

THE PARTY SYSTEM IN KAZAKHSTAN AND THE ETHNIC ISSUE

Valentina KURGANskaIA

*Leading research associate,
Institute of Philosophy and Political Studies,
Ministry of Science and Education,
Republic of Kazakhstan
(Almaty, Kazakhstan)*

1. Local Specifics of the Party System

The place and role of a legislature among the country's political institutions is an indicator of its progress toward democracy. Constructive processes of sociopolitical modernization potentially able to create a stable democratic system make the institutions of parliamentary democracy key and inalienable parts of such system. It is virtually unimportant which of the types of state and a corresponding model of the separation of powers exist in a country—it is much more important for the parliament to be able to represent all social groups and take part in political decision making.

This makes it signally important to develop the nation's political culture and shape it as an indispensable political actor through the system of party representation and protection of the interests of all social groups. In fact, this is the basis and the necessary condition of an advance toward a democratic, sovereign, socially responsible, and efficient state ruled by law.

Ten parties registered their candidates at the 1999 parliamentary elections: the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPK), the Agrarian Party of Kazakhstan (APK); the Republican Political Party Otan; the People's Congress of Kazakhstan (PCK); the Republican People's Party of Kazakhstan (RPPK); the Party of Revival of Kazakhstan (PRK); the Democratic Party Azamat; the National Party Alash; the Republican Political Party of Labor (RPL); the Kazakhstan Civilian Party (KCP).

In 2002 Kazakhstan acquired a new Law on Political Parties under which any voluntary association of citizens of Kazakhstan created to express the political will of definite social groups, to protect their interests and represent them in the legislative and executive structures of state power and in local structures, and to take part in the formation of these structures is recognized as a political party. Political parties are created on the initiative of groups of citizens of Kazakhstan (with the minimum membership of 1,000); to be registered a political party should have at least 50,000 members. They should be members of its structural units (branches and offices) with no less than 700 members in each of the units functioning in all regions, large cities, and the capital. Under this law, the parties with considerable financial support and the largest following survived on the political scene. As of 1 July, 2004 there were 12 registered political parties¹ (see Table 1).

Table 1

Membership of the Political Parties²

1	Communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPK)	59,890
2	Agrarian Party of Kazakhstan (APK)	52,657
3	Republican Political Party Otan	300,000
4	Kazakhstan Civilian Party (KCP)	105,336
5	Democratic Party Ak zhol	110,044
6	Political Party Rukhaniat	75,000
7	Patriot Party of Kazakhstan (PPK)	131,980
8	Republican Party Asar	180,000
9	Kazakhstan Social-Democratic Party AuyI	61,043
10	Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan People's Party	58,000
11	Democratic Party of Kazakhstan	No data
12	Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan	No data

These figures say that over 10 percent of the republic's adult population are members of one of the parties.³ This is explained not so much by the nation's high level of political awareness as by the new law: the necessary 50,000-strong membership was achieved by registering people as members by all, including administrative, methods. This explains why rank-and-file members can barely distinguish between programs of their own and other parties.

According to sociological polls, in the past five years the nation was mainly concentrated on the material, rather than political, circumstances: low wages, high public services rates, high consumer prices, expensive foodstuffs and medicine. All political parties, therefore, speak a lot about new jobs, new openings for local skilled personnel in foreign companies, higher wages and social protection for the most vulnerable population groups. The stable rating of the Otan Party and an upsurge of popularity of the Asar

¹ The two Communist parties and the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK) are opposition parties.

² Based on the following sources: "Uchastie muzhchin i zhenshchin v politicheskikh partiakh Respubliki Kazakhstan" Map (Involvement of Men and Women in Political Parties of the Republic of Kazakhstan) for October 2003 drawn by the International Ecological Association of Women of the East, speeches of the Asar and Rukhaniat leaders at congresses of their parties in the spring of 2004 (these parties were registered practically two months before the parliamentary elections).

³ See: A. Baymenov, "Nash narod gotov k demokratii," *Epokha*, No. 45 (67), 14 November, 2003.

Party are ascribed to such factors as real access to administrative and information resources, their real achievements, social status, and the leaders' personal authority.

