

## UZBEKISTAN: POLITICAL PARTIES ON THE EVE OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

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The very contradictory processes going on in all political parties of Uzbekistan are caused by the dynamic changes in their role in the country's political life. This observation is based on an analysis, first, of the ratings of their involvement in public life; second, of their election platforms; third, of the unfolding political rivalry; fourth, of the statements made by their leaders; and fifth, of their tactics. Today, while the progressive elites work toward reviving the status of their parties, some of the party leaders have demonstrated that they are not ready to accept any reforms.

Naturally enough, the republic, which is still living through the transition period, has not yet acquired influential parties of the Western type. The local parties have not learned how to attract supporters and keep them between election campaigns, how to formulate targeted programs from public sentiments, or how to translate these programs into life. The party leaders and the head of state have repeatedly admitted this. The continued chaotic social stratification<sup>1</sup> and the highly personalized nature of political organizations are also responsible for the parties' inadequate development. I should say that the absence of a communist party (such parties function in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) is a very contradictory phenomenon caused by an underestimation of the importance of having a complete range of political viewpoints in society. This ban on left-wing parties is only encouraging right-wing sentiments.

It is wrong to say, however, that the country lacks political parties with any amount of experience and with recognizable leaders. The oldest of

<sup>1</sup> Here I have in mind social stratification of the working class (workers employed at large, including the defense, plants in Tashkent, Chirchik, Almalyk, Samarkand, Navoi, etc.) and the collective farm peasantry, as well as noticeable migration of the scientific and technical intelligentsia, that is, the three strata which can, in principle, form large stable parties.

our parties, the National-Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (NDPU) set up in 1991, and its activity confirm that there are enough people in the capital and outside it with adequate experience of party work,<sup>2</sup> who know how to enlist supporters, carry out an election campaign with satisfactory results, and even how to apply the latest political know-how. These party functionaries, however, lack other qualities very much needed for everyone engaged in public activities: political culture, popularity, and faith in the future of democratic reforms in the country.

At the same time, the parliamentary factions and certain local organizations of large political parties have already acquired enough influence to appoint people to top posts and carry out certain financial decisions. For example, the chairmen of the Oliy Majlis (the parliament) committees and their deputies can criticize the government and discuss execution of the state budget; and the heads of the regional branches of certain parties, such as the NDPU and the Fidokorlar National Democratic Party (Self-Sacrificers), can influence decision-making at the municipal level. Party functionaries are obviously independent figures with important political roles to play.

In the social context of the present transition stage of development people look at party functionaries as important figures, close to businessmen or state employees (teachers, doctors, officers, etc.).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> I have in mind the process of large-scale party development that started in the Uzbek S.S.R. in about 1989, when a multiparty system appeared; it acquired clear organizational forms in 1990 with the abolition of notorious Art 6 of the Soviet Constitution about the C.P.S.U. as "the leading and guiding force of Soviet society." There were two more peaks of party development in Uzbekistan: in 1994 and 1999 during the first and second parliamentary elections.

<sup>3</sup> Under Art 4 of the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Political Parties, judges, public prosecutors, investigators, officers of the Interior Ministry structures and the national security bodies, the military, foreign citizens, or stateless persons cannot be members of political parties.

Party functionaries depend for their well-being either on high posts in the party hierarchy, on their families' business activities, or on their own desire to climb high up the party ladder. As distinct from businessmen and civil servants, party activists are free to dispose of their time and are much more sure of themselves.

Recently it became obvious that the professional requirements of party functionaries have changed: their greater involvement in legislative activities makes a law degree almost indispensable, and also allows them to go into private practice. (This should not be taken to mean that engineers with their mainly technical education couldn't be good party functionaries.) A party functionary should be a good speaker, he should demonstrate high vitality, good knowledge of the state tongue, a good command of English, and be a good mixer.

