THE PARTY SYSTEM AS AN ELEMENT OF POLITICAL MODERNIZATION OF KAZAKHSTAN

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ABSTRACT

Today, sovereign Kazakhstan is steadily moving towards consistent modernization, higher competitiveness in the globalized world and postindustrial development.

Its political party system can be described as a political institution that ensures the country's stability and sustainability.

A multi-party system and pluralism that should be developed and consolidated are the two indispensable elements of democratization.

Despite their fundamental transformations, political parties and political systems have not disappeared from the stage—they have merely moved to qualitatively new positions.

At each new stage of social and political transformation political parties undergo radical changes; the same fully applies to

the party system in its quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Political parties of Kazakhstan have travelled the road from proto-parties to industrialized entities to self-organizing mechanisms of the political elites. In order to clarify the prospects and the key trends of the country's political modernization, we should identify the specifics of Kazakhstan's party system and the nature of its impact on the state and civil society.

KEYWORDS: ***party, the party system of Kazakhstan, modernization, identity, transformation of the political system, the state.***

Introduction

Political parties have covered the road from informal power groups to institutionalized political entities with organizational and social structures of their own. As such, they became an important element of contemporary states' political life that influence society and some of its segments. In this sense, they can be described as socio-political institutions, this definition being their inalienable attribute. Hence the second attribute of political parties—their claim to political power. In other words, only the parties ready to assume responsibility and play an important role in politics can describe themselves as a political power in the full sense of the word.

Broadly speaking, political parties are one of the results of historical development of states, however they are simultaneously under the influence of cultural, national, economic and other factors. In every state parties pass through identical, yet differently tinged, development stages. With parties as political organizations and inevitable participants in the political process, institutional factors—the form of governance and state organization, election laws and election system—gain even more consequence.

Kazakhstan acquired its multi-party system and party environment in the post-Soviet period of its development. In the 1990s, Kazakhstan experienced a sharp surge in the number of parties, a phenomenon created by the low threshold of numerical strength: in this way groups became political parties, a normal and acceptable state of affairs at the stage of transition.

Altogether, the transformation of political parties should increase their role as, primarily, inevitable participants in the elections, secondly, as one of the main actors of decision-making and, thirdly, as an instrument of citizens' socialization and their greater involvement in the country's political life.

Democratization of Kazakhstan society has added more weight to personal initiatives and personal activities. At the same time, a certain vagueness in personal identification and civil positions, which is reflected in the imprecise comprehension of social and political interests, is highly typical of the present development stage. Party membership determines and crystallizes individual political consciousness. As one of the very specific mechanisms that society relies on to control the state, political parties fulfill their regulatory and communicative functions. Those who study political parties as a link between the state and civil society demonstrate a somewhat indiscriminate approach to Western experience and tend to ignore post-Soviet specifics, mentality and centuries-old traditions of the people of Kazakhstan. It is no accident that today political modernization is described as a process of "formation, development and distribution of contemporary political institutions, practices and political structure as a whole. Political institutions and practices of our days are not copies of political institutions of the countries of developed democracy; they give adequate responses to and ensure

adjustment of the political system to the changing conditions and challenges of our days."[1] In fact, the peculiarities of the civil society of Kazakhstan crop up at all stages from its emergence and development to its perfection; as such, they are partly responsible for the vague status of the institution of political parties that manifested itself in the functional, organizational and structural context.

Methodology

In our study we relied on retrospective, systemic, structural-functional and political factor analysis. Theoretical comprehension relies, to a great extent, on the theory of socio-political modernization, since the development of the state and the structure of the party system are seminally important for the modernization of the newly independent states. A constructivist approach to the studies of the party system has led us to the most adequate understanding of the role played by the stronger statehood and the process of transformation of state institutions in the emergence and consolidation of the party system in Kazakhstan.

Political Modernization in Contemporary Society

The makeup of contemporary society is determined, to a great extent, by the process of modernization, which has inundated all regions and all countries of the world. It is an integral process that affects all spheres of social life (economic, political, cultural, educational, professional, etc.). Shmuel Eisenstadt, one of the prominent modernization theory experts, defined modernization in the historical context as changes in those types of social, economic and political systems that had been developing in Western Europe and North America in the17th-19th centuries before spreading to other European countries. In the 19th and 20th centuries, modernization has reached South America, Asia and Africa.[2]

Experts in different fields of knowledge not only study modernization as an integral process of social transformation patterned on Western societies; they identify economic, political, cultural, legal and other types of modernization. Political modernization is especially important, since the political system plays a great role in the social system of contemporary society.