All party programs offer fairly or even excessively detailed mid- and long-term programs of economic, social, state, political, cultural, etc. development; they speak of a more competitive economy, more effective system of social protection, creation of civil society and democratic changes. Some of the parties, however, fail to specify the means to be applied to realize the sociodemocratic changes probably because the party functionaries do not believe that they can cope with the task single-handedly. All parties, except the Ak zhol Party, formulate their aims in most general terms (Table 2 shows the changes occurred in the past five years in the party system).

Table 2

Party Programs

1999	2004
Lack of a solid social basis	No changes
Party programs barely reflect the will and interests of social groups	Much more attention is paid to the interests of individual social groups
Insignificant impact on public opinion	No changes
Limited memberships and few active supporters	Memberships are still limited yet the number of active supporters has grown
Weak organizational, financial (with few exception) and ideological basis	Parties have strengthened their organizational, financial, and ideological basis
Control of the elite in power over the parties; direct and indirect interference of state structures in the party development processes	No changes
Orientation toward the leaders' personal traits	No changes
Delimitation of parties and public movements not only according to the power/opposition but also to the ethnic/polyethnic principle	The registered parties are not ethnically oriented yet some of them still rely on the power/opposition principle

The weak and limited social basis is responsible for the fact that the decisions parties pass at their conferences and congresses become known to a narrow group of active members, while a small number of parliamentary seats (10) limits the parties' impact on law making.

In the very short period of independence Kazakhstan could not acquire a ramified political system weighty enough to find a worthy place in the civil society's structures. As a result, the principles and mechanisms of pluralistic democracy have so far failed to determine (and do not determine today) the ideology and practice of sociopolitical transformations.

The specifics of the sociopolitical structure create specific problems. Those of the groups that used unjust privatization to acquire initial capital and to considerably increase it later are seeking political influence and control over parties. The authorities, in turn, are trying to curb their activity and to persuade

them to agree on compromises. On 2 December, 2004, for example, the Association of Financiers made public a statement signed by the heads of the largest Kazakhstani banks, in which they expressed their support of the country's president and its course and said that the banks should not finance political parties. Those who signed the document were convinced that the state and the banks shared common interests. The financiers supported the economic growth strategy and the course for stage-by-stage political modernization. Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Eurasian Bank A. Mashkevich, Chairman of the Board of the Tsentrkredit Bank V. Lee; Chairman of the Board of Directors of Narodny Bank A. Pavlov, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kazkommertsbank N. Sukhanberdin (who had been suspected of giving money to the opposition) were among those who signed the document.

2. Public Opinion about Political Processes

The poll the Institute of Comparative Social Studies conducted in 2003 by the order of the republic's Ministry of Science and Education Institute of Philosophy and Political Studies, was designed to find out what the public thought about the country's political life as a whole and of the political institutions that appeared in the course of sociopolitical reforms (see Table 3).

Table 3

What Do You Think about Political Processes
in the Country? (in %%)

* Active involvement and a stable interest in the country's political life	13.4
* Interest in individual events and political figures	30.6
* Indifference	22.3
* Mistrust, fears, and a desire to keep away from politics	17.7
* Active rejection, disgust	2.3
* Undecided	13.7

The above shows that the nation is mainly interested in individual political figures and events. At the same time, over 40 percent of the respondents pointed out that they were either indifferent to political developments or thought negatively of them. This is based on the commonly accepted opinion that people have no real chance of participating in decision making (see Chart 1).

Any political system is a system that represents social interests. "Normal policies appear where there is a natural (and insurmountable in principle) variety of group interests realized through party-and-political representation, competition, and rivalry."⁴ The poll demonstrated that the Kazakhstani citizens do not attach special importance to the type of sociopolitical system (see Chart 2).

The poll revealed that the nation prefers a socialist state of the Soviet type rather than Western democracy. This opinion belongs to the respondents of advanced and old age (this could only be expected). Twice as many Russian respondents (27.7 percent) preferred the socialist state of the Soviet type as Kazakhs (14.8 percent). Housewives, unemployed, and old age pensioners prevail among the social groups that support the socialist choice. People between 18 and 29 (including students), as well

⁴ A.S. Panarin, *Filosofia politiki*, Novaia Shkola Publishers, Moscow, 1996, p. 21.

