

WHAT MAKES
THE PARLIAMENTARY AND
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS
IN CENTRAL ASIA AND
THE CAUCASUS SPECIFIC

ELECTIONS
IN CENTRAL ASIAN STATES:
POLITICAL RIVALRY
IN A TRANSITIONAL SOCIETY

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The beginning of the third millennium is a very difficult time to make an objective assessment of the events going on in the countries and regions of the world. The images of the Great Chess Board, the classical heritage postulates espoused by geopoliticians, the attempts to create new “symbols of evil,” and the deliberate

criticism of democratic principles as a universal political dominant are too often distorting the objective picture of our reality. In this respect, a well-balanced analysis of the electoral processes in the newly independent states of Central Asia is of considerable interest. The significance of the party and personal composition of the power institutions

in the region's countries is determined not only by their resource potential, the situation in Afghanistan, and the fight to prevent new threats to international security. Although Central Asia is historically closely related to Russia, today there are several other major foreign political actors in the region who are declaring their interests: the U.S., Turkey, China, Iran, Pakistan, India, and the European Union with its individual countries. Their participation is giving all the political processes going on in the Central Asian republics a comprehensive and de facto global dimension.

Acquiring national sovereignty and achieving development under conditions of post-union statehood have become serious tests for these

countries. During these years, their social systems have come close to the critical mark on several occasions, while the crisis trends in the social and political spheres have not been fully overcome, despite the optimism instilled in the official statements. On the whole, the situation in the region refutes the apocalyptic forecasts regularly offered by some experts and politicians at the beginning of the 1990s, and is currently characterized by significant positive shifts. All the same, the development and stability prospects of the Central Asian states is still a topic of numerous discussions in which parliamentary and presidential elections have recently found themselves the center of attention.

Campaign Standards and Political Practice

For most members of today's world community, democratic elections have become an indispensable attribute of power. But a number of examples can be presented when this attribute was used to avoid accusations of authoritarianism, or, on the contrary, to justify the pressure being placed on certain political leaders. So opinions significantly differ with respect to recognizing particular elections as democratic, particularly the election campaigns being run in transitional societies. This is where we often witness the notorious double standard which often becomes a bone of contention in developing constructive interaction between specific states, or even on an international scale.¹ And although there is no such thing as a hopeless situation in big politics, public doubts about its legitimacy do not enhance any political regime.

Unfortunately, essentially none of the Central Asian states have managed to escape being accused of organizing "non-alterative elections," that is, of violating the main prerequisite of democratic rule. Since the beginning of this decade, the OSCE has been regularly criticizing the leaders of the region's countries, claiming that they sanction only the activity of the opposition under their control and are merely paying lip service to mass support of its policy. If we put aside all the speculations and ambitions of the opposition figures, we could probably consider this question from a slightly different angle: how can the five sovereign public systems in Central Asia be managed and political stability achieved? At the same time, it should be emphasized that the answer to this question is not only defined by the situation in the region's countries themselves, but also by constructive cooperation among all the outside actors drawn into the Central Asian processes. It is important that today's contradictory evaluations of the elections in a particular Central Asian country do

¹ Although the concept "standard" in the electoral process is rather provisional, analysts usually refer to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to corresponding international pacts, and recently to the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Declaration. These documents contain the basic principles for recognizing the legitimacy of power: political power in a democratic society should be based on the will of the majority, on granting all citizens equal rights to vote and to the secrets of voting, on the principle of rotation of power, and on the principle of freedom of election information. What is more, in 2001, at the summit held in Kishinev, the CIS adopted a Convention on Observing the Voting Rights of the Population, which confirms the adherence of the post-Soviet states to the basic international principles in this sphere.

not become the beginning of a rampant “out with the opposition” campaign, but of a responsible exchange of opinions in support of the new state as it strives for sustainable development and to strengthen its national sovereignty.

Parliamentary and presidential elections as national forms of the declaration of will of the people of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have been held several times now. In each case, they had their own specifics generated by the election legislation and correlation of domestic political forces in each particular state. What is more, such trends as the executive branch (headed by the presidents in power) strengthening its social foothold and members of the opposition losing the level of influence they enjoyed on the wave of post-Soviet romanticism became the main electoral characteristics in all the Central Asian states in 2004-2005. But the most important thing in this respect is that the people have become acquainted with the culture of alternative elections and are thus tangibly more politicized. Despite the diversity of the political practices in the region’s five countries, it appears the trends indicated will continue to be pertinent in the mid term too. The legitimate regrouping of the Central Asian elites is significantly reducing the possibility of internal destabilization of political life in the next few years.

