the manat up to a real growth in the country's GDP, from a significant improvement in the number of jobs by over 600,000 to a tenfold increase in the national budget create a basis for a strong economic structure and sound economic growth.

All this allows us to speak about the start of a process of the liberalization of the national economy a most important achievement of Ilham Aliyev's first presidential term. As the president notes: "In our country the proportion of the private sector in GDP is over 80 per cent. This is still taking into account the fact that oil and gas are a state monopoly. This is the basis of the economy. A combination of all these factors and, of course, the stable situation and the trust of foreign investors in Azerbaijan have enabled us to achieve this. Of course, this could be said to be a world record to achieve a rate of growth of 30 and more per cent in three years. But for me the most important figure is not even this. A more important figure is the reduction in poverty in the country, because the level of GDP

is still not an indicator that we have all taken advantage of these opportunities. The level of poverty has been reduced from 50 per cent in 2003 to 20 per cent in 2007." (from an interview to Moldovan TV, Channel 4, 19 December 2007)

The emergence of Azerbaijani investors and their going abroad is another important aspect. The successful implementation of a number of projects in Georgia, Turkey and other European countries creates the opportunity for steady growth in foreign investment by Azerbaijan. This is a real precondition for implementing specific steps to change the structure of the national economy and to impart it with an innovative quality. In this aspect we abide by two most important factors: first investment abroad helps to create qualitatively different bilateral relations; second it is not so much volume that is important as the ability to correctly choose priorities. At the same time, it is important to maintain the country's economic policy, as chosen by President Ilham Aliyev in 2003.

Liberalization of economy

If one analyses the past year of 2007 as a whole, then one may boldly state that it was precisely this period that was the definitive stage in the liberalization of the national economy. A whole range of measures, including the beginning of the registration of entrepreneurs according to the "single window" principle, the liberalization of the inflow of direct foreign investments, the reorientation of priorities in state expenses in favour of spheres ensuring high economic return and profitability and providing the opportunity to improve the distribution of incomes, have become truly revolutionary changes which will encourage greater transparency of the work and system of registration of businesses and the effective development of the national economy.

The economic component in the country, as a whole, is creating a real basis for a subsequent transformation from entrenched industrialism to a level of post-industrialism. Modern trends, which shape the current self-awareness and the national "me" of Azerbaijani society, are tacitly shifting, freeing up space for post-modernist political and economic factors. Globalization as such creates new opportunities and opens up broader prospects for the development of the national economy and improving political and democratic institutions.

Therefore one may boldly claim that the main task of Ilham Aliyev's first term, which consisted of shaping a sound and advancing economic system, is being successfully implemented. It is precisely economic modernization, stability of the market, improvement in the banking sphere, formation of a middle class and strengthening the role of private enterprise in the country's GDP that will tacitly modify public awareness, turning them to a new level of democratic traditions and institutions.

By virtue of the strengthening of the economy and ensuring the welfare of the citizens one may speak about a gradual democratisation of society and a transformation from a transient democracy to one of a stable, i.e. consolidated democracy. One should not forget that as the economy grows in transient states the social and institutional structure of society and the state changes. An increase in the solvency of the population, as well as the flow of investments, as a result of which the economy becomes more efficient and effective, encourage the gradual modernization of economic life. In turn, this gives rise, as

Karl Marx wrote, to a situation where when the economy is modernized in a country, capitalism is strengthened and a bourgeoisie is formed, the transformation of the political system is inevitable. In Marxist terminology, changes in the basis will always lead to changes in the superstructure.

Capitalism and democracy

As the well-known American philosopher Francis Fukuyama points out, "relations between capitalism and democracy are not straightforward.

Capitalism in itself does not put direct pressure on democracy. It gets along perfectly well with many forms of authoritarianism (although, of course, not with communist totalitarianism) and may even flourish in non-democratic countries. But capitalism is a more effective motor of economic growth than socialism, and therefore is more likely to generate rapid socioeconomic changes which favour the emergence of stable democracy" (F. Fukuyama, *Capitalism and Democracy: The Missing Link*. In L. Diamond and M. F. Platter (Eds), *Op.cit.* p 102).

As another American political expert R. Duch stresses, "in the past the market economy preceded the emergence of democratic institutions". (R. Duch. *Tolerating Economic Reform: Popular Support for Transition to a Free Market in the Former Soviet Union*. "American Political Science Review", No 87, 1993, p.594). Therefore, the occurrent efforts to impose on us a simultaneous transition to democracy and to a market are an attempt to alter the model of mutual relations between economic and political changes, which have developed over centuries, and which constitute an experiment without historical precedent.

History has shown that a democratic regime remains stable only if a general electoral law emerges along with the achievement of a certain level of per capita GDP. At this level the majority of the country's population is sufficiently well-off to be able to take responsible decisions and to neutralize the effect of the lumpen proletarians who receive ballot papers. Attempts to introduce a general electoral law at lower levels of development lead either to its rapid abolition or to its turning into a meaningless procedure, and at a level of development at approximately three times higher than this the switch to a democratic system is simply inevitable.

It is precisely the level of economic development that largely determines the formation of political institutions preferable for a country. The optimum political regime for stable economic growth depends on the level of its economic development. Countries with a higher level of development may tackle the tasks of adapting to post-industrial challenges only if they have sufficiently developed institutions of a contemporary democratic society.

The majority of the east Asian countries, who originally carried out economic reforms and only then began political ones, have travelled a similar path. In essence, political changes have more often become an irreversible aspect of a developing economic system, as happened in Singapore, Indonesia or Malaysia. For example, in Mexico, which tried 20 years to free itself, real progress was only made once the national per capita income reached 9,000 dollars. This threshold showed the irreversible nature of the process of democratisation and lifted Mexico into the number of countries with a consolidated democracy.