Chart 1

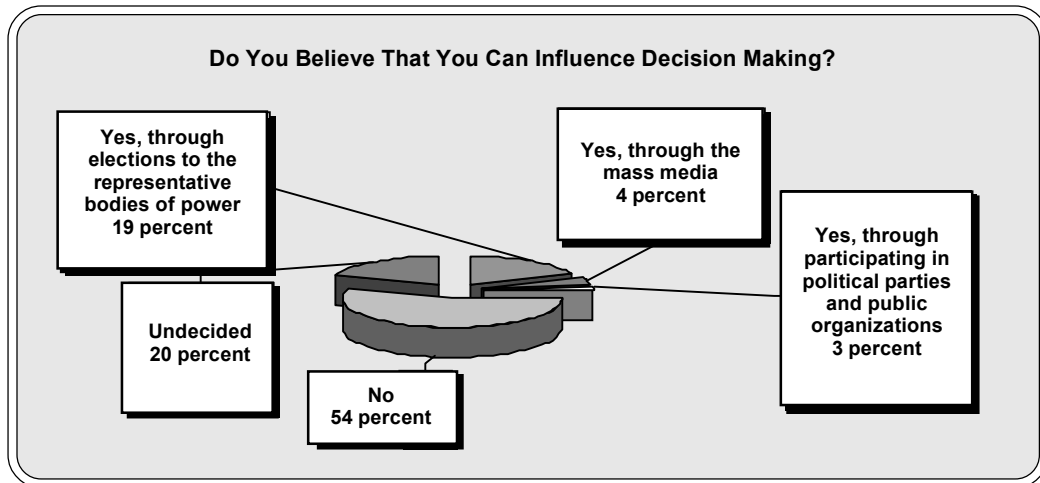
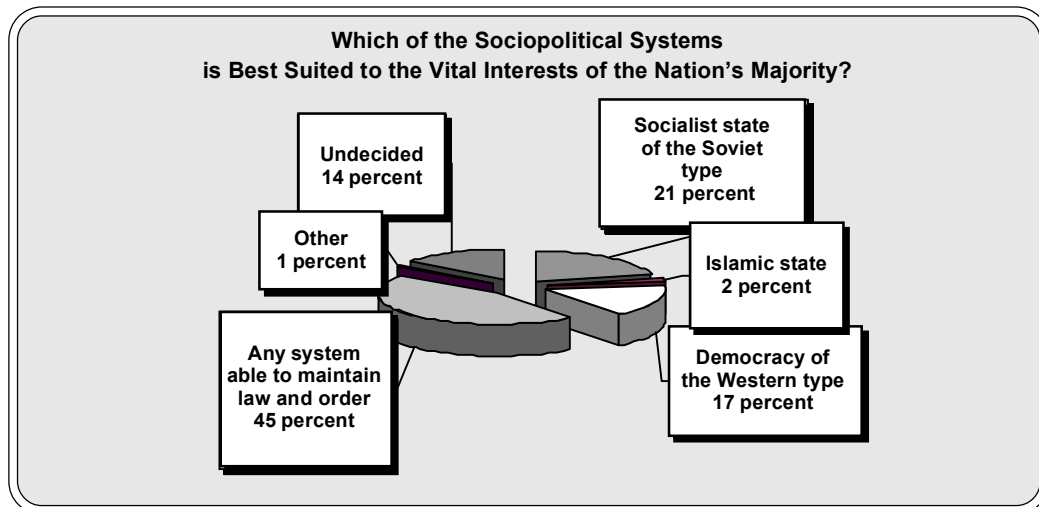


