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Isaacs, R. (2009). *Between informal and formal politics : neopatrimonialism and party development in post-Soviet Kazakhstan*. PhD thesis. Oxford Brookes University.

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**Between Informal and Formal Politics: Neopatrimonialism and Party  
Development in post-Soviet Kazakhstan**

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A Ph.D. thesis submitted to the School of Social Sciences and Law Oxford  
Brookes University, in partial fulfilment of the award of Doctor of Philosophy

March 2009

98,218 Words

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## **Abstract**

This study is concerned with exploring the relationship between informal forms of political behaviour and relations and the development of formal institutions in post-Soviet Central Asian states as a way to explain the development of authoritarianism in the region. It moves the debate on from current scholarship which places primacy on either formal or informal politics in explaining modern political development in Central Asia, by examining the relationship between the two. It utilises Kazakhstan as a case study by assessing how the neopatrimonial system evident in the country has influenced and shaped the development of political parties. It investigates how personalism of political office, patronage and patron-client networks and factional elite conflict have influenced and shaped the institutional constraints affecting party development (institutional choice, electoral design and party law), the type of parties emerging (organisation, ideology and membership) and parties' relationship with society. The analysis reveals that informal forms of political relations and behaviour are affecting the ability of political parties to function effectively in terms of their relationship to democratisation. Due to the use of informal preference and selective application of formal rules and the personalisation of the political system around the president, Nursultan Nazarbaev, only pro-presidential parties dominate the party system at the expense of other political opinions. Simultaneously, political parties and formal institutional rules assist in legitimising informal political behaviour and relations, providing elite cohesion and formal vehicles for high level elites to protect and extend their political and economic interests. The study reveals how the complex relationship between informal and formal politics in post-Soviet states is assisting in creating durable authoritarian regimes.

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## **A Note on Transliteration**

Transliterations from the Russian language are based on the Library Congress standard. Transliteration of Kazakh words are also transliterated from their Russian counterparts – except where the word itself derives from Kazakh, such as *Akim* (governor) and *Nur Otan* (Light of Fatherland).

## **Acknowledgements**

Completing this study would not have been possible had it not been for the financial, academic and personal support of many people. I was fortunate enough, and grateful, to have received a three year studentship from Oxford Brookes University which enabled me to pursue this research in the first instance. I am also indebted to the Leverhulme Trust who funded the fieldwork component of the study, without which I would have been unable to have undertaken the extensive period of fieldwork during 2006-2007. I am particularly thankful to Jean Cater of the Trust who provided superb support throughout the 12 month period. I am sincerely grateful to my Director of Studies, Dr. Sarah Whitmore and my supervisor Professor Gary Browning, whose academic guidance, council and endless reading of my work ensured I remained on the right track and without their advice the research would not have reached fruition. I am also beholden to the support of many colleagues in the School of Social Science and Law at Oxford Brookes, as well as the Graduate Office who have fielded numerous enquires and undertaken many administrative tasks in relation to this research.

I am greatly indebted to many local and international residents in Kazakhstan who shared their time and insights with me. Particular thanks go to Kerim Nuriyev and Maria Kulibayev who worked tirelessly for me as research assistants and translators. I also very much appreciated the help of Roza Nurtazina and Zhaksylyk Sabitov from the Eurasian National University in Astana – who assisted with the research and arranging interviews with political elites in the Capital. I am grateful to the many staff and administrators of the many political parties I spoke with for their help in securing interviews. I am indebted to all the politicians and analysts who participated in the interviews for taking time out of their busy lives to answer my many questions and share their understanding of politics in Kazakhstan. A special note of thanks goes to Adil Nurmakov and Marina Sabitova who were very generous in giving up their time for me and who provided great insight into the region. I am grateful to the staff at the Kazakh National Library and the Academy of Science Library for their assistance in locating publications and newspapers. Heartfelt thanks must go to many of the staff at the Department of Politics at the Kazakhstan Institute for Management and Strategic Research which hosted me during my stay in Kazakhstan. I am particularly, indebted to Nargis Kassenova and Togzhan Kassenova who provided



scholarly inspiration, friendship and wonderful hospitality in equal measure and generously took the time to read various draft chapters of this work. Thanks are also due to Aldiyar Autalipov, Donnacha Ó Beacháin, Jonathan Pixler, Joanna Lillis and Ustina Markus for research assistance, logistical support and friendship. I would also like to mention the hospitality and friendship of Stuart, Imme and Andrej who often provided a welcome relief from the attrition of data collection. I am also indebted to Lynda Howard who was kind enough to read earlier draft versions of this work.

I am forever indebted to my family, Peter, Gwen, Bettina and Gino who have offered inexhaustible support and encouragement for which I am wholly thankful. Above all, this work would never have been completed without the patience, kindness, love and support of Charlotte. She has travelled this journey with me and shared the burden of its undertaking. She has been more supportive than I could have ever asked for and for that I am eternally grateful.

## List of Abbreviations and Key Terms

***Akim*** – Local Governor

***Akimat*** – Local Government

**ANK** - Assembly of Peoples of Kazakhstan

**APK** - Agrarian Party of Kazakhstan

**ASIP** - Association of Sociologists and Political Scientists

**CEC** – Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan

**CPSU** - Communist Party of the Soviet Union

**DPK** - Democratic Party of Kazakhstan - *Demokraticheskaiia partiia Kazakhstana*

**DVK** - Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan - *Demokraticheskii Vybor Kazakhstana*

**ENRC** - Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation

**FJK** – For a Just Kazakhstan – *Za Spravedlivyi Kazakhstan*

**GPK** - Civil Party of Kazakhstan - *Grazhdanskaia partiia*

**KISEP** – Kazakhstan Institute for Socio-Economic Information and Forecasting

**KNPK** - Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan – *Kommunisticheskaiia Narodnaia Partiia Kazakhstana*

**KPK** - Communist Party of Kazakhstan - *Kommunisticheskaiia partiia Kazakhstan*

**NAP** - New Azerbaijan Party

**NKK** - Party of Peoples Congress of Kazakhstan - *Partiia narodnyi kongress Kazakhstana*

**OSCE** - Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

**OSDP** - All-National Social Democratic Party – *Obshchnatsional'noi sotsial-demokraticheskoi partii*

***Mazhilis*** – Kazakhstan's Parliament

***Maslikhat*** – Local Council

**MMM** - Mixed-Member Majoritarianism

***Oblast*** – Region



***Obshchestvennoi palate*** - The Public Chamber

**PNEK** - Party of Peoples Unity of Kazakhstan - *Partiia Narodnogo edinstvo Kazakhstana*

**PPO** – Primary Party Organisation

**PVK** - Party of the Revival of Kazakhstan - *Partii Vozrozhdeniia Kazakhstana*

***Raion*** – District

**RNPK** – Republican Peoples Party of Kazakhstan - *Respublikanskaia narodnaia partiia Kazakhstana*

**SNEK** - Union of Peoples Unity of Kazakhstan - *Soyuz narodnoi edinstvo Kazakhstana*

**SPK** - Socialist Party of Kazakhstan - *Sotsialisticheskoi partii Kazakhstana*

**TsST** - The Centre of Social Technologies

***Vlast'*** – Power (but has far wider connotations entailing the administration of the authorities and the president)

## Glossary of Main Political Parties

**Agrarian Party of Kazakhstan (APK):** The Party was founded in January 1999 and was led by *Mazhilis* deputy Roman Madinov. It was considered very pro-presidential and it was suggested the party was a creation of the presidential administration. The party was close to the Civil Party of Kazakhstan (GPK) and formed a bloc with them prior to the 2004 parliamentary election. The party won 11 seats. In 2006 the party merged with *Otan* to become part of *Nur Otan*. The party supported the candidacy of Nursultan Nazarbaev in the 2005 presidential election.

***Ak Zhol (Bright Path):*** The party was founded in 2002 by Bolat Abilov, Alikhan Baimenov and Oraz Zhandosov, all former members of the government who had split from the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan movement. The party views itself as in ‘constructive opposition’ to the government. However, after winning only one seat in the 2004 parliamentary election the party split. Abilov and Zhandosov wanted to take a harder line against the government and the president, so they formed *Nagiz Ak Zhol* in 2005. Alikhan Baimenov remains party chairman and sat in parliament during the 2004-07 convocation. The party briefly merged with *Adilet* prior to the 2007 parliamentary election but split soon after. Baimenov also ran for president in the 2005 presidential election.

***Alga (Forward):*** The party was established in 2005 after DVK was declared liquidated by the Ministry of Justice. It is considered an outright opposition party and has yet to receive registration with the Ministry of Justice after two attempts. Therefore, the party cannot compete in parliamentary elections. It is alleged that the party is financially backed by Mukhtar Abliazov, one of the key figures behind DVK. The party’s chairman was Assylbek Kozhakhmetov but he resigned in 2007 after a dispute within the Political Council as to whether they should merge with OSDP and *Nagiz Ak Zhol* to fight the 2007 parliamentary election. The party is now chaired by Vladimir Kozlov. *Alga* backed the For a Just Kazakhstan (ZSK) candidate, Zharmakhan Tuiakbai in the 2005 presidential election.

**All National Social Democratic Party (OSDP):** The party was created by former speaker of the *Mazhilis*, Zharmakhan Tuiakbai in 2006 after he had run for the

presidency against President Nazarbaev. The party is considered to be a radical opposition party in the sense that it opposes the government and the president outright. It shares a close relationship with those elites from *Nagiz Ak Zhol/Azat* and briefly merged with them prior to the 2007 parliamentary election. The two parties went their separate ways after the election.

***Asar*** (Together): The party was established by the president's daughter Dariga Nazarbaeva in 2003. Considered pro-presidential, the party won four seats at the 2004 parliamentary election. The party merged with *Otan* in 2006 to become part of *Nur Otan*. The party supported the candidacy of Nursultan Nazarbaev in the 2005 presidential election.

***Atameken*** (Motherland): The party was created by its chairman, Yerzhan Dosmukhamedov in 2006, a former close associate of the president's second son-in-law, Timur Kulibaev. Initially the party was considered to have been a loyal pro-presidential party, but the party soon revealed itself to be in strong opposition to the government and the president. The party has never received registration and Dosmukhamedov resides abroad and has vowed not to return to Kazakhstan until his party and *Alga* are registered.

***Azat*** (Freedom): The party was established by Bolat Abilov in 2008 in an attempt to re-brand *Nagiz Ak Zhol*. The party is considered to be in opposition to the government and the president but it did receive official registration.