Wishing to upgrade the skills of party functionaries and the quality of party work in the republic, the authorities are supporting all institutions designed to develop new methods of party development and political technologies<sup>4</sup> (the Academy of State and Social Development, the Institute of Strategic and Interregional Research under the republic's president, the National University, the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, the Tashkent Law Institute, the Institute for the Study of Civil Society, etc.).

Looking at developed countries (America, Britain, Germany, etc.), the public in Uzbekistan became convinced that political activities should

<sup>4</sup> The 1999 parliamentary elections, as a result of which prominent members of the local intelligentsia became deputies, confirmed that political techniques play their role together with money and the administrative resource.

be a continuous process that does not stop once the elections are over. The constitutional reform started in 2000 was designed to raise the role of the legislature in the state. It gradually ripened until, finally, the parties reached the maturity needed to play an active role in elections. This reform was necessary because the parties failed to assert themselves sufficiently in the Oliy Majlis of the first and second convocations. It is still too early to predict the results of the coming parliamentary elections, even though the parties have acquired a legally confirmed higher status.<sup>5</sup> It is hard to determine the extent and alternatives of administrative power the parties can command.<sup>6</sup> In 1999, for example, many prominent experts were wrong about Fidokorlar's expected victory in the parliamentary elections: it failed to enlist the support of the regional, city, and district administrators, while the voters demonstrated different social and economic preferences. Still, it is possible to identify the main strategies the political parties will use in the 2004 elections.

<sup>5</sup> In 1999, on the eve of parliamentary elections, the experts of Izhtimoiy fiqr, the largest public opinion center, found out that 45.5 percent of the polled were absolutely sure about the differences in the party programs and aims. According to express polls carried out by a group of independent sociologists in Tashkent, 67 percent of the polled saw no differences between the parties.

<sup>6</sup> This situation is further aggravated by the fact that under the 1992 Constitution, the local administrators (in regions and cities) also head the local kengashes of people's deputies (that makes them the heads of the executive and legislative branches of power at one and the same time). This obviously cripples the checks and balances system. (Administrative reform, however, has already limited the previously unlimited power of the local executive structures.) The central power believed that the fact that prior to 2004 the kengashes of people's deputies could nominate their candidates to the elected bodies of all levels was keeping administrative influence in check to a certain extent.

## I

Naturally, any analysis of the upcoming election campaign should start with a discussion of the last campaign in 1999. Let's have a look at how the Fidokorlar Party (expected to become a ruling party of a new type) has been gaining momentum. Founded in 1998 as a party of young people and businessmen, it played on patriotic sentiments and considerably improved its chances after the terrorist acts of 16 February, 1999 in the very center of Tashkent, the Uzbek capital. On the wave of national consolidation, the "Self-Sacrificers" (students and young businessmen) pushed the new party to second, after the NDPU, place in the election race.

The party was the first to set up regional organizations in the districts, as well as structures designed to attract various age groups: Yoshlar kanoti (the Youth Wing), E'zoz (Respect), and Fidokor ayol (the

Women's Wing). Anyone wishing to understand the present state of party development and political technology in Uzbekistan should bear this in mind. The political calculations proved correct: each of the groups looked at the party as its own. In the summer of 1999, its mass actions (sport competitions and pop shows<sup>7</sup>) in the regions attracted crowds of young people. The money thus earned was distributed among the poorest strata of the population; in this way the party tried to cushion the inevitable impact of the transition period on its popularity. Every year the party organizes regional conferences of its businessmen-members.

Despite of all this, in 1999 *Fidokorlar* failed to win the majority of seats. Many members of the expert community agree that among the organizational, personnel, financial, technical, and other causes (all very important for an analysis of the party development process) a paradoxical, tactical error cost it the victory. In the course of its first election campaign, the party was very caustic about bureaucrats and corruption. The bureaucrats responded using their administrative influence and damaged the party's election chances. Most of the expert community agrees that its youth prevented the party from fully tapping the influence of the regional elite; for the same reason *Fidokorlar* failed to successfully oppose the NDPU, its main political rival.