Electoral Issues

The political agenda in the region was traditionally formed by the events in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. But due to the dramatic upheavals experienced in the spring of 2005 by Kyrgyzstan, it is worth paying attention to the situation in the three Central Asian countries which are relatively small in size and very weak economically. Kyrgyzstan, which we have already mentioned, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan are extremely different in terms of their resource potential, government regimes, and the special features of their cooperation with international partners. But nevertheless, their location, where the external borders of the post-Soviet expanse and a very instable part of the Islamic world meet, cannot help but be taken into account in real politics. Despite the fact that the Domino principle essentially does not work in the region, the presence of ethnic groups separated by state borders and the problems created by water supply, electric energy, migration flows, the spontaneous revival of caravan trade, and so on are keenly felt in the poorest part of Central Asia, where even in hydrocarbon-rich Turkmenistan, the standard of living is far below similar indices of the Soviet period. Another problem, the fragmentary nature of the ethnopolitical elites of the titular population, is more urgent here than in the larger states.

Many publications are devoted to the informal differentiation of the ruling circles, or so-called clannishness in today’s world.² Clannishness as a synonym of fragmentariness and informal differentiation not only of the elites, but of all society, is slowly adapting to the present-day forms of political life and having a significant impact on it. But detailed descriptions of “who, where, when, and with whom” frequently obscure the meaning of the “experience of independent statehood,” which is only just forming in Central Asia. There are quite enough contemporary managers in the post-Soviet countries, but under the conditions of an embryonic market, the mosaic of social relations at all levels of the social pyramid is such that large interest groups are only very approximately delineated here, while

² See in particular: K.P. Borishpolets, “Klany i politicheskaia vlast,” *Azia i Afrika segodnia*, No. 2, 1991; S. Biriukov, “Elity-klientely kak kluichevoi faktor politicheskogo razvitiia Tsentral’noaziatskikh gosudarstv,” *Russkii zhurnal* [<http://centrasia.org/newsA.php4?st=1048023480>]; K. Collins, “The Logic of Clan Politics: Evidence from the Central Asian Trajectories,” *World Politics*, Vol. 56, No. 2, January 2004, pp. 224-138.

the main nucleus of ethnonational consolidation is only just beginning to take shape. So the painful attempts to walk away from the dividing lines of the civil war period (in Tajikistan), the exotic cult of Turkmenbashi (in Turkmenistan), and the failure of former president Askar Akaev's political maneuvering (in Kyrgyzstan) are essentially the same kind of phenomena. They are examples of the relatively successful or, on the contrary, failed policy to create a relatively broad mass base for the political regime, without which it is even hypothetically impossible to raise the question of development.

The electoral processes of recent years in these three countries have made appraisals of the events going on in them much more judgmental. Nevertheless, an analysis of the situation compels us to reject many critical considerations, if only because alternative scenarios of the status quo are based exclusively on rhetoric.

The situation in Kyrgyzstan, which prestigious Russian Orientalist Sergey Luzianin described as a combustible mixture of politics and crime,³ did not become such in the wink of an eye. The fall of Akaev's regime is the result of a critical mass of socioeconomic problems unresolved by the government, insufficient attention to the problems of the country's southern regions, including underestimation of the growing influence of religious extremists, and weak control over the activity of foreign foundations. At the same time, Kyrgyz political scientists are pointing out that one of the main reasons for the April (2005) events should be considered Akaev's lack of preparedness for ruling the country and the weakness of the official power bodies.⁴ The republic's leadership has essentially distanced itself from society and is up to its neck in raking in corporative riches, ensuring its political survival, and searching for additional external resources.

Askar Akaev could have most likely been accused of "being inadequate for his post" by the country's citizens long before his formal resignation. After steering a course toward a multi-vectored foreign policy and putting forward several popular initiatives, such as declaring Central Asia a non-nuclear zone, revival of the Great Silk Road, and similar undoubtedly beneficial undertakings, the republic's first president failed to become involved in its real modernization. Active support of international efforts in the fight against the Afghan Taliban also gave Akaev and his close entourage significant political clout, which however he was unable to convert propitiously within Kyrgyzstan itself. Despite the foreign political ties "worked up" by the president, the gap between the official authorities' words and deeds grew to dangerous proportions. Against this background, the entry into big politics of Akaev's family members (together with the prospect of transfer to a parliamentary-presidential form of rule) proved, although important, essentially incapable of having any impact on the situation in the country.

The crisis was essentially predetermined as early as the fall of 2004, when active consolidation of the Kyrgyz opposition, regrouping of its forces, and the creation of several blocs began, quite unexpectedly for foreign observers. At first glance, the official authorities had a great many multifarious rivals. But in actual fact, all the new opposition members knew each other well on an everyday level through joint work, while most of them were at one time removed from their leading posts by members of the president's team. The "second bell" sounded for Askar Akaev's supporters on the day of the parliamentary elections, 27 February, 2005, when a second round of voting was scheduled at more than 50% of the polling stations (a total of 45% of the registered electorate voted). The specter not even of a diarchy, but of an extensive Brownian movement (taking into account the diversity of the political spectrum) arose before the country. And the fact that the crisis ended without society rico-

³ See: S. Luzianin, "Goriuchaia smes is politiki i kriminala. Promezhutochnye itogi 'tiulpanovoi revoliutsii' v Kirghizii," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 28 November, 2005.