**Civil Party of Kazakhstan (GPK)**: The party was established in 1998 and was led by Azat Peruashev and was alleged to have been funded by Aleksandr Mashkevich and the Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation (ENRC). It was a strictly pro-presidential party and won 11 seats in the 1999 parliamentary election and then 11 seats (with APK) in the 2004 election. In 2006 the party merged with *Otan* to become part of *Nur Otan*. The party supported the candidacy of Nursultan Nazarbaev in the 2005 presidential election.

**The Communist Party of Kazakhstan (KPK)**: The successor to the communist era Kazakhstan Communist Party. The party formed in 1991 at the last congress of the



old party where Nazarbaev established the Socialist Party of Kazakhstan and disbanded the old communist party. The party was not permitted to officially register until 1994 having been banned by Nazarbaev. Former Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Serikbolsyn Abdil'din, became leader in 1996. The party has provided the most consistent form of opposition to Nazarbaev throughout the post-Soviet period. The party won two seats in the 1995 parliamentary election, three in the 1999 election, none in the 2004 election and did not participate in the 2007 election. Abdil'din stood as the main opposition candidate in the 1999 presidential election. The party supported ZSK candidate, Zharmakhan Tuiakbai, in the 2005 presidential election.

**Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan (KNPK):** The party was established in 2004 after a split in the KPK. The party is led by Vladislav Kosarev and takes a much softer line towards the presidential administration. The party competed in the 2004 and 2007 election but did not win any seats. The KNPK put forward its own candidate, Erasyl Abylkasymov, for the 2005 presidential election.

**Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DVK):** The party formed in 2002 from the movement Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan. The movement featured many high profile government officials and businesspersons moving into opposition against the president and the government. Their complaint was the lack of democratic progress in the country and the preference given to members of the president's family in the auctioning of former state enterprises. Despite being convicted of tax evasion and placed in prison, former *Akim* of Pavlodar *Oblast* Galymzhan Zhakiianov was anointed party chair. The party participated in the 2004 parliamentary election in alliance with the KPK, but managed only 3.4 percent of the vote and no seats. The party was liquidated by the Ministry of Justice in 2004 for violating articles of the Law on Political Parties. The party claimed it was politically motivated and reconstituted itself as *Alga* in 2005.

**Democratic Party of Kazakhstan 'Adilet' (Justice):** The party was established in 2004 by Maksut Narikbaev, a former class mate of the president. It was originally called Democratic Party of Kazakhstan, but added *Adilet* to its name in 2006 to reflect the fact the party consists of many figures from the legal profession. It is a

loyal presidential party and participated in the 2004 parliamentary election gaining one constituency seat. In the 2007 election the party merged with *Ak Zhol*, but failed to win any seats. The two parties split after the election. The party also supported the candidacy of Nazarbaev in the 2005 presidential election.

**For a Just Kazakhstan (ZSK):** Was a political movement founded in 2005 to back the candidacy of former speaker of the *Mazhilis*, Zharmakhan Tuiakbai, for the 2005 presidential election. The movement featured all the political parties considered outright opposition in Kazakhstan; *Nagiz Ak Zhol*, KPK and *Alga*. It was an effort to replicate the political solidarity of the opposition in Ukraine which had brought about the Orange Revolution.

**Kazakhstan Social Democratic Party ‘Auyl’ (Village):** The party was established in 2000 by the prominent political figure and former deputy in the *Mazhilis* Gani Kaliev. The party considers itself a ‘loyal opposition’ party to the president, but critics argue it is another pro-presidential party. It participated in the 2004 and 2007 election but did not win any seats. The party supported the candidacy of Nazarbaev in the 2005 presidential election.

***Nagiz Ak Zhol* (True Bright Path):** *Nagiz Ak Zhol* was established in 2005 after Bolat Abilov, Oraz Zhandosov, Altynbek Sarsenbaev and Tulegen Zhukeev split from *Ak Zhol*. They disagreed with Alikhan Baimenov, the other co-chairman of the party, over the extent to which the party should cooperate with the presidential administration. The party was considered an outright opposition party despite the close ties many of the party elite had with the president and government. The party merged with OSDP to fight the 2007 parliamentary election, but after having failed to win any seats they both went their separate ways. The party was disbanded in 2008 and reformed itself as *Azat* with Abilov taking the main role as party leader and Zhukeev as General Secretary. The party supported the candidacy of Zharmakhan Tuiakbai in the 2005 presidential election.

***Nur Otan* (Light of Fatherland):** Established in 2006 by the submergence of *Asar*, GPK and APK into *Otan*. *Nur Otan* is the main party in the country; it is led by the president, Nursultan Nazarbaev. Many government officials and regional governors



are among its membership. The party won 88 percent of the vote in the 2007 parliamentary election and all the seats in parliament.

**Party of Patriots:** The party was founded by its chairman, Gain Kasymov, in 2000, a former deputy of the *Mazhilis* and member of the government. The party is pro-presidential. It participated in the 2004 and 2007 parliamentary elections but did not win any seats. Kasymov stood in the 1999 presidential election, but the party supported the candidacy of Nazarbaev in 2005.

**Republican Peoples Party of Kazakhstan (RNPK)** Founded in 1998 and led by former Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin after he openly criticised the president. Despite Kazhegeldin moving abroad when criminal charges were brought against him, the party was registered with the Ministry of Justice and still competed in the 1999 parliamentary election winning one seat. The party never achieved re-registration when changes were made to the Law on Political Parties in 2002 and was thus unable to participate in further elections. After its dissolution, many members of the party joined with DVK, *Alga* and OSDP.

**Rukhaniyat (Spirituality):** Established in 2003 after its predecessor, the Party of the Revival of Kazakhstan was unable to obtain registration under the new Law on Political Parties. It is led by Altynshash Dzhaganova, a high profile figure in arts and literary circles and former deputy of the *Mazhilis*. The party strongly supports the president and participated in both the 2004 and 2007 parliamentary elections but did not win any seats. The party supported the candidacy of Nazarbaev in the 2005 presidential election.

## **Introduction: In-between the Informal and Formal - Introducing Political Party Development in Kazakhstan**

There has been a considerable volume of literature on the political and economic trajectories of former Soviet Republics. In the first ten years after the collapse of the Soviet Union the dominant conceptual and theoretical approach applied by academics to the newly formed regimes and states was democratisation theory. The assumption underlying this literature was that these fifteen new states were embarking on a transition en route for democracy. The specialist and casual observer would have noted in recent years that many post-Soviet republics have transited not towards democracy but instead, varying degrees of authoritarianism. In particular, in the southern republics of the former Soviet Union, the Central Asian states, the democratisation literature has proven abstract and inoperative, as the five republics have remained resolutely authoritarian.<sup>1</sup> Instead, scholars pursuing an intellectual and empirical discourse in the security strategic and resource rich region have characterised political development via two approaches. In the first instance, and quite understandably, there was a trend in perceiving political and economic developments through the lens of the formal structural remnants of the Soviet period. Attention was paid to the national and ethnic identities created and engineered by the Soviet Union during their seventy-year dominance. Analysts and researchers tried to understand and unpack the nation-building efforts of the post-Soviet regimes and the impact such labours would have upon ethnic minorities within each Republic. Underlying this approach is the implicit assumption the Soviet Union was successful in transforming and modernising Central Asia and was able to create nations and identities where none previously existed. Conversely, other scholars have worked from the counter assumption that the Soviet Union failed in transforming Central Asia. It is argued that rather than being wiped out by socialist modernisation, pre-Soviet and even pre-Tsarist forms of political and social identity resisted and survived the Soviet period, and moreover, the Soviet political system was adapted to fit the traditional peculiarities of the region. Rather than constructed Soviet national identities, it is the informal institutions and organisations of tribes and clans which

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<sup>1</sup> Neil Melvin, *Authoritarian Pathways in Central Asia: A Comparison of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan*, in Yaacov Roi' (ed.), *Democracy and Pluralism in Muslim Eurasia* (London, Frank Cass, 2004), pp. 119-142.



are the dominant political and social forces in the region. The clan approach has received wide attention in recent years and as such this focus on informal politics is well judged. Understanding informal politics in Central Asia is key to explaining formal political development.

Formal structural aspects of state building and democracy have been overlooked. Political party development in particular has been ignored and maybe with good reason considering the failure of any observable transition towards democracy. A great quantity of analysis has explored political parties in post-communist Eastern Europe and many of the former Soviet states but political parties in Central Asia have rarely been considered. While avoiding analysis of party development may seem well-reasoned in light of the informal nature of politics in the region it does not address why political parties have persisted. Political agents have been expedient in constructing and building political parties – they remain a constant and at times ever changing feature of the political landscape in Central Asia. There has, however, been no explanation of the factors affecting party development. We do not know anything concerning the nature of the relationship between the informal politics that arguably dominates the region and political parties as well as other institutions (elections, constitutions etc.). Collectively political scientists have not addressed the interaction and influence between formal institutions and the informal political behaviour and relations evident in post-Soviet Central Asia (patron-client relations, factional elite conflict, etc.). As this work will set out using the case of Kazakhstan, while informal political behaviour and relations are a crucial factor influencing the development of political institutions like political parties, parties and other formal institutions provide an institutional context within which informal political behaviour and relations occur. They provide elite stability, institutions to protect elite interests and are a source of public legitimacy for leaders seeking to consolidate power. The relationship between informal and formal politics has contributed to the durability of authoritarianism in the region. It is considered that political parties are indispensable to democracy but parties are also central to the embedding of authoritarianism, and recent scholarly work is beginning to highlight this.<sup>2</sup> This work, therefore, seeks to

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<sup>2</sup> See Jason Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in the Age of Democratisation* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007) and Ellen Lust-Okar, *Structuring Conflict in the Arab World: Incumbents, opponents and institutions* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005).

explore the relationship between informal and formal politics in Central Asia by examining the influence and interaction between informal political relations and behaviour and party development in Kazakhstan and the extent to which it has contributed towards authoritarian consolidation. Therefore, the case of Kazakh party development provides scholars and observers with an opportunity to explore several questions and puzzles important to political development in Central Asia and other post-Soviet states. It is these which form the central research questions of this study:

*What is the nature of the relationship between informal neopatrimonial political relations and behaviour, in the shape of personalism, patron-client relations and factional inter-elite conflict and the formal institutional development of political parties? In particular, how has this relationship influenced the formal structural constraints of parties in Kazakhstan, the type of parties that are emerging and their connection with wider society? And what has been the impact of this relationship on overall political development?*