Political modernization means positive changes in the political system caused by the adjustment to the demands of the time on the basis of the accumulated civilizational potential of state institutions and civil society and the innovative resource of the economy.

The main aim of political development identified within the framework of modernization concepts is a new type of interaction between the state and society, social and political mechanisms to engage the greater part of the country's population into decision-making and create favorable conditions for social and economic development and social stability.

Samuel Huntington, a prominent American scholar, wrote that the concepts of social and political modernization should be set apart from political modernization and argued that social and economic modernization opened the doors to political modernization. According to him, political

[1] *Politichesky protsess: osnovnye aspekty i sposoby analiza,* Collection of education materials, ed. by E.Iu. Meleshkina, INFRA-M Publishing House, Moscow, 2001, p. 248.

[2] See: S.N. Eisenstadt, *Modernization: Protest and Change*, New York, 1966.

modernization was a process that embraced rationalization of power, differentiation of social, state and civil structures and raised the level of political involvement. He points out the following: "A basic and frequently overlooked distinction exists between political modernization defined as movement from a traditional to a modem polity and political modernization defined as the political aspects and political effects of social, economic, and cultural modernization."[3] He interpreted political modernization as democratization of political institutions and the political consciousness of society.

The modernization theory has identified the main trend within the framework of general globalization with due regard for the specifics of its manifestations in different social and political contexts. This approach has differentiated and justified the existence of two types of modernization: *original modernization*, which is present in all countries moving towards rational social structures through gradual development of their internal processes, and *secondary (reflected) modernization*, which is typical of the countries that fell behind in their development and are modernizing to catch up with the rest.

Wolfgang Zapf, one of the prominent students of modernization theory, further developed the above differentiation. He discussed modernization in a tripartite temporal context:

- "First, it is a secular process launched by the industrial revolution, within which there appeared a small group of modernized societies as we know them today;
- second, it is highly varied process in the course of which those that had fallen behind caught up with those that had outstripped them;
- third, it is an attempt of the modernized states to respond to the new challenges that crop up along the road of innovations and reforms."[4]

As a rule, experts identify three echelons of modernization.

The first began in the 17th-18th centuries and spread to Northwestern and Central Europe and later to North America and Canada.[5] All other countries and regions belong to the zone of the so-called transit or catching-up modernization. There are two echelons in this zone as well: big countries that are modernizing on their own independent platforms (Russia, Japan, Turkey, some of the Eastern European and Latin American countries). They constitute the second, after the West, echelon of modernization. The third echelon consists of the majority of the developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America with a history of colonialism and the status of raw material appendages to the West.

The countries of the first echelon modernized in the course of historical development realized on its own foundations. Many experts point to the internal, organic and endogenous nature of this type of modernization.

The countries of the second echelon had certain features in common, namely, an outstanding role of external factors: reliance on the experience gained by others in social and economic development and technological progress up to and including organizational forms of social institutions, problems or even retreats. "The countries of the second modernization echelon entered the road of industrial growth and development, technologies and mass education, political liberalization and the rule of law, even if mainly formal. In the latter half of the 20th century Japan, one of the second-echelon countries, managed to catch up with the countries of the first echelon and found itself in the state of transition to postmodernity."[6]

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[3] S. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, Yale University Press, 1968, p. 35.

[4] W. Zapf, "Teoria modernizatsii i razlichie putey obshchestvennogo razvitia," *Sotsis,* No. 8, 1998, p. 14.

[5] See: V.A. Krasilshchikov, *V dogonku za proshedshim vekom: razvitie Rossii v XX veke s tochki zrenia mirovykh modernizatsiy,* ROSSPEN, Moscow, 1998—Rossiyskaia Gosudarstvennaia biblioteka, 2010, pp. 12-13.

[6] M.S. Ashimbayev, *Politichesky tranzit: ot globalnogo k natsionalnomu izmereniu,* Elorda, Astana, 2002, p. 14.

Modernization of the countries of third echelon (the greater part of Latin America, Asia, Africa and the least economically developed countries of Southern Europe) began with colonization and supply of raw materials to the world trade system. This was a very specific type of modernization that depended on the West and was, therefore, unable to independently identify the parameters of its further civilizational development and the habitual lifestyle of the majority of the local people.