Chart 2

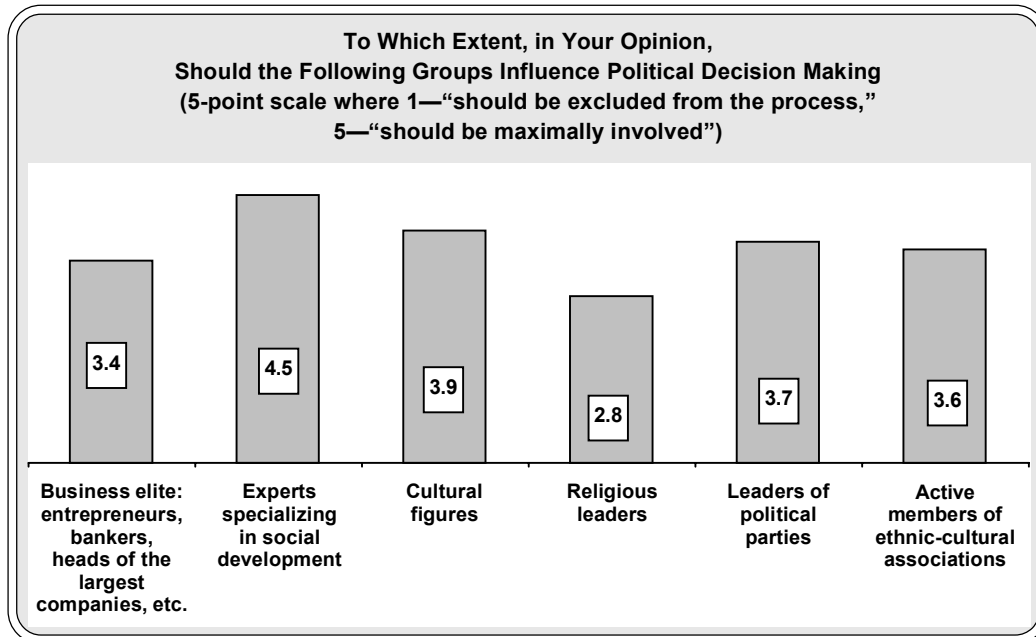


as top and middle managers and qualified specialists prefer Western democracy. The number of those who share the democratic values of the Western type is larger among those with high monthly incomes. There is an equal number of the supporters of socialist state and Western democracy among the civil servants and workers.

Nearly 50 percent can be satisfied with any system able of maintaining law and order. This raises a question of how social stability can be achieved. The answers to this and similar questions can be obtained by identifying which of the social groups are worthy of political decision making according to public consciousness (see Chart 3).

The above suggests that the majority favors the expert community; cultural figures, leaders of political parties, and active members of ethnic-cultural associations trail behind. Business elite and religious leaders are two least-welcome groups. There were members of all social groups among the respondents.

Chart 3



Despite the fairly low rating of leaders of political parties the Kazakhstani model of political and party development is coming to the fore in the current sociopolitical changes. There is hope, therefore, that in the future Kazakhstan will acquire a developed, differentiated, and balanced system of party representation of the economic and sociopolitical interests of social groups and strata.

Table 4 shows how the nation assesses the role of political parties in economic transformations. Over 50 percent of the respondents were undecided about the efficiency of parties' activity; about 20 percent admitted that parties, especially parties of different political orientations, were useful.

Table 4

**Assessment of Practical Results of Political Parties' Impact
on Democratic Processes (in %)⁵**

	Obviously Useful	Useful on the Whole	Rather Harmful	No Practical Result	Undecided
Republican Political Party Otan	10.5	23.8	2.2	16.1	47.4
Kazakhstan Civilian Party	1.4	15.9	3.9	20.4	58.4
Agrarian Party of Kazakhstan	2.0	18.9	2.3	20.4	56.4
Communist Party of Kazakhstan	3.0	15.8	4.7	19.1	57.4
Democratic Party Ak zhol	4.0	15.1	2.8	18.1	60.0
Patriot Party of Kazakhstan	1.2	11.9	3.1	21.4	62.4
Kazakhstan Social-Democratic Party AuyI	1.1	12.9	1.9	20.1	64.0

⁵ By the time of the poll other parties were not yet registered.