The case of Kazakhstan will illustrate how the informal and formal intersect and impact upon political development in Central Asia and in many other former Soviet states. The informality of much political behaviour and relations (such as patronage, patron-client relations and factional elite conflict) and its entwining with formal institutions resembles a form of neopatrimonialism.<sup>3</sup> For this study, neopatrimonialism will be used as a framework through which to examine the relationship between the informal and formal. It will be used as a lens through which the central argument of this thesis is played out. In the case of Kazakhstan, the president, Nursultan Nazarbaev, relied on informal forms of political behaviour and relations, derived from a fusion between traditional forms of politics and communist forms of patrimonialism, as a way to consolidate his power vis-à-vis the specific uncertain context of political transition. This form of rule saw the emergence of competition between informal elite groups who fought over resources while the president arbitrated the conflict. Consequently, the president was strategically placed to design the institutional rules of the game concerning the institutional set up of the country, electoral competition and party activity and organisation. As a result, a

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<sup>3</sup> A definition of neopatrimonialism is provided towards the end of this chapter and the framework is explicitly covered in Chapter One.



dominant party emerged to provide the president with elite stability, while laws were purposely designed for loyal officials to selectively apply and interpret formal rules in favour of the president's party, *Nur Otan*. From this institutional context emerged parties which were personalistic and clientelistic. They are generally co-opted by informal elite groups<sup>4</sup> and founded on the basis of securing economic and political interests or a form of public office. Parties also lack coherent ideologies. Parties form units to protect or extend interests as part of the process of elite competition. As a consequence their relationship with wider society is characterised by disconnection and passiveness with parties' relationship with citizens being defined by homogeneity of opinion concerning the centrality of Nazarbaev's leadership, a discourse spread by *Nur Otan* who are able to do so with ease due to the informal preference they receive from administrative resources. Loyal clients read ambiguous laws in a way that advantages *Nur Otan* at the expense of other political voices, thus helping secure Nazarbaev's power. Subsequently, parties are weak at interest articulation and representation, two qualities required from parties in a well functioning democratic system. The way informal political behaviour and relations exist alongside political parties, means many of the fundamentals for democracy are absent. Instead parties, particularly in the shape of *Nur Otan*, provide elite stability for an authoritarian leadership and formal units for informal elite conflict while also functioning as a legitimising vehicle for the president's consolidation of power (in both an informal and formal sense). In the case of party development in Kazakhstan, the relationship between informal politics and formal political development is complex. While informal political behaviour and relations impact significantly on political parties' ability to carry out the functions required of them in a democratic environment, parties as formal institutions, alongside formal rules, aid the consolidation of authoritarian power and provide a neat context within which informal politics can become legitimised.

This chapter sets out the purpose of this research and its place in the literature on Central Asia and the former Soviet Union. It begins by exploring the limitations of democratisation literature in analysing Central Asian post-Soviet development. This is followed by an examination of the two approaches central to scholarly discourse in

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<sup>4</sup> Equally, ambitious influential individuals are also behind political parties.



the field: nationalism and traditionalism. I then explore more closely, understandings of institutions and organisations in both the formal and informal sense within Central Asian politics that are both positioned on one of the two forms of approaches. I argue the underlying assumptions of these two approaches are counter opposed. In exploring the terrain between the informal and formal in Central Asia, I argue a midway analytical approach is necessary to unpack party development in Kazakhstan. As such, a theoretical framework is required to account for informal context (the neo-patrimonial regime) and formal party development (party institutional constraints, type and citizen linkages). Lastly, I address definitional issues associated with the research and provide a brief guide of the chapters to follow.

### **1. Utility of Democratisation Literature in Central Asia**

The fall of communism across Eastern Europe in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 provided political scientists with the nearest approximation of a real-life laboratory to apply theories of how states transit from authoritarianism to democracy. These theories, originally constructed to conceptualise the transitions in Latin America and Southern Europe in the 1970s, have been useful to varying degrees in analysing the processes of transition in Eastern Europe.<sup>5</sup> The democratisation literature can be divided into two categories: the functionalist and genetic schools. However, as will be demonstrated here, the applicability of democratisation literature with regard to most of the former Republics of the Soviet Union is questionable.

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<sup>5</sup> Guillermo O'Donnell & Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, vol. 4, (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1986); Philippe Schmitter & Terry Lynn Karl, The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidologists: How Far to the East Should They Attempt to Go?, in A. Brown (ed), *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002) pp. 459-467; J. J. Linz & A. Stepan, (1996) *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1996); Petr Kopecky & Cas Mudde, 'What has Eastern Europe taught us about the democratisation literature (and vice versa)?' *European Journal of Political Research*, 37, 2000, 517-539.

### 1.1 The Functionalist vs. Genetic Schools

The premise of the functionalist school is that 'modern democracy is a product of the capitalist process.'<sup>6</sup> Advocates of the functionalist approach suggest democracy can be explained by its correlation with capitalist development, a growing and affluent middle class and modernisation<sup>7</sup> and is summed up in the famous maxim 'no bourgeoisie, no democracy'.<sup>8</sup> While the focus on social prerequisites has been contested by some,<sup>9</sup> it is now regarded as a common assumption amongst most social scientists that 'the level of economic development seems to have considerable impact not so much on whether democracy exists as on its sustainability overtime'.<sup>10</sup>

The genetic approach rather than focusing on correlation emphasises causation.<sup>11</sup> The approach is rooted in the work of Dankwart Rustow. Rejecting the concept of social preconditions (with the exception of the necessity of national unity), and the need for a minimal level of economic development, Rustow instead argued that choice and political agency are significant causal drivers for democracy. Democracy for Rustow is the result of struggles between factions of elites who eventually make a conscious and deliberate decision 'to accept the existence of diversity in unity and, to that end, institutionalise some crucial aspect of democratic procedure'.<sup>12</sup> Other proponents of the approach have argued that outside forces like civil society and political parties did not become primarily involved until the later stages of the transition process.<sup>13</sup> Despite some scholars believing there has been a tendency to

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (New York: Harper & Row, 1950)

<sup>7</sup> Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Aylesbury, Peregrine Books, 1966); Seymour M Lipset, *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (New York, Double Day, 1960).

<sup>8</sup> Barrington Moore, *Social Origins*, p. 418.

<sup>9</sup> Larry Diamond, Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered, in G. Marks & L. Diamond (eds.) *Re-examining Democracy: Essays in Honour of Seymour Martin Lipset*, (California, Sage, 1992) pp. 93-139; Peter Berger, The Uncertain Triumph of Capitalism, *Journal of Democracy*, 3 (3) 7-17, 1992.

<sup>10</sup> Valerie Bunce, Comparative democratisation: Big and Bounded Generalisations, *Comparative Political Studies*, 33 (6/7), 2000 p.706.

<sup>11</sup> James Hughes, Transition models and democratisation in Russia, in M. Bowker and C. Ross (eds.) *Russia After the Cold War* (London, Longman, 2000), p.26.

<sup>12</sup> Dankwart Rustow, Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model, *Comparative Politics*, April 1970, p. 355.

<sup>13</sup> Guillermo O'Donnell & Philippe Schmitter, *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule*; Samuel P. Huntington, 'How Countries Democratise', *Political Science Quarterly* 106(4), 1991, pp. 579-616.



assume too much freedom on the part of transition actors,<sup>14</sup> the role of political elites as a causal variable within democratic transitions has become an accepted assumption.<sup>15</sup>

### *1.2 Problems of post-Communism and the Democratisation Literature*

Theories of democratisation have been utilised by scholars to understand transitions occurring in the former Soviet Union.<sup>16</sup> However, there are problems associated with applying such theories to this context. First, on a comparative level it is questionable as to whether it is appropriate to apply theories of democratisation, designed originally for the Latin American and Southern European transitions, to post-communist states. Phillippe Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl took the assumption that 'provided events or processes satisfy certain definitional requirements, their occurrence in Eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union should be considered, at least initially, analogous to events or processes happening elsewhere'.<sup>17</sup> However, others disagreed suggesting the differences and contexts of the two regions' transitions make them incompatible for comparative research.<sup>18</sup>

Second, the democratisation literature relies heavily on democracy as an end-point. While a genetic approach makes it possible to ascertain that a state is not transiting towards democracy, it does not assist in elaborating where states not proceeding towards democracy are transiting to, only that they are generically authoritarian.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, the democratisation approach has received well-deserved criticism. For example, Michael McFaul has argued that post-communist transitions 'are so different from the third wave democratic transitions in the 1970s and 1980s that they should not even be grouped under the same rubric. Instead, the collapse of

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<sup>14</sup> Geoffrey Pridham, *Comparative Reflections on Democratisation in East-Central Europe: A Model of Post-Communist Transformation?* in G. Pridham & A. Agh (eds.), *Prospects for Democratic Consolidation in East-Central Europe* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> Bunce, *Comparative democratisation*.

<sup>16</sup> J. J. Linz & A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, and Richard D. Anderson, M. Steven Fish, Stephen E. Hanson and Philip G. Roeder, *Post Communism and the Theory of Democracy*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press).

<sup>17</sup> Phillippe Schmitter & Terry Lynn Karl, *The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidologists*, p. 462.

<sup>18</sup> Valerie Bunce, *Should Transitologists be Grounded?* In A. Brown (ed) *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001) pp. 468-480.

<sup>19</sup> J. J. Linz & A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition*.



Communism triggered a fourth wave to democracy and dictatorship.’<sup>20</sup> The ‘transition paradigm’ has been further maligned by suggestions that it should be discarded as its assumptions are no longer necessarily valid.<sup>21</sup>

Third, the idea present in some of the transition literature that a path to democratisation is built on linear clear-cut stages has proved evidently unfounded.<sup>22</sup> For instance, states like Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have produced quite erratic patterns. Kazakhstan’s post-Soviet development began fairly democratically before retreating to an authoritarian model post 1995. Kyrgyzstan, again, began the transition as a fairly open democratic state, obtaining the title of Central Asia’s “Island of Democracy”<sup>23</sup> before reverting back to authoritarian type only to be reversed due to events in 2005 when a popular uprising saw the overthrow of the president, Askar Akaev. This inconsistent pattern has led scholars over the last few years to be chasing events rather than obtaining the opportunity to build on theory.<sup>24</sup>

Considering this, it is purposeful to ask how productive the democratisation approach is when analysing political developments in post-Soviet Central Asia. The succinct answer is, not a great deal. If applied directly, the different schools of democratisation provide problematic answers. In terms of a functional approach, Central Asia was one of the most isolated and least developed regions of the former Soviet Union.<sup>25</sup> During Perestroika, it had a reputation of conservatism and was seen by some as Moscow’s greatest challenge in terms of modernisation.<sup>26</sup> Society based around tribal and clan culture, was and continues to be, to a certain extent, considered economically weak. Being the most underdeveloped, least-urbanised, and least educated region of the former Soviet states, it is no surprise it has been the least

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<sup>20</sup> Michael McFaul, The Fourth Wave of Democracy and Dictatorship: Non-cooperative Transitions in the Post-Communist World, *World Politics*, 54, 2002 p. 213.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Carothers, The End of The Transition Paradigm, *Journal of Democracy*, 13, (5), 2002, pp. 6-9.

