

AZERBAIJAN'S FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY IS BASED ON NATIONAL INTERESTS AND MEETS THE CHALLENGES OF THE TIME

Azerbaijan, which has a millennial tradition of statehood, has a rich history of diplomacy. The balanced diplomacy of the ruler of Caucasian Albania, Javanshir, in a complex geopolitical situation and the diplomatic activities of the Atabays, Shirvanshahs and Qara-Qoyunlu - all these are glorious pages of the history of Azerbaijani diplomacy. Azerbaijan's strategic position in the Caucasus region and on the historical Silk Road determined the important role of the states of the region in international relations and diplomatic and trade ties for a long time. Under the ruler of the Ag-Qoyunlu state, Uzun Hasan - Hasan the Long, Azerbaijan's role in East-West ties increased even more. In addition to other countries of the East, Azerbaijan managed to establish broad diplomatic relations with European states. An important role in diplomatic negotiations was played by Hasan's mother Sara Khatun, the only female diplomat in the whole East at the time.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Azerbaijan became part of Russia, but with the formation of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic on 28 May 1918, the country once again independently joined the system of international relations. In 1919, when Azerbaijani diplomacy took its first steps, diplomatic missions of 16 states functioned in Baku, including the USA, Great Britain, France, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, Belgium, Iran, Poland and Ukraine. Until April 1920, Azerbaijan had diplomatic missions and consulates in Georgia, Armenia, Iran, Turkey, Ukraine, etc. After the de facto recognition of Azerbaijan's independence at the Paris Peace Conference on 11 January of the same year, the government prepared a bill on the establishment of diplomatic missions in Western Europe and America.

After occupation by Bolshevik Russia and the subsequent formation of the USSR, Azerbaijan's independent foreign policy activity was completely

*Atropat meets with Alexander the Great.**Artist E. Mammadov. National Museum of History of Azerbaijan*

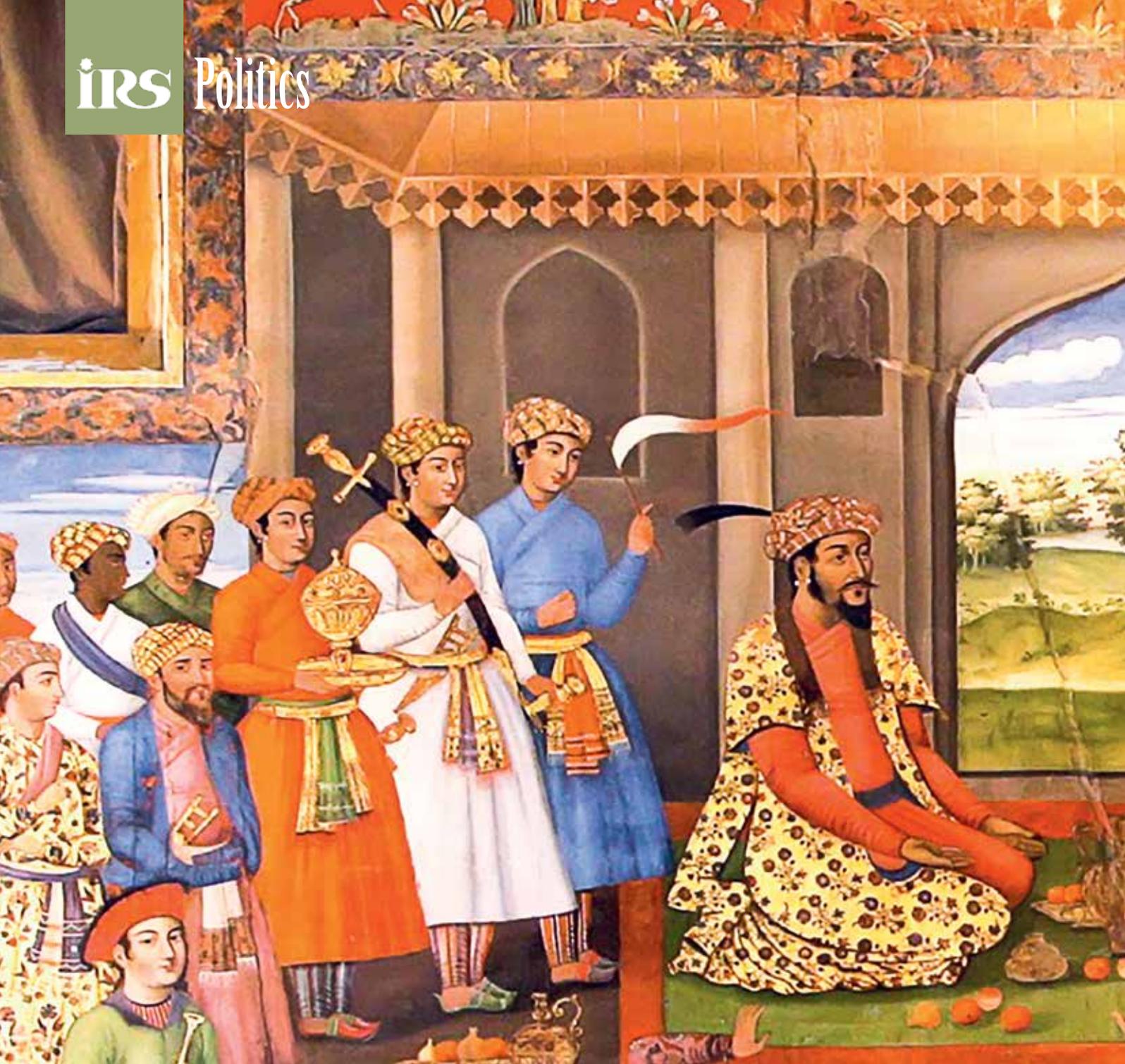
*Shah Ismayil I receives foreign ambassadors.
17th century Tabriz miniature*



