

## HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF THE FORMATION OF THE STRATEGIC TRAJECTORY OF THE NEW AZERBAIJAN PARTY

### ІСТОРИЧНІ АСПЕКТИ ФОРМУВАННЯ СТРАТЕГІЧНОЇ ТРАЕКТОРІЇ ПАРТІЇ НОВИЙ АЗЕРБАЙДЖАН

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The New Azerbaijan Party represents a unique case in the modern political history of Azerbaijan, as it was established not with the primary objective of attaining political power or engaging in a struggle for authority, but rather with the mission of extricating the country from its prevailing crisis. The historical phases of the party's formation reveal that the New Azerbaijan Party was founded in 1992 under extremely challenging circumstances, initially as an opposition party. Nevertheless, even during its tenure in opposition, the party consistently refrained from opposing the statehood of Azerbaijan or its national interests. Members of the New Azerbaijan Party have consistently acted as the closest collaborators and confidants of our national leader, Heydar Aliyev, in the implementation of the program he outlined for the construction and development of an independent Azerbaijani state. At present, the numerous members of the party are firmly united around President Ilham Aliyev, the legitimate and capable successor to Heydar Aliyev's political legacy. Over the intervening period, the New Azerbaijan Party has substantially broadened its international relations. The party has deepened its ties with Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), as well as with political entities in Russia, China, Germany, and Georgia. During these years, the representatives of the New Azerbaijan Party have held numerous productive meetings with delegates from the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the Baku offices of the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute of the United States, further enhancing collaborative relations. Today, the New Azerbaijan Party not only serves as an initiator of international conferences and symposiums but also actively participates in them. The political institutions of the Azerbaijani state, including the New Azerbaijan Party, have undergone significant historical evolution during the years of independence. Although the party's spheres of activity are diverse, they all converge on a single goal—the welfare of the people and the advancement of the nation along the path of progress.

**Key words:** History of Azerbaijan, New Azerbaijan Party, political development, political leadership.

Партія «Новий Азербайджан» являє собою унікальний випадок у сучасній політичній історії Азербайджану, оскільки вона була створена не з головною метою досягнення політичної влади чи боротьби за владу, а скоріше з місією вивести країну з панівної кризи. Історичні етапи становлення партії показують, що партія «Новий Азербайджан» була заснована в 1992 році в надзвичайно складних умовах, спочатку як опозиційна партія. Тим не менш, навіть під час перебування в опозиції партія послідовно утримувалася від виступів проти державності Азербайджану та його національних інтересів. Члени партії «Єний Азербайджан» послідовно виступали як найближчі співробітники і довірені особи нашого загальнонаціонального лідера Гейдара Алієва в реалізації наміченої ним програми побудови і розвитку незалежної азербайджанської держави. Нині численні члени партії міцно згуртовані навколо президента Ільхама Алієва, легітимного та дієздатного наступника політичної спадщини Гейдара Алієва. За цей період партія «Новий Азербайджан» значно розширила свої міжнародні зв'язки. Партія поглибила свої зв'язки з правлячою в Туреччині Партією справедливості та розвитку (ПСР), а також з політичними структурами Росії, Китаю, Німеччини та Грузії. За ці роки представники партії «Новий Азербайджан» провели численні продуктивні зустрічі з делегатами Європейського Союзу, Ради Європи, Організації з безпеки та співробітництва в Європі (ОБСЄ), бакинських офісів Міжнародної республіканської партії. Інституту та Національного демократичного інституту Сполучених Штатів, подальшого зміцнення відносин співпраці. Сьогодні партія «Новий Азербайджан» не тільки виступає ініціатором міжнародних конференцій і симпозіумів, але й бере в них активну участь. Політичні інститути азербайджанської держави, в тому числі партія «Новий Азербайджан», за роки незалежності пройшли значну історичну еволюцію. Незважаючи на те, що сфери діяльності партії різноманітні, всі вони зведені до єдиної мети – добробуту народу, просування нації по шляху прогресу.