3. Concise Information about Parties⁶

Information about the history of some of the parties can be found in my article “The National Question in the Platforms of Political Parties and Movements in Kazakhstan,” that appeared in *Central Asia and the Caucasus* (No. 4, 2000). This article, in particular, contains information about the Republican Political Party Otan (the Homeland), the Kazakhstan Civilian Party (KCP), the Party of Revival of Kazakhstan (PRK) (renamed the Political Party Rukhaniyat). In this article I’ll supply concise information about the parties that have either been reregistered or recently appeared on the political scene.

The Agrarian Party

Its constituent congress took place on 6 January, 1999; it was registered on 16 March, 1999 and reregistered on 6 March, 2003. The party is headed by Romin Madinov, deputy of the Majilis (the lower chamber of the parliament). Its social basis is uniform: people engaged in the agricultural sector.

Its program says: “The Agrarian Party of Kazakhstan sees its main goal in contributing to the country’s progress, its advance toward developed society of freedom and social justice in which all enjoy the conditions conducive to productive labor aimed at raising the nation’s prosperity.” It describes one of its key tasks in the social and spiritual sphere as: “Maintaining conditions in which each and everyone enjoy equal opportunities” and “Bringing up young people in full accordance with the principles of respect, friendship, and neighborly relations among peoples.”

The *Agrarniy Kazakhstan* newspaper published since 2002 renders the party information support.

The Democratic Party Ak zhol

Its constituent congress took place on 16 March, 2002. The party was set up on the initiative of several members of the political council of the republican public association The Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan. B. Abilov, A. Baymenov, and O. Djandosov are its cochairmen. In November 2003 at the third congress two more people—A. Sarsenbaev and L. Zhulanova—joined them as cochairmen. The party was registered on 3 April, 2002 and reregistered on 12 December, 2002.

Its program says: “Independent, flourishing, democratic, and free Kazakhstan is our aim together with a worthy life for each of its citizens. Independence, democracy, freedom, and justice are our fundamental values.” As distinct from similar documents issued by other parties its program reveals the mechanism through which the political system of Kazakhstan can be reformed: decentralization of power, the independent media, greater role of the maslikhats, more efficient anti-corruption efforts, etc. In the sphere of spiritual and intellectual development the program suggests that “real conditions for the unhindered studies and development of the culture, languages, and traditions of the peoples of Kazakhstan should be created” and that “children and the young people should be brought up and educated in the spirit of patriotism and internationalism.” Ak zhol believes that “a single and uniform Kazakhstani society should be created. It should be based on patriotism, culture, languages, and specific features of all peoples of Kazakhstan that should be preserved and developed.” The program further says: “National unity and public accord should be preserved and strengthened; all ethnic cultural centers should

⁶ The section is based on the documents of the Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan and the republican Youth Information Service [<http://www.misk.kz>], as well as the handbook by Iu.O. Bulutkaev and A.E. Chebotarev, *Politicheskie partii Kazakhstana. 2004* (Political Parties of Kazakhstan. 2004), Almaty, 2004.

be encouraged; the state should pursue a reasonable and efficient policy designed to preserve and develop the Kazakh language and its use in all spheres of public life.”

Since the summer of 2002 the party has been publishing a weekly *Ak zhol Kazakhstan* with a circulation of 23,000; it also runs an Internet site <http://www.dpkakzhol.kz>.

The Social-Democratic Party AuyI

Early in 2000 the Peasant Social-Democratic Party AuyI convened its constituent congress; it was registered in March 2000 and reregistered on 2 April, 2003. Later it changed its name into the Kazakhstan Social-Democratic Party AuyI. Peasants and farmers are its social basis. The leader is Gani Kaliev.

Its main goals are: stronger state regulation and greater state support for the agrarian sector; protection of the interests of the agrarian workers; an active contribution to the economic and political reforms designed to make society more democratic; promotion of the contemporary forms of market relationships in all economic spheres; upgrading the living standards; introduction of social justice and maintenance of stability in the country. The program also speaks about “a stronger ethnic and confessional harmony” and about the need “to educate citizens in the spirit of patriotism and responsibility for the all-round and harmonious development of the Republic of Kazakhstan.”

Since the fall of 2003 the party has been publishing the bilingual newspaper *AuyI* with a circulation of 10,000.

