



EVALUATION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN KAZAKHSTAN ON MARCH 20, 2016

The elections to the sixth Parliament of Kazakhstan, namely, to the Lower Chamber of the Parliament (Majilis), was held on March 20, 2016. The parliamentary elections were held earlier than it was previously scheduled due to the initiative of the parliamentarians of the fifth Parliament, who appealed to the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, to dissolve the Majilis and to enter a new election process. The main purpose of the aforementioned initiative was to implement Nazarbayev's program of reforms and to form a new effective Majilis, which would be able to receive a vote of confidence in order to modernize the country.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Parliament consists of two Chambers: the Senate and the Majilis. The Senate consists of 47 deputies. The Senate shall be composed of deputies elected in twos from each of 14 regions, Almaty city, which is a city of the national importance, and Astana city, which is the capital of the country. 15 deputies are assigned by the President in order to represent national, cultural and other interests of the society (Article 50). The deputies of the Senate should be elected on the basis of an indirect electoral right under the secret ballot. Half of the elected deputies of the Senate should be re-elected every three years. In this light, the regular Senate elections should be held no later than two months before the end of the deputies' term in office. The duty term of a deputy of the Senate is 6 years. Kazakhstani citizens who have reached thirty years of age and have no legal barrier to be elected can become a deputy of the Senate (Article 51).

According to the Law on Election of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Majilis can be formed from the representative of a political party, which has overcome 7% threshold (Article. 97-1). According to the Constitution, the number of members of the Majilis is 107 (Article 50). 98% of these members are elected on the basis of universal, equal and direct right under the secret ballot while the other 9 members are elected by the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstani citizens who have reached twenty-five years of age and have no legal barrier to be elected can become a deputy of the Majilis (Article 51). According to the Article 54, the Majilis has the rule making power. During the fifth elections to the Majilis held on January 15, 2012, only 3 out of 7 political parties were able to pass 7% threshold: the Nur Otan Party (80.99%), the Ak Zhol Democratic Party of Kazakhstan (7.47%) and the Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan (7.19%). As a result of the election, the Nur Otan Party, the Ak Zhol Democratic Party of Kazakhstan and the Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan constituted 83%, 8% and 7% of seats in the Majilis.

According to the Law on Local Public Administration and Self-Governance in the Republic of Kazakhstan, Maslikhats, which are responsible for making local decisions, could be organized at the regional, city and district levels, so as in the city of republican significance (Almaty), and in the capital city (Astana) (Article 1). However, there are no Maslikhats in villages. Despite absence of the legal entity rights (Article 5) Maslikhats are liable in front of the citizens in their region for their activities (Article 8). The Central Election Committee determines the number of members of the Maslikhats. The number of members in regional Maslikhats, Maslikhats of Astana and Almaty city parliaments can be up to 50, in the city Maslikhats - up to 30 and in the district Maslikhats - up to 25 (Article 5). All Kazakhstani citizens who have reached twenty years of age can become a member of the Maslikhat. The duty term of the Maslikhat's members is 5 years and they are elected by the citizens on the basis of universal, equal and direct right under the secret ballot (Article 5).

Current international tensions between the Western countries and Russia, especially, the economic sanctions implemented towards Russia by the West, have negatively affected the development of Kazakhstan. In his Address to the Nation, titled "Kazakhstan in New Global Reality: Growth, Reform and Development," held on November 30, 2015, Nursultan Nazarbayev indicated the Roadmap, which sets the measures that are to aid in solving all the problems, which negatively affect the development of the country. He indicated the Roadmap with three main concepts and five main directions. These five main directions are developed to achieve structural transformation with holistic view in order to fight against the crisis, which negatively affects the development of the country: 1) Stabilization of the financial sector; 2) Optimization of the fiscal policy; 3) Privatization and promotion of the economic competition; 4) New investment policy framework; 5) New social policies.

It is obvious that new legal arrangements should be made in order to strengthen the implementation of the main strategies for the continuous development of the country and of the five main directions mentioned above. Therefore, Nursultan Nazarbayev emphasized that the initiative of the Parliament was a patriotically responsible behavior and that renewing the Majilis would positively affect both the country and the citizens. We can observe that the Kazakhstani society has responsibly approached the elections and has given a vote of confidence to the Nur Otan Party, which is headed by Nursultan Nazarbayev once more. This can also be proven by the results of the elections.