**Ключові слова:** історія Азербайджану, партія «Новий Азербайджан», політичний розвиток, політичне лідерство.

**Introduction.** It is well-established that the initial condition for the formation of any ideology is the existence of collective consciousness, manifested in various forms. This collective consciousness is based on shared ideas, needs, values, and norms. The social system itself has been constructed by humanity through collective (or social) consciousness. It is noteworthy that political thought is also a product of social consciousness, including its development at the ideological level.

We can assert that various types of ideologies exert different influences on the process of political thought development, leading to distinct outcomes. Ideology can be considered the foundation of political ideas, as politics cannot exist independently of ideology. The sole distinction lies in the degree of proximity between the two.

It is well-known that from early childhood, individuals are inculcated with various life principles

related to family, tribe, ethnic group, humanity, and so on. Political ideology, in particular, exerts a powerful influence because it permeates almost every individual's consciousness through governance structures and other means of control to varying degrees.

Through ideology, an individual cannot form universal perceptions of themselves or the world. However, they can evaluate both themselves and the world around them; the entire history of political thought attests to this. Let us consider such processes in the context of Azerbaijani history. The general characteristics of these processes are as follows:

- The political structure of traditional societies was intertwined with ideas about the individual and the world, which were secured through religious and mythological thought (primarily in anthropological forms), often seen as part of a divine plan.

- In transitional societies (marked by the collapse of empires, expansionist wars, civil conflicts, etc.), the formation of new social groups occurred rapidly. Marginal (intermediary) groups frequently articulated ideas opposing the dominant ideology (for example, the Khurramites, among others).

- The formation of capitalist society accelerated the integration processes between Eastern and Western civilizations. The ideology of the open society began to penetrate both Western and Eastern political structures. However, this was not so much the formation of a new ideology as the adaptation of both traditional and externally adopted ideological practices to contemporary living conditions. This was a painful process that affected the mentality, social status, and self-awareness of various social groups.

It is essential to emphasize that the principles of an open society (equality, liberty, private ownership), integrated with scientific and technological advancements across diverse sectors, have given rise to new paradigms regarding humanity's role and perception of the world. The ideological fusion of liberalism and conservatism has, at a cognitive level, established the foundation for numerous ideological conclusions. Political entities, notably political parties, strategically leverage these dynamics to assert their positions and influence collective consciousness. Political ideology is disseminated and embodied through various social institutions, particularly political parties.

#### **Degree of Problem Elaboration**

In contemporary, independent Azerbaijan, a multitude of political forces actively participate in the evolution of political processes [8]. Among these forces, the New Azerbaijan Party stands out [17]. As is well-documented, the operational mechanism of modern society's political system is structured around the execution of governance and authority [14]. Objective circumstances can precipitate the transformation, reconfiguration, or dissolution of the political system [16]. The foremost objective of

any state is the preservation and stabilization of its political system [15]. The established political regime is influenced by both governance methodologies and national-historical traditions. In this context, political parties are entrusted with substantial responsibilities within the parameters of their authority [13].

The fundamental components of Azerbaijan's political governance structure emerged at the convergence of the 20th and 21st centuries [9]. The remnants of the Soviet political system, which were inherited by the post-Soviet states, have undergone various stages of evolution and crisis [10]. The political instability resulting from the post-Soviet crisis significantly exacerbated the volatility of the political system. Only through extraordinary measures could this instability be mitigated [11]. Moreover, internal and external factors impacting the development of the national political system must be considered. In this respect, the role of political actors, particularly parties and their leadership, was of paramount significance [7].

There exists a substantial body of scientific and theoretical literature addressing these issues [6]. The analysis of the formation and development of the political system in Azerbaijan has been among the subjects of inquiry [5]. The analysis demonstrates that political traditions frequently replaced each other in the transmission of political experience. Azerbaijani statehood, which developed at the crossroads of Eastern and Western civilizations, encountered numerous political paradoxes. Both democratic and authoritarian traditions evolved and solidified in this context [13]. Democratic development in modern Azerbaijan retains elements of specific political traditionalism [12]. This traditionalism, of course, is rooted in universal values and national self-awareness.