There were other miscalculations (typical of all parties) that cost the party its victory. In the course of the 1999 election campaign, it concentrated its efforts on the largest, most promising and socially important regions (Samarkand,<sup>8</sup> Tashkent,<sup>9</sup> Ferghana, and Namangan), while neglecting the comparatively small regions (Syrdarya, Navoi, Khorezm, and some others). *Fidokorlar* was probably pursuing political aims of its own, such as scoring a victory at all costs by strengthening its position in regions where religious extremists were relatively strong.

After the elections the party concentrated its efforts on the parliamentary committees, commissions, and its parliamentary faction.<sup>10</sup> This allowed the party not only to reinforce its ranks (which would have been otherwise impossible because of underfunding of all the political parties), but also to analyze the situation in the regions.<sup>11</sup> The parliamentary faction includes several important figures (the vice premier and heads of several large enterprises) who preserved their posts.<sup>12</sup> Satisfied with its achievements and despite criticism from the head of state,<sup>13</sup> the party ignored its everyday work among the common people<sup>14</sup> and limited itself to random events in the capital and the regions.

The highly unpopular cabinet decisions passed in 2002, which ruined the army of petty traders who lived on illegal imports and tax evasion by regulating retail and wholesale trade and tightening customs control and taxation regime, as well as the numerous intermediary structures, tested the political parties' political maturity. They had either to explain to the people in clear terms the meaning of the unpopular measures or criticize them; as before, the parties shirked the responsibility of making this historic choice.

In 2000-2003, just as before when it criticized the bureaucrats in 1999, *Fidokorlar* found itself in another paradoxical situation. On the one hand, the party that had already betrayed its political weakness attracted open and active criticism from its opponents (the NDPU, for example, criticized it for the inflat-

<sup>7</sup> The party scored a political victory by attracting Iulduz Usmanova, the most popular pop singer, to its ranks; it also enlisted support of the best film directors, cameramen, artists and designers, as well as promotion experts.

<sup>8</sup> The position of any republican party at the elections in the Samarkand Region can be regarded as the second important indicator (after Tashkent) of its strength. In 2004, too, the region will attract political parties due to its powerful business and information structures.

<sup>9</sup> The contradictory trends of industrial development in the formerly industrially developed Tashkent Region will create more problems in the coming election campaign. It seems the party candidates will have to clearly formulate realistic programs of industrial revival.

<sup>10</sup> In 1999-2003, as a result of this, the party lost several of its most active supporters of the middle and lower ranks, who later joined the Liberal-Democratic Party.

<sup>11</sup> An Oliy Majlis deputy can do this during regular trips to his constituency.

<sup>12</sup> Only the members of the *Fidokorlar* Central Council dedicate all their time to parliamentary activities.

<sup>13</sup> President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov publicly criticized party leader Prof. E. Norbutaev, a prominent lawyer, for the party's political ambitions, which never coincided with the number of votes it received.

<sup>14</sup> Today, the party offers the following figures about its membership: there are about 33,500 members in its 1,700 grass-root cells; the figures look doubtful when compared with the number of party cards issued.

ed figures of its membership and for the obvious inexperience of its leaders). On the other hand, it remained the “party of power” and, therefore, had to assume responsibility for the unpopular decisions described above. Having realized by the end of 2002 that a party swiftly losing its rating points would draw criticism from all sides during the upcoming election campaign, the people on top deprived Fidokorlar of its title of “main party” and of administrative support. The party could no longer rely on it to achieve its political goals.