discontinued. On 8 October 1923, by order of the Council of People's Commissars of the Azerbaijani SSR, all diplomatic missions functioning in Azerbaijan, except for the missions of Turkey and Iran, were abolished. Only in 1944, towards the end of the Great Patriotic War, did the Soviet Kremlin, guided by its strategic interests, find it necessary to create the People's Commissariats of Foreign Affairs in the republics of the Union, including in the Azerbaijan SSR. Over the years, these bodies had a purely formal nature.

At the end of the 20th century, Azerbaijan once again gained independence following the collapse of the USSR and faced the need to build its foreign policy activities. After the return of the highly experienced statesman Heydar Aliyev to power, the process of state building in the country rose to a qualitatively new level, which also affected the system of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Based on the historical heritage and

peculiarities of Azerbaijan's geopolitical position, a multi-vector and balanced foreign policy strategy was formed, which successfully continues today, based on Azerbaijan's national interests and in accordance with the challenges and demands of the times.



On 24 August 2007, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev signed an order on the establishment of a professional holiday for employees of the republic's diplomatic services on 9 July. The adoption of the temporary instruction on the Secretariat of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic on 9 July 1919 was taken as a basis.

In his speech at the official reception on the occasion of the Republic Day on 28 May 2017, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev described the foreign policy of the country as follows: "Azerbaijan has made great strides in the foreign policy sphere. We will continue to

defend our national interests in the international arena. Today in the world we are known as a country that is highly respected. The number of countries wishing to cooperate with us is growing. We have no problems with any country, except for Armenia, in the bilateral format. We have put forward a number of trilateral formats of cooperation."

Azerbaijan's foreign policy in the region and beyond is imbued with the spirit of good-neighborliness, mutually beneficial cooperation and partnership. Without entering into military-political blocs, Azerbaijan has formed an atmosphere of "soft" security, acting not

*Shah Tahmasp I receives foreign ambassadors.
Fresco in the Chehel-Sutun Palace in Isfahan*



as a “consumer” but as a “producer” and as a guarantor of security in the region, and is now perceived as a worthy and reliable partner. The expanding ties with countries of Latin America, Africa and South-East Asia serve as a clear indicator of Azerbaijan’s growing authority in the international arena. In the words of the political theorist Joseph Nye, the policy pursued by Azerbaijan could

*Beglarbey of Shirvan Abdulla Khan receives traveler
Antony Jenkinson. Artist O. Sadigzade. National Museum
of History of Azerbaijan*





*Shah Abbas I receives foreign ambassadors.
17th century miniature*

- Taking into account the absence of internal sources of risk in Azerbaijan - protection of the country from external risks and ensuring its security through a thoughtful policy;
- Non-interference in the internal affairs of states and support for interstate relations that deny external interference;
- Avoiding international actions and initiatives that do not meet the national interests of Azerbaijan and following a policy based on national interests;
- Expansion of cooperation with international organizations and expansion of multilateral diplomacy;
- Maintaining adherence to national spiritual and religious values, proceeding from the rich experience formed over centuries - promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and multiculturalism;
- Increasing the competitiveness of the national economy, expanding exports and gaining access to new markets amid the global financial and economic crisis and falling oil prices;
- Completion of TANAP and TAP projects in accordance with the schedule and the launch of the Southern Gas Corridor;
- Completion of work on the East-West and North-South transport corridors.