In Turkey democratic changes became successful after the stabilization of the economic situation, a reduction in inflation and the beginning of a growth in the well-being of society. In a short period of time the Turkish political establishment achieved a growth in GDP of almost 6,500 US dollars per capita, which testifies to the stable and gradual growth in the Turkish economy.

The democratisation of the last decade is closely linked with economic growth which creates real and lasting preconditions for effective transformation, although this idea should in no way be interpreted literally to imply that "the rich are democratic".

Economic growth and democratisation

Economic growth and democratisation depend on one another with economic factors playing the definitive role. Wealth and opportunity, provided not by nature or the minerals under the earth, but acquired as a result of the transition from a feudal society to a capitalist, and later from an industrial to a post-industrial society, at the same time transforming the priority of industry into an imperative of the services sphere, enable one to speak about a real and consistent transition to a path of market development. Such development, as the experience of the West and Japan has shown, is the more effective.

States that possess large supplies of minerals and who use these opportunities exclusively for the purpose of enriching the political and financial elite, often remain underdeveloped, their people uneducated and their specialists unqualified.

By attracting "brains" from outside, a consumer psychology of "western intellectuals" is formed in these states, whereas the education system remains at a low, and society at a primitive level.

As President Ilham Aliyev points out: "In countries where democracy has become developed, there is also economic development. Where democracy has not been developed, [economic] development has been slow. In this question no natural resources, oil or gas play a major role, these are temporary factors". (From President Ilham Aliyev's speech at the opening of Heydar Aliyev Park and at a meeting with the people of Yardimli District, 9 September 2005).

In this context the editor of the respected American magazine Foreign Affairs, Farid Zakariya, says with every justification: "Why does wealth encourage freedom? Let us recall examples from European history: the process of economic development usually leads to the emergence of two elements which have decisive importance for the success of liberal democracy. First, it gives an opportunity to key segments of society, especially private business and the bourgeoisie as a whole to acquire strength and independence from the state.

Second, in dealing with social groups of this nature, the state becomes less predatory and capricious; it is more and more orientated towards observing certain rules and the needs of society, at least on the requirements of its elite". (see F. Zakariya: The future of freedom: non-liberal democracy in the USA and abroad, p 67).

One possible reason for the stability of democracy in the wealthy countries, put forward by the sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset, is that through various social mechanisms wealth allows the exacerbation of the conflicts of distribution to be reduced. Initially,

prosperity and the true distribution of financial resources create the preconditions for economic growth, thus contributing towards the recognition of freedom by the individual and the formation of a new mass consciousness. The strength of such a thesis is confirmed also by historical experience.

Alexander Hamilton once wrote: "So long as property remains roughly equally divided and a considerable proportion of information permeates through to society, in voting there will be a tendency to pay tribute to the services of even the most obscure people. With the growth in wealth and its concentration in the hands of the minority and with society's increasing desire for luxury, do-gooders will more and more be seen merely as a happy addition to material values". (see Bruce (?Mayerhof): *The Faces of Democracy*, page 60) Hamilton was sure that a concentration of economic and political power was inevitable.

Seymour Martin Lipset holds a similar view, drawing this conclusion in 1959: "The richer a nation gets, the greater its chances of a stable democracy."

If one looks at history and the modern development of China, then one can clearly trace that at the beginning of the 1990s it initiated a number of economic reforms believing that they would lead to capitalism "as in the West". And despite the fact that some of them failed, nevertheless in China they realized that the country had to be rebuilt, starting with the economy and moving on to political modernization and democratic transformation.

Such a convergence allows one to speak about the possibility of the implementation of political changes which are the logical continuation of economic reforms. The essence of this whole process boils down to the liberalization of all spheres of human activity, a change in socio-cultural archetypes and the subsequent consolidation of the democratic regime. Here also lies the central thesis of modernization which "consists of economic growth giving rise to parallel, and to a certain extent predictable changes in cultural, public and political life". (see *Theory and Practice of Democracy*, page 143).

One of the leading economists and political thinkers of the 20th century, Friedrich August von Hayek, writes in his book "The Road to Serfdom": "Apart from the notorious 'economic freedom', economic security is also quite justifiably described as a necessary condition for true freedom. In a certain sense this is true. An independent intellect or a strong character are rarely found among people who are not confident of being able to feed themselves." (F. A. Hayek, "The Road to Serfdom", Moscow, 2005, page 129)

In conditions of globalization and intensive expansion of the "third democratic wave", such a strategy of social changes presents itself as something obvious, because the increasing financial inter-connection between continents calls forth a rejection of political insularity and the desire to become the member of a club of democratic states. It is precisely taking into account the specific nature of a country or region in the post-authoritarian transition that determines the preferences given to the strategy of "economy before politics".

These conditions create a basis for the liberalization and formation of a civic society in regions where there have been transformations, particularly in Azerbaijan. That is precisely why civic society forms the only foundation for political democracy, without which the latter

is simply impossible or ineffective. It was precisely this thesis that in 2003 was of paramount importance to Ilham Aliyev's first term as president.

>From stability to modernization

"The idea appears not as an accidental creation of human insight, but is a natural precondition for the modern condition of human society".

(Alexis de Tocqueville, 1805-1859 French sociologist, historian and politician)

In the course of recent years the main guideline of the socio-political development of the state has been directed exclusively towards forming a stable system of democratic institutions and traditions. Democratization as such is a determining factor of the strategy of national development and is an important component of coexistence within the framework of a unified society.

In the conditions of a "third democratic wave", all kinds of discussions around government by the people become even more topical and fundamental because, on the one hand, they determine the possibility of the sovereign development of the national state, and on the other they create a bridgehead for "beacons of freedom" for the export of the personal vision of various democratic concepts to countries of "post-authoritarian transition".