The Civilian Party

Its constituent congress was held on 17 November, 1998; the party was registered on 29 December, 1998 and reregistered on 10 January, 2003. It was set up on the initiative of work collectives of industrial enterprises; Azat Peruashev is its leader. It relies on workers and technicians, as well as on a very limited student and old-age pensioner membership together with able-bodied agricultural workers, unemployed, etc.

The stronger statehood of the Republic of Kazakhstan is its goal; this presupposes “stable functioning of all public institutions under the conditions of high efficiency and civil solidarity of the Kazakhstani citizens.” It has formulated its main task as “support for the efforts to create a uniform Kazakhstani society, strengthening civil peace and ethnic harmony in the country.” The party has identified three key principles in the sphere of ethnic policies: “(1) Kazakhstan is the homeland of all people living on its territory irrespective of ethnic affiliation and language; (2) there are no “newcomers” and “guest” peoples in Kazakhstan: all its citizens enjoy equal rights and opportunities; (3) specific ethnic and cultural features of all peoples living in Kazakhstan is the country’s common wealth. Assimilation or isolation of national cultures should not be tolerated.”

The party runs its site in the Internet <http://www.civicparty.kz/egi-bin/menu.cgi>.

The Republican Political Party Otan

It is the product of the merge of several parties and movements: the Party of People’s Unity of Kazakhstan, the Democratic Party of Kazakhstan, the Liberal Movement of Kazakhstan, the Kazakhstan-2030 Movement, and the Party of Justice. Later the Republican Party of Labor and the People’s Cooperative Party joined the Republican Party Otan. It was registered on 12 February, 1999 and reregistered

on 10 January, 2003. It is chaired by the republic's President Nursultan Nazarbaev who at the March 2004 congress appointed Amangeldy Ermigiaev, Zharmakhan Tuiakbay, and Alexander Pavlov his deputies.

Its program says: "Contemporary democratic society is our aim; freedom, justice, solidarity, equality, and brotherhood are our principles." It also admits that the country needs strong and constructive oppositions and election reforms. In this it differs from other party programs. In the sphere of ethnic relations the party rejects the idea of an ethnocratic state; it is convinced that ethnic harmony is a product of the priority of general human values that allow each and every ethnos to develop freely. The party supports the constitutional right of every citizen to use his native tongue; it favors a rational, well-balanced and gradual policy in the linguistic sphere and development of a single cultural community based on old and deep-rooted cultural traditions and cooperation among the ethnic groups of Kazakhstan; it supports democratization as the key to ethnic peace and harmonized ethnic interests. The party supported the laws on the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan and on the National-Cultural centers.

Two newspapers—*Strana i mir* (in Russian) and *Dala men kala* (in Kazakh)—render information support together with the *Stolitsa* magazine.

The Patriot Party

It was set up by Gani Kasymov, who was Majilis deputy in 1999-2004; today, he is the party's leader. Its constituent congress took place on 1 July, 2000; the party was registered in August 2001 and reregistered on 21 March, 2003.

Its program says: "It is party's aim to promote spiritual and cultural revival of the country together with an economic upsurge, improved welfare and increased national wealth so as to successfully address social problems (liquidation of unemployment; ensuring subsistence level for the pensioners and the disabled together with free education and medical aid)." The party supports all changes for the better, decentralization of power, elected akims of all levels, and independent judiciary power. The party has stressed that it will promote the idea of internationalism: "We are the single Kazakhstani nation" and "Kazakhstan is for the Kazakhstanis." It has admitted that ethnic problems remain unresolved.

The party has its page on the website of the Central Asian Agency of Political Research: <http://www.caapr.kz/ppk>.

The Party Asar

The party was registered in December 2003; its leader Ms. Dariga Nazarbaeva is also president of Khabar, the largest media holding, and chairperson of the republic's Congress of Journalists. The party announced that it had formed a parliamentary faction of 10 formerly independent deputies. Its social basis is all social groups; the party states that half of its members are young people between 20 and 35.