⁴ See: Z. Todua, "Kyrgyzstan after Akaev: What Happened and Why, What Next?" *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (33), 2005.

cheting totally out of control was largely a coincidence. In order to keep hold of the reins over the country, its new leadership organized presidential elections three months after Akaev's April resignation. At that time, it is fair to note, the republic needed stability and to strengthen its national institutions, which could only be achieved on the basis of free and fair elections.

On the whole, the election campaign went peacefully and in the spirit of constructive debates between different representatives of the former opposition. We will remind you that according to the results of the voting, K. Bakiev was preferred by approximately 89% of the voters, with the republic's ombudsman T. Bakir uulu (3.9%) coming in second, and third place going to leader of the Union of Industrialists and Businessmen A. Aitikeev (3.6%). The other three candidates gathered less than 1%. In this way, not only did Kyrgyz politics return to normal legal conditions, but this return was supported by a substantial majority of the voters. An important aspect was also that even before these elections, the government confirmed its adherence to the country's international obligations. In August 2005, recalling this, head of the Russian Foreign Ministry Sergey Lavrov said that the results of the elections in Kyrgyzstan were stabilizing the situation in Central Asia, and K. Bakiev's victory would bring this to fruition.

Tajikistan President Emomali Rakhmonov controlled the development of the election campaign much more successfully than Askar Akaev. Especially considering that the country had still not recovered from the consequences of the civil war, and the monthly income of the republic's residents amounts to between 5 and 15 dollars,⁵ the 2005 parliamentary elections, also organized on 27 February, were held in a peaceful atmosphere. Incidentally, Tajikistan was not expecting any particular shakeups in this respect. Emomali Rakhmonov said that he was personally voting for peace, stability, and democracy at the first free elections since the end of the civil war. This statement apparently was in full keeping with the mood of the masses. Eighty-eight percent of the republic's citizens participated in the election, at which six political parties competed for votes. In accordance with the majority districts and party lists, 63 deputies were elected to the parliament. As experts predicted, the pro-presidential People's Democratic Party sustained victory by receiving approximately 85% of the votes. What is more, the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) and the Communist Party topped the 5-percent barrier. Three of the parties participating in these elections did not get into parliament: the Democratic, Social-Democratic, and Socialist parties. But only the latter acknowledged its defeat, while the four other opposition parties (including those which made it into parliament) did not agree with the voting results and demanded repeat elections. "The Communist Party, the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan, the Social-Democratic Party, and the Democratic Party of Tajikistan state that they do not accept the results of the voting in Dushanbe and demand another election," said the declaration of these parties made by Communist Party leader S. Shabdolov, which was published in March 2005. In turn, Deputy Chairman of the Tajikistan Central Election Commission M. Kabirov told journalists that during the elections "several violations were committed... Such undertakings are not always run impeccably ... but the violations were not so bad as to cancel the results of the election. There were shortcomings, but they were not bad enough to render the election invalid."⁶

The dissatisfaction of most of the opposition in the form of the IRPT, which, according to the inter-Tajik peace agreement, should receive 30% of the seats in the government, was aroused by the difficulties with its registration, as well as by the fact it was revealed that the administrative resource had been siphoned off in favor of the presidential party (the PDPT). Its overwhelming success theo-

⁵ According to possibly slightly exaggerated estimates of the Tajik opposition, approximately 60% of the population lives on the income of migrants from Russia, 25% on drug revenue, and 15% on humanitarian aid from foreign countries.

⁶ [<http://www.gtnews.ru/cgi/news/view.cgi?goto=8431/>], 12 December, 2005.

retically ensured the executive power branch the support of the qualified majority of the legislative power branch and allowed Emomali Rakhmonov to run for a third presidential term. But the head of state approached the dialog with the opposition from a better thought-out standpoint than the former leader of Kyrgyzstan. The need for pragmatism was entirely justified, since on 29 April, 2004, the leaders of several parties—the Social-Democratic, Democratic, IRPT, and Socialist—created a coalition called “For Fair and Transparent Elections in Tajikistan.”⁷ At the beginning of March 2005, the members of the coalition, along with the country’s Communist Party, announced their non-acceptance of the results of the parliamentary election and demanded it be re-held and the members of the Central Election Commission replaced.