Often such an export occurs by means of replacing different national characteristics or without taking account of the real opportunities for building democracy in a certain corner of the globe, i.e. without comprehending the real results of institutional, behavioural and socio-psychological changes the main indicators of society's readiness for the transition to democracy. At times this approach brings forth depreciating effects of a global nature, which in the long run leads to the emergence of such theories of global chaos, as a "clash of civilizations". Democracy as such more often comes out as a factor of new geopolitical, or it would be more accurate and precise to say, geo-economic expansion.

However, before embarking on any discussions, one should decide on the very understanding of "democracy", after all one frequently hears overtones of the past which are very familiar to our generation. We often speak about democracy, more and more rarely thinking about the reality of its essence, although the basis for such discussions is very firm and has the right to exist. Our main political-ideological task is the development of the country as a free and democratic state. But one needs to understand that in Azerbaijan there are objectively complex processes occurring which more and more are becoming the subject of discussion on the part of different individuals and organizations. Most of all these discussions are about democracy, freedom of speech and the press and the concept of "freedom" as a whole.

We are often accused of being unaccustomed to freedom, and that we constantly need to look around us. However, one should draw a line between democratic transformation and the geopolitical influence of the West. After all, often, when we consider democracy exclusively as a form of representation and government by the people, we do not take into consideration the ideas and tasks of those who hold these views.

Democracy has long since ceased to be exclusively a form of the

representation of the majority, for often we are becoming witnesses of how an exclusive minority is dictating the rules and this argument is gaining support. Often we are seeing that the main foreign political tasks are being carried out by means of democracy and an agenda is being shaped in this or that part of the world.

These factors no longer come as a surprise when in societies to whom historically democratic traditions and institutions have been alien, new standards of behaviour are formed without taking account of the factors of national-historic, cultural and socio-political distinctiveness and a change in the public conscience. Even in conditions where progress acquires an innovative nature, i.e. when ideas, technologies and knowledge change more quickly than it takes one generation to take the place of another, such sharp "political body action" causes a shift in the centre of gravity of the public conscience to a plane of radical rejections.

At the end of the 21st century democracy is being turned into a dangerous geopolitical weapon capable in a very short time of causing not only a change of regime, but also of contributing to an escalation of tension, as we have already seen in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, and so on.

Some champions of democracy, clearly, rarely think about the experience of history, although the well-known German economist of the 19th century, Friedrich von List, noted that with the clash between a more developed, industrial society and a less developed society, a pre-industrialist or fairly industrialist, the following happens: In keeping with the position of a liberal economy, if you take a country with a developed economy and integrate it with a country with an undeveloped economy, then the level of development and modernization will be distributed approximately equally.

>From the point of view of Friedrich von List's economic school, which is backed up by history, there will be a greater development of the sector which was in a more developed state and an even greater impoverishment and degradation of the "backward" economic system. In other words, the direct contact between the more modernized system of economy and a less modernized one does not lead to their equalization on the principle of communicating vessels, but to a situation where the more modernized and wealthier part becomes even more wealthy and the less developed part even poorer, because a disproportionate development of the economic sector occurs in this poor zone, it becomes a primary appendage and, in point of fact, you have colonization.

The "new economy"

In the context of the situation of postmodernism and globalization, this principle is repeated, but today we find ourselves in a different situation. There exists a western ultra-liberal economy, developed at the post-modern level, which turns with its methodology to other countries, offering to develop and post-modernize these countries. This "new economy" presents itself as an objective and as a definite instrument for an economic breakthrough, and for the transition of countries from an industrial to a post-industrial state. And here a situation arises that is absolutely symmetrical to that model which existed in the 19th century and was analysed by Friedrich von List.

But whereas yesterday it was the countries with an economy that was predominately pre-modern that were an object of colonization, today

the industrially developed countries themselves are, in fact, becoming nothing more than the object of exploitation of these post-modernist systems. Production is being transferred there (as, for example, to the zone of the Pacific community), and not only resources but human labour are being exploited and, thus, the same phenomenon of colonization emerges, but only in a new, covert form.

On 4 January 2008, an article was published in the British Guardian newspaper by the well-known political observer of the London-based Times, Simon Jenkins, in which, despite the existing view on democracy, he gives his attitude to the essence of modern democracy.

He writes: "It seems that democracy today is not in the best of health...Democracy has always been imperfect. From the moment the concept of 'self-government' lost its inseparable link with the prefix 'self' i.e. it outgrew the framework of the agora...[ellipsis as published] - it has gradually become adapted to various countries and peoples. Democratic institutions depend more on the history, culture and geography of specific countries than the ideas of Madison, Mill and de Tocqueville...[ellipsis as published]

"With all the tragic nature of the events that have been happening over the past week in Pakistan and Kenya, it would have been the height of arrogance on the part of the West to demand that the whole world followed the same path to people's government that it itself has followed for long bloody centuries. It is possible that we also consider liberal democracy to be the only 'true faith', but this opinion is scarcely shared today by the majority of people in Russia or China. Like the citizens of many other countries, they place security and well-being above everything else.

"We are not so holy that we can teach others what state system best suits them especially when it comes to the countries whose political atmosphere the West itself has polluted with financial aid, debts, trade restrictions and border conflicts. It is possible and it appears that today democracy in Pakistan and Kenya is suffering from an attack of violence, but you know in the West, too, it is confined to corruption when compiling party lists, eccentric results in 'primaries' and the existence of collegiates of electoral delegates.

"Today the people of Britain and the USA sharply criticize their own constitutions for failing to comply with democratic ideals, especially when it comes to accountability of the government and constraints restricting the freedom of action of the executive power.

And the outcome of the [presidential] election in America in 2000 was generally determined not by the voting of the electorate, but by the decision of a body consisting of people appointed by an oligarchy (the results of the election were endorsed by the Supreme Court).

Finally, the American people would scarcely be pleased if observers from Ukraine, India and Thailand, who had come to supervise the voting, had been based at the Miami Hilton hotel.