The party describes itself as a centrist party that supports the development program called Kazakhstan-2030 and the reforms carried out by the country's president. Its program says: "An economically strong, democratic, and socially oriented state ruled by law and the developed civil society institutions are our aim." The program also says: "The party is always prepared to enter into constructive cooperation with any political forces, it opposes populism, extremism, and radicalism of all forms and manifestations." The party says the following about the ethnic issue: "The party believes that the republic's prosperity is possible if rooted in the nation's traditions. Interaction and interpenetration of cultures and traditions of all peoples living in the republic are its main advantage."

The party publishes two newspapers: *Asar-Kazakhstan* (in Russian) and *Asar zamany* (in Kazakh) with the circulation of 6,000.

The Political Party Rukhaniat

It is the heir to the Party of Revival of Kazakhstan that came to the political scene back in 1995. Its constituent congress was held on 5 April, 2003; its leader Ms. Altynshash Djaganova is a prominent public figure and publicist writer. She also heads the Migration and Demography Agency. Her party relies on intelligentsia and the oralmans (ethnic Kazakhs who moved to the republic).

The party resolutely supports the presidential course. Its program says: "It is our goal to help create a democratic state ruled by law, based on ethnic harmony and relying on socially oriented market economy. This can be achieved through the nation's moral and spiritual revival." As distinct from its predecessor the Rukhaniat insists on ethnic peace, equality of people of all ethnic affiliations, social consolidation in the context of the country's sustainable development. It says in its program: "The party favors equal access and equal opportunities at work for all Kazakhstanis irrespective of their ethnic affiliation. The party favors creation of conditions that would allow all ethnic groups to realize their creative potentials; that would be conducive to the revival of ethnic cultures, art, languages, customs, and ethnocultural traditions and norms. The party opposes all manifestations of nationalism and chauvinism."

It publishes the bilingual newspaper *Rukhaniat-Alemi*.

The Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK) People's Party

Its constituent congress took place on 21 February, 2004 after which the party was registered. Its political council is headed by Asylbek Kozhakhmetov; the party's leader, however, is imprisoned Galymzhan Zhakianov. This is an opposition party that works toward democratization of the sociopolitical sphere. It wants to limit the president's powers and extend those of the parliament; it favors reforms of the local bodies of state power, local self-administration, and the election and judiciary systems; it promotes the idea of freedom of the press and development of civil society institutions.

It was the first to raise the issue of strengthening ethnic relations in the republic of Kazakhstan based on the linguistic policy. Its political manifesto points to contradictions in the language laws and describes as intolerable the state's policy in this sphere. It is convinced that the law on the languages contradicts the constitution because it made the Kazakh language the only language of official documents. The party also criticizes the level of teaching the state tongue at schools and in universities and the intentional display of official inscriptions in the state language only. At the same time, the party believes that ignorance of the state tongue common among the top bureaucrats can no longer be tolerated; it condemns the bureaucrats who are obviously unwilling to create the conditions in which all citizens could learn the state tongue. The party, however, has not offered a set of measures to overcome these negative phenomena; its political manifesto abounds in statements and assessments and lacks constructive suggestions.

The *Respublika* and *Soz* newspapers render the party information support together with the Navigator Internet publication.

The Democratic Party

Based on the republican movement For Kazakhstan Ruled by Law, the party was set up in the spring of 2004; was registered in June 2004. Its leader is Maksut Narikbaev, former chairman of the Supreme Court and rector of the Kazakh Humanitarian Juridical University.

While insisting on its support for the Kazakhstan-2030 strategy the party favors evolutionary, harmonious and sustainable development of the country that should preserve traditions and historical experience. The party has described its highest values as Freedom. Law. Justice. Agreement. Its main tasks are: promotion of further democratization and improvement of the country's political and legal system; all-round efforts to upgrade the living standards and quality of life; developing and strengthening the nations' political and legal awareness.

The party sees its aim in preserving the republic's independence by strengthening statehood based on laws, genuine democracy, ethnic harmony, political stability, free market economy, and the rule of law.

The party publishes two newspapers—*Kozkaras* (in Kazakh) and *Za pravovoy Kazakhstan* (in Russian) with a circulation of 4,000.