After talks between the authorities and the leaders of the Communist Party and the IRPT, these two parties withdrew their main complaints and assumed their seats in the parliament: the Communist Party had four seats and the IRPT, two. When asked whether a coalition of parties would be created during the period of the presidential election in 2006, its possible participants replied that this problem had not been discussed. But on the whole, the Tajik opposition did not succeed in forming a united, albeit no longer military but political, front. At the end of April 2005, all the parties belonging to the election coalition signed an agreement on its disbandment. When assessing their experience, the leaders of this coalition said that through their joint action they had tried to raise mutual understanding and constructive cooperation with the presidential party PDPT and in the final analysis with the country’s president to a greater height. In other words, it is worth noting that by going for a working compromise with the opposition, Emomali Rakhmonov made a good start in choosing future administration partners.

All the same, part of the country’s opposition is still getting its candidate ready to participate in the 2006 presidential election and setting him up as a rival to Emomali Rakhmonov. For example, Makhmadruz Iskandarov, now living in Russia, intends to compete against him. He plans to return to the republic as soon as the Prosecutor General rescinds his previous accusations.⁸

In this way, the background of the upcoming election in Tajikistan is outwardly reminiscent of the situation in Kyrgyzstan. There is an extremely low standard of living in the republic without any tangible signs of improvement. But the nature of relations between the current leader and the opposition forces qualitatively differs from the Kyrgyz version. It would be gratifying to think that representatives of the various segments of the republic’s political elite could come to terms not only about guaranteeing their status, but could also offer society a dynamic program aimed at resolving the most urgent problems to ease the population’s plight.

Turkmenistan, the third of the small Central Asian states, differs tremendously at first glance from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. High per capita GDP indices are characteristic of the republic; Turkmenbashi (Saparmurat Niyazov), who has been officially declared the nation’s permanent leader, occupies the post of president; it has the status of a neutral country, which is recognized by the world community; and regional and extra-regional powers are extremely interested in its energy potential. But according to authoritative specialists, the situation in its economic and social spheres continues to leave much to be desired. For example, despite all its potential, the oil and gas industry, the foundation of the republic’s economy, is in a pre-crisis state in terms of several technological parameters. In so doing, most of the revenue from the export of hydrocarbons is distributed among a chosen few under the control of the “perpetual, lifetime president.” The changes have not affected

⁷ The Democratic Party initially refrained from joining the coalition, but after it was unable to get any guarantee from the head of state regarding amendments to the law on elections and confirmation of the quotas to leading posts in the government, on 2 August, 2004, it also joined ranks with it.

⁸ M. Iskandarov—former member of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), field commander during the bloody civil war of 1992-1997, openly criticized the Tajikistan government, among other things for holding the 2003 referendum which established the procedure for E. Rakhmonov’s re-election, permitting him to remain president until 2020.

the people who, while remaining dissatisfied with their lot, are still entirely inert. Most of the republic's poorly urbanized residents are extremely downtrodden. Nor have the changes affected the authoritative form of rule characteristic of Turkmenistan with all its extremely specific cult manifestations.

Under these conditions, election campaigns as part of the broader political processes largely demonstrate inertial motion. Despite the outer streamlined organization of the country's power institutions, their efficacy is confirmed so far by limited historical experience. Only the first steps are being taken to directly unite the mechanisms of unequivocal and representative democracy within the framework of the political system, while the charismatic leader acts as the guarantor of their application.

The current version of election legislation, which sets forth the procedure for forming power structures of different levels, was adopted not long before the April 2003 election of people's representatives to the National Council (Khalk maslakhaty) and to local self-government bodies. These laws created the unique structure of representative power in the Central Asian countries. On the one hand, according to the Constitution, there is a Mejlis in the republic (the supreme body of legislative power), but above it stands the National Council, which has 2,000 members. Its decisions are not the law, but all the republic's government bodies are obligated to carry them out. This structure is headed by the country's president, it consists of the heads of ministries and departments, Mejlis deputies, representatives of the judicial departments, and specially elected people's representatives (the latter serve five-year terms). It is characteristic that at the 2003 elections to the National Council and to the local self-government bodies, voters were much more active than at the election to the Mejlis in 2004.⁹ Objectively, the National Council blocks the functions of the parliamentary structure in the form of the Mejlis, and the balance between them is maintained by the president's powers. This two-phase, essentially three-level, system of representative power makes it possible to create an extremely specific "network structure of political participation of the elites," which reflects Turkmenistan's specific reality. Under this system, there can essentially be no mass spontaneous demonstrations, and additional guarantees of consent of the privileged social strata are ensured not only by the special forces departments, but also by the status boons with which a significant number of key functionaries of the middle and at times lower levels are endowed. If skillfully managed, this structure can prevent certain individuals or groups from giving vent to their corporative strivings for five to ten years. But as in any super complicated system, its strengths are not inexhaustible, and it requires quite frequent "adjustments."