"I personally believe that democracy is the best path to stability and the prosperity of society and I hope that other people share my opinion as to its advantages...[ellipsis as published]

"However, the best way to publicize democracy is by example, and not interventions or official 'reprobations'. Britain's 'white-collar

workers' are not so pure that its leaders can give lectures to the whole world in a tone reeking of neo-colonialism. It is possible that the shortcomings of democracy in other countries are seen as a 'beam in the eye' compared with our 'speck of dust', but to sort out this beam is their own business, and definitely not ours.

"Pakistan occupies sixth place in the world in size of population.

The frailty of 'semi-democracy' in this country is caused by the upheavals of the recent past and desperate poverty. There are hundreds of means of helping it to get through the rough path leading from dictatorship to democracy which Britain was fortunate to overcome by a 'pleasure step' over two centuries. But at the end of the day Pakistan and Kenya will only be stronger if they travel this path by themselves. And the last thing they need is a dressing down on the telephone by a post-imperial 'nanny'".

I have deliberately quoted the main points of this article so extensively because his findings fully reflect the situation that is being created by the West in the countries of the "new democracy" under the cloak of democratic terminology.

Geo-democratic changes

Naturally, in the conditions of global integration, when not only finances can easily and rapidly be moved around, but mutual relations between people are shaped under the impact of information and communication technology, and feelings, too, are conveyed by electronic means (by smileys), it is impossible to speak about autocracy in its past meaning. On the other hand, nowadays a national state, especially if it is restricted by the laws of geographical determinism and sees itself as a geographically important area, is more and more being subjected to pressure from outside with the purpose of following precisely that model of democracy and a civic society which should, in the opinion of importers, form the best government of the people.

In today's world we are more and more often becoming witness to geo-democratic transformations when, with the aim of building a new environment of democratic institutions and traditions, the state principles in this or that country are being radically revamped.

The national democratic transition became a derivative of the global disturbances on the world political map after the collapse of the USSR. However, the internal cataclysms in Azerbaijan, caused by the inept rule of a group of romantics, pushed discussions about democracy back several years, because the political elite who came to power in 1993 had to formulate a stable internal structure of society, to avert a regression in the national economy and to ensure an appropriate external background for the state's activity.

As we know, without stability, no talks about democracy and a civic society have any value. Without stability and an understanding by the people of Aristotle's truth that "a state is created so that the people can live in a stable manner", it is difficult to form a public awareness directed towards equality of rights and transparency.

Finally, without a stable political structure it is impossible to imagine a stable economic system which is the determining factor of a national democratic transition because, as President Ilham Aliyev points out: "Economic growth and the democratisation of society are

the main elements of our policy which are impossible one without the other. It is possible to be economically strong, but if there is no democracy and no transparency, and if human rights are not protected, then you cannot expect success". (from President Ilham Aliyev's speech at a meeting of the autumn session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; 29 April 2004).

Having digressed somewhat from the subject we were discussing, one still has to state with regret that discussions about a national democratic transition are rarely becoming a factor of popular debate in the country. Such indifference to the current and future strategy of national development cannot be explained. In conditions when from scientific positions the proper place and acceptable model of democratic development to meet with current realities in Azerbaijan has not been defined, the political establishment often has to try to decide both theoretical and practical tasks.

Although the scope for debate is very broad, it also requires that national intellectuals join in the debate in an extremely active way.

This question has been frequently raised by the head of state who believes it is necessary to use the country's scientific potential widely to solve these theoretical problems.

Azerbaijan's new political space

The main task facing the Azerbaijani political elite in recent years has been the formation of a new political space for the country, where everyone understands their obligations and rights, where the individual recognizes the truth once declared by Jean-Jacques Rousseau that one person's rights end where another's begin. In other words, as one politician put it, "the extent of the blow from my fist ends where the other person's cheek begins".

Azerbaijan's new political space will be formed in time, because such a process is not being sanctioned "by superiors" and is not being implemented "to order". In the long term it will identify the possibility of inter-action between the authorities and the opposition for the benefit of the development of the state and society. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the 32nd president of the USA (1882-1945) once said: "Whatever the ideology in a country might be, its national interests are invariable." It is precisely in this that we see the ideal of constructive rivalry, where each player in the political process understands that there is only one objective the benefit of the country.

Intolerance, irreconcilability and a rejection of dialogue must be replaced by healthy competition, tolerant mutual relations and a desire to form an environment of constructive, functional, public debate around the present and future state. This thesis was the fundamental one when President Ilham Aliyev more than once asked the players in the political process to take up a rational position in relation to the nationwide projects and initiatives that were being carried out and to become part of a dialogue between the authorities and the counter-elite with the ultimate aim of forming a stable political playing field.

It is important to understand that democracy is not just a matter of approaching the urn and casting your vote on a day specially set aside for this. Democracy is a part of life, a way of thinking and a form of inter-action within society between its members. It is a

process that helps to strengthen and develop states and not to set it in regression. We in power clearly understand these truths. We realize that the political environment is in need of constant renewal and we recognize that we have to move on if our democratic development is to be complete and stable. A whole range of urgent measures have been carried out in this direction in recent years which allow, on the one hand, to form the basis of a future civic society, and on the other, to make the national democratic model effective and acceptable to Azerbaijani society.

The foundations for a civic society are being purposefully and systematically laid in Azerbaijan today. Here is contained the basic context of the forthcoming transition to consolidated democracy. The creation in 2007 of the State Foundation of Support non-government organization under the Azerbaijani president was an important landmark on the path to forming an effective "third sector" in the country, independent of outside sponsors, dictating its own rules of the game and behaviour, striving to build a diagonal of influence for the adoption of political decisions required for grant providers by means of the activities of the non-government sector. In Azerbaijan there are currently over 3,000 non-government organizations functioning and all these things are indicators of the formation of a civic society in the country.