## II

To objectively analyze the political activities of the republic’s parties we have to bear in mind not only domestic, but also global and regional factors. Indeed, the main events of recent years—the use of the military airfields in Uzbekistan for the purposes of the counter-terrorist coalition (2001); Uzbekistan’s support of America’s actions in Iraq, and considerable strengthening of American-Uzbekistan relations—are affecting the parties to no less a degree than the trade-related decisions. America’s considerable financial support of Tashkent relating to the counter-terrorist operation in Afghanistan started, in a latent way, contradictory public trends (including American state support of the opposition forces in Uzbekistan). The weak anti-governmental groups acting in Uzbekistan took the Declaration on Strategic Partnership between Washington and Tashkent signed late in 2001, which contained an obligation of the superpower “to support all institutions of civil society,” as a legal guarantee of their continued activity.

It should be said that the Birlik and Erk groups set up late in the 1980s and operating until 1993 enjoyed considerable American state support even before the declaration was signed.<sup>15</sup> After eight years in emigration, some of the émigrés (A. Pulatov, P. Akhunov, B. Malikov and others) tried to improve the image of the opposition regarded as “a product of Gorbachev’s perestroika and the Islamist-nationalist movement.” In their interviews with the foreign media (Radio Liberty, the Voice of America, etc.) in late 2001 and in 2002, they spoke about human rights and economic reforms. In the process they made the bad mistake of not addressing the youth and the business community (something pro-governmental Fidokorlar had done), the two most constructive social groups for stimulating social reforms. The Birlik activists and representatives of other structures mainly relied on their former members, many of whom had been sentenced to various terms in prison, and, as it turned out, were too emotional when it came to assessing the authorities. (It is interesting to note that back in 2001 the Birlik movement was very active in “looking for inordinate means to overcome the economic crisis.” It demanded, that, first, Uzbekistan should be given its share of the Caspian oil; second, that labor migration should be better controlled, by which they meant stemming illegal immigration; and third, that small business should be more actively supported.) Despite its obvious mistakes when it came to enlisting popular support, the movement elaborated (probably with the help of Western political technologists) a new line of political behavior approved by its regular congress in May 2003. This line mainly presupposed a peaceful dialog with the authorities; the same congress changed the movement’s name to the Birlik Popular Movement Party, probably for legal considerations and in order to improve its tainted image.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, in May 2003, official political technologists busied themselves with the problem of the “party of power.” Fidokorlar’s continued crisis stimulated a wide discussion about the prospects for political reforms in Uzbekistan. In June-September, the Institute for the Study of Civil Society organized about 20 round table discussions that attracted about 860 of the best entrepreneurs and farmers and outlined about 30 most urgent problems related to the administrative barriers hampering entrepreneurial

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<sup>15</sup> Former U.S. State Secretary James Baker demanded that Tashkent legalize Birlik; the Uzbek authorities refused to succumb to pressure.

<sup>16</sup> I have limited my analysis of the opposition groups which appeared by May 2003 because this problem, as well as the regional elites, deserves special consideration.

activity.<sup>17</sup> It became obvious that these problems could only be resolved at the legislative level and that a new political party was badly needed: the round tables openly criticized Fidokorlar as the party of power, and the Chamber of Entrepreneurs and Producers, the two main defenders of the business community's interests, for their inadequate performance.<sup>18</sup>

The political technologists were convinced that the new party should be liberal-democratic since all social groups supported the liberalization course initiated by the head of state.<sup>19</sup> Experts, probably convinced that the new party should not limit its activity to parliamentary elections, believed it wise to set up a "movement-party." This was how in October 2003 the party, Movement of Entrepreneurs and Businessmen—the Liberal-Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (MEB—LDPU), came into being.<sup>20</sup>

From the very beginning, the phenomenon of party security, typical of any large country, could be clearly seen. In Uzbekistan, parties (this was especially true of Fidokorlar on the eve of the 1999 elections) try to keep their election activities secret and never submit complete information about what they are doing. In other words, the leaders and officials avoid interviews (the officials say they are acting on the orders of the party leaders), while the rank-and-file party members know nothing of interest. As a result, the public and local and foreign journalists look at the party as a "closed" structure. However, there are several other features that distinguish the MEB-LDPU's development from Fidokorlar's.