It is noted that, over the past century, political consciousness and political relations have assumed an increasingly significant role among the other forms of public consciousness and spheres of life activity [14]. Political consciousness and relations have actively influenced individuals' worldviews and, more broadly, their general outlook on life [2]. The politicization of public consciousness becomes evident especially during pivotal historical moments [3]. This manifests in the polarization of social groups, the intensification of social contradictions, and the challenges that arise on the path to achieving civil peace. These phenomena, in turn, lead to the emergence of new worldviews and the formation of new fundamental values in individuals.

**Tasks and objectives.** This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the historical development phases of the New Azerbaijan Party, focusing on the distinctive features of the formation of its strategic trajectory. Initially, the exceptional role of the party's leaders is examined.

**Methods:** To achieve the research objectives, a review of scientific and theoretical literature was

conducted, alongside a historical analysis of socio-political processes. The study encompasses facts and figures related to the activities of political parties, particularly the prominent New Azerbaijan Party, within the state structures established during the years of independence.

**Main Section. The National Leader Heydar Aliyev is the founder and architect of the New Azerbaijan Party.**

The distinguished statesman and National Leader Heydar Aliyev was both the founder and the leader of the New Azerbaijan Party throughout his lifetime. His exceptional organizational skills and extraordinary ability to mobilize resources significantly accelerated the development of the New Azerbaijan Party.

It is well-documented that the first and second congresses of the New Azerbaijan Party were conducted under the leadership of the prominent statesman and skilled politician Heydar Aliyev. Aliyev's insightful speeches and final addresses at these congresses laid the foundation for the party's development strategy. Thanks to Heydar Aliyev's efforts, the New Azerbaijan Party gained prominence and was recognized as a well-structured entity on the international stage. The party's experience garnered significant attention from important political circles in foreign countries.

Following the dissolution of the USSR in October 1991, Azerbaijan, like other newly independent republics, declared its state sovereignty. However, neither the Ayaz Mutalibov administration nor the Azerbaijan Popular Front (AXC) and Musavat party duo succeeded in establishing a stable state, preserving its attributes, or advancing statehood. They even dismantled the relatively effective administrative principles inherited from the USSR. In this context, the sole hope of the people was Heydar Aliyev, a prominent public-political figure known for his experience, foresight, and resolute leadership. During this period, thousands of people from across Azerbaijan appealed to Heydar Aliyev, then Chairman of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic Supreme Assembly, requesting him to take measures to rescue the country from crisis, chaos, and anarchy.

On October 16, 1992, the newspaper "Səs" ("Voice") published a petition from Azerbaijani intellectuals addressed to Heydar Aliyev, which would later be known as the "91 Movement." The petition, which called for the establishment of a new political party under his leadership, was signed by intellectuals from various regions of the republic, who, on behalf of themselves and the ordinary people they represented, implored Heydar Aliyev to lead the newly founded party.

"Esteemed Heydar bey,

In the current circumstances, you are the sole individual capable of undertaking this arduous and responsibility-laden task within the republic!... Based

on the results of public opinion surveys conducted across nearly all regions of Azerbaijan and the thousands of verbal and written recommendations received by our organizing committee, we deduce that you alone can serve as the unequivocal leader of the NEW AZERBAIJAN PARTY... We envision the New Azerbaijan Party as an organized, robust, and leading force, uniting individuals with a new ideological mindset around you... Today, you are safeguarding and administrating the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, which is under political, economic, military, and moral blockade, through your personal influence and strategic diplomatic acumen. We hope that you will extend these efforts to the entirety of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan awaits your final and decisive resolution." [4]

**Establishment of the New Azerbaijan Party.** On November 21, 1992, at the founding conference held in Nakhchivan, a political entity dedicated to fulfilling its historical mission in the establishment and advancement of independent Azerbaijan – the New Azerbaijan Party – was established.