<sup>22</sup> In particular, the work of Dankwart Rustow is built on the idea of specific stages towards democracy. Linz and Stepan also argue that there are three stages or conditions that need to be met before a democracy can be consolidated.

<sup>23</sup> John Anderson, *Kyrgyzstan: Central Asia’s Island of Democracy?* (Amsterdam, Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999).

<sup>24</sup> Henry Hale, *Democracy and Revolution in the Post-Communist World: From Chasing Events to Building Theory*, Ponars Working Paper, April 2005, [www.csis.org/ruseura/ponars](http://www.csis.org/ruseura/ponars)

<sup>25</sup> Jerry F. Hough, *Democratisation and Revolution in the USSR, 1985-1991* (Washington D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 1995).

<sup>26</sup> William Fierman, The Soviet Transformation of Central Asia in W. Fierman (ed.) *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation*, (Boulder, Westview, 1991), pp. 11-35.

democratic of all former Soviet states. Clearly, from a functionalist perspective, the main obstacle to democracy in Central Asia is the lack of modernisation. This may be the case; however, what does it really tell us about post-Soviet political developments in Central Asia. That it is authoritarian? That the region has a long way to go in terms of economic development? It does not provide a deeper understanding of the processes within Central Asian post-Soviet development. A genetic approach also provides difficulties. Rustow's minimal condition of 'national unity' would mean a fairly ethnically homogenous state like Turkmenistan would be ripe for democratic fruition. This has not been the case as Turkmenistan has a reputation as the most authoritarian of all former Soviet states. A genetic approach also presumes too much power on the part of elites and political actors, as well as containing the assumption that actors are utilitarian power seekers. The genetic approach does not explain how elites and political actors may have got into a position of advantage in the first instance.

## **2. Theoretical Approaches to Politics and Society in Central Asia**

Without having the democratisation literature to rely on how have scholars conceptualised the post-Soviet developments of Central Asia? What have been their major focuses?

Approaches to post-Soviet political developments in Central Asia have fixed largely, although not exclusively, on two areas. First, they have focused on the strength of the structures and identities that are remnants of, or creations of, the Soviet Union. Studies have explored Soviet constructed national and ethnic identities and have assessed the potentiality for ethnic conflict and the creation of new national regimes. This has highlighted the complex and diffuse ethnic composition of states and has assessed the role of political agency in nation building efforts with regards to how the presidents and governments constructed cohesive nations where there had been none previously.<sup>27</sup> Second, studies have stressed the strength of tribal pre-Soviet

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<sup>27</sup> Ronald Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, (California, Stanford University Press, 1993); Sharam Akbarzadeh, Nation-Building in Uzbekistan, *Central Asian Survey*, 15 (1), 1996, pp. 23-32; Sharam Akbarzadeh, National Identity and Political Legitimacy in Turkmenistan, *Nationalities Papers*, 27 (2), 1999, pp. 271-290; Ian Bremmer & Cory Welt, The Trouble with Democracy in Kazakhstan, *Central Asian Survey*, 15 (2), 1996, pp.



identities and structures. The assertion is that with independence from the Soviet Union tribal, clan, regional and Islamic identities, long suppressed under the Soviet Union, have returned to shape the direction of the post-communist transition. In addition, by the turn of the millennium it became apparent the Central Asian governments' efforts of engendering national and civic identities were secondary to those of traditional identities.<sup>28</sup> Scholars, thus, took the premise that factors of pre-Russian colonialism, those characterised by tribal political alliances, clan based social organisation and Islam, were as important, if not more so than any Soviet nationalist or ethnic legacy.<sup>29</sup> It is suggested Soviet structures were implanted on top of existing traditional structures and it is the latter that takes precedent in terms of what drives political processes.<sup>30</sup>

This section explores these two different approaches. Following this, I examine the two main approaches and works that have investigated the role of institutions in post-Soviet Central Asia. That is the precedence given to informal institutions (clans, tribes and kinship) and those of formal Soviet institutional legacies (*Oblast* [regional] and *Raion* [district] identities). Both approaches to institutions are in themselves an extension of the wider polarised debate within Central Asian literature. I argue that a midway approach that assesses the relationship between informal politics and formal institutional development is necessary to provide a better understanding of Central Asian post-Soviet political development. The study of political parties in Kazakhstan provides us with an empirical and analytical case to explore this relationship between informal and formal politics.

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179-199; Shirin Akiner, *Melting Pot, Salad Bowl – Cauldron? Manipulation and Mobilisation of Ethnic and Religious Identities in Central Asia*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 20 (2), 1997 pp. 362-398; Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*, (London, I. B. Tauris, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> See Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006) and Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics and Beyond: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan* (Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2004).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Jan Ake Dellenbrant, *The Central Asian Challenge: Soviet Decision Making on Regional Stability under Brezhnev and Gorbachev*, *Journal of Communist Studies*, 4 (1), pp. 55-77, 1988; Gregory Gleason, *Fealty and Loyalty: Informal Authority Structures in Soviet Asia*, *Soviet Studies*, 43 (4), 1991, pp. 613-628; Mehrdad Hagheyeghi, *Islam and Politics in Central Asia*, (London, Palgrave MacMillan, 1995); Dilip Hiro, *Between Marx and Muhammad: The Changing Face of Central Asia*, (Glasgow, Harper & Collins, 1994); Rafis Abazov, *Central Asia's Conflicting Legacy and Ethnic Policies: Revisiting a Crisis Zone of the Former USSR*, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 5 (2), 1999, pp. 62-90; Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, (New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2002); Kathleen Collins, *Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia*, *Journal of Democracy*, 13 (3), 2002, pp. 137-152; Kathleen Collins, *The Logic of Clan Politics: Evidence From the Central Asian Trajectories*, *World Politics*, Vol. 56, No. 2, January 2004, pp. 224-261.



## 2.1 Nationalism and Ethnicity Approach

Following an agency-focused approach Central Asian specialists have explored how presidents and elites have tried to shape the emerging nationhood of their respective states. This had led also to an emphasis on the ethnic diversity of the region and the potentiality for conflict. Due to the unique Soviet legacy in Central Asia, the five Central Asian States had no prior experience of modern nation statehood. The Soviet government had been able to institutionalise national identities by means of creating independent republics in Central Asia where there had been none before.<sup>31</sup> While the newly independent regimes drew on Soviet bureaucratic structures they also underpinned their independence by elaborating nationalising policies in favour of the hegemonic titular nationality.<sup>32</sup> The Central Asian regimes 'engaged in nation-building not only as a response from below by the indigenous intelligentsias, but also as a means of fortifying the integrity of the titular nations themselves'.<sup>33</sup> Elites used nation-building tools, such as the changing of street names and the constitutional primacy of the titular language, to secure political and cultural dominance of the titular nationality. It has been argued that governing elites turned to the tools of nationalism 'as the new ideology to fill the vacuum left behind by the Soviet collapse'.<sup>34</sup> In Uzbekistan, for example, 'after the Soviet collapse, once the Uzbek elite were left to their own devices, it sought to justify its existence in the language of nationalism'.<sup>35</sup> Such an emphasis on national identities and nation building is understandable as the shift from Soviet republic to independent national state was the most visible transition in Central Asia.

Another major aspect of the nationalism literature within Central Asian post-Soviet scholarship has been the influence of the titular regimes nationalising policies on minority ethnic groups in each state. In particular, Shirin Akiner has alluded to the heightening of inter-ethnic tensions within each state creating a sense of 'first' and

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<sup>31</sup> Regarding the Soviet institutionalisation of nationalities, see Oliver Roy, *The New Central Asia*, and Rogers Brubaker, *Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutional Account*, *Theory and Society*, 23, 1994, pp. 47-78.

<sup>32</sup> Annette Bohr, *The Central Asian States as Nationalising Regimes*, in G. Smith (ed.) *Nation-Building in post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 139-166.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p. 141.

<sup>34</sup> S. Akbarzadeh, *National Identity*, p. 286.

<sup>35</sup> S. Akbarzadeh, *Nation-Building in Uzbekistan*, *Central Asian Survey*, 15 (1), 1996, p. 31.



'second-class' citizens and 'under such circumstances dormant hostilities could be activated suddenly by some otherwise trivial incident'.<sup>36</sup> Akiner uses the case of the inter-ethnic riots of 1989 in the Ferghana region of Uzbekistan, between ethnic Uzbeks and Meshketian Turks, to highlight her point. In this instance the riots, which lasted two weeks, were sparked by the price of strawberries. Her description of Central Asia being a 'melting pot, salad bowl – cauldron' was intended to highlight that the ethnic displacement left by the artificial drawing of boundaries could create the potential for conflict in the region.<sup>37</sup> Warnings of the potentiality of conflict based on ethnic and national lines were a feature of analysis before the collapse of the Soviet Union too. James Critchlow argued that the stagnant economy, the purges of the native elites in the 1980s and the growing population were all factors that threatened stability in the region.<sup>38</sup> After the collapse, conflict and instability were seen as almost inevitable. Prospective destabilisation in the region was depicted as a potential gathering storm.<sup>39</sup> Understandably, predictions of conflict along nationalist and ethnic lines have been a reoccurring theme in the literature. Events in the 1980s, the ethnic displacement within each state, instability at the borders of the region, in particular Afghanistan, and the way nationalism and ethnicity played a important role in some of the other Soviet successor states all pointed to the strong possibility of conflict and instability engulfing the region.<sup>40</sup> However, with the exception of Tajikistan, the Central Asian states have remained remarkably stable.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Shirin Akiner, *Melting Pot, Salad Bowl*, p. 392.

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Sabol, The Creation of Central Asia: The 1924 National Delimitation, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1995, pp. 225-241.

<sup>38</sup> James Critchlow, Corruption, Nationalism, and the Native Elites in Central Asia, *Journal of Communist Studies*, 4 (2), 1988 pp. 143-161.

<sup>39</sup> Boris Rumer, A Gathering Storm, *Orbis*, Vol. 37, 1993.