- First, the MEB-LDPU increases its membership by enlisting a large number of farmers and large and medium producers (outside the trade and intermediary structures), mainly with higher education, which is probably explained by their role in carrying out market reforms. The party also attracts intellectuals, mainly economists.<sup>21</sup> (Fidokorlar, while following the well-known tactics "Either Vote or Lose" applied in Russia and concentrating mainly on young people and businessmen, failed in Uzbekistan: the party never clearly distinguished between its "members" and "supporters.") The new party followed different rules that made its core more stable.
- Second, the mass actions of the liberal democrats designed to attract more supporters are normally charitable events within the framework of the "Year of Charity and Kindness" going on in the republic. Businessmen who are also party members pay for well-equipped secondary schools to be built in remote and mountainous areas and distribute money and gifts among the poorest strata of the population. This is improving the image of the new party on the eve of the parliamentary elections.
- Third, the Liberal-Democratic Party is organizing seminars on election-related subjects for its most active members (between 25 and 80 people each), which have become fairly popular among them. More and more people are attracted by the interactive methodologies. (According to the Law on Financing Political Parties of May 2004, foreign foundations, alliances and organizations cannot fund political parties, so the old practice of using foreign money to organize training seminars was discontinued.) Today, these seminars are held on the money of local participants.

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<sup>17</sup> In September 2003, the document about the most urgent economic reforms produced by the round tables was actively commented on at foreign Internet sites, including the sites of the U.S. State Department.

<sup>18</sup> The last round table was held at the Kumushkan recreation area outside Tashkent, where the documents and an application about registering a new party were signed. It was there that the initiative group asked the head of state for a meeting to be held, which took place on 7 October, 2003.

<sup>19</sup> It was very hard to insist on the liberal-democratic nature of the future party since, on the whole, liberal democracy is closely associated with Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. It is interesting to note that this coincided with criticism of liberalism in Kazakhstan. To a certain extent the Liberal-Democratic Party of Japan was selected as the pattern for the new party.

<sup>20</sup> Its first leader Kobiljan Tashmatov (one of the leading bankers in Uzbekistan and a Fidokorlar deputy) knew more than others about the farmer movement in the country. A charming person and a skilful leader, who was born in the Ferghana Region and knew how to attract considerable funds, he promptly set up local structures of the new party.

<sup>21</sup> The decree of the head of state issued after the well-known August 1991 events in Moscow is still in force in Uzbekistan. It banned party activities in creative unions, educational establishments, etc. Under Art 5 of the Law on Political Parties, members of political parties can take part in the events their parties organize out of hours and at the parties' expense.

- Fourth, the classical traditions of party development that required a “collective propagandist, agitator, and organizer” forced the new party to pay particular attention to its newspaper, *XXI asr* (the 21st Century). This multicolored publication with a circulation of 4,000 invites popular authors to discuss foreign and domestic issues. There is the opinion that it is gradually becoming the best in its class. In addition, the newspaper publishers instructed the editors to concentrate on critical articles irrespective of the people involved.<sup>22</sup> For the first time since the *Fidokor* newspaper, as it was in 1999, *the 21st Century* analyzes the strategy and tactics of other political parties.
- Fifth, the party is busy establishing a network of consulting offices and expert groups for offering advice, including legal advice, to the public. This obviously attracts people. It is quite natural for the “party of power” to set up a network of public offices designed to help resolve conflicts, especially those in the business sphere. The MEB-LDPU invited experts and economists to elaborate party mini-platforms for the regions, discuss them with the local party cells, and blend them into a single party platform. In light of the very low level of legal knowledge in the business community, the party set up so-called emergency legal aid stations to help small businessmen (potential voters) cope with bureaucrats (read: corruption and arbitrary rule).