Under the pressure of global systemic changes, Western political science produced all sorts of concepts and theories of political development only to discover that the lineal and forward models of modernization and Westernization are hardly scientifically valid. This fact was growing increasingly more obvious as scholarly studies of social development of the third-echelon countries were deepening and widening with the gradually increasing body of empirical data.

Alain Touraine's studies of counter-modernization, for instance, allowed him to conclude that societies that have chosen Westernization as their variant of modernization were inevitably confronted with revolutions, riots and violence. He called this road the "separation of modernity and modernization" and anti-modernization. In plain words, this meant an open opposition to modernization.[7]

Victor Krasilshchikov is of a similar opinion. In one of his works he has concluded: "…modernization of the developing countries that follow Western prescriptions might upturn the weak structures of their economies, exacerbate social conflicts, destroy the environment and consolidate the monopolistic position of big business with inevitably negative results. In fact, this modernization was seen as 'modernization of backwardness'."[8]

It should be said that in different countries and regions of the world modernization is realized by different means and methods that use different mechanisms. On the other hand, political modernization has certain universal components:

- a differentiated political structure in which political roles and institutions are highly specialized;
- a state of a modern type with sovereignty and other features of a subject of national and international law;
- a state which plays a prominent role in all spheres of social life and which relies on a wider sphere of application and a greater role of the law that keeps the state and its citizens together;
- a state in which the number of citizens (persons with political and civil rights) is gradually increasing along with a wider involvement of social groups and individuals in political life;
- a state in which rational political bureaucracy appears and widens its influence to move away from a rational bureaucratic organization to a dominant system of governance and control over society;
- a state in which the functions and role of the traditional elites and their legitimacy are trimmed and modernization elites are strengthening.[9]

These universal components can be clearly seen in the political modernization of Kazakhstan, where modernization began as soon as the republic gained independence in 1991. Very much like in

[7] See: V.I. Pantin, V.V. Lapkin, "Volny politicheskoy modernizatsii v istorii Rossii," *Polis,* No. 2, 1998, p. 40.

[8] V.A. Krasilshchikov, "Evoliutsia teorii modernizatsii," in: *Modernizatsia: mirovoy opyt i sovremenny Kazakhstan. Materialy respublikanskoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii 20-21 aprelia 1995 g.*, Part 1, Turan Independent University, Almaty, 1995, p. 22.

[9] See: *Politichesky protsess: osnovnye aspekty i sposoby analiza*, p. 249.

all other countries, modernization in Kazakhstan was orientated towards market economy, democratic regime, new social institutions, changing forms of public consciousness and behavior of social groups and individuals. In one of his books President Nazarbayev has suggested that the traditional model should be replaced with "adapted modernization."[10]

The periodization of the countries as echelons of modernization suggests a question: To which echelon of the catching-up modernization does Kazakhstan, one of the Soviet republics in the past, belong? The question about the echelon of modernization, under which Kazakhstan should be categorized, is not a question of purely academic interest. The answer to this question will determine the aims of modernization, its temporal limits and its stages; it will identify the social, historical, economic, ideological and other factors that interfere with or promote modernization.

In his work *Ideynaia konsolidatsia obshchestva kak uslovie progressa Kazakhstana* (Ideological Consolidation of Society as an Indispensable Condition of Progress of Kazakhstan) Nursultan Nazarbayev has identified his country as a "developing country," which means that it belongs to the third echelon of modernization.[11] In another of his works, *Strategia stanovlenia i razvitia Kazakhstana kak suverennogo gosudarstva* (The Strategy of the Emergence and Development of Kazakhstan as a Sovereign State) the President of Kazakhstan examined South Korea, Singapore and other so-called new industrialized states to formulate his own "strategy of fast development." These countries are modernizing quite successfully in many, including economic, respects and join the group of leading countries.

Modernization of the Political System of Kazakhstan

Today, practically all of the world's states are facing the challenge of modernization. In each particular case, however, these tasks have certain specifics caused by the countries' national and cultural identities even though there are certain common features created by the fact that the mega society has entered a new, post-industrial stage of its development.

The time has come for Kazakhstan to construct its national, cultural and civilizational identity.