The minister of finances and chairman of the government of tsarist Russia, Sergey Witte, wrote: "A state does not so much create as replenish, it is the citizens who are the true creators...[ellipsis as published] Not to point the way to independence, but to develop it and help it in every way." The non-government sector must form an open and transparent dialogue between the authorities and society, but this is possible only with financial self-sufficiency and transparency carried out in the national interests of policy.

Unfortunately, often those who hide behind the screen of a human rights champion or a member of an NGO are carrying out their carefully calibrated and formed tasks and objectives outside the country.

However, they would do well to realize that Azerbaijan is a country which chose democracy for itself by the will of its own people.

Having embarked on this path, we intended, abiding by all democratic standards, and taking account of the historical, geopolitical and other specifics, to ensure the implementation of the principles of freedom and democracy. In conditions of the formation of a stable and sovereign statehood, the Azerbaijani people are capable of independently determining the speed, timescale and levels of progress on the path towards creating a society of consolidated democracy.

As President Ilham Aliyev notes, we have defined democratic development as follows: "The creation and strengthening of a civic society, the strengthening of the process of democratisation and the construction of a law-based state this is not simply a slogan or an intention, it is the main condition for Azerbaijan's all-round development. Our experience shows that the path chosen by Azerbaijan is the correct one. The parallel conducting of economic, political and social reforms develops Azerbaijan in all ways, strengthens stability which is so vital to our country and also has a positive influence on the socio-political situation". (from President Ilham Aliyev's speech at the opening of the autumn session of the Milli Maclis [Azerbaijani parliament], on 2 October 2005).

Opponents of democratisation

It is quite obvious that Azerbaijan's stable consistent development does not please everyone. Many of those who use pseudo-democratic language would like to go back to the past: some in order to plunder national wealth with impunity, to rob people and the state, others to deprive the country of economic and political independence and others to realize their own ambitions. We must disappoint those who today in and outside the country still harbour hopes of a return to the past.

Our country stands firmly on positions of adherence to its democratic course and development, and despite difficulties and upheavals, we are striving to bring the country to the necessary level of development to provide three basic factors of the development of Azerbaijani society national unity and political sovereignty, economic well-being and integrity of spiritual unity and the moral values that bind us.

In this context I would like to stress quite an important aspect so that the debate around national democratisation has a more lasting and sound basis. I propose that such declarations are at times important because they create an opportunity to make the argument more fruitful and effective. In the modern world two concepts play a key role in the theoretical construction of the democratic system in one environment or another "the transition to democracy" and "consolidation of the democratic system" or "consolidation of democracy". The first process leads to "the establishment of a democratic government", the second to "the consolidation of democracy" or to "the effective functioning of a democratic regime".

In point of fact, in the first case it is a question of an institutional basis of democratic transformation, which assumes the creation and functioning of a democratic regime, and the process of changing and electing the legislative and executive authorities. In the second case we are talking about a consolidation of democracy as a socio-political system which assumes a qualitative change in the mass conscience and society's total inclusion in the new democratic values, traditions and institutions.

Therefore, in the context of the concepts we have mentioned, the occasional pessimistic arguments about the "results" of national democratisation seem extremely hasty. It is obvious that such "results" of democratisation cannot be accurate, because the political agenda is still being defined by the tasks of the first period, when the institutional base of the process of national democratisation was due to be established. In this context the arguments of those who suggest that 16 years is a sufficient period of time for total democratisation seem quite groundless. It is well known how long the first stage of democratisation turned out to be in some Latin American countries, particularly Brazil, where it stretched from the mid 1970s to the mid 1990s. In Britain democracy has been established over a period of about 200 years.

Effective legal and political system

A determining factor of the development of democracy is the creation of an effective legal and political system. But the price of the development of democratic procedures should not be in conflict with law and order, nor with stability which was achieved with such difficulty, nor with the stable conducting of an economic course.

This thesis determines the modern state of a feasible policy which is based on the realization that a strong power is the guarantee of the durability of the principles of statehood. Hobbs once noted that a formal order, which makes possible the joint life of private individuals in society, creates a strong state power. Its absence is a reason for anarchic tendencies and the collapse of the state.

The durability of state power is in many ways determined by the authorities' ability to protect the interests of different sections of society, to maintain a balance between social forces and ensure the progressive development of civilian, democratic and self-administrative trends of human contact. If state power ceases to work for society and restricts its activity to merely serving individual groups, and its own apparatus, it is helping to alienate the citizens from the state and its institutions, and creates conditions for conflict between society and the authorities. The efforts of the president are directed towards solving these tasks, which enables one to speak about a desire to perfect in Azerbaijan the opportunity for active civilian participation and a dialogue between society and the authorities, i.e. to create a stable and strong power.

A significant aspect of the formation of a stable political system in the country is the qualitative transformation of political culture.

It comes out as a factor for providing state sovereignty and an element of building an effective model of mutual relations between the authorities and the counter-elite in the country, and ensures the participation of all players in the political process and accordingly creates an opportunity for the consistent development of political and public institutions. Meanwhile, the lack of proper cultural orientation and the blind following of foreign examples inevitably lead to a nation losing its own identity. Political culture must identify the exclusively national factor of development and come out as the major link in inter-political debate, ensuring the establishment of a full-fledged political dialogue in the country.

Our political culture must embody the nation's readiness for innovative breakthroughs and new technological achievements.

President's thesis

President Ilham Aliyev's activities in recent years have contributed to a change in the vector of development of the national political environment. The thesis about the need for economic and political stabilization in the country has gradually grown into the creation and development of structures of a civic society. Parties and other political organizations, in view of the low social order for their existence and functioning, have started to cohabit in society or to latently cancel themselves out. Associations, unions and blocs have become a frontal part of the process which hides a total weakness of opposition political organizations which are incapable of competing in the struggle for power.