Against the backdrop of worsening crises and conflicts typical for the Cold War period, geopolitical discords, the emergence of new forms and manifestations of terrorism, as well as asymmetric threats, these strategic tasks take into account the imperative of time and are aimed at ensuring the sustainable development and security of Azerbaijan in the long-term.

As noted in the speech of the President of the Republic, the settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict remains the main foreign policy priority. The transfer of the ideology of "greater Armenia", formed over more than 200 years, to the military-political plane and the unleashing by Armenia of a war against Azerbaijan, which resulted in the occupation of 20 per cent of its territory, bloody ethnic cleansings and the expulsion of almost a million Azerbaijanis, is the main threat to our security. Azerbaijan's position on this issue has a decisive and principled character: Nagorno-Karabakh is an inalienable part of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan will never reconcile itself with the fact of occupation

be called Smart Power. On the other hand, it would probably be better to refer to an independent foreign policy in such a complicated region and in a chaotic world order and in the crucible of political, economic, military crises, and perhaps successful ensuring of security despite everything as Intelligent Power.

In general, the tasks assigned to the foreign policy department in the head of state's speech, proceeding from the threats and challenges of the modern system of international relations, can be classified as follows:

- The settlement of the Armenian-Azerbaijani military conflict in accordance with the norms and principles of international law and UN Security Council resolutions within the borders of Azerbaijan recognized by the international community on the basis of its territorial integrity and sovereignty;

*Embassy of the State of Shirvanshahs arrives in Moscow. 15th century.
Artist L. Knit. National Museum of History of Azerbaijan*



and will never allow the creation of a second Armenian state on its territory. This is precisely the strategic position of Azerbaijan in the negotiation process, which was outlined by the head of state on the basis of the will of the Azerbaijani people. The events of 4 July of the current year when the peaceful village of Alkhanli in Fizuli District of Azerbaijan was subjected to artillery fire from nearby Armenian positions - as a result, a two-year-old girl and her grandmother were killed and another resident was wounded - once again showed the true face of Armenia, which seeks to undermine the negotiations and the mediatory efforts of the co-chairs through provocations.

Over the past period, on the basis of a proactive strategy, important measures were taken to expose Armenia's aggressive policy in the political, diplomatic, military, information, humanitarian and other spheres. As a result of these steps, the following results were achieved:

- The international community, except for Armenia, recognizes, supports and respects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders. This position

is enshrined in the well-known resolutions of the UN Security Council, resolutions of the OSCE, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Council of Europe, NATO, the Non-Aligned Movement and other international organizations, as well as bilateral statements and documents of other states on a bilateral basis;

- Armenia's attempts to transfer the military occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan to the political plane and even legitimize the occupation under the pretext of self-determination failed: the international community did not recognize the results of Armenia's military aggression against Azerbaijan. On the contrary, the well-known resolutions of the UN Security Council, resolutions and declarations of the OIC and documents of other international organizations condemn the occupation of the Azerbaijani territories and the violent change of recognized state borders;
- The OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs and the entire international community consider the current status quo based on occupation to be unacceptable and unsustainable and seriously call for its change - and

this primarily means the elimination of the fact of occupation;