<sup>40</sup> There were several events that occurred throughout the region in the 1980s. The first was the riots in the Kazakh capital of the time Almaty. In 1986 the central government replaced the First Secretary in the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic, Dinmukhamed Kunaev, with a Russian Gennadii V. Kobin. The riots were an expression of public disapproval at the decision. Further events took place in Ferghana in Uzbekistan in June 1989 and Osh in Kyrgyzstan in June 1990. These were both considered ethnic conflicts. For further reading see Sam Nunn, Barnett Rubin and Nancy Lubin, *Calming the Ferghana Valley: Development and Dialogue in the Heart of Central Asia* (New York, The Century Foundation Press, 1999).

<sup>41</sup> Soon after Independence civil war broke out in Tajikistan. It lasted from 1992 until a peace accord was signed in 1997. The cause of conflict was not, as first predicted, Islam or nationalism but a crude form of regional and clan politics in which divided elites were staking a claim on power. See Barnett. R Rubin, The Fragmentation of Tajikistan, *Survival*, vol. 34 (4), 1993, pp. 71-91.



The lack of emphasis on traditional identities within this approach can be posited as a reason for stability in the region as pre-Soviet traditional identities remained a constant during the Soviet period and were there to occupy the ideological vacuum left by communist disintegration. In emphasising the institutionalisation of national identities, based on Soviet delimitations, the role of traditional identities has been underplayed. Much literature has shown that rather than Central Asian people being transformed by Soviet domination, Central Asian society was, in fact, resistant to the particular efforts of Soviet modernisation. As a result the assumption that national identities, based on the defined national units set by the Bolsheviks nationalities policy, had taken a hold in Central Asia led to the misconception that a violent rejection of the Soviet legacy in a nationalist or ethnic form would occur.<sup>42</sup>

## 2.2 Traditionalism

The view of post-Soviet politics through the lens of nationalism and ethnicity is based upon the assumption the Soviet Union was successful in institutionalising the idea of nation states built on dominant ethnic titular populations. The opposite is that the Soviet Union failed in transforming Central Asia.<sup>43</sup> Instead, despite the Soviet leadership's attempt to eradicate them, traditional customs, art forms and dress persisted.<sup>44</sup> Arguably, this was due to the Soviet administration being simply superimposed over the existing local power structure, in which local elites occupied leading positions.<sup>45</sup> These local authority structures were based on traditionalist tribal and clan networks particular to the region.<sup>46</sup> What emerged, therefore, was a parallel system of covert autonomy 'through which Central Asian elites and masses circumvented the Soviet system'.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, the Soviets were unable to establish loyalty to the class and stratification of Soviet society as it never overcame the complexities of traditional Central Asian society. This engendered 'strong

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<sup>42</sup> See Dilip Hiro, *Between Marx and Muhammad* and Ahmed Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism?* (London, Zed Books, 1994).

<sup>43</sup> William Fierman, *Soviet Transformation*.

<sup>44</sup> Edward Allworth, The focus of literature, in E. Allworth (ed.), *Central Asia 120 Years of Russian Rule*, (Durham, Duke University, 1989) pp. 397-433.

<sup>45</sup> Gleason, Gregory, Uzbekistan: The Politics of National Independence, in I. Bremer & R. Taras (eds.) *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 53.

<sup>46</sup> Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics*.

<sup>47</sup> Pauline Jones Luong, Politics in the Periphery: Competing Views of Central Asian States and Societies, in Pauline Jones Luong (ed.) *The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies from Soviet Rule to Independence* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 9.



informal structures and factionalism and patron-client networks which flourished in the party'.<sup>48</sup>

The supposition underlying this approach is that traditional forms of pre-Soviet and pre-Tsarist politics and society persist in modern day Central Asia and are important causal factors driving political development. In particular, the concepts of tribal and clan affiliation are believed to be the dominant forms of social identity, subsequently impacting on the nature and dynamics of the political regimes in the region. Accordingly, a traditional framework has been used to explain the issue of corruption during the Brezhnev era.<sup>49</sup> While for others traditional structures explain post-Soviet regime transition divergence and convergence in the region.<sup>50</sup>

The above illustrates how there are two major approaches to post-Soviet Central Asia based on opposing assumptions. There is a nationalist/ethnic perspective founded on the conjecture the Soviet Union was successful in transforming Central Asia during its period of hegemony, institutionalising ethnic groupings into new nation states. It was the nationalising process the presidents of the newly independent republics turned to in legitimising their rule by using the language, tools and symbols of nationalism and ethnic distinctiveness as nation and state building frameworks. Therefore, the extent to which a president such as Nazarbaev in Kazakhstan has been able to hold together a cohesive, strong and unified state has been a marker of their political success and a qualification for legitimising their power. Conversely, the traditional approach is rooted in the postulation the Soviet Union failed in transforming Central Asia. As such, traditional forms of political and social structures like tribes, clans and Islam survived Soviet encroachment and returned in the era of independence to be used by political elites to influence political outcomes. In addition, the political leaders of the region have had to carefully consider the importance and impact of informal forms of politics in constructing and legitimising their power. It is these two approaches which have fashioned our understanding of political institutions in Central Asia.

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<sup>48</sup> Rafis Abazov, *Central Asia's Conflicting Legacy and Ethnic Policies*.

<sup>49</sup> See, James Critchlow, *Corruption, Nationalism, and the Native Elites in Central Asia*; W. Fierman (ed.) *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation*, (Boulder, Westview, 1991) and Shirin Akiner, 'The Struggle For Identity' in J. Snyder (ed.) *After Empire: The Emerging Geopolitics of Central Asia*, (Washington, National Defense University Press, 1995).

<sup>50</sup> Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics*.

### 3. Political Institutions in Central Asia

While much literature on Central Asia has focused on the role of agency,<sup>51</sup> recent studies have recognised the importance of exploring political structures, in particular institutions and organisations.<sup>52</sup> These studies have been influenced by the two opposing approaches noted above. On the one hand there is a focus on the role of formal Soviet institutional legacies and on the other, informal organisations such as clans and tribes take centre of attention.

#### 3.1 Soviet Institutional legacies

Soviet institutional legacies are evident across Central Asia and to an extent can be found in many other former Soviet republics.<sup>53</sup> One particularly noticeable case is institutionalised Soviet regional identities. Pauline Jones Luong has explored the impact of this formal Soviet institutional legacy on elite preferences during transition and the role they played in affecting the establishment of new electoral systems in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. As Jones Luong argues, the negotiating process in the establishment of new electoral systems in Kazakhstan was characterised and influenced by elite power perceptions which stem from 'the predominance of regional political identities among political leaders and activists within each state as a result of their shared Soviet institutional legacy'.<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, 'the entire process by which Central Asian states adopted new political institutions indicated the enduring strength of the Soviet system'.<sup>55</sup> It confirmed that 'far from a decisive break with the past, the design of electoral systems in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan clearly demonstrates that these Central

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<sup>51</sup> See Timothy Colton and Robert Tucker, *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership*, (Boulder, Westview Press, 1995), R. Taras (ed.) *Post-Communist Presidents*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), Sally N. Cummings (ed.) *Power and Change in Central Asia*, (London, Routledge, 2002), and Eugene Huskey, 'The Rise of Contested Politics in Central Asia: Elections in Kyrgyzstan, 1989-90', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 47, (5), 1995, pp. 813-834.

<sup>52</sup> See in particular, Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics*, and Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>53</sup> See Ken Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>54</sup> Jones Luong, *Institutional Change*, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* p. 2.



Asian states continued to embrace certain features of a shared Soviet legacy following independence'.<sup>56</sup>

Soviet institutional legacies are evident across Central Asia. This is of course unsurprising. The five Central Asian states had no prior experience of modern nation statehood or modern political institutions other than those created by the Soviet regime. Formal Soviet institutional legacies are apparent and ubiquitous across the region. In the first instance, the form of presidential rule and hierarchical institutionalisation of power is directly linked to the distribution of power under communist party rule. In particular it has been argued that the presidency of Uzbekistan 'draws heavily on the experience of the Soviet period'.<sup>57</sup> The powers afforded to many of the former First Secretaries of the regional communist parties, reflects the amount of power that has been installed in those same figures that became the first presidents of the newly independent states of Central Asia.

Soviet institutional legacy is evident in the reconstitution of political elites. There is overwhelming evidence the near-Soviet past is crucial in 'determining the make-up and fortunes of the post-Soviet elite'.<sup>58</sup> There is a debate within the study of elite transition in the former Soviet Union between those who argue an acquisition class emerged in the early transition and those who suggest that in fact any new capitalist elite is still drawn from the former Soviet *nomenklatura*.<sup>59</sup> The case of Central Asia suggests continuity as opposed to change, as the transition from Soviet to nationalist elite was 'mainly a matter of changing the names on the office doors'.<sup>60</sup>

Unsurprisingly political parties are also a major source of Soviet institutional continuity. In Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, both regional communist parties undertook a rapid and smooth transition into two new 'democratic' parties, the

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* p. 253.

<sup>57</sup> Roger D Kangas, Uzbekistan: Evolving Authoritarianism, *Current History*, April, 1994, pp. 178-182.

<sup>58</sup> Jonathan Murphy, Illusory Transition? Elite Reconstitution in Kazakhstan, 1989-2002, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 4, June 2006, p. 552.

<sup>59</sup> See David Lane and Cameron Ross, *The Transition from Communism to Capitalism: Ruling Elites from Gorbachev to Yeltsin* (London, Macmillan, 1999) and Olga Kryshstanovskaya and Stephen White, From Soviet Nomenklatura to Russian Elite, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 48, 5, 1996, pp. 711 – 733.

<sup>60</sup> Gregory Gleason, Uzbekistan: The Politics of National Independence' in I. Bremer & R. Taras (eds.) *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 118.



Democratic Party of Turkmenistan and the Peoples Democratic Party (Uzbekistan). The internal structures and composition of the parties remained static although with less of the power and influence of their predecessors. Even in Kazakhstan where the party was originally banned by President Nursultan Nazarbaev, the idea of a monolithic party in the structure and shape of the communist party has been the type of party Nazarbaev has aspired to create since independence. This was finally achieved at the end of 2006 when Nazarbaev was able to consolidate many of the pro-presidential parties into *Nur Otan* (Light of Fatherland).

The implication of Jones Luong's research is that it indicates emphasis should be placed on formal institutions, especially with her focus on electoral design. For Jones Luong a formal institutional perspective (that of the structural legacies of Soviet rule) explain authoritarian consolidation in the region. The emphasis on formal institutions has received criticisms, however, from those who profess a clan perspective towards Central Asian political development.