In such an inner-political structure the main aspect of President Ilham Aliyev's political concept is already being built on his main thesis "from stability to development", which is identified by a desire to conclude in the near future the process of democratic transformation and to begin the formation of structures and institutions of a civic society. So it is quite obvious that the recognition of

liberal-democratic models at a rhetorical level does not promise success. The ability of politics to adjust is determined in the desire of these models to become a part of social development.

At the same time, in trying to break away from hybrid forms, which emerge during transformations, it is necessary to be able to build a democratic basis based on the modernization of contemporary life.

It (modernization) determines the possibility of establishing a full-fledged democratic society. In recent years the policy of transformations which is being implemented in Azerbaijan has created a stable foundation for the retransformation of socio-cultural models. Henceforth democracy and the segments accompanying it are not perceived by society as something alien and difficult to digest. This is the main aspect of the retransformation of the mass conscience, and as such it makes substantial adjustments to our national self-awareness. Democracy sets itself up not only in the form of freedom of the individual, but also creates a foundation for improving the notional apparatus of "freedom" and ensuring the retransformation of archetypes and the most important factors of national identity.

In recent years a clear basis of national democratisation has been formed in the country which identifies with the understanding by the power elite of the following factors of political, economic and socio-cultural activity:

(i) the rights and freedoms of the individual are an important and priority link in the horizontal of mutual relations between state and society. At the same time, the state's course towards modernization, which is aimed at building a transparent and democratic regime, embodies a system of values where the citizen is seen in a qualitatively new aspect and the provision of his rights is an imperative of modern democratic development. The basis of this thesis is this quote from President Ilham Aliyev: "We are building a society which will ensure the supremacy of the law, a high level of transparency and each person will live in conditions of peace and calm and take advantage of all freedoms". (from President Aliyev's interview with a correspondent of the Nikkei newspaper (Nihon Keizai Shimbun", 13 June 2007);

(ii) a democratic course is the main vector of the development of Azerbaijani statehood and a determining factor of the strategy of national development;

(iii) democracy, like subsequent liberalization, which offers maximum freedom to the citizen, defines the essence of the transformation in the convergence of the idea of freedom and the concept of effective statehood. At the same time by democracy is understood a form of authority, and from this point of view it presents itself as a teaching of the legitimisation of the power of the majority.

Liberalism, on the other hand, assumes limits of power;

(iv) the preconditions of democratisation and subsequent liberalization in the country are laid down in the outcome of substantial economic changes which ensure the implementation of a system of ECONOMIC MODERNIZATION + STAGE-BY-STAGE DEMOCRATIZATION=THE START OF A PROCESS OF THE FORMATION OF A CIVIC SOCIETY [capitalized as published]. This is a true embodiment of the policy of the transformation period, which is aimed at the formation of a new political space and an

economic model, consistent with the requirements of the contemporary world order. This thesis is backed up by the president's quote that "macroeconomic indices in Azerbaijan are at the lowest level, without parallel in the world". (Ilham Aliyev's speech at a session of the cabinet on 22 October 2007). The development of the economy as a whole is leading the country to a factor of a more stable democratic system;

(v) a civic society in the country will be formed along with the implementation of the paradigm THE MODERNIZATION OF THE ECONOMY, THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF PUBLIC LIFE, THE SYSTEMIC LIBERALIZATION OF NATIONAL SPACE [capitalized as published]. As Ilham Aliyev notes: "We believe that the future of our region will depend on how successfully our society is modernized. In other words, the development of democratic reforms and the implementation of economic reforms will depend on our activity in the policy of the modernization of the political system and our society. (from President Aliyev's speech at the opening of the first extended session of the international investment forum "An extraordinary round-table meeting on Ukraine", 16 June, 2005);

(vi) the basis of democratic transformation and the building of a civic society in the country rests on an understanding of the dichotomy TOTAL FREEDOM=STRONG POWER [capitalized as published], which excludes anarchic tyranny and disorder, and also contributes to concluding the process of the construction of effective statehood.

Summing up this thesis, President Ilham Aliyev stresses: "Our aim is to build a modern, strong state, to create an economically strong state and the building of a society of social prosperity and to solve all the problems that concern people and the formation of a free society so that people can live better, in happiness and with a sense of well-being". (from President Aliyev's speech at the opening of the Qazax Olympic sports complex, 30 May 2007);

(vii) globalization, which in the 21st century presents itself as the main aspect of the modern development of mankind, exerts considerable influence on the formation of the inner-political environment. The westernisation introduced by global tendencies is shifting the accents of behavioural norms and stereotypes, eroding the concepts of the sovereignty of a national state. That is why an important element in protecting a stable and effective state system is the ability to strike a balance between the imported and autogenous factors of the development of society. "The endorsement of social justice and the protection of our national-spiritual values," the president reminds us, "are of vital importance for the country", (President Aliyev's speech in Qobustan District, 23 October 2007).

Priority must be based on local socio-cultural models as a basis of sovereign development taking into account the positive aspects of the western (westernising) world. The building of a civic society in Azerbaijan cannot be carried out by copying western models. Taking into consideration socio-cultural characteristics, local political and economic factors, and the archetypes of the national "me" will contribute towards certain autogenous transformations and develop democratic institutions and traditions. This idea fully sits with the thesis expressed by the president: "We must not blindly copy in Azerbaijan everything we see abroad. There are some things there which will be of no benefit to us. But we must bring in and make use of everything there that is positive." (from President Aliyev's speech at a session of the cabinet on 22 October 2007)

The process of democratisation in Azerbaijan has already travelled a definite path: Twelve years have passed since 1995, when the general anarchy and political tyranny ended and the economic and political reforms began. In 1995, 20 years after the overthrow of dictatorship, Spain became a full-fledged and stable democracy. In recent years Azerbaijan has been emerging from a protracted period of post-revolutionary reaction, the tasks of which it has already solved. We have reached the point where the authorities are ruling by new methods.

