



CURRENT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT IN KAZAKHSTAN

On April 26, 2015, Kazakhstan held early presidential election which was initiated by the Majilis members of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan (APK). The President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev won a landslide victory in presidential election against the two other candidates by a large margin. According to the Central Election Commission (CEC), the leader of the ruling party Nur Otan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, won with 97.75% of total votes. His opponents - Turgun Syzdykov, nominated by the Communist Party, and the independent candidate Abulgazi Kusainov gathered 1.61% and 0.64% of total votes, respectively.

The very idea to conduct early presidential elections was the need to avoid the collision of holding presidential and parliamentary elections in the same year (both scheduled for 2016), which would be unconstitutional. The aim of making proposal to hold elections during the two years in Nazarbayev's leadership was also to tackle with difficult economic situation in the country.

Current presidential elections has specific features. One is unprecedented high voter turnout – According to the CEC, out of 9 547 864 registered voters 9 090 920 or 95.21% took part in voting process. Such high voter turnout was recorded for the first time in history of Kazakhstan.

Other is high level of voter support for Nazarbayev's reelection – only during the first presidential elections in 1991, Nursultan Nazarbayev won the race for presidency with higher level of population support – 98.7% of total votes. After a decline in the rates during the presidential campaign of 1999 (79.78% of total votes), the Leader of the Nation won elections in 2005 and 2011 with 91.15% and 95.5% of total votes, respectively.

Current presidential election was positively assessed by the world community and international observers. The CEC accredited 858 observers who represented 37 foreign states and following international organizations: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Missions of Commonwealth of Independent States, Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States, Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-Speaking Countries. In addition, 168 representatives of foreign media have received accreditation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Nursultan Nazarbayev officially started the fifth presidential term on 29 April, 2015. His reelection has proved population support of declared democratic reforms in the country aiming to improve effectiveness and efficiency of governmental bodies, especially, the Parliament.

According to the Constitution of Kazakhstan, the Parliament comprises of two Chambers: the Senate (47 members with the 6-year term, half of which are elected every 3 year) and the Mazhilis (107 members with the 5-year term). The Senate is composed of 32 elected members who are elected by maslikhats (2 from each 14 provinces and the cities of republican significance – Almaty and Astana) and 15 other members appointed by the President of Kazakhstan. In the Mazhilis 98 members are elected in a closed-list proportional representation system and 9 others are elected by the APK.

Nowadays, development process of Kazakhstan's parliamentary system could be evaluated in two stages– before and after 2007. In 2007, in order to strengthen the political parties in the country, the governmental authorities conducted constitutional reform which

promoted the introduction of the 7% threshold for each political party volunteered to take part in the race for seats in the Mazhilis. Combining with the amendments in the Law on Political Parties in 2002, which increased the number of registered members of a political party from 3000 to 50000, there was a reduction in the number of political parties which could be competitors for the leading party Nur Otan. As a result of the elections in 1999, there were elected representatives of 4 political parties, namely, Otan, Civil, Agrarian and Communist parties in the Mazhilis. In 2004, the number of political parties increased to 5 in Mazhilis, namely, Otan, Asar, Ak zhol, Democratic parties and electoral bloc AIST. In 2007 only Nur Otan reached the 7% threshold, which was against the expectations of the policy makers in the world because of the restriction in the legislation that not less than two parties would take part in the Parliament. Due to this restriction, the 2009 amendments to the Law on Elections required that the party with the second-highest vote would automatically receive seats in the Mazhilis, even if it failed to reach the 7% threshold. After the election in 2012, three political parties had the opportunity to take part in the Parliament by reaching above 7% threshold, namely, Nur Otan (80.99%), Ak Zhol (7.47%) and Communist Party (7.19%). In this way, Kazakhstan committed itself to legislative reforms, especially in the area of politics.

In conclusion, Kazakhstan has been taking serious steps in the process of improving its legislative and political system. After the last presidential election, with the leadership of Nazarbayev, the state would continue to carry out the process of democratization.