### *3.2 Clan Politics*

The clan perspective has gained a great amount of currency in recent years.<sup>61</sup> By the turn of the millennium it became apparent Central Asian governments' efforts of engendering national and civic identities were secondary to those of clan and tribal identities. Scholars, thus, took the premise that pre-Russian history characterised by tribal political alliances and clan based social organisation were as important, if not more so than any soviet legacy. Kathleen Collins has criticised the formal institutional level approach, especially the work of Jones Luong, as in her opinion it leads to several faulty assumptions. Above all that regions are the equivalent to identities and maybe more importantly that the Soviets were successful in creating these regional identities. For Collins 'regions are not given any meaning, bonds, networks and staying power of an identity group'.<sup>62</sup> Clans, on the other hand, 'have an intrinsic meaning, identity, and legitimacy and cannot merely change their social constituency.'<sup>63</sup> A clan approach, therefore, works from the assumption the Soviet

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<sup>61</sup> See Collins, *Clan Politics*, Edward Schatz *Modern Clan Politics*, and Frederick Starr, *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers and Parliaments in Central Asia*, Silk Road Paper (Washington D.C., Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Studies Program, June 2006).

<sup>62</sup> Collins, *Clan Politics*, p. 58.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* p. 58.

Union was unsuccessful in eradicating traditional forms of identity and politics. Traditional relationships did not disappear or erode under Soviet dominance.<sup>64</sup>

Clans are not strictly defined as informal institutions and are seen more as informal organisations.<sup>65</sup> For the most eminent proponents of this approach 'clans are the critical informal organisations that we must conceptualise and theorise in order to understand politics in Central Asia'.<sup>66</sup> Clan, in this particular literature is defined roughly as 'an informal organisation comprising a network of individuals linked by kin and fictive kin identities'.<sup>67</sup> They are the dominant social structures and political players responsible for the transformation of the political system as opposed to formal institutions such as elected officials.<sup>68</sup> The evidence at times seems overwhelming for the case of the 'clan' approach to Central Asian politics. For example, in Kyrgyzstan the Northern clan groups (encompassing the Chui, Kemin, Talas, and Issyk-Kul regions) are seen as always historically competing with the Southern clan groups (the Osh, Naryn and Jalalabat regions) for political power.<sup>69</sup> Historically in Kazakhstan society has been divided into three social organisations the *Ulu Zhuz* (Great Hundred), *Orta Zhuz* (Middle Hundred) and *Kichi Zhuz* (Small Hundred). Western scholars have often referred to them as the three different 'hordes'.<sup>70</sup> These social divisions are seen as powerful and imperative in that authority resides mainly with figures from the Great and Middle *Zhuzs* and that membership of a *Zhuz* can determine the power and influence a person can have and on their career prospects. In Uzbekistan there are the Tashkent, Ferghana and Samarkand clans while in Tajikistan there are the Kohdjent, Pamiri and Dangharin clans. All are seen as important organisations that during both the Soviet and post-Soviet period have provided cadre and political leadership in both countries.

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<sup>64</sup> Schatz, *Op. cit.*, p. xxi.

<sup>65</sup> Below I will discuss in greater detail the definitional issues and problems associated with the term 'institution'.

<sup>66</sup> Collins, *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17.

<sup>68</sup> Nurbolat Masanov, *Kazakhskiaia Politicheskayia i intellektual'naia elita: Planovaia prinadlezhnost' i vnutrieniicheskoe sopernichestvo*, *Vestnik Evrazii*, 1 (2), 1996, pp. 46-61.

<sup>69</sup> Vladimir Khanin, Political Clans and Political Conflicts in Contemporary Kyrgyzstan, in Yaacov Roi' (ed.), *Democracy and Pluralism in Muslim Eurasia* (London, Frank Cass), pp. 215-232.

<sup>70</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs* (Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1987).



The developments and analytical insights provided by the 'clan' literature are useful, insightful and informative. However, there are four problems with the approach. First, while proponents suggest the approach is not inherently orientalist, as clan influence is subject to change and evolution, there is an implied emphasis on the linkage between autocracy and clans as well as the conflict potential of clan politics.<sup>71</sup> For scholars like Collins the negative aspects of clan politics can only be broken down by the institutionalisation of a Western style market economy. This implies a pre-determinant understanding of Central Asian development that views clans as a form of social organisation which is regressive and non-responsive to democratisation and that their continued influence leads only to autocracy unless, however, they are reconciled with Western methods of economic and social organisation. Second, there is an issue of definitional clarity. The term clan is sometimes aligned with other informal concepts such as, clientelism, corruption and patron-client relations. A distinction between these terms is not always forthcoming. Third, it is possible to observe a certain over-stating of the power of kinship based clan identities. Recent scholarship suggests that identities can be based on wider social networks as opposed to narrow clan kinship identities as the events of 2002 in Aksy, Kyrgyzstan indicate.<sup>72</sup> Or as in the case of Kazakhstan, the emergence of inter-elite cleavages are founded not on kin-based networks but socio-economic cleavages.<sup>73</sup> Finally, recent events in both Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan point to the restricted explanatory nature of a kinship-based clan perspective. The removal of members of Nazarbaev's family from political office and business interests, such as Rakhat Aliev, Dariga Nazarbaeva and Timur Kulibaev suggest that kinship ties are not as important as the clan perspective purports. Also, the smooth transition of power, following the death of Turkmen President Sapmurat Niiarov, which placed Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov as president was counter to claims that the death of Niiarov would send Turkmenistan spiralling into chaos and conflict between competing clans.

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<sup>71</sup> Vladimir Khanin, Political Clans and Political Conflicts in Contemporary Kyrgyzstan.

<sup>72</sup> Scott Radnitz, Networks, Localism and Mobilisation in Aksy, Kyrgyzstan, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 2005, pp. 405-424.

<sup>73</sup> Barbara Junisbai and Azamat Junisbai, The Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan: A Case Study in Economic Liberalization, Intra-elite Cleavage, and Political Opposition, *Demokratizatsiia*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2005



For these reasons, the conceptual approach of clan politics is not necessarily the most appropriate framework within which to explore party development in Kazakhstan. The clan literature is, however, crucial in bringing to the fore the relevance of informal politics in Central Asia and to a certain extent the rest of the former Soviet Union. So as not to be constrained by either focusing solely on informal politics or formal political institutions, this study on party development is intended to explore the relationship between informal political relations and behaviour and formal party development. Rather than using the clan perspective this work will use neopatrimonialism as a framework to unpack the informal nature of political behaviour and relations in Kazakhstan and how they sit with formal institutions, mainly parties.

#### **4. Political Parties in Kazakhstan and Central Asia**

Political parties in Central Asia, as formal institutions, represent the interaction between these two competing views of post-Soviet political development. With the case of political parties in Kazakhstan, we are witness to the role of formal institutions in authoritarian consolidation, yet we can also observe the influence of informal political behaviour and relations.

Political parties in Central Asia are important institutions for providing elite stabilisation. In Kazakhstan, as will be discussed in Chapter Four, Nazarbaev used the formation of a dominant pro-presidential party, *Nur Otan*, to mitigate against the fragmentation of elites. The party solidified his support and brought acquiescence from regional elites and independent actors. Parties were used in a similar fashion in Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In many of these cases it is possible to observe the direct influence of Soviet structural legacies. In Turkmenistan, for instance, the Communist Party was instantly turned into a new party, the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT), and essentially carried on as it had before, except its main function was to provide political support and elite stability to Niazov as he constructed his personal regime. Parties have also proven important formal institutions for disaffected elite groups. In the case of Kazakhstan, as Chapter Five will illustrate, they have been utilised by liberal professional elites and oligarchic groups as units to protect and extend their economic interests during

fraught processes of elite competition while at the same time providing them with a formal vehicle for contesting public office. In Kazakhstan parties have also proven useful formal institutions for providing the president with legitimacy. They are used to promote and support a message regarding the centrality of the president's leadership to the prosperity and success of the country. Similar observations can also be made about dominant parties in former Soviet states, particularly *Edinaia Rossiia*, Vladimir Putin's party in Russia.<sup>74</sup>

At the same time it possible to see the influence of informal politics.<sup>75</sup> Despite some of the problems associated with clan literature it is evident informal political behaviour and relations are important causal drivers in Central Asian politics. The impact of informal politics on political party development is particularly acute in Kazakhstan. As will be discussed in Chapters One and Three, informal political relations pervade Kazakhstan's political system. Nazarbaev's power, for example, is constructed upon a high degree of personalism, extensive patronage networks and a factional elite conflict<sup>76</sup> – all forms of informal political behaviour and relations. This influences party development in several ways. Large levels of personalism and Nazarbaev's extensive patronage network (the power to personally appoint state officials) ensures that formal laws concerning electoral competition and party activity are designed in such a way so they can be selectively interpreted by loyal clients to the president. This benefits the president's party *Nur Otan*. The overall context of informal politics in the system also results in most political parties being anchored on personalistic or clientelistic characteristics. As institutions they are centred on the interests of those elites leading the party, in turn lacking ideological distinction focusing instead on personality. The effect of the panoply of informal politics and relations is that parties' relationship with society is weak and

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<sup>74</sup> Other examples which will be discussed in the concluding chapter are Emomali Rakhmon's Peoples Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDPT), Heydar and Ilham Aliev's New Azerbaijan Party (NAP) and the President of Kyrgyzstan, Kurmanbek Bakiev's *Ak Zhol* (Bright Path).

<sup>75</sup> In many respects some of the Soviet institutional legacies are also informal practices. Creating a party in order to give former Communist Party members jobs – is to a certain extent an informal practice.

<sup>76</sup> What has emerged in Kazakhstan are various 'influence groups'. That is elite groups who have considerable access to financial and political resources and are attempting to influence the political process and the president in an effort to continue to secure and extend their interests. Influence groups are not necessarily based just on ancestral ties as suggested in the clan approach although it is one characteristic, but instead on elite economic cleavages. For further reading see, *Evraziiskii tseñtr politicheskikh issledovaniĭ i Agentstvo sotsial'nykh tekhnologii*, 'Gruppy vliyaniia vo vlastno-policheskoi sisteme Respubliki Kazakhstan', November 2005, Almaty and Moscow.



characterised by disconnection and passiveness. Parties lack strong interest articulation and representation abilities and are instead dominated by the informalism which protrudes into politics. These types of relationships between informal politics and formal party development can also be observed in other post-Soviet states, most notably the Central Asian states of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, but also Russia and Azerbaijan among others. The comparable value of exploring the relationship between the informal and formal in the case of Kazakhstan will be highlighted in the concluding chapter.