"Interesting battles" ahead

OCTOBER 2008: A STRONG STATE, A MODERNIZED ECONOMY AND FREE CITIZENS
[capitalized as published]

2008 is an important period for adopting political decisions when each of the players in the political process will rejoice in their subject changes. From a retrospective position it is clear that we can expect interesting political battles from the models of previous elections. At the same time, there is no doubt that the authorities are prepared to go to the ballot box with a substantial supply of new political, economic and social proposals. We will try to reveal the essence of what we can expect by October 2008 and what our proposals are so that the country's citizens can make the correct and rational choice in favour of continuity of policy and the "new course".

The main objective which President Ilham Aliyev has achieved, supported by the foundation of statehood laid down by Heydar Aliyev, was the further strengthening and development of national statehood.

The task was to bring back the former economic strength and political stability, in the framework of the new world order to ensure the country's active participation in regional and global processes, to switch from a defensive foreign political concept to an offensive one and to "pierce" the indifference of international organizations towards a number of issues and problems that were important for the country.

In addition, it was necessary to carry out a whole range of tasks: to begin the intensive modernization of the economy; to provide jobs for 600,000 people; to lay the foundation for the formation of a middle class and, having ensured consistent development, to begin the liberalization of the national economy and to reduce the level of poverty in the country as much as possible.

But this was not all: it was necessary to invest in the country's intellectual future and create a basis for forming an intellectual medium by means of training 15,000 young people abroad; by a system of mortgage crediting to create conditions for solving housing problems for young people; to build more than 1,200 schools; with the support of young, to create an effective mechanism for the formation in the country of a democratic regime and a civic society.

In regional and international arenas the task is to step up efforts to solve the Karabakh problem; to change the nature of foreign political activity and the constant lobbying of the country's interests in uniting the diaspora around nationwide tasks. In the last four years there has been a substantial improvement in the defence capability of the national army, whose budget in 2008 is 1.2bn dollars. Even quite recently one would often hear critical attacks regarding the possibility of a tenfold increase in the country's budget, but the

current realities have shown the soundness of the promises given by the president in 2003.

Test of maturity

Today Azerbaijan is approaching a new stage in its test of maturity.

In recent years the face not only of the metropolis but also of the periphery has seriously changed.

Public awareness is latently transforming the post-modernist trends which will subsequently determine the strategy of tomorrow. However, Ilham Aliyev's domestic and foreign policy activities are still to be assessed seriously and impartially. At the moment this is not difficult, although proper analysis is at times being obstructed by critical attacks. But the agenda which President Ilham Aliyev will be working in the next five years is already clear. Without claiming to be a precise and final prognosis, it is possible to reduce it to seven basic tasks in general terms.

First, a stable economic system inevitably leads to greater democratisation of public awareness. The implementation of a broad range of economic measures in the course of the last four years or so has created an opportunity for an increase in people's financial solvency, an increase in the financial opportunities of the individual, and that means this will inevitably lead to a change in behavioural stereotypes among members of society because, as J.-J.Rousseau wrote, "equality, which makes people independent of one another, develops in them a habit and a tendency to be guided in their private life only by their own desires and will. That complete independence, which they constantly use both in relations with their equals and in their private life...shapes in them a concept of political freedom and an adherence to it". (All politics: an anthology. Moscow, 2006, p 130).

Model of future economic development

The model of economic development in consequence, shaped at this stage, will be: (i) to transform Azerbaijani society into a channel of the formation of a new political environment in which the authorities and the opposition co-exist in the context of constructive rivalry; (ii) to assist in the completion of the stage of forming the basis of a civic society; (iii) to lead public awareness to an environment of post-industrial values, which will help to change the place of the individual in society, the recognized understanding of the concept of a "free citizen" and the modification of the content of politics in Azerbaijan.

Second, the country's economic development in recent years has pursued the aim of consolidating the state's role as regional leader in the South Caucasus. Accordingly, Azerbaijan's claims to the leading role in the region require the formation of a system of stable union relations. It is common knowledge that the best ally is a remunerative partner. Accordingly, an alliance means investment in the future, and as a rule this is a cost-plus factor, which does not bring an immediate return, but is a true path towards forming a policy of strategic and long-term goodneighbourly relations.

In continuing the policy which was carried out by President Ilham Aliyev in relation to a whole number of countries, in the coming years the vector of the strategy of foreign political activity will

most likely be directed also towards the East, because it is generally accepted that the Asia-Pacific region will be the area where the main political events of the 21st century will unfold. At the same time, Azerbaijan is capable of being not just a factor of Europe's energy security, but also becoming an important aspect of the formation of the security architecture in the East.

Third. It is natural that at the current stage the historic process of the liberalization of the economy has acquired the nature of a global world trend embracing more and more countries. Scope is opening up for the activity of mechanisms of market regulation. The interference of states in the economy and its administrative forms, as well as in forms of direct state regulation, is being reduced. The main function of a state is becoming the creation and maintenance of a competitive environment by means of adopting economic and civil legislation, simplifying and cheapening the creation of new private enterprises and supporting medium-size and small businesses.

The process of the liberalization of the national economy is closely linked with its level of growth. Along with economic growth and changes in the basic factors of the formation of a stable economic system there will occur an increase in transparency and the implementation of a strategy of inter-economic liberalization, to which apply the privatisation of state enterprises and the expansion of the sphere of freely established prices and incomes, interest rates and credit conditions, which are taking place within the framework of national economies, and also, in particular, a strengthening of foreign economic liberalization. The latter will help to expand the unhindered international movement of goods and services, capital and information.

At the same time, this aspect will be an important factor in the country's entry into the WTO, because the liberalization of world trade with goods and services is being shown by the tendency to lift customs barriers and restrictions in trade between countries.