234 candidates from a list of six-parties attained the elections, namely, 127 candidates from the Nur Otan Party, 35 from the Ak Zhol Democratic Party of Kazakhstan, 22 from the Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan, 19 from the Auyly National Patriotic Party, 8 from the Unity Party and 23 from the National Social Democratic Party were included in the election process. According to the Central Election Committee of Kazakhstan, the result of the vote count in electoral districts with total of 9840 ballot boxes is 77.12% or 7,566,150 voters out of 9,810,852 registered voters. The distribution of votes are as follows: 82.20% for the Nur Otan Party (6,183,757), 7.14% for the Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan (537,123), 7.18% for the Ak Zhol Democratic Party of Kazakhstan, 0.29% for the Unity Party (21,484), 1.18% for the National Social Democratic Party (88,813) and 2.01% for the Auyly National Patriotic Party (151,285). According to these results, the Nur Otan Party constitutes 84 seats in the Majilis, while the Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan and the Ak Zhol Democratic Party of Kazakhstan constitute 7 seats each. The most active attendance to the election was observed in four regions: Almaty region (94.06%), Atyrau region (85.37%), South Kazakhstan region (85.06%) and Kostanai region (84.85%). On the contrary, the least active attendance was observed in Almaty city (34.1%).

On March 21, 2016, in order to determine the rest of the members of the sixth Majilis the elections were held by the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan. According to the results of the Central Election Committee, 83.41% or 372 out of 446 registered voters gave their votes electing nine parliamentarians among different ethnic groups such as Kazakh, Russian, Moldovan, Korean, Armenian, Chechen, Uyghur, Ukrainian and Dungan.

A total of 995 observers from international and local organizations observed the parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan. For instance, 8 observers from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Turkic-Speaking countries (TURKPA) attended the process. The observers from international and local organizations announced that the elections were held in a free, fair, transparent and democratic environment. In conclusion, in order to protect themselves from negative effects of conflicts in the region and to fight against the socio-economic problems caused by the global crisis, Kazakhstani citizens have shown their support to the Nur Otan Party, which has been carrying out the policy of being "An Eternal State".

Note: Elections of Maslikhats were held along with the elections to the sixth Parliament. According to the territorial election commission, the Nur Otan Party has won the majority of the seats in Maslikhats.

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Politics, Foreign Affairs and Security

- According to the Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan, the party of the Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev Nur Otan won the majority in the lower house (Majilis) of the Parliament of the country. The Nur Otan Party won 84 mandates at early elections to the Majilis. As a result of the parliamentary elections, the Ak Zhol Party and the Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan won seven mandates each.
- According to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Grigory Karasin, the most important result of the 35th round of the Geneva International Discussions on Security and Stability in Transcaucasia was a principled agreement to restart work of the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) at the Georgian – Abkhazian border. The IPRM operation in Gal was suspended in April 2012.
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus reported that the main issue on the agenda of the joint meeting of the political and security subgroups of the Contact Group on the settlement in Ukraine held in Minsk was ensuring security during elections in the Donbass region.
- During his official visit to Moscow, the U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, held talks with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Sergey Lavrov, and the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin. The agenda of Moscow talks included efforts of the International Syria Support Group for the sake of cessation of hostilities, humanitarian aid and its better availability, promotion of political transition in Syria and struggle against the Islamic State. Moreover, the parties discussed the efforts to ensure full implementation of the Minsk Agreements.
- Nepal has been officially granted dialogue partner status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The relevant memorandum has been signed at the SCO headquarters in Beijing with the participation of the Secretary-General of the organization, Rashid Alimov, and the Prime Minister of Nepal, Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli. The political decision to grant a dialogue partner status to Cambodia, Azerbaijan, Nepal and Armenia was taken at the SCO summit in Ufa, Russia in July 2015. Moreover, during the Ufa summit the status of Belarus in the SCO was upgraded from a dialogue partner to an observer. Sri Lanka and Turkey, which joined the SCO in 2009 and 2013 respectively, also have a dialogue partner status.