During the preparatory phase for the founding conference, a group of intellectuals in Baku developed preliminary drafts of the party's statute and program. These drafts were reviewed and critiqued by experienced colleagues, who contributed their recommendations. Initially, these documents were extensive and lacked a thorough reflection of the issues pertinent to Azerbaijan's independence—such as the consolidation of state sovereignty, the creation of a stable and socially oriented economy, the establishment of an independent, democratic, legal, and secular state, and the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, alongside principles of legality, Azerbaijani identity, continuity, and social justice. However, the introduction of markedly different, concise, and substantive drafts during the conference was a direct outcome of Heydar Aliyev's intervention. He was compelled to revise the party's statute and program extensively to align them with his visionary approach.

During the deliberation on the party's statute, Heydar Aliyev meticulously considered the feedback from the conference participants and integrated some of their suggestions.

A critical provision in the YAP program is the imperative of enhancing Azerbaijan's integration into the global community to bolster the nation's state independence. Thanks to the successful foreign policy of the esteemed leader Heydar Aliyev, this goal was achieved, and cooperation at an equal level within international organizations became a cornerstone of Azerbaijan's sovereignty. In January 2001, Azerbaijan's accession as a full member of the Council of Europe affirmed its earnest commitment to joining the "European family" and demonstrated adherence to all obligations undertaken before the organization.

On January 27, 2003, Mr. Ilham Aliyev's election as Vice-President and Bureau member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) represented a significant achievement for Azerbaijan within this international body. This development highlighted the advanced state of our country's relations with the Council of Europe and underscored the considerable respect and support for our delegation, especially for Mr. Ilham Aliyev. It is noteworthy that at the time of Azerbaijan's admission as a full PACE member, the organization was perceived as "Armenian-friendly" and influenced by "Armenian lobbying." However, from the outset, Ilham Aliyev and his delegation adopted a strategic approach that effectively transformed the organization from an anti-Azerbaijani stance to one that acknowledged and respected Azerbaijan's rights and sovereignty. Under Ilham Aliyev's initiative, PACE adopted numerous resolutions condemning Armenia's aggressive policies, designating the Nagorno-Karabakh region as an "occupied zone," and criticizing the looting of Azerbaijan's historical, cultural, and national heritage. [3, p. 166]

The Program of the New Azerbaijan Party (YAP) also delineates the directions of economic and social policy. The Program states: "The Party prioritizes the development of education, science, and culture in its social policy." Over the past period, the esteemed leader Heydar Aliyev, as the founder of independent Azerbaijan, practically implemented the key principles and provisions advanced in the Party's Program and Statute.

By the end of 1995, the New Azerbaijan Party had already established itself as a formidable political organization, securing a substantial majority of votes in parliamentary elections and assuming a leading role as the ruling party in the country's socio-political landscape. The effective application of Heydar Aliyev's political views and philosophy was pivotal to the Party's significant achievements. Regarding the Party's activities during this period, Heydar Aliyev remarked: "Recently, there has been talk that the New Azerbaijan Party has already failed, that it is dead, that it no longer exists... Those representing the YAP are not very capable, and so on. Undoubtedly, these are views and opinions aimed at weakening and diminishing the strength of the New Azerbaijan Party. Despite not having close contact with the Party's leadership, I certainly never believed these assertions. I was confident that the New Azerbaijan Party would survive and, through various stages, become even stronger. I am very pleased with the Party's current state, I congratulate it, and I hope that the New Azerbaijan Party will continue to develop rapidly and secure a deserved place in the republic's society, which is based on democratic principles, and in the multi-party system. This depends largely on you." [5]

One of the significant factors enhancing the historical importance of the First Congress of the New Azerbaijan Party was the steps taken towards ensuring political succession. The decision to appoint Mr. Ilham Aliyev as Deputy Chairman of the Party brought a new spirit and modernity to this process. In the parliamentary elections held on November 12, 2000, Mr. Ilham Aliyev and several YAP members secured the majority of seats in the parliament. This allowed for the assertion that the decisions of the First Congress were the result of pragmatic political thought. Mr. Ilham Aliyev's subsequent election as First Deputy Chairman of the Party was a clear indicator of the successful outcomes of the decisions made at the First Congress.