A TABLE: COUNTRIES WITH A TRANSITIONAL ECONOMY BY CATEGORIES DEPENDING ON THE ORIGINAL STRATEGY OF REFORMS [capitalized as published]

Consistent strategy of Progressive start/ Interrupted Gradual Limited

" big explosion" stable progress "big explosion" Reforms Reforms

Estonia_ Hungary_Albania Azerbaijan Belarus

Latvia_ Slovenia_Bulgaria_Armenia Uzbekistan

Lithuania_ Croatia Macedonia Georgia Turkmenistan

Czech Republic Kyrgyzstan Kazakhstan

Poland_ Russia Ukraine

Slovakia*_Tajikistan

Romania

*In Slovakia the accelerated economic reforms took place in 1990-1992 when it entered the Czechoslovak Federation.

Fourth, in recent years a space has developed in the country for

forming a national idea which is based on the concepts of statehood set out by Heydar Aliyev and will be based on the modernization course of present-day Azerbaijan. It was Cicero who once said: "If one looks at everything from the point of view of wisdom and passion, then of all social relations for each of us the most important and the most dear are our relations with the state. Our parents, our children, our relatives and our close friends are dear to us, but our Fatherland alone has embraced all the affections of all people."

(Cicero. On old age, On friendship, On duties. Moscow, 1975).

In this context, the pivotal aspect of a national idea is the primacy of the state as the most important concept in the life of each Azerbaijani. It is precisely Azerbaijan and being an Azerbaijani that are the refraction of the socio-political, moral-spiritual and sacred values formed by the Azerbaijani people over the centuries of history, language, culture and religion as a cultural factor. These aspects national history, the Azerbaijani language, the gift to traditions and the distinctive nature of our culture, as well as religious tolerance form the present and future of Azerbaijani statehood as a sovereign subject of world politics, as a separate unit in the epoch of global integration.

All this helps to unite politics and culture, helping to spiritualise and aestheticize politics, which is turning more and more into a game of sordid passions, to impart it with deep meaning. Such a national idea will help to recreate national unity and unite natural contradictions. "A nation implies common values, and nationalism the creation of the significance of these values." (A.Moeller, The Third Reich, Hamburg, 1935).

Political sovereignty

Fifth, as recent years have shown, the president's task consists of ensuring political sovereignty and stable economic prosperity by means of an intellectual breakthrough in national development. In conditions of the internationalisation of education and global competition it is extremely important to create the necessary conditions for a constant improvement in the intellectual level and the emergence of a priority of the sphere of services. In a world where information-communicational and nanotechnologies dictate the agenda, it is important to Azerbaijan to form the necessary basis for participation in this race.

Without the necessary level of education and science it will be difficult for us to think about the prospects of national development and about the stable and consistent development of Azerbaijani statehood. It is evident today that in the coming years Ilham Aliyev's main task will lie precisely in the renewal and expansion of the nation's intellectual basis, which will determine the strategy of development for the future.

Sixth, in order to confirm the stated positions as an independent centre of regional policy active diplomacy is needed in tackling local tasks and active involvement in global problems. Naturally, in the last decade and a half the West has become more egocentric and has difficulty comprehending a different point of view. But the general crisis of policy and diplomacy requires a search for constructive proposals and the participation of all the components of world politics in the processes of worldwide importance. The main advantage of a multi-vector concept is the broad perspectives which

create a bridgehead so that each side is able to display initiative.

Seventh, the influence of the state on regional processes is closely linked with the strengthening and perfection of the country's defence capability. A strong army is precisely what is capable of exerting a systemic influence on all of Azerbaijan's foreign policy. The strengthening of the country's positions in the region, as well as solving the Karabakh conflict will be possible also given the all-round development of the national military-industrial complex.

There should be no doubt that the coming years will be devoted to resolving this task.

All that must be done in the next five years can be defined as having a firm position and a flexible approach. Heydar Aliyev at one time carried out a main function - he created and endorsed statehood.

Ilham Aliyev in his first presidential term fulfilled the main work in advancing the country's geo-economic factor. One may say with every confidence that in the future he will implement to the full a range of measures aimed at the country's total modernization.

I concluded one of my articles published a few years ago with a quote from Winston Churchill, a politician with great and restless strength and an ability to be ahead of history and to predict its global turns. Without altering tradition, I would like to close this article with a quote from Sir Winston's speech at Fulton (Missouri in 1946).

The choice of the Fulton speech is not by accident. It is believed to be Churchill's most important and vivid speech, where for the first time such expressions as the "muscles of war" and "special relations" were heard. It touched for the first time on that same "iron curtain" which protected the West from the threat of communism.

Naturally, in an age of the transience and acceleration of history, when the processes of decades of the past today take up only two-three years, there can be no talk of curtains, and there is no point, because it does not answer our priority objectives and national interests. However, our national development and the processes of a global nature that surround us force us to think more often about sovereignty and national spirit. Both these factors help us to develop and to progress, they inspire our aim for innovation and our initiatives and they define the essence of how the Azerbaijani people will live in the future.

Today we are happy that we have a sovereign national state and that we have the opportunity to determine a national strategy of development, taking into consideration our own vision of the path, and each of us is proud that he is Azerbaijani. All this together is concordant with what I would like to cite for each of us as a reminder of our mission in this world: "Looking around us, we must be concerned not only about doing our duty before mankind, but also that we do not fall below the level we have reached...New, bright prospects and opportunities are opening up. If we reject them, or ignore them, or do not use them in full measure, we will invite the condemnation of our descendants for a long time. It is necessary that consistency of thought, persistence in the achievement of goals and dignified simplicity in decisions have determined and directed our policy...[ellipsis as published] We have an obligation to cope with this difficult task and I have no doubt that we will succeed."