A fundamental element in this respect was the parliamentary election to the Mejlis of the third convocation held on 19 December, 2004. Fifty deputies (out of 131 candidates) representing the ruling Democratic Party, the only legal party in the country, were elected to a five-year term.¹⁰ According to the existing procedure, the district administrations selected candidates, then the regional administrations petitioned for them, after which each candidate was approved by the presidential apparatus. Under these conditions, the republic's leadership considers the rivalry between them to be proof of the election's fairness and transparency. Four hundred representatives of the National Institute of Democracy and Human Rights, as well as of public organizations, such as the Democratic Party, Youth Union, Women's Union, and trade unions, monitored both the election and the counting of votes. Foreign observers were not present at the election since official Ashgabad refused to admit OSCE representatives.

⁹ 99.8% of the registered voters (2,391,315 people) took part in them. 144 candidates ran for 65 seats in the National Council, and 6,323 for 5,535 mandates in the local self-government bodies.

¹⁰ Fifty voting districts and 1,610 polling stations were formed for holding the election. Approximately 77% of the electorate participated in the voting.

In this way, the legislative principles which define the specifics of the elections to the republic's parliament are an interesting example of a combination of the national dimensions of the election campaign and the transfer of the main focus of rivalry among the potential deputies to the local level. The advantage of this approach is that it reinforces the feedback between the electorate and its chosen officials. But all the same, it reduces the parliament's ability to influence government strategy, even when this influence becomes predictable under the conditions of a one-party system.

The question of presidential elections is also resolved in an unusual way compared with neighboring countries.¹¹ From time to time, the republic's president Saparmurat Niyazov announces his intention to prepare a successor. For example, not that long ago he asked the National Council to nominate several candidates to this post every year—prestigious people who have been known in the country for at least 10 years. Among Turkmenbashi's other statements on the transfer of power, attention should be paid to the one in which he said that a presidential election would be held in 2008-2010, and preparations for it should begin now.¹² But the republic's highest legislative body resolved to postpone discussion of the presidential election until 2009.

Some experts believe that by including the question of elections on the agenda, Turkmenbashi is making sure the domestic and world community understands that he consents to transferring power to a worthy person elected by the people. Others note that he is putting on a show customary for end of the public career of authoritative leaders. But, one way or another, the question of power succession was drawing close to its denouement. The main thing is probably whether the system can ensure stability in one of the most important geo-economic spots in Central Asia without its creator.

Since it is impossible to draw a temporal framework for Turkmenbashi's time in power and the "successor" operation is so problematic, we are compelled (in order to clarify the forecasts) to turn to an evaluation of the Turkmen opposition. It does not have a great influence on the domestic processes going on in the country. Following the removal of B. Shikhmuradov, Kh. Orazov, N. Khanamov, and other prominent Turkmen figures, their relatives were also ousted from the power echelons and big business. After it was declared there had been an assassination attempt on Turkmenbashi in 2002, many representatives of the upper level of the political elite were arrested, and others emigrated. Emigrants living in Western Europe created a Democratic Forces Union of Turkmenistan, but it is difficult to judge this organization's real connection with the country or its influence on the situation in it. At times, the Turkmen opposition structure is reminiscent of the "Kyrgyz situation," that is, among the adversaries of the current president are people who used to be in power. It is possible that restoring their individual or group participation in government rule will help to preserve the sociopolitical status quo in Turkmenistan. But it is more likely that the new leader is still absolutely unknown to the broad public, and his legitimization will rely on principally new foundations, and not on those on which the current authorities of the republic or their public opponents rely.

In contrast to the electoral processes in the small Central Asian states, the election race and elections in Uzbekistan are always covered in detail by specialists. After the events in Andijian, attention to them grew even more, although the assessments also became much more contradictory.

Alternative presidential and parliamentary elections have been held in this republic since the fall of the Soviet Union. As early as the first years of political pluralism, they designated the main

¹¹ Saparmurat Niyazov has been ruling Turkmenistan continuously since 1985, in the beginning as leader of the Communist Party Central Committee, and since 1991, as the nationally elected president. In 1999, the National Council removed the restrictions on the presidential term and Saparmurat Niyazov was declared lifetime president. In 2002, the Council adopted this decision again, although lifetime presidency is not legislatively enforced.

¹² On 7 April, 2005, at an extended government meeting, which was broadcast on local television, S. Niyazov said: "As for me personally, I deeply acknowledge both my responsibility to the people and to the state, and my duty to ensure succession at the highest echelon of the country's power."

trends in the overall electoral picture which have not lost their pertinence today. Former functionaries, many of whom had just recently been in disgrace, on the one hand, and the opposition intelligentsia, on the other, struggled for power. Rivalry between them unfolded under the strong influence of the Muslim factor and the politicization of Islam in several key areas of the country. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which was closely tied to the Afghan Taliban, acted as a third force for quite a long time, claiming its participation in power, whereby its claims were inevitably taken into account by all of the country's major politicians.