In November 2001, the Party's Second Congress was held. During this congress, amendments were made to the Party's Statute, including the establishment of the position of First Deputy Chairman, to which Mr. Ilham Aliyev, already recognized as a prominent politician, was elected. This led to a more rapid development of the Party, particularly with increased active engagement of youth in the Party's activities.

#### **The Role of Ilham Aliyev in the Formation of the New Azerbaijan Party**

The factor of Ilham Aliyev in the formation of the New Azerbaijan Party was indispensable as the worthy successor to Heydar Aliyev's political legacy and a guarantor of Azerbaijan's rightful place among leading world states. Mr. Ilham Aliyev was already actively involved in the republic's socio-political life, having established himself as a powerful political figure through his vigorous activities as First Vice-President of the State Oil Company, Member of the National Assembly, Head of the Azerbaijani Parliamentary Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and President of the National Olympic Committee. His election as First Deputy Chairman of the New Azerbaijan Party had a highly positive impact on the organization's activities and was a crucial factor in enhancing the Party's mass appeal. As First Deputy Chairman, he emphasized that the strength of the New Azerbaijan Party primarily resided in its irreplaceable leader Heydar Aliyev, in the alignment of the Party's policies with the interests of the people, and in the practical implementation of its foundational principles. He confidently asserted that the New Azerbaijan Party would remain in power and that Azerbaijan's future was closely linked to this Party and the policies of Heydar Aliyev.

The exceptional role of Ilham Aliyev in transforming the New Azerbaijan Party into a leading political force in society cannot be attributed solely to his representation in the Party's leadership and its activities. Following his election as the First Deputy Chairman of the New Azerbaijan Party, Ilham Aliyev drew not only national but also international attention.

In his address to the Azerbaijani people on October 1, 2003, our National Leader Heydar Aliyev emphasized the high importance he placed on both Ilham Aliyev and the New Azerbaijan Party, presenting Ilham Aliyev and the Party as the most appropriate choice for the nation:

The years 1992-2003, during which the New Azerbaijan Party was founded, established, developed, and became a political force, are directly associated with the name of National Leader Heydar Aliyev.

Ilham Aliyev's magnificent victory in the 2003 presidential elections opened a new and honorable chapter in the history of independent Azerbaijan. The significant direction of Ilham Aliyev's pre-election campaign was the comprehensive explanation of the work done during Heydar Aliyev's presidency to preserve and further strengthen the statehood and independence of the country. By arguing with concrete facts that Azerbaijan's successful oil strategy promised substantial socio-economic progress, demonstrating the strong economic potential of the country, and highlighting the improving standard of living, Ilham Aliyev succeeded in fostering voter optimism.

Ilham Aliyev was elected as the President of independent Azerbaijan and Chairman of the New Azerbaijan Party, marking the Party's and its members' next and most significant victory.

Therefore, Ilham Aliyev's election as President in October 2003 was a result of the people's confidence in the Heydar Aliyev political course. The victory of the YAP candidate in the 2003 presidential elections visibly confirmed the Party's influence in the country's socio-political life.

On December 17, 2004, in the municipal elections, and on November 6, 2005, in the parliamentary elections, the YAP again achieved victory, further establishing itself as a party with substantial representation in both local self-government bodies and legislative bodies. The Party fulfilled the hopes placed upon it by the President and the people, reaffirming its leadership and indispensability by securing 63 mandates.

In Azerbaijan, social justice, national unity, and the protection of citizens' rights and freedoms are core principles upheld by President Ilham Aliyev. From the outset of his presidential duties, Ilham Aliyev structured state policy in accordance with priorities in the field of political reforms. The continuation of the Heydar Aliyev course, which has demonstrated its vitality and effectiveness in all areas, and the creative application of its core principles in the context of globalization, are defining characteristics of Ilham Aliyev's presidential activities.