- The political and legal bases for a gradual settlement of the conflict have been formed, and this, in accordance with the norms and principles of international law, the well-known UN Security Council resolutions and the Helsinki Final Act, provides for the withdrawal of the Armenian troops from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, ensuring the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan within its internationally recognized borders, the return of Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced persons, including the Azerbaijani community of Nagorno-Karabakh, to their native land and the coexistence of the Armenian and Azerbaijani communities of Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijan's borders in the form of autonomy;
- Armenia has come to a deadlock in the negotiation process and has no other way but to withdraw its troops from the occupied Azerbaijani territories. Therefore, resorting to military and political provocations, Armenia is trying to divert attention from the main goal and torpedo the negotiations, trying to redirect it towards technical issues;
- Armenia's occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan, being temporary and tactical, led to the geopolitical and geo-economic isolation and strategic defeat of Armenia, pushed it away from regional projects and contributed to the depletion of its political, military, economic and demographic resources. Armenia has seriously questioned its existence as a sovereign state;
- Armenia's illegal acts in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan are foiled by political and legal means and at the same time, are exposed at the international level, and thanks to national and international mechanisms for legal prosecution in this area, significant progress has been made;
- As a result of the exposure of Armenia's policy of military aggression and ethnic cleansing against Azerbaijan, as well as war crimes and criminal acts against humanity in the occupied territories, the moral foundations and image of Armenia as a state are thoroughly shattered at the international level. International public opinion has formed a clear view on Armenia's occupation policy and false propaganda designed to disguise it. With the provocation in the village of Alkhanli, Armenia once again exposed itself.

In accordance with the tasks to resolve the conflict,

consistent and proactive activities to eliminate the consequences of the Armenian occupation and ensure the territorial integrity and sovereignty of our country within its internationally recognized borders will continue.

Facing a traditional threat represented by the Armenian aggression, Azerbaijan takes seriously the new and asymmetric risks and threats characteristic of the modern period and originating from the outside and takes the necessary measures to prevent them. Today, Azerbaijan does not have internal sources of risk. Along with the high professionalism of law enforcement agencies and special services, the fundamental basis of stability in the country is the right socio-economic policy and consistent and purposeful steps to build an inclusive, multicultural society. In addition, Azerbaijan carries out a security policy, which leads to a steady improvement in the well-being of the people and protection of the rights and freedoms of citizens.

Azerbaijan actively supports the efforts of the international community on a bilateral and multilateral basis aimed at enhancing international security and overcoming conflicts that serve as a fertile ground for terrorism, radicalism and extremism, and for the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Azerbaijan also contributes to the strengthening of existing international mechanisms and means in this direction and to increasing their effectiveness.

Azerbaijan stands for building a system of international relations based on the rule of law and supports the efforts aimed at this. The establishment of the United Nations after the Second World War, the rapid institutionalization of international relations in general and the codification of norms and principles of international law reduced the risk and threat of war, but failed to completely eliminate them. One of the illustrations of this situation is Armenia's military aggression against the neighboring state. Azerbaijan does not interfere in the affairs of other states and does not allow other states to interfere in its internal affairs.

One of the important foundations for building a system of just and safe international relations is the promotion of a dialogue between cultures and civilizations and multiculturalism. Unfortunately, in the modern world there is a growing number of people wishing to transfer the clash of civilizations from theory to practice. Azerbaijan, providing not only the existence, but also the development of multiculturalism with centuries-old traditions of tolerance and successful state policy, supports the dialogue of civilizations and

Representatives of the ADR government and Ministry of Foreign Affairs before an official reception marking recognition of the independence of Azerbaijan by European countries. Baku, January 1920



cultures on a global level with its own model. The first European Games, the Baku Forum of the UN Alliance of Civilizations, the Forum on Intercultural Dialogue and the Baku process in general, the 4th Islamic Solidarity Games - all this is Azerbaijan's contribution to the realization of this high goal.

One of the important tasks of Azerbaijan's foreign policy is to develop cooperation with international organizations. In the system of international relations, multilateral diplomacy should prevail over unilateral steps, the voice of all states, regardless of the territory and population, should be heard, and collective decisions must be made. In this context, Azerbaijan will strive for the further development of multilateral diplomacy and cooperation with international organizations. The main target here, as a universal international organization, is the UN and its specialized structures. In 25 years, mutually beneficial and fruitful cooperation was established between Azerbaijan and the UN. Proceeding from this and the experience of non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council in 2012-2013, Azerbaijan will continue to actively support efforts aimed at reforming the UN system in order to bring it in line with the requirements of the times. In June 2016, at a session of the UN General Assembly, Azerbaijan was elected a member of the UN Economic and Social Council for 2017-2019, gaining 176 votes out of 184 member states. ECOSOC, as the central platform

for conducting professional discussions on sustainable development, will give us additional opportunities to contribute to international development.