Political modernization is especially important in this context; it ensures transit, that is, the transformation of social and political institutions into contemporary democratic and civil institutions—the presidency, constitutionalism, civil society, and the parliamentary and legal system. In Kazakhstan, political modernization is unfolding within the framework of the presidential form of governance that has already demonstrated its efficiency. The central role in political and economic modernization of Kazakhstan belongs to the state that formulates the aims and suggests adequate methods.

In the political sphere, modernization acquired a form of political transit, "understood as a transfer of the social and political system of any state from less adequate to a more adequate and more developed form of democracy that embraces the political organization of society and the political system of the state."[12] The social and political institutions of Kazakhstan have been transformed in

[10] N.A. Nazarbayev, *Na poroge XXI veka,* Өner, Almaty, 1996, pp. 125-128.

[11] See: N.A. Nazarbayev, "Ideynaia konsolidatsia obshchestva kak uslovie progressa Kazakhstana," in: *Strategia nezavisimosti,* Almaty, 2003, pp. 84-120.

[12] M.S. Ashimbayev, op. cit., p. 17.

the course of political modernization. We have in mind the present state of such social and political institutions as political parties, the system of the division of labor, presidency, parliamentarianism, the legal system, etc. The civil society is emerging.

Democratization of the political system is one of the key trends of political modernization, the process in which democratization is opposed by society in the process of reformation. In fact, the level of structural and functional division of political institutions in the traditional, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes is very low, which explains why in traditional societies with non-differentiated functions all the key functions belong to one person.

There is an opinion among political scientists in Kazakhstan that we should pay particular attention to the peculiarities of Eastern states. Zhanylzhan Junusova, for example, wrote that "in our republic, very much like in many Asian states, domination of the state over civil society is the main problem of democracy."[13] Konstantin Syroezhkin, who studied the specifics of statehood has written: "…Kazakhstan was no exception to the common rule; it inherited the common regularities typical of transit societies of the countries of the East."[14] The specifics of political modernization of Kazakhstan are explained by its transfer from a traditional to a contemporary open society.

Today, the modernization theory justifies the nature, scope and trends of political, social and economic changes in the post-totalitarian world. Currently, the theory of political modernization is especially interested in political systems observed in the transition states.

A sum-total of social, economic and political factors determine the specifics of modernization, and the following should be taken into account:

- the nature of the initial model of economic relationships: in other words, whether market economy predates political changes;
- political and economic reforms that should be carried out either simultaneously or one by one;
- the nature of the political regime (either totalitarian or authoritarian) that predated democracy;
- the nature of democratic transit: it is either reviving a democratic regime or developing it from scratch;
- the extent to which political modernization is connected with the content of national traditions and the state of social self-awareness.

Political modernization of Kazakhstan (or any other country, for that matter) is invariably accompanied by political crises. We deemed it necessary to offer our own description of the stages of political modernization; below they will be tied to the party and political system of Kazakhstan.

Political modernization can be conventionally divided into the following stages:

— *The problems confronting the authoritarian regime, and its liberalization*. The content of this stage is determined by wider individual and collective political rights, while the dominant structures remain intact. This, in turn, is connected with the involvement of common people in the political life of their country.

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[13] Zh.Kh. Junusova*, Institutsionalizatsia demokratii: model zapadnoy politologii dlia posttotalitarnykh obshchestv i opyt Respubliki Kazakhstan,* Author's thesis of a doctorate, Almaty, 1996, p. 147.

[14] K.L. Syroezhkin, "Gosudarstvennost i etnichnost: problemy i prioritety perekhodnykh obshchestv," in: *Kazakhstan na puti k ustoychivomu razvitiu*, Almaty, 1996, p. 143.

— *Establishment of democracy*. This stage of political modernization changes the quality of a political system: democratic political institutions and structures emerge that interact through democratic procedures. This process includes:

(a) appearance of a competitive party system;

(b) institutionalization of democratic mechanisms of state power.

— *Consolidation of democracy*. At this stage the society is gradually adapting itself to a new political mechanism and a new model of conflict settlement.

Political modernization is invariably accompanied by contradictions in all spheres of social life that inevitably affect political interests and the methods of their interaction. In order to arrive at the best possible political strategy that would prevent the crises typical of the period of transition, we should study the essence and the entire range of contradictions typical of modernization.