Although in recent years the situation has significantly changed, there can still be no real talk of the formation of a political spectrum. Nevertheless, political pluralism (in its contemporary form) is integrating the main mass of pertinent public interests into the framework of legal institutions and making it possible to recall Hegel's words: "Everything real is rational, and everything rational is real."

The election to the two-house parliament held for the first time in the republic's history at the end of 2004 is especially important when describing the electoral processes in Uzbekistan. It was preceded by a four-month election race, during which the people were supposed to acquaint themselves with the gist of the parliamentary reforms and consciously define their attitude toward the participants in this process. The election to the Legislative House of the Oliy Majlis took place on 26 December. According to official data, 85.1% of the voters took part in it and elected 62 deputies (out of 489 candidates). Another 58 deputies got into parliament after a second election on 9 January, 2005, at which the voter turnout was almost as high as 80%. The seats in the lower house of parliament were shared among five parties and independent candidates from citizen initiative groups. A total of more than 500 candidates competed for election to the Legislative House, that is, there were more than four candidates to each seat. In the upper house of parliament, approximately 15% of the senators represent the agrarian sector, more than 20% represent education, science, and culture, and 10% the industrial complex.

Among the deputies of the Legislative House only 18 (15%) were previously deputies of the Oliy Majlis. There are far more well-known political and public figures in the Senate, particularly among those appointed by the president. It is also worth noting that almost 50% of the elected senators are khokims of various levels. This essentially also reflects the world standard of regional representation at the national level.

According to the election results, a two-party system was established in the country. The overwhelming number of seats in parliament went to the two main parties, the People's Democratic (PDP) and the Liberal Democratic parties, who nominated candidates in all districts. The fewest candidates were nominated from the Democratic Party Millii tiklanish, while two other parties, the Democratic and Social-Democratic parties, were inactive both at the national and local elections.

Uzbekistan's Western partners were extremely displeased that the country's authorities did not permit a significant number of opposition parties and organizations to participate in the election. On the whole, the opposition was to be disappointed in this election race, since official Tashkent demonstrated its firm intention to ensure political pluralism based on the creation and support of their own constructive political adversaries, and not on rivalry with radical critics.

In principle, judging from the statements by many representatives of the secular opposition to the government of Islam Karimov, they could not see the possibility of qualitatively changing the situation in the country other than the steps being taken by the country's leadership. In so doing, searching for alternative figures to the current president is unlikely to yield results. The combination of charisma and competence, which should distinguish a successful opposition member, is rarely encountered during backstage discussions. In other words, in the event of its hypothetical advent to power, the traditional opposition will remain isolated from most of the population and will not be able to present a realistic reform strategy. Whether or not a third force will arise in Uzbek politics in this event is not

part of the picture. This will most likely depend not on the activity of President Karimov, but on the successor of the current head of state, whereby with an effective program to cut back the number of urban and rural marginals. At the current stage, the pressure of the labor-surplus human masses on the country's social and political structures is being partially alleviated by an increase in foreign migration, which was not characteristic of the republic's residents even during the Soviet period. Ways to raise employment are likely to be sought in the idea, which is revived from time to time, of irrigating the country's arid regions by diverting the runoff of the Siberian rivers, which is generally unrealistic.

The heightened attention to ways to rapidly improve the life of most of the population has another essentially political aspect, educational work among young people to combat not only the terrorist, but also the drug threat.

There is no doubt that these and many other urgent tasks facing society will be widely discussed as the next presidential election approaches, which should be held in 2007. Islam Karimov has been the country's uncontested leader for many years now.¹³ Very often he is called an inclement politician, even a dictator, who is holding back the reforms. But we should admit that the current head of state's inclemency relies on pragmatic approaches in domestic and foreign policy. At the beginning of the 1990s, he recognized new sociopolitical organizations, including the Birluk movement and the Democratic Party Erk, which announced their opposition policy. At that time, Islam Karimov called on the opposition to engage in constructive cooperation, but its radical leaders placed their stakes not on participating in power, but on gaining it. The opposition's stubborn refusal to accept the role of junior partner led to the president's supporters saying that if they continued to concede to the demands put forward by the radical opposition, the country could turn into another of the region's hot spots. In the sphere of international policy, Islam Karimov rendered tangible support to the U.S. by offering it bases for carrying out the antiterrorist campaign in Afghanistan. But when Washington's presence became more a factor of domestic policy than foreign partnership, the American military withdrew from Uzbekistan at Islam Karimov's request.