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan announced its plans to submit the issue of the situation on a section of its border with Uzbekistan for consideration by the Permanent Council of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Recently, the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry filed a note of protest to Tashkent demanding to remove the roadblocks in the disputed border section in the Chalasart area. It should be noted that after bilateral consultations between the Heads of the State Border Services, the parties managed to agree to withdraw their military forces from the unmarked border section.
- The Ministry of Defense of Russia reported that the strategic command and staff exercises involving about 30,000 personnel and over 3,800 pieces of military hardware had started in the country. The drills will assess the capabilities of the Airborne Force Command for exercising command and for control of a joint force grouping upon the accomplishment of assigned missions.

Economy, Finance and Energy

- According to the state statistics service, Rosstat, Russia produced 10.466 million barrels of oil per day in January 2016, outstripping Saudi Arabia, which reported oil production at 10.091 million barrels per day for January. Meanwhile, the OPEC countries reported a total of 32.335 million barrels of oil produced per day. Oil export from Russia dropped by 2.3% to 19.2 million tons in January 2016 year-on-year.
- The State Oil Company of Azerbaijan, SOCAR, announced its plans to sell a part of stake in Petkim oil and chemical company of Turkey, which produces plastic packages, fabrics, detergents. Currently, SOCAR holds 51.39% of the shares in Petkim.
- According to the report of the Energy Market Regulatory Authority of Turkey (EMRA), Azerbaijan supplied 594.46 million cubic meters of gas to Turkey in January of 2016, compared to 577.36 million cubic meters in January of 2015. Azerbaijan accounted for 11% of the total volume of Turkey's gas import in January of 2016. The remaining volume of natural gas was imported via pipelines accounted for Russia (2.79 billion cubic meters) and Iran. Moreover, EMRA reported that Turkey had for the first time imported liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the US in 2016. The country imported 83 million cubic meters of LNG, which accounts for 7.15% of the country's LNG consumption, while the rest of LNG was exported to Turkey from

Qatar, Algeria, Nigeria and other countries.

- Within the framework of a meeting of the supervisory board of the Vladivostok port held by the Deputy Prime Minister of Russia and the presidential envoy in the Far Eastern Federal District, Yuri Trutnev, 29 companies with projects worth 85 billion rubles or \$1.23 billion have been granted the status of residents of the Free Port of Vladivostok.
- The President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rakhmon, officially launched the Naftason oil refinery in the city of Konibodom in the Sughd province. Besides, the president inaugurated a new cement plant of LLC Huaxin Ghayur Sugd Cement in the Bobojon Ghafurov district in the Sughd province.
- According to the Minister of Economic Development of Russia, Alexei Ulyukayev, Russia's GDP declined by 2.7% in February 2016 on a par with January 2016 levels as monthly growth is expected to enter positive territory at the turn of July-August 2016.
- According to the State Statistical Committee of Uzbekistan, the country used \$3.156 billion worth of foreign investments in 2015, or 20.1% of the total volume of used capital investments in the same year. 59.1% of the total volume of foreign investments was spent on the fuel and energy sector.

Society and Culture

- The leaders of Azerbaijan, China, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and other Eurasian countries offered condolences to Belgium on the terrorist attack, which caused death of 31 people and injury of 316 more as a result of explosions in Brussels airport and metro station.
- The Government of Russia announced that it would assign 1.29 billion rubles (\$18.9 million) in subsidies to implement a range of measures for protection of the world's deepest Lake Baikal.
- The Government of Turkmenistan announced signing a number of documents with the specialized agencies of the United Nation, namely, a Country Program Action Plan with the United Nations Population Fund for 2016-2020 and a Country Program Action Plan with the United Nations Children's Fund for 2016-2020.
- The Ministry of Defense of Russia reported that the Soyuz-2.1a carrier rocket that blasted off from the Plesetsk space center had successfully delivered a military satellite into orbit. This was the second launch of the Soyuz-2 carrier rocket from the Plesetsk space center this year.