Russian political scientist Andranik Migranian is of the same opinion: "Having opted for the path of modernization where we first carry out political, and later economic, reforms and push aside the problems of the national-state order we might miss the chance to carry out reforms without serious cataclysms and might block off the road to democracy for many years to come."[15]

As a rule, all definitions of political modernization concentrate on the following:

- the ability of a political system to adjust itself and respond to challenges and changing social conditions;
- a new qualitative level of interaction between the state and civil society is required to achieve social targets; in fact, this is an efficient dialog between power and society;
- in order to be well-timed and highly productive, this dialog should be ensured by the efficient functioning of newly established types of institutions, differentiation of political structures and the rule of law.

Political Parties of Kazakhstan in the System of Modernization

Political parties and their function of political representation can be defined as one of the key institutions of political modernization. Since the very first days of its independence (or even earlier—since the late 1980s) Kazakhstan has been moving towards a multi-party system. The party system of the Republic of Kazakhstan is based on the Law on Civil Associations, amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan of 1998, the Law on Political Parties and the constitutional reform of 2007.

Political parties can be described as intermediaries between the political system and the milieu in which this system functions, or as doorkeepers of sorts that keep entrances into the political system open. These organizations and institutions articulate and aggregate group interests and move them up

[15] A. Migranian, "Perestroyka kak popytka transformatsii totalitarnoy imperii," in: A. Migranian, *Rossia v poiskakh identichnosti (1985-1995),* Collection or articles and essays, Mezhdunarodnye otnoshenia, Moscow, 1997, p. 197.

to the political level. It is due to the existence of parties that social strata and groups previously isolated from politics acquire a chance to be involved in the political process.

This fully applies to the emergence of political parties in Kazakhstan in the transition period which replaced the Soviet totalitarian regime, under which the Communist Party dominated the political and all other spheres of social life. The one-party regime of the Soviet type was replaced by a multi-party system of a democratic type that gave the social layers of Kazakhstan society a chance to become a part of the political system of independent Kazakhstan.

The political process that consolidated the multi-party system in Kazakhstan is similar to those that took place in other CIS countries. We fully agree with those Russian and Kazakhstan experts who believe that this was not a transition from a one-party to a multi-party system; this was an interconnected process in the course of which the state and political monopoly of the C.P.S.U. was wiped out, and a new statehood and a corresponding party system created. We should bear in mind, however, that the development of the multi-party system in Kazakhstan has certain distinctive features caused by its historical, demographic, political and ethnocultural specifics.[16]

In 2008-2009, the state made it easier to register political parties.

An analysis of Kazakhstan's party system as we know it today points to the following typical features:

— multiparty system;

— legal basis and legal frameworks of party life;

— the numerical strength of any party, not fewer than 50 thousand, is defined by the corresponding law;

— wide territorial representation;

— dominant position of the Nur Otan Party in the party system;

— registered opposition parties.

In Kazakhstan the process of party system construction fully corresponds to the development logic of party systems in transition societies: today our party system is still fairly shaky and fragmented. "It is shaky because the share of voters that change their preferences between election cycles is still fairly big; it is fragmented because it consists of too many elements (or, in other words, parties)."[17]

Ideological aspects are no less important when it comes to the assessment of the party system: they make it possible to identify the parties and their political image. The post-totalitarian society of Kazakhstan has not yet arrived at an adequate assessment of the basic ideological concepts of the day—liberalism, conservatism and social-democracy—which means that there is no correspondence between social awareness and the party system. "In a society democratized 'from above' the forces that support changes normally close ranks around state structures or a charismatic leader, while ideology most likely determines practically nothing."[18]

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[16] See: A.Kh. Bizhanov, "Gosudarstvo i politicheskie partii: istoria i sovremennost," in: *Gosudarstvo i politicheskie partii: istoria i sovremennost: Materialy respublikanskoy nauchno-prakticheskoy konferentsii, Almaty, 27 aprelia 1998 g.,* PNEK, KISI, Almaty,1998, pp. 20-21.

[17] G.V. Golosov, "Formaty partiynykh system v novykh demokratiakh: institutsionalnye faktory neustoichivosti i fragmentatsii," *Polis,* No. 1, 1998, p. 106.

[18] A.Kh. Bizhanov, *Respublika Kazakhstan: demokraticheskaia modernizatsia obshchestva perekhodnogo perioda,* Oner, Alamaty, 1997, p. 78.