The second largest international platform after the UN General Assembly is the Non-Aligned Movement, of which 120 states are members. Azerbaijan became a member of the Non-Aligned Movement in 2011. Since the day of its establishment, this movement has played an important role in strengthening international peace and security. The final document of the 17th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement held on 13-18 September last year on the island of Margarita (Venezuela) decided to hold the 18th Summit of 2019 in Azerbaijan. The forthcoming summit in Baku will also have a symbolic character, since it will be the first summit of the Non-Aligned Movement on the European continent after a 30-year pause - the 1989 Belgrade Summit. In 2019-2022, Azerbaijan will chair the Non-Aligned Movement.

Azerbaijan will consistently develop relations with the European Union, NATO, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the League of Arab States, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the African Union, the Organization of American States and other organizations, of which it is not a member, but with which it cooperates through appropriate mechanisms. At the same time, Azerbaijan will increase its efforts to expand cooperation opportunities within regional organizations, of which it is a member, including the OSCE, OIC, the Organization

*Opening of the Embassy of the Azerbaijan SSR in Ankara. 18 November 1921.
To the right of Mustafa Kemal Pasha is Ambassador Ibrahim Abilov*



for Economic Cooperation, the Turkic Council, the Commonwealth of Independent States, GUAM, the Council of Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and others.

During the years of independence, Azerbaijan trained its own qualified diplomatic personnel. Today, the diplomatic corps of the country is dominated by young people. In the coming period, we intend to achieve representation in the management system of international organizations of which we are members, and thereby increase our contribution to their work.

Our concept of economic diplomacy acquires even greater urgency against the backdrop of the fundamental economic reforms being carried out in Azerbaijan and the development of the non-oil sector. The development of foreign economic relations, the popularization of the country's economic potential abroad, the diversification of the non-oil sector, the promotion and expansion of exports, the attraction of foreign investment and the promotion of Azerbaijani investments abroad, the organization of visits by

representatives of business circles, meetings of joint intergovernmental commissions and working groups of Azerbaijan with foreign countries on economic cooperation, the export of Azerbaijani goods and services to new markets, as well as attracting foreign advanced technologies are the main fields of Azerbaijan's economic diplomacy. In this context, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in conjunction with the Ministry of Economy and other government agencies, works to organize meetings of joint intergovernmental commissions and business forums. Cooperation in the field of tourism occupies an important place in the development of bilateral economic ties. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism and diplomatic missions are working together in countries that are attractive in terms of tourism to popularize the tourism opportunities of Azerbaijan.

An important contribution to regional cooperation is made by energy and transport projects initiated and implemented by Azerbaijan. We take an active part in the implementation of the North-South and East-West

Building of the Embassy of the Azerbaijan SSR in Ankara. 1921

transport corridors. Important projects include the creation and prompt commissioning of the Trans-Caspian International Route and the opening of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway communication system. The full implementation of the Chinese concept of the Silk Road Economic Zone will include the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars project in the number of the most important infrastructures in the region. Along with this, there is no doubt that the Qazvin-Rasht-Astara (Iran) - Astara (Azerbaijan) railway project, which is an integral part of the North-South transport corridor, will give a new impetus to the economic growth of the whole region and the countries participating in it. Azerbaijan is also the initiator of the large-scale energy project "Southern Gas Corridor", important components of which are the TANAP/TAP projects. This is a project of energy cooperation and energy security. It is important to note that energy and transport corridors do not mean only the transportation of energy and cargo, but are corridors of comprehensive cooperation. Members of the Southern Gas Corridor project are Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece,

Albania and Italy. We are sure that at the next stage other Balkan countries will join the project.

The strategic objectives of Azerbaijan's foreign policy are an integral part of the unified state policy aimed at strengthening the country's independence and sovereignty in the medium and long-term, ensuring security and improving the well-being of the Azerbaijani people, achieving peace and security in the region, and further enhancing the authority of Azerbaijan in the international arena. The settlement of these tasks on the basis of such fundamental principles of an independent, multi-vector and balanced foreign policy as mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs includes the further intensification of joint activities with partners on a bilateral basis and within international organizations, the launching of new initiatives, as well as active humanitarian, energy, transport, economic and digital diplomatic measures in accordance with the requirements of the times. 🌟