The new party has blundered in the process of its development. To my mind it was wrong to decline the services of people with rich experience in party work (in the NDPU, for example). This is especially obvious in the regional party organizations. These faults became clear in May 2004 when the post of party leader (filled by K. Toshmatov) went to M. Akhmedjanov, general director of the Tashkent Tractor Works (one of the largest enterprises in Uzbekistan), who in the Soviet past worked on the regional committee of the C.P.S.U. and, later, in the NDPU. It seems that this correct step will strengthen the party ideologically and organizationally. It would hardly be wise for the party to invite entrepreneurs, its main contingent, to become party functionaries. If it wins the elections it will have to organize systematic training of its core at courses or even party schools.

### III

Political parties and initiative groups will nominate their candidates to the Legislative Assembly (the lower chamber); the Senate (the upper chamber) is formed according to a more complicated scheme: each region is represented by six senators elected by district, city, and regional councils of people’s deputies.<sup>23</sup> It seems that as a result, the khokims (governors, mayors, and administration heads)—the most influential actors in the election process—will find themselves among the senators rather than among the lower chamber deputies. Since this convocation of the Legislative Assembly will be the first professional parliament in Uzbekistan, administrative influence will mostly be felt at the municipal level. This will probably give more freedom to the central structures of all political parties when it comes to nominating candidates to the parliament (the lower chamber especially).

The role of the political parties in the upper chamber remains unclear so far: the senators will have to speak for their regions, the interests of which are not always identical to the interests of the parties that nominated them. Indeed, the interests of two senators from different parties representing the same council may clash over, say, communal tariffs.<sup>24</sup> They will find it impossible to remain loyal to their parties and to the region at one and the same time.

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<sup>22</sup> For example, one of the issues carried an open letter to the Governor of the Tashkent Region K. Tuliaganov and some other equally highly critical documents.

<sup>23</sup> According to the election laws, it is the task of the Central Election Committee to establish the election procedure. It is its responsibility to guarantee that the laws are observed in the process and to prevent the executive structures from interfering in the process.

<sup>24</sup> The NDPU presents itself as a party which takes the interests of the most vulnerable social groups to heart.

All parties want to see local administrators among their members—the presence of regional elites makes parties stronger.<sup>25</sup> The Liberal-Democratic Party went as far as inviting Vice Premier Sh. Mirziyev to join its ranks. At the same time, political parties have been given the opportunity for the first time in recent history to take part in the executive structures.

The constitutional reform will upgrade the role of the local councils of people's deputies; it will contribute to the division of power at the provincial level and strengthen the so-called party groups.<sup>26</sup> This will happen if the state gives more rights to the local councils and party groups to appoint people to important administrative posts, deal with financial (budget) issues, etc. The relations between the party groups and the local offices of the same party will be regulated to the extent they affect (directly or indirectly) the legislative process.<sup>27</sup>

The interests of all the political parties will clash during the elections, while their programs and the images of their leaders will either lead the party to victory or defeat. As distinct from the 1999 elections, people will vote for platforms which not only outline the most urgent problems (the minimum per capita consumption and subsistence level, civil service reform, etc.), but also show how to cope with them. The leaders will have to learn how to talk to their potential supporters.

There are four main criteria that can be applied to any party's organizational activities: the number of events, the number of people attracted by them, media coverage, and the expert community's opinion. An analysis of the election activities of the political parties carried out in May-June 2004<sup>28</sup> produced the following results. The NDPU is very influential in the Navoi and Bukhara regions; Fidokorlar (NDPF) in the Samarkand Region and Tashkent; the Social-Democratic Adolat Party (SDAP) in the Samarkand and Tashkent regions; the Milly Tiklanish Democratic Party (MTDP) in the Tashkent and Ferghana regions; and the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDPU) in the Djizak and Khorezm regions. The table below presents the ratings of the political parties' organizational activity.<sup>29</sup>

Party	10 May	20 May	30 May	10 June	20 June	Average
NDPU	15	7	22	15	16	13
NDPF	4	15	9	7	11	9.2
LDPU	12	17	7	11	15	12.4
MTDP	6	6	13	10	9	8.8
SDAP	3	12	5	7	10	7.4

Obviously, just like 13 years ago, the NDPU is still the most active among the parties; the low rating of the SDAP can probably be explained by the looseness of its grass-root structures.