Today the Nur Otan Party is the most influential political force: in 2007 it gained an unprecedentedly big number of votes and all seats in the Mazhilis of the parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The functions of any political party are not limited to political activities and election campaigns. As an active political instrument, any political party influences the state, its activities and the way it realizes its functions. The power and institutional potential of Nur Otan allow it to take part in the organization of the state power institutions and determine the main trends of domestic policies. Led by the President of Kazakhstan, it relies on ideological and propaganda mechanisms to preserve and strengthen national harmony and agreement in Kazakhstan.[19]

Today, one of the main trends of the country's politics is the transformation of its party and political system for the sake of higher efficiency and greater functional load. This, in turn, is intended to draw political parties into state governance and strategic decision-making. On the other hand, it is highly important to transform the structure of the country's political system into an efficient mechanism of accumulation of the electorate's political interests.

In fact, opposition parties operate side by side with pro-power social-political associations within the republic's party field. Very much like in any other state, Kazakhstan conducts the interaction between the parties and political power in its own specific way. All parties in the Republic of Kazakhstan are very active, especially during election cycles; in-between many remain passive.

Most of Kazakhstan's political parties emerged as a reaction to the liberalization of the totalitarian regime. As such, they were nothing more than "groups that crowded around ideological phantoms, slogans, symbols and popular political leaders."[20]

Closer scrutiny of the emergence and development of Kazakhstan's party system produced the following important comments:

- First of all, during the independence period Kazakhstan acquired a multi-party system which at different stages was determined by the historical content, institutionalization and the social and cultural specifics of the society of Kazakhstan. This determined:
  - — concentration and super-dynamic, even if fairly contradictory, process of the formation of the multi-party system;
  - — the formation of the multi-party system taking place simultaneously with the statehood development;
  - — the role of the state as the main political factor that strongly affects the party system;
  - — domination of the ethnic component over program provisions and goal-setting;
  - — the vagueness of the social basis of parties and the prospects of their widening; this explains why the parties are not influential enough;
  - — domination of parties with obvious and charismatic leaders;
  - — the apathy and indifference of society to party processes as a whole;
  - — disagreements between the parties when it comes to the aims and methods of political activities;

[19] See: E.K. Ertysbaev, *Kazakhstan i Nazarbayev: logika peremen,* Elorda, Astana, 2001, p. 576.

[20] S.E. Zaslavsky, "Funktsii politicheskikh party v rossiyskom obshchestve," in: *Rossia i sovremenny mir,* Collection, ed. by L.K. Shkarenkov, INION RAN, Moscow, 1998, pp. 135-136.

— fragmentation of the party system;

— the fact that legal institutionalization of parties is trailing behind their political institutionalization.

Today, Kazakhstan has already acquired standards and outlines of the political field of its own. Most of the parties have their own social foundation, electoral and even parliamentary history; they try to influence the electoral process and its results, as well as formulate its rules and norms. They are very active between the elections (not long ago they were mainly active only during the electoral campaigns). Kazakhstan's party system is moving from extreme pluralism to one with a dominant party.

Opposition is not developing as it should in the absence of party rivalry and competitive milieu in the parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Efficient opposition is one of the key features of a multi-party system.

- Secondly, an analysis of descriptions and parameters of the political parties of the independence period from the point of view of the theory of political institutions reveals that the party system of Kazakhstan is developing in waves, with six peaks. During the period of independence, there were 28 officially registered parties; today there are eight parties active in the political field.

Political parties were formed by different means and methods. At first, parties were built from below; later, from above or through a combination of the two methods. Political parties mostly arrived from the outside; a few of them were electoral-parliamentary, unitary or mixed. All of them wanted to establish a democratic society, none were a-systemic.

As a result of political modernization, the party system of Kazakhstan acquired the classical "one and a half party" structure, which, in one form or another, functions in Sweden, Japan, China, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan and other countries. Experts deemed it necessary to point out that "the trend of moving from the (quasi) multi-party system to one and a half structure is becoming increasingly clear. This is a result of restructuring the party field caused by an integration of pro-presidential parties, post-election fragmentation of the opposition camp and the result of constitutional reforms of 2007."[21]

In Kazakhstan, the one and a half party system has outcropped in the form of political domination and monopoly of Nur Otan. It relies on a mighty administrative resource further consolidated by the amendments to the Fundamental Law that permitted officials to combine state and party posts.