The president himself believes that today, when new threats in the form of nationalism, separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism are increasingly spreading throughout the world, it is difficult to talk about the development of democracy. The problem of security naturally has an impact both on the foreign and domestic policy of the republic's leadership. After all, it is obvious that while the war in Afghanistan continues, there will continue to be a threat to peace, security, democratic changes, and reforms in the neighboring Central Asian countries, and there will continue to be a source of international terrorism and the danger of its expansion far beyond the boundaries of the region. At the same time, Islam Karimov believes that the characteristic feature of democratization under conditions of the East is the consistency and gradualness of this process, and that a revolution in this sphere is unacceptable.

It is difficult not to agree with the Uzbekistan president here, after all even in the West democratization did not always happen as the result of revolutionary upheavals. The universal understanding of human rights and democratic freedoms is valuable not only in itself, but also because the societies actively striving to embody them are more efficient with respect to development of the economy, defensibility, and security. The need to manage and guide the democratic changes, which has become the main stimulus of the activity of the leaders of post-Soviet states in the transition period, is placing greater responsibility on them. It is gratifying that the "adequacy" of the ruling circles of these newly independent states is controlled today not by the C.P.S.U. Central Committee, but by their sovereign peoples, who belong to the family of the world community.

¹³ In December 1991 at the alternative election, Islam Karimov was elected president of Uzbekistan. In March 1995, in keeping with the results of the national referendum, the term of Karimov's presidential powers was extended to 2000. On 9 January, 2000, during the election of the Uzbekistan president, in which Islam Karimov and leader of the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan Abdulkhafiz Jalalov participated, he was again elected the head of state. At that time, 91.9% of the voters who participated in the election voted for Karimov, and 4.1% for the second candidate to this post.

As for Kazakhstan, the relatively recent commentaries on the results of the elections in this republic differed little from similar statements and publications about Uzbekistan. Some of them were sugarcoated, others contained rampant criticism. Therefore, convincing confirmation at the December 2005 election by President Nursultan Nazarbaev of his mandate, which even the skeptics recognized, became a significant event for all the Central Asian states. But it was preceded by a very cautious and gradual (almost along the lines of Islam Karimov's recommendations) process to streamline the country's political life and stabilize and raise its economy,¹⁴ as well as by the first steps to draw up a sustainable development strategy.

Significant qualitative changes were noted in the republic's electoral sphere, particularly during and after the parliamentary election held on 19 September, 2004. And this was not only due to the fact that by this time approximately a tenth of the polling stations were equipped with modern electronic voting systems or to the increase in the number of parties permitted to join this campaign who were refused registration at the election in 1999. Their characteristic feature is the indisputable victory of the ruling party Otan (Homeland) and the unsuccessful maneuvering of the opposition, which was unable to offer a convincing alternative policy to the one being carried out by the official authorities. Some analysts explained the success of this party (and it is invariably associated with Nursultan Nazarbaev) not only by the achievements of the president's policy, but also by the fact that its leadership, without hiding its electoral preferences, managed to remain within legal boundaries. The skilful electoral management of the head of state's team ensured an efficient election campaign, minimized the effect of various "dirty" political techniques, and made it possible to carry out the basic premises for creating the necessary competitive conditions for other political forces.

As for the opposition, the Ak zhol Party (Bright Way) came forward as its main structure at the 2004 elections. It was oriented toward the interests of big business, but in so doing made active use of populist slogans. For example, it was in favor of proportional distribution among the population of the revenue from oil sales. The special twist of its election campaign was the presence in the party's leadership of such well-known figures in the country as A. Sarsenbaev, the former Kazakhstan ambassador to the Russian Federation, and B. Abilov, one of the republic's biggest businessmen. But most of the party's leadership was made up of those who were ousted from the power structures in 2000-2001, due to which the people considered them traditional representatives of the ruling circles, but losers. What is more, the Ak zhol Party made a serious mistake, it wanted to consolidate both the liberal and the pseudo-patriotic electorate, right down to the marginal strata, in order to create a stable social fulcrum for itself. The other half of the opposition was more radical. It was represented in particular by the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan Party (DCK), which came forward with harsh criticism of Nursultan Nazarbaev and strove to establish contacts with the new Ukrainian leadership headed by Viktor Iushchenko. At the 2004 parliamentary election, the DCK was in the same bloc as the communists, the oldest party in Kazakhstan. But as a result, the DCK-CPK bloc totally lost this election.

Here it is worth noting that in September 2004, Ak zhol received quite a large number of votes, losing on party lists only to the government party, Otan, and surpassing Dariga Nazarbaeva's party, Asar (All Together). Nevertheless, the representatives of Ak zhol stated that all the results of this election were falsified. At the same time (in the fall of 2004), Zharmakhan Tuiakbay, the country's former prosecutor general, former speaker of the Majlis, and one of the leaders of the Otan party, went over to the opposition camp. He headed the movement "For a Fair Kazakhstan," which immediately began claiming that all opposition forces should be consolidated.