The relationship between informal political relations and behaviour and formal institutional development can be best understood by using a neopatrimonial framework for analysis. Since independence, the Central Asian states have developed neopatrimonial regimes where presidents maintain authority through personal authority and informal power networks are mobilised to capture the state (or state assets) in the interest of their members.<sup>77</sup> The role of the president is to balance the competing interests of these groups through a process where personnel selection and access to positions of power and resources within the state is dependent upon his patronage.<sup>78</sup> Personalism of power, extensive patron-client networks and factional elite conflict are the main planks of the informal and irrational elements in a neopatrimonial system. In Central Asia, and many former Soviet states, such aspects are evident. Simultaneously, formal rational aspects of politics exist. There are codified constitutions, rational delimitations of office, formal separation of powers, elections and political parties.

In summary, it is possible to observe the relationship between informal politics and political parties on two levels. In the first instance informal relations and behaviour influence the development of political parties' by the way informal interpretation of the formal rules impact upon the ability of parties other than pro-presidential parties to compete effectively and fairly. On the second level formal parties are used to

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<sup>77</sup> John Ishiyama, *Neopatrimonialism and the Prospects for Democratization in the Central Asian Republics*, in Sally N. Cummings (ed.) *Power and Change in Central Asia*, (London, Routledge, 2002) pp. 42-58; and Alisher Ilkhamov, Neopatrimonialism, Interest Groups and Patronage Networks: the impasses of the governance system in Uzbekistan, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 65-84.

<sup>78</sup> Spetsifika gosdarstvennoi kadrovoi politiki v Kazakhstane, *APR*, 24<sup>th</sup> December 2001, [[http://eurasia.org.ru/cgi-bin/archive/r-show-frame.pl?ka\\_press,2001,12,24](http://eurasia.org.ru/cgi-bin/archive/r-show-frame.pl?ka_press,2001,12,24)].

contextualise informal politics. Parties provide elite stability, vehicles for the purpose of informal conflict and legitimisation and support devices for ruling presidents.

As this research will demonstrate the relationship between informal politics and formal institutional development has been a factor contributing to authoritarian consolidation. Patronage and patron-client networks have assisted in providing loyalty to the personal leadership of the president, which in turn aids *Nur Otan* and marginalizes other political parties and actors. The parties emerging in this context are weak in the functional aspects of democratisation (interest articulation and representation) but strong on functions assisting in authoritarian durability (providing elite stability and political legitimacy).

Therefore, this work aims to explore the relationship between informal politics and the development of political parties in Kazakhstan within the context of neopatrimonialism. In doing so it will shed light on the entrenchment of authoritarianism and the role parties are playing in this process. This study builds on the analytical explorations of the formal institutional literature and clan literature by examining the relationship between neopatrimonial forms of informal political relations and behaviour (personalism, patron-client relations and factional inter-elite conflict), formal institutions (political parties) and authoritarian trajectories. What is different about this work is that it does not make the assumption that informal political relations and behaviour and formal institutions are necessarily separate entities. It will demonstrate they are inextricably linked. Political elites, based on their own clientelistic interest are appropriating formal political institutions for their own purposes. Authoritarianism, therefore, is not so much a result of clan organisations but the interplay between actors within those organisations; informal political relations and behaviour such as patron-client ties and factional inter-elite conflict and their relationship with formal institutions like political parties. As such this work undertakes a mid-way analytical approach that reflects not just on the relationship between informal politics and formal institutions in Kazakhstan but also how agency impacts and relates to party development. The role of Nazarbaev is important in that while being left a patrimonial legacy built to a certain extent on



informal clan ties under the tutelage of Soviet communism, he has continued to persist with and rely on such a political system.

The thesis will argue that while Kazakhstan's political system is a neopatrimonial system, consisting of a fusion between traditional politics, patrimonial communism and new constitutional-liberal institutions, Nazarbaev's reliance on informal relations and behaviour is specific to, and a response to, the uncertainties and dynamism of transition. Emerging from this early period of independence was a political system based on personalism and loyalty to the leader, underscored by an extensive patronage network where access to resources and jobs is dependent upon the patronage of the president. Emerging from this are various influential elite groups competing for access while the president arbitrates the conflict. From this position the president has been able to fashion and design the formal rules of the game to suit his political needs. Presidentialism, based on formal and informal power has weakened the emergence of other institutional centres of power. Party development has been managed from above by the establishment of a dominant party, virtual parties and the cooption of the opposition. The president has been able to design the institutional rules governing electoral competition and party genesis, organisation and activity on the expected basis his loyal network of clients will selectively apply and interpret the law in favour of parties he supports, namely *Nur Otan*; marginalising those parties considered oppositional. *Nur Otan* is also a key institution in providing elite stability to some of the informal factional elite conflict that has occurred. Out of this institutional context have emerged political parties which are personalistic and clientelistic. Whereas some political parties are used by individual political figures in an attempt to claim a form of public office, many others are vehicles for informal elite conflict and personal ambition. They are parties with limited memberships; organisations focused mainly on those elites who created them and without clear and succinct ideological distinctions. The emphasis is on the personality and popularity of the chairman or co-chairmen. Partly as a consequence, parties' relationship with society is characterised by disconnection and passiveness with citizen linkages founded on personalism and clientelism. Parties' relationship with society is defined by homogeneity of opinion regarding the centrality of the president's leadership for the future prosperity of the country. This is a discourse spread effectively by *Nur Otan* that is able to do so due to the informal preference and

advantage they receive from loyal clients of the president. Formally, *Nur Otan* assists in publicly legitimising the president's authoritarian rule. *Nur Otan*, therefore, has been an important factor in the consolidation of authoritarianism. The relationships existing between informal political relations and formal party development in the case of Kazakhstan is comparable to political relationships between informal forms of politics and formal institutional development in other former Soviet states.

As the clan approach is hindered by explanatory limitations and at times conceptual confusion, a different theoretical framework is required to analyse party development in Kazakhstan. Considering the nature of the informal political context, I propose a two-tiered theoretical framework. On the first level to theorise the context of informal competition for power and resources this work will use the theory of neo-patrimonialism. Within the neopatrimonial framework exists the more precise concepts of personalism (loyalty to the leader), patron-client relations (patronage) and factional inter-elite conflict. These concepts provide precision in terms of the way informal relations and behaviour influence and relate to party development. As such, the study will highlight instances where these different forms of informal politics affect and connect with formal party development. On the second level as the key aim of this study is to explore the relationship between informal politics and party development in terms of the formal institutional rules governing party genesis, organisation and activity, the types of parties emerging and parties' relationship with society, it is appropriate to use formal party theory related to these spheres of party development to assist in unpacking the analysis. Consequently a theoretical framework will be constructed out of these theoretical and conceptual tools to understand the formal aspects of party development in Kazakhstan. Before turning to address this framework in the following chapter definitional terms will be discussed.

## **5. Issues of Definition**

### *5.1 Institutions vs. Organisations*

Institution is a contested term. One of the most widely accepted definitions of institutions is that of 'the rules of the game in a society, or more formally,



*[institutions as – my italics]* the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction'.<sup>79</sup> Institutions, therefore, are seen to structure human interaction whether political, social or economic. This definition is seen to include both formal and informal rules.<sup>80</sup> However, a distinction is made between institutions and organisations and importantly for this study organisations are considered to be political bodies such as political parties, senates, unions and city councils.<sup>81</sup> This provides a very narrow conceptual understanding of an institution. Moreover, it underestimates the rules that govern party activity and party organisation. Such rules in the West are essential in holding political parties accountable in the democratic process. In Kazakhstan, parties and party members are also held to fixed rules whether by state law governing party activity or internal party charters which party members and leaderships are bounded to. That these rules and obligations are not always met and are influenced by informal phenomena does not mean they are any less institutions. How informal phenomena influence formal rules with regards to political parties is a component of this research. Therefore, this research is instead informed by a far wider definition of institution that takes into account political parties. Institutions are defined as 'the formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organisational structure of the polity and political economy'.<sup>82</sup>

## *5.2 Informal Institutions vs. Informal Phenomena*

While this broad definition of institutions is useful for encompassing both informal and formal institutions a distinction needs to be made between informal institutions and other informal phenomena. This work concerns informal phenomena, or more precisely those informal relations and behaviour which occur alongside formal institutional rules governing party and party member activity. Informal institutions are distinguished from formal institutions as the 'socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created communicated and enforced outside officially sanctioned

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<sup>79</sup> Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.6.

<sup>80</sup> See Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, Introduction in Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky (eds.) *Informal Institutions and Democracy*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006); John Carey, Parchment, Equilibria, and Institutions, *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 33, Nos. 6-7, pp. 735-61, and North, *Institutions*.

<sup>81</sup> See North, *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>82</sup> Peter Hall & Rosemary C.R. Taylor, 'Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms' *Political Studies*, XLIV, 1996, pp. 937.

channels'.<sup>83</sup> The emphasis is on enforcement outside of *officially* sanctioned channels. Formal institutions are linked to official channels of politics, economy and society. Helmke and Levitsky also distinguish between informal institutions and other informal practice and as such they envisage four distinctions that informal institutions should be separated from: weak institutions, informal behavioural irregularities, informal organisations and culture.<sup>84</sup> As Helmke and Levitsky suggest 'not all patterned behaviour is rule bound, or rooted in shared expectations about others behaviour'.<sup>85</sup> This needs to be taken under consideration when exploring the role of the informal in political development in Central Asia. Kathleen Collins avoided describing clans as informal institutions preferring to conceptualise them as informal organisations.<sup>86</sup> This is because of the unpredictable and at times opaque nature of informal politics in the post-Soviet era. Political identities like clan or tribal affiliation may not be fixed and therefore behaviour may not follow prescribed rules internal or external to official channels and are neither easy to locate or conceptualise as informal institutions.

It is important informal practices are distinguished from social norms, customs, traditions, and other informal patterns of behaviour.<sup>87</sup> Informal political practices are those instances of behaviour, patterned and non-patterned, outside of formal channels, in which official rules and formal institutions are circumvented, manipulated or ignored without significant sanction. Informal political practice can be guided by various motivations – self-maximisation, altruism and through the informal expectations of others. Due to their unpredictable and changing nature informal political practices are not institutions. Rather than use the term informal practices, utilised by Alena Ledeneva, this work will use the expression 'informal political relations and behaviour'.<sup>88</sup> Ledeneva's term was specifically used to describe instances of patterned exchange which occurred outside of formal channels. The broader term 'informal relations and behaviour' is preferred in this work due to its ability to bring under its scope wider informal phenomena that is not always

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<sup>83</sup> Helmke and Levitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 6-8.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

<sup>86</sup> Collins, *Clan Politics*, pp. 16-18 and 24-28.

<sup>87</sup> Alena V. Ledeneva, *How Russia Really Works: The Informal Practices that Shaped Post-Soviet Politics and Business* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2006).