The Communist Party of Kazakhstan (CPK)

In 1993, at its 19th congress it declared itself to be the successor of the Socialist Party of Kazakhstan; it was registered in February 1994 and reregistered according to the new law in March 2003. Workers, pensioners, academics, university lecturers, and civil servants form its social basis. Serikbolsyn Abdildin, Majilis deputy and former Chairman of the republic's Supreme Soviet is its First Secretary.

The party disagrees with the reforms now underway in the country and is convinced that the political system is unable to heal the main social sores (poverty and social destitution, corruption, dependence on foreign capital, migration, crime, etc.). The party describes the just social system as its main aim. At the first stage it plans to wage political struggle for the revival of popular rule and to set up a powerful bloc of left-centrist forces able to form a coalition government of social and national salvation. Socioeconomic changes are planned for the second stage. Its main principles are: proletarian internationalism, equality of people of all ethnic affiliations, unity and brotherhood, respect for national dignity of all peoples of multinational Kazakhstan and all nations of the world, strengthening international brotherhood and friendship among peoples. Its address to the communists of Kazakhstan of 21 February, 2004 contained a conclusion that the conditions "for class and ethnic clashes" are being ripening in the country.

The party publishes a newspaper *Pravda Kazakhstana* with a circulation of 10,000; the party has an Internet site <http://www.compartykz.info/>.

The Communist People's Party (CPPK)

It held its constituent assembly in June 2004 (the First Constituent Assembly was held in April 2004, after which the party failed to register itself because of its name the Communist Party of the Republic of Kazakhstan). It was registered under a different name in June 2004. Its First Secretary is Vladislav Kosarev who since 1991 has been Chairman of the Kokshetau Regional Trade Union Council.

The programs of the two communist parties are very similar: social, economic, and political protection of the rights of wage workers; struggle for the power of the working people, against exploitation of man by man, for international and ethnic peace, and creation of a new social formation. It describes itself as a party of the Leninist type and favors a parliamentary republic, strong institutions of civil society, varied forms of property with the priority of public property; protection of the environment, freedom of conscience and equality of all creeds, cooperation with the communist parties of other countries.

The program speaks of two stages: at the first sociopolitical reforms should be carried out, at the second the power of the people should be established realized through the soviets, workers' self-administration, and other forms of the direct rule of people.

The Communist People's Party describes itself as a party of proletarian internationalism that does not segregate people of different nationalities, supports unity and brotherhood and respect for national dignity, languages, traditions, and history of the peoples of multinational Kazakhstan and of all peoples of the world.

It publishes a bilingual newspaper *Kommunist Kazakhstana*.

4. New Approaches to the Nationalities Policy

As compared with 1999, the parties have developed the following new elements in their nationalities policies:

- The parties cooperate with the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan and support the Law on the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan (Otan); cooperation with the national-cultural centers (Otan and Ak zhol); description of the Assembly as an artificial and sham democratic structure (CPPK).
- Rational, balanced, and gradual realization of linguistic policies (Otan, DCK); calls to carry out reasonable and efficient policy designed to preserve and develop the Kazakh language and its use in all spheres of public life (Ak zhol, DCK).
- Recognition that the ethnic problem has not yet been resolved (PPK, DCK);
- Concentration on creating equal opportunities for promotion at work (Rukhaniat);
- Statements that the conditions for “class and ethnic clashes” are gradually ripening in the country (CPK).

An analysis of the positions of political parties in relation to the state and development trends of ethnic relations in the republic has shown that they are very similar and even identical when it comes to the key issues. The pro-presidential parties for their part stress the harmonious nature of ethnic relations in the republic and the task of their preservation in full accordance with the principles of the current ethnic policies. The opposition parties prefer to dwell on the contradictory, unbalanced and conflicting nature of ethnic relations in the country and the need to change the nationalities policy.

All parties, however, limit themselves to outlining the ethnic problems and none has gone as far as suggesting specific ways and methods for their settlement. This can be explained by the objectively complicated nature of the problem and a wide variety of strategies all of which call for detailed theoretical substantiation, an analysis of domestic and foreign experience, etc. The parties are obviously reluctant to draw too much attention to this sensitive issue because of absolutely justified apprehensions that any definite position on the ethnic issue will inevitably cost them part of their followers.