The decree signed on November 24, 2003, on the "Measures for Accelerating Socio-Economic Development in the Republic of Azerbaijan," the "State Program on Socio-Economic Development of Regions (2004-2008)" approved on February 11,

2004, and the "State Program on Improving Living Conditions and Increasing Employment of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons" dated July 1, 2004, as well as directives on promoting entrepreneurship and socio-economic spheres, encompass various directions of his activity program.

On November 24, 2003, Ilham Aliyev initiated comprehensive measures aimed at addressing the objective problems arising from the transition between different socio-political formations, by signing the decree on "Measures for Accelerating Socio-Economic Development in the Republic of Azerbaijan". As is well known, the decree outlined the theoretical, practical, and conceptual approaches to accelerating the dynamic development observed in the national economy.

President Ilham Aliyev's socio-economic reforms have been highly praised by international financial institutions. In November 2006, Donna Dousset-Coyrolo, Director for the South Caucasus at the World Bank, highlighted that Azerbaijan had established itself as a country with high economic indicators and that the trust of international financial institutions in our country had significantly increased. This trust resulted in the world's largest financial resources providing real support for Azerbaijan's largest economic project: the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, ensuring that the "Project of the Century" faced no issues [1].

Today, the tireless efforts of Azerbaijani President and YAP Chairman Ilham Aliyev generate a sense of pride among every Azerbaijani, as they realize the fulfillment of Heydar Aliyev's aspirations. President Ilham Aliyev continues and completes the work initiated by our National Leader Heydar Aliyev. While Heydar Aliyev laid the foundation for the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline, Ilham Aliyev, as the faithful successor of Heydar Aliyev's path, inaugurated and ensured the operationalization of the pipeline.

The political and economic significance of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline must be considered as one of the most decisive historical events in strengthening Azerbaijan's independence. Had the "Contract of the Century" not been signed in 1994, and had subsequent infrastructure projects not been implemented, and had construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline not commenced, it would be difficult to speak of Azerbaijan's standing among the world's nations today. Ilham Aliyev assesses this fact as follows: "Had the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline not materialized, there would be no discussion of economic development in Azerbaijan. Many sectors in Azerbaijan began to develop only after the 'Contract of the Century' [2, p. 130]."

The contemporary development phase of the New Azerbaijan Party (YAP) was defined by the III Congress held on March 26, 2005. During the Congress, Ilham Aliyev was unanimously elected

Chairman of the New Azerbaijan Party. Chairman Ilham Aliyev delivered an extensive report at the Congress, providing a profound and comprehensive analysis of the socio-political processes occurring globally and domestically, and delineated the key directions of the Party's activities.

The election of President Ilham Aliyev as Chairman of YAP during the III Congress in 2005 brought dynamism to the political environment of the country. As a carrier of the ideological thought based on Heydar Aliyev's ideas and moral principles, and possessing rich political experience and intellect, President Ilham Aliyev succeeded in shaping a new mode of thinking and style of activity in Azerbaijan's political life. This, in turn, established new perspectives for the future political activities of the New Azerbaijan Party.

**Conclusion.** Under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev, the worthy successor of the National Leader Heydar Aliyev, the day when our country will achieve a brighter and more prosperous future is not

far off. As evidenced by the facts, Ilham Aliyev is a leader who is unafraid of difficulties, emerges from all trials with valor, and demonstrates great sacrifices for his people and homeland. Ilham Aliyev is also a statesman who has successfully continued the historical mission of the great Heydar Aliyev and has concluded the projects initiated by his predecessor with notable achievements. In summary, he is a formidable phenomenon whom Azerbaijan takes pride in, relies upon, and views as a cornerstone of its successful future.

The Azerbaijani people recognize Ilham Aliyev as the most deserving disciple of Heydar Aliyev's political school, capable of completing the crucial tasks and prospective plans initiated by his predecessor and continuing the far-sighted internal and external policies he has implemented to date. Today, the steps and actions taken by Ilham Aliyev as President of the Republic of Azerbaijan demonstrate his adherence to and continuation of Heydar Aliyev's path and political line with due diligence.

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