Politics, Foreign Affairs and Security

- After reelection the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev announced five strategic tasks for the country, namely, to increase the share of Kazakhstan's middle class, to develop a single domestic market, to fight with corruption, to create new jobs through implementation of the industrial program and business development, to strengthen the nation's unity.
- According to the public relations office of the Anzali Free Zone, Iran would host the 15th Summit of the Chambers of commerce of the Caspian Sea littoral countries. Over 100 heads and members of the Caspian Sea littoral countries' Chambers of commerce would attend the Summit. The last Summit was held in Astrakhan in 2014.
- Afghan President Ashraf Ghani postponed his official visit to India due to heavy clashes in the north of the country between government forces and militants of the radical movement Taliban.
- Russia has recently completed the process of ratifying a protocol of the Treaty on Creation of a Nuclear-Free Zone in Central Asia, which was signed between Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in 2006. In addition, the USA started the process of ratification the Treaty at the level of Senate.
- According to the Ministry of Defense, Tajikistan has created the second line of defense along its common border with Afghanistan. Additional forces have been deployed along the Tajik-Afghan border in the Khatlon Province.
- Eighteen officers from the State Border Service of Turkmenistan completed an OSCE Border Management and Threat Assessment training course, held at the Imamnazar Border Crossing Point on the Turkmen-Afghan border. The course was designed to enhance the ca-

pacities of personnel from the Border Service in collecting information as well as conducting searches, surveillance, and threat assessments at the border.

Economy, Finance and Energy

- During the meeting with participation of heads of oil and gas ministries of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Turkey and EU representatives hosted in Ashgabat, the parties adopted the energy declaration and decided to create a joint working group on developing the cooperation in the energy sphere.
- State Oil Company of Azerbaijan (SOCAR) announced its interest in purchasing France's Total petrol stations in Turkey. SOCAR was interested in acquiring Total's 5.3% share after the company would leave the Turkish market.
- The President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev stated that the resumption of oil production at the Kashagan oil field in the Kazakh sector of the Caspian Sea would cost more than \$2 billion. Kazakhstan planned to resume oil production at Kashagan oil field in late 2015, or in 2016.
- According to the official report, the Russian energy company Gazprom was hit with an 86% drop in its profits. The company announced a net profit of \$3.1 billion for 2014 down from \$22 billion. Gazprom was also hit by a debt and pricing dispute which meant it cut its gas supplies to Ukraine. Gas sales to Europe and other countries declined by 8.5%.
- The Deputy Head of the Oil and Gas Commission of the Parliament of Iraq Kurdish Regional Government Dilshad Saban stated that the amount of oil that would be exported to Turkey would increase and reach 625 thousand barrels per day by June, 2015.
- Ministry of Finance reported that Ukraine's foreign debt rose 8.3% by \$2.4 billion in March and totaled

\$32.8 billion. The total amount of the direct government debt equaled \$54.1 billion. Ukraine's debt growth indicators in March are comparable with data for the whole 2014 year.

- During the first International Forum on Oil and Gas Exploration held in Astana, First Deputy Minister of Energy Uzakbai Karabalin confirmed the desire of the state to begin implementation of the biggest oil project Eurasia in the Caspian Basin with the total cost of \$500 billion. The Eurasian Oil Exploration Project would be launched in the field between Astrakhan Province (Russia) and Atyrau Province (Kazakhstan).

Society and Culture

- The European Union would allocate €70 million to Ukraine to build protective structures in the zone of the Chernobyl nuclear plant. The construction of a new safe confinement, known as New Shelter, at the Chernobyl nuclear plant estimated at €1.425 billion.
- An OSCE-supported training seminar on the development of sustainable fisheries in the Aral Sea region was held in Kyzylorda. The two-day event was organized by the OSCE Program Office in Astana in partnership with the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea Executive Directorate in Kazakhstan.
- United Rocket and Space Corporation stated that Russia would create world's first rocket and missile engine manufacturing holding, which would bring together Russian manufacturers of engines for rockets and missiles. The structure of the holding and its head-enterprise were not defined yet.
- 9 wagons with humanitarian aid were transported from Kazakhstan to Tajikistan. Another 24 wagons with humanitarian aid were on their way. The total amount of the humanitarian aid, which were sent from Kazakhstan to Tajikistan to provide assistance during the spring floods worth more than \$2.7 million.