Today, the heat of inter-party competition has somewhat subsided: parties have become less active and less willing to attract more votes. The same fully applies to the ideological struggle and competition between the main political parties. Society is ready for a constructive dialog between the parties.

A slower pace of party construction is one of the most obvious trends. The past passion for party construction has become subdued; the process has slowed down. The party and political field of Kazakhstan has become structured; while parties acquire practically no new members.

On the whole, the party and political system is an element of political modernization of Kazakhstan. The state relies on the political and legal system to play its role in the development of the party system. The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan occupies the central place in the process: it formulates the fundamental provisions that are absolutely indispensable for further existence and functioning of the party system.

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[21] E.T. Seylekhanov, *Politicheskaia sistema Respubliki Kazakhstan: opyt razvitia i perspektivy*, Monograph, KISI under the President of the RK, Almaty, 2009, p. 186.

The Party and Ideological Variety in Kazakhstan

The ideological foundations of the typology of political parties in contemporary science can be described as one of the reasons of party and ideological variety in Kazakhstan. The ideological aspects of party classification are an inalienable element of any analysis of the party system. Back in 1995, Ilyas Karsakov, one of the Kazakhstan experts offered a non-traditional classification of political parties of Kazakhstan and Russia based on their attitudes to reforms. He has identified the following blocs for Kazakhstan:

— National-radical parties (Alash, Azat).

— Pro-government parties.

— Liberal-democratic parties.

— Parties of the left-centrist bloc.

— Left radical parties.[22]

As this classification shows, at the stage of its formation, pluralism was inherent in Kazakhstan's party system, which spoke of a wide range of opinions in society.

In the context of social and political modernization and globalization, the ideological, axiological and political attitudes of the common people are rooted in the basic ideological trends that have been responsible for the social, economic and political development of states and nations in the last 200 years. They are liberalism, socialism and nationalism responsible, in their turn, for political institutions and political practices of all contemporary states.

Political parties in Kazakhstan are democratic, liberal, social-democratic or communist. This means that Kazakhstan is a modernized society, whose mass consciousness reflects all main ideological trends of our days.

In one of his works that deal with social politics and political transformations in Kazakhstan expert and politician Imagali Tasmagambetv has analyzed party programs, their attitude to social problems and the methods of their settlement to identify three types of political parties:

— Centrists.

— Left radicals.

— Right radicals.

— Ethnically oriented parties of the national-democratic type.[23]

It is highly important to point out that in Kazakhstan the party and ideological variety is highly specific: the parties' ideological platforms fully or partially contradict their nature and the real content of their activity.

The ideological picture of almost any post-Soviet society is highly complicated: often enough the same people demonstrate devotion to different ideological and frequently mutually exclusive

[22] See: I. Karsakov, "Politicheskie partii Rossii i Kazakhstana: sravnitelny analiz," *Sayasat,* No. 5, 1995, pp. 25-26.

[23] See: I.N. Tasmagambetov, *Sotsialnaia politika i politicheskaia transformatsia,* Institute of Development of Kazakhstan, Almaty, 1997, pp. 163-200.

trends. This explains why many political scientists and sociologists write about the highly paradoxical conscience of the post-Soviet citizen and society that looks more like a cocktail of liberalism, socialism and nationalism than anything else.

In his *Les partis politiques* (Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State) prominent French researcher Maurice Duverger paid particular attention to the ideological aspect of the political parties' activities in the form of public opinion: "It is highly important to distinguish between the so-called processed and unprocessed public opinion… Parties express public opinion and shape it to equal extent, likewise, they form it and deform it … this is a dialog rather than an echo. Without parties nothing but trends would exist—vague, instinctive, varied, depending on nature, education, customs and the social context."[24]

The political and ideological situation that emerged in most of the post-Soviet states pushed the political parties into a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, conditions that are particularly conducive to the existence and functioning of political parties and political systems emerged. On the other hand, the inertia of the masses makes it much harder for the political parties and party systems to function relatively efficiently.