In this way, by the beginning of 2005, that is, in anticipation of the presidential election, the opposition tried to take the offense, but was unable to achieve any visible success. As early as Janu-

¹⁴ Between 2000 and 2005, the GDP in Kazakhstan rose by 62.4%, while in Russia it rose by 33%. The average annual rate of economic growth in these countries amounted to 10.2% and 5.9%, respectively.

ary, the activity of DCK was essentially curtailed on a court decision, and in the spring, the Ak zhol Party split. On the basis of a constitutional parliamentary majority, Otan became *de jure* and *de facto* the dominating political force in Kazakhstan.

But domination in the sphere of real politics does not mean there are no problems. Many convincing publications are devoted to the country's sore points: clannishness, the increased activity of the members of the president's family, corruption, and the continuing poverty and backwardness of most of the population. The role of Nursultan Nazarbaev's oldest daughter, Dariga, and the Asar Party headed by her is commented on ambiguously. Majlis Deputy Dariga Nazarbaeva is suggesting that a broad public discussion be held, according to the results of which a reform program should appear, a so-called road map of democratic development for the country. There are already several projects for extending the powers of the parliament and local self-government and for implementing other corresponding changes. Dariga Nazarbaeva constantly talks about the need to raise the role of civil society and undergo a gradual transition from a presidential to a presidential-parliamentary republic. The program of the parliamentary coalition headed by Asar envisages the free handout of one million land plots of 10 hundredth parts of a hectare each to the country's citizens, and the introduction of a tough policy to curb inflation and tariffs by controlling the activity of state companies and monopolies in this sphere. Dariga's program is an extended version of the current president's policy, but with the accent on measures to prevent an increase in instability.

The conception being carried out by Asar's leadership is quite promising since it is trying to continue Nursultan Nazarbaev's policy. In contrast to other leaders of the region's countries, he is building his policy on the basis of a long-term strategy, to which current reality is subordinated, relying (among other things) on the experience of retaining unity among the Kazakhstan elites and on raising their interest in sociopolitical stability. In so doing, special attention is being paid to involving the younger generation of Kazakh managers and providing them with status roles in national policy. The country's successful economic development is placing the strengthening of Asar's foothold in a favorable light. According to average statistical indices, Kazakhstan is the leader in the post-Soviet expanse.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the question of a successor for Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbaev, who was newly elected on 4 December, 2005 to a seven-year term, is not pertinent in the near future. Preliminary surveys and more than 90% of the votes show that the republic's citizens do not see an alternative either to the individual who has been head of the state for more than 14 years, or to his policy. It is symptomatic that the opposition nominated Zharmakhan Tuiakbay as their main candidate at the presidential election, a person who is directly associated with the forced suppression in 1989 of the student demonstrations in Alma-Ata. As for Nursultan Nazarbaev, he achieved equilibrium on the national political field and, as is expected, will be able to play a positive role in the work of the OSCE, presuming that Kazakhstan receives the status of chairman of this organization in 2009. The prospect of becoming the first country in Central Asia to participate on such a grand scale in European affairs is a serious stimulus for further intensification of the democratic reforms, including with respect to elections.

The results of the latest parliamentary and presidential elections in the republic provided a positive solution to several urgent problems in its social life. But, as any other election campaign, they are not the "be-all and end-all." Political rivalry to govern the country and the current authorities' constant efforts to claim social responsibility are still pertinent. In order to guarantee their stability, young democracies (both poor and relatively prosperous in the material sense) should consistently carry out economic and political modernization.

¹⁵ The Kazakhstan government is currently working on increasing the per capita GDP to 8-9,000 dollars by 2012. The average monthly salary by this time should exceed 70,000 tenge (on the order of 500 dollars), and pensions should increase two-fold.

Overcoming Difficulties As They Arise

The current electoral processes in the Central Asian states are giving rise to many controversial issues. For example, there is quite a widespread opinion that elections are only giving the local leaders an opportunity to refute accusations of not being democratic and to continue receiving dividends from foreign investors. But the opposite also seems to be true: it is precisely the current leaders of the newly independent states who are extremely interested in developing the electoral processes as an indicator of the real situation in society. Nevertheless, despite the radical rhetoric and the charitable attentions of many foreign organizations, the opposition has not shown itself to be a constructive opponent to the current authorities in essentially any of region's countries. Of course, it is to a certain extent legitimate for the traditional and new opposition members to talk about "unpredictable consequences" under the weight of the unresolved social problems, terrorism, fundamentalism, separatism, drug trafficking, and many other threats existing in Central Asia. But there is no all-out threat of a political explosion. In this respect, the leaders of the Central Asian countries and their foreign partners should view the election results not only as a certain outcome of political development, but also as the beginning of a new stage of positive interaction in the interests of security, democracy, and the further strengthening of cooperation.