<sup>25</sup> The first Political Council of the MEB-LDPU included the khokims of the Khorezm, Surkhandarya, Samarkand, and Djizak regions. So far, the party has betrayed no intention of inviting heads of district and city administrations to join its ranks.

<sup>26</sup> Everything said about the local councils being ill-prepared to accept the reforms is not true. On many occasions the local councils (especially in Tashkent, Chirchik, Samarkand, and elsewhere) did not agree with regional administrations, public prosecutors, and other officials.

<sup>27</sup> According to the republican laws, people join parties as individual members, yet the laws say nothing about certain sides of the activity of parliamentary factions and party groups. In the future, the parties' greater involvement in state administration will require further specification of certain contradictory issues (related to deputies who change factions, deputies' responsibility to their factions, etc.).

<sup>28</sup> Similar analyses were conducted in the past, too. This one was organized on the eve of the enactment of the new Law on Elections to the Oliy Majlis (which entered into force on 1 July, 2004); for this reason it seems to be more accurate and free from administrative influence.

<sup>29</sup> The rating was based on the four factors enumerated above (number of events; number of people involved; media coverage; expert opinion).

I believe that the position of the NDPU will depend on its youth wing.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, the local mentality and profound respect for the elderly will preserve the party's image "as the party of wise men" for a long time. With its highly organized structure and a vast staff of functionaries, many of whom worked in the communist party structures, the party has a very good chance of getting at least 33 percent of the votes.

The Social-Democratic Adolat Party<sup>31</sup> can rely on the experience of similar parties in Northern and Central Europe and count on international moral support. It has a good chance of developing into the party of the middle class.<sup>32</sup> The Milly Tiklanish Democratic Party can win the hearts of the undecided voters with the help of the media. It should be added that the parties have already learned how to form blocs<sup>33</sup> or even alliances.<sup>34</sup> In this respect, Adolat and Milly Tiklanish have the best chances.

On the eve of the parliamentary elections one more, extremely important, problem has not yet been resolved. I have in mind political correctness. There are all kinds of examples of party structures using so-called dirty techniques to tarnish the image of rivals. This practice is not resolutely condemned in the media out of fear of damaging the country's image in the eyes of the world community. This is another side of national mentality. Indeed, all parties should sign, and observe, the code of election behavior; this is one of the OSCE's demands.

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The scope and the role of the domestic and foreign factors, as well as the significance of this election campaign in sociopolitical life bring to mind the parliamentary elections of 1989 and 1994. In 1989, the level of political activity among the population depended on the actions of the reformers inside the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, while in 1994, it hinged on the efforts of the opposition to avenge their contracted influence in the country. Neither the communists, nor the young opposition will take part in the 2004 elections; the future of the social and economic reforms will depend on the parliament's composition. This gives all the parties, especially the young ones, a chance to demonstrate their ideological and organizational maturity.

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<sup>30</sup> The recent change in leaders (A. Jalalov, a well-known philosopher, a former presidential candidate, was replaced by relatively young A. Rustamov) was a tactically wise move.

<sup>31</sup> The fact that the party is headed by Academician T. Daminov, a well-known doctor, and has a large number of medics in its ranks makes it an organization of one profession.

<sup>32</sup> The subject of the middle class dominates in the political vocabulary; in August 2002, when addressing the 9th session of the Oliy Majlis, the president outlined a policy for all-round protection of the business class.

<sup>33</sup> Today, due to the difficulties with implementing socioeconomic reforms and in order to promote national consolidation, the formation of blocs (between LDPU and NDPF, for example) would be the best answer from the tactical and ethical viewpoints.

<sup>34</sup> After the 1999 elections, the Vatan tarakkieti and Fidokorlar parties formed one party called Fidokorlar.