Henry Hale, in particular, in his survey of what Western experts wrote about post-Soviet problems, has specified why political parties in Russia and in newly independent states are weak and unpopular.[25]

- He writes that "voters have been suspicious of the new idea of a 'party,' after having had a very bad experience under the U.S.S.R."
- Second, "the Soviet regime destroyed the social cleavage and related social infrastructure that are said … to give birth to parties. The transition … had failed to create new stable cleavages" indispensable for successful functioning of political parties and party systems.
- Third, the political institutions of post-Soviet countries, including Kazakhstan, "have not provided proper incentives for party formation."[26]
- Fourth, the fairly limited organizational resources available to political leaders deprived them of a chance to build up fairly strong political structures.
- Fifth, Russia's political tradition that relied on strong executive power and weak legislative and legal power was borrowed by the post-Soviet states. This tradition limits the chances of forming party systems that mostly align themselves with legislative power and representative structures rather than with executive and administrative structures.

Henry Hale believes that political parties in the post-Soviet states are weak and unpopular mostly for institutional and organizational reasons. This is true, yet there are reasons of an ideological nature that are no less important; we have in mind the shortcomings of ideological efforts of the political parties of Kazakhstan and other post-Soviet states as well as their social and psychological environment.

We insist that political parties are weak and unpopular not only for external but also for internal reasons: they should pay more attention to their ideological platforms which remain vague and unclear so far.

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[24] M. Duverger, *Politicheskie partii,* Transl. from the French, Akademichesky proekt, Moscow, 2000, p. 455.

[25] See: H.E. Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia?: Democracy, Federalism, and the State*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2007, p. 4.

[26] Ibidem.

Many parties are not hesitant to discuss their ideologies and even include them in their names. Indeed, there are democratic, liberal, liberal-democratic, socialist, social-democratic, communist and other parties in Kazakhstan. The programs and the social foundation (if any) of the majority of them do not correspond to their names; the same fully applies to what they are doing and to their relationships with other parties, state structures and civil society institutions.

Experts in Kazakhstan, likewise, revealed a lot of interest in this problem: "The ideological problem may not fully correspond to the true nature of parties. This means that we need different assessment criteria, different classification systems or even a different political science since the Western patterns when applied to a non-Western political environment look like an ill-fitting suit," writes Azat Peruashev.[27]

This means that a high-quality and comprehensive analysis should rest on certain assessment criteria, systems of classification and typology that fully correspond to the realities of Kazakhstan.

Berik Abdygaliev has offered a highly original and completely non-Western approach to the typology of Kazakhstan's political parties. His classification ignores the ideological foundation of the parties and is based on the way they are related to power within the "upper/lower classes" disposition:

— a party of the upper stratum designed to conscript the lower stratum;

— the party of the lower stratum that tries to climb up to the top;

— the party of the lower stratum designed to support the upper stratum.[28]

There are many reasons behind this, the main being the vagueness of their ideological foundation which we have mentioned above, and which makes their social foundation and hence their electorate unclear. These parties do not have a clearly outlined social core that treats the party as its own, and identifies itself with the party, while the latter speaks on the political stage on its behalf.

Conclusion

In democratic societies parties are used as ideological instruments of expressing political identities and solidarity of the masses. This means that ideology keeps parties and masses together. Ideology is a spiritual instrument used by a party to attract new followers.

On the whole, ideology is a generalized expression of ideals and values invariably present in human consciousness. Émile Durkheim demonstrated in his time that human consciousness, ideals and values being its basic elements, is determined by the place man occupies in society. Those who occupy similar or close positions have identical ideas about social structure, political institutions and processes, which confirms their political identity.

Political identity is actualized through party activities in the ideological sphere. Political parties aggregate a wide variety of attitudes and opinions of socially and ideologically like-minded people within an ideology that it uses to establish contact with those individuals and social groups whose interests it represents on the political arena. This allows it to search for and gradually identify a population group which will become its social foundation.

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[27] See: A. Peruashev, *Institutsializatsia politicheskoy partii v sovremennom Kazakhstane. Opyt GPK,* Strategia Analytical Center, Almaty, 2002, pp. 21-22.

[28] See: B. Abdygaliev, "Politicheskie partii i obshchestvennye organizatsii Kazakhstana," in: *Demokratizatsia obshchestva—magistralny put razvitia Kazakhstana,* Collection of Documents of the Republican Scientific and Practical Conference, Almaty, 10 October, 1995, KISI at the President of the RK, Almaty, 1995, pp. 81-82.

This means that public opinion is the most important sphere of activity of any political party since all types of parties' political activity, up to and including election campaigns and the periods between them, are mediated through public opinion. It is highly important to bear in mind that the methods of mediation through public opinion are determined, to a great extent, by party ideologies. This means that parties can represent public opinion through their ideologies.