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* p .3.



patterned and which does not necessarily involve clientelistic exchange. It will cover the personalism inherent in the political system which is not focused on formal rational office, the extensive nature of patron-client networks which operate at both an economic level (exchange) and a political level (positions within the state apparatus) and factional elite conflict. Importantly it will allow for an untangling of the relationship between informal politics and formal rules. Informal political relations and behaviour take the form of selective interpretations and informal preferencing of formal rules which are devised in a manner which allow for such behaviour.

### *5.3 Neopatrimonialism and Clientelism*

The relationship between informal politics and formal institutional development is best conceptualised as occurring within a neopatrimonial framework. A neopatrimonial system is defined as a system where ‘the chief executive maintains authority through personal patronage rather than through ideology or law.’<sup>89</sup> The right to rule is ascribed to a person rather than an office.<sup>90</sup> Inherent in a neopatrimonial system are forms of clientelism and patronage.<sup>91</sup> Clientelism is defined as ‘as the informal exchange of goods and services through an asymmetric, dyadic tie between patron and client, based not on ascription or affection but on need.’<sup>92</sup>

### *5.4 Party and Party Development*

Some scholars have applied a very strict definition of a political party. Anthony Downs created a popular definition in his work on party competition. He formulated that a party is a ‘team seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in

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<sup>89</sup> Ishiyama, *Op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Patronage and clientelism are inter-related concepts and practices – although there is a subtle distinction between the two. While denoting the same type of political exchange patronage concerns the distribution of public resources – goods, services and public jobs, where as clientelism is linked to wider political exchange where all public decision-making might become a token of exchange. This issue will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter. See Simona Piattoni, *Clientelism, Interests and Democratic Representation: The European Experience in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 4-8.

<sup>92</sup> Luis Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Luis Roniger and Ayshe Gunes-Ayate, eds., *Democracy, Clientelism, and Civil Society* (Boulder, CO, Lynne Rienner, 1994) cited in Collins, Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition* p. 38.

a duly constituted election.’<sup>93</sup> Implicit in this definition is a rational choice understanding that parties are goal oriented and seek to achieve their goals by the most rational means.<sup>94</sup> In the context of Kazakhstan a rational choice perspective has limited utility. Opposition elites who have left the patronage of the president stand minimal chances for controlling the governing apparatus. Their most rational path would be to remain within the patronage of the president to gain access to power structures. There are also other problematic definitions, for example, La Palombara and Weiner argue that there are four characteristics which define a party: continuity in organisation, permanent organisation, determination of leader to capture and hold decision-making power, and to seek public support.<sup>95</sup> The problem with such a definition is that it does not take into account change in political parties. For example, La Palombara and Weiner suggest a party should outlive the life span of its leader. If the party changes and evolves after the leader has passed from the political scene, say by changing its name, does it mean we cannot define it as a party? In the case of Kazakhstan this is an important issue. Political parties, as this work will demonstrate, are tied to political personalities and it is difficult to see how some will survive in their present form without their leader. Therefore, this definition is created from a Western-oriented understanding of political parties and does not take into account the great change and diversity of party organisations that are appearing across the world. Such an emergence of parties in different contexts has meant that scholars have had to review how they define and conceptualise parties.<sup>96</sup> Chapter Five will deal with this issue in greater detail in relation to Kazakhstan. Therefore, a more general definition of party will be used in this study. Using Alan Ware’s definition, this work understands a political party to be an ‘institution that (a) seeks influence in a state, often by attempting to occupy positions in government, and (b) usually consists of more than a single interest in the society and so to some degree attempts to ‘aggregate interests.’<sup>97</sup> The issue of aggregation of interests is important in the case of Kazakhstan’s political parties as to a great extent there is a

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<sup>93</sup> Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, (New York: Harper and Brothers) p. 25

<sup>94</sup> Joseph A. Schlesinger, On the Theory of Party Organization, *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 46, No. 2, May 1984, pp. 369-400.

<sup>95</sup> Joseph La Palombara and Myron Weiner, The Origin and Development of Political Parties, in <sup>95</sup> Joseph La Palombara and Myron Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1966) pp. 3-42.

<sup>96</sup> Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, Species of Political Parties: A New Typology, *Party Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2003.

<sup>97</sup> Alan Ware, *Political Parties and Political Systems* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996).



disconnection between parties and the citizens they are supposed to represent the interests of. This will be explored in Chapter Six.

The term party development is utilised ubiquitously in this study. But what is meant by party development? In general party development is linked to the role parties can play in democratic development and consolidation.<sup>98</sup> Party development is related to the extent that parties have developed their functional capacities in relation to democratic procedures. This includes parties becoming key actors in determining access to power via open elections through electoral participation and cabinet formation.<sup>99</sup> Such a functionalist perspective in relation to party development in Kazakhstan is problematic for two reasons. The most obvious is that Kazakhstan has not proceeded towards democracy yet there has been a linear progression of party development. And in connection with this, parties have developed roles which have been used to legitimise authoritarian regime development. Parties are playing roles within the Kazakh system different from those in an established or consolidating democracy where they are assisting in authoritarian durability. Therefore, there is a necessity to view party development not just in correlation with democratic development but also in terms of how party development can support and sustain authoritarian development. As such, this study utilises a more organisational development perspective.<sup>100</sup> It intends to explore how informal politics influences and is influenced by the different types of organisational forms and capacities of the parties emerging. This suggests that parties can take different forms and that their development is not dependent on just their functional obligations within a democratic polity. Conversely, it examines parties' organisations in terms of their capacity to exist and compete in elections in the first instance, membership building, the organisational role in terms of intra-elite conflict, personal ambition and parties' relationship with wider society. The overall perspective is that while of course parties are indispensable for democracy as they are in possession of crucial operational functions in that respect, they also have other developmental properties

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<sup>98</sup> Carrie Manning, Party-Building on the Heel of War: El Salvador, Bosnia, Kosovo and Mozambique, *Democratization*, Vol. 14, No. 2, April 2007, pp. 253-272; Grigorii V. Golosov, Who Survives? Party Origins, Organization Development and Electoral Performance in Post-Communist Russia, *Political Studies*, Vol. 46, 1998, pp. 511-543.

<sup>99</sup> Richard Katz (ed.), *Future of Party Government: Party Governments –European and American Experiences* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1987).

<sup>100</sup> Joseph A. Schlesinger, *Party Organisation*.

and effects. In turn, therefore, the shape their development takes can play a role in authoritarian consolidation.

## 6. Chapter Summary

Chapter One sets out the integrated framework for this study laying out both the theory of neopatrimonialism and formal aspects of party development. It explores the theoretical elements of patrimonialism and neopatrimonialism as well as patrimonial communism. It also lays out the theoretical background for understanding party development examining both classic party theory and theory related to the development of political parties in the former Soviet Union. Chapter Two describes the methodological underpinnings of the research explaining the research method and strategy applied to this work. Chapter Three provides political and historical context to the chapters that follow. It briefly assesses Kazakhstan Soviet history before covering the development of Kazakhstan's neopatrimonial system during the post-Soviet period. It examines how Nazarbaev turned to informal political relations and behaviour in an effort to see off some of the uncertainties of transition namely institutional competition and emerging pluralism. The chapter also outlines the emergence of powerful influential elite groups, the process of elite fragmentation and how the president combated fragmentation by centralising power most significantly in the shape of *Nur Otan*. Chapter Four begins a trilogy of chapters analysing the relationship between the informal political relations and behaviour evident in Kazakhstan's neopatrimonial system and the formal development of political parties. It explores the influence of informal politics on the formal institutional constraints concerning political parties. It examines how the presidency/president, rules of electoral competition and the law specific to party organisation and activity, were impacted by informal politics and preferencing by loyal clients of the president and in turn how parties played a formal role in providing elite stability. Chapter Five examines the type of parties to emerge from this institutional context. It explains how the parties to evolve are elite driven based on personalism and clientelism. They lack ideology, focusing instead on personality and display hegemonic behaviour. It is also explained that parties play a key role in providing a context for factional elite competition. Chapter Six examines the impact of the relationship between informal political and relations and formal party development in parties' relationship with



wider society. It illustrates that parties' relationship with society is defined by disconnection and passiveness with citizen linkages based on personalism and clientelism. It outlines the extent to which *Nur Otan* have been crucial in providing public legitimacy for Nazarbaev by fostering homogeneity of opinion concerning the centrality of his leadership. Outlining some tenuous links developing between some opposition parties and society the chapter concludes by stressing that these linkages are essentially very weak. The concluding chapter summarises the main argument of the thesis regarding the nature of the relationship between informal politics and formal party development, before then addressing some recent changes to informal politics and the formal institutional context. The chapter concludes by placing some of the key findings of the research in a broader comparative perspective with other former Soviet states, highlighting some wider trends occurring in the region on this topic. Overall the thesis contributes to our understanding of how informal politics affects the development of formal political institutions in post-transition authoritarian states not just in the former Soviet Union but across the globe. It illustrates how informal political relations and behaviour affect the quality of democratic processes and how formal institutions take on different forms of functionality due to their relationship with informal politics. In this sense, formal political institutions act to contextualise and legitimise informal political relations and behaviour.

## Chapter One

### Neopatrimonialism and Party Development: A Framework for Analysis

Usually in any geographic or temporal case studying party development would entail utilising various aspects of the diverse array of theories and concepts related to parties and party systems.<sup>1</sup> Party development in Kazakhstan and its relationship with informal political relations and behaviour, however, cannot be viewed through such a straightforward theoretical prism. A majority of theoretical works related to party and party system development were induced from empirical work concerned with the progress of political parties in Western advanced industrial societies. Not privy to the historical and geographical context of advanced party systems of Western Europe, party development in Kazakhstan is instead interrelated to the informal neopatrimonial structural context of its political system. The emergence of political parties in the post-Soviet era is connected to informal forms of political behaviour and relations inherent in the political system. Therefore, a theoretical approach to analysing and understanding party development in Kazakhstan requires a framework offering insight and assistance in both the informal and formal aspects of this phenomenon.

It is imperative, therefore, to apply a two tier integrated theoretical framework to deal adequately with the informal and formal. The first tier places the context of politics in Kazakhstan within the idea of neopatrimonialism. In a neopatrimonial context informal relations and behaviour thrive under the guise of loyalty and personalism to the ruler, patron-client ties and inter-elite factional conflict. These informal forms of relations and behaviour influence the operation of political institutions which to an extent are devised purposefully to be influenced by such informal politics. Simultaneously, the rational elements of neopatrimonialism and

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<sup>1</sup> M. Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties* (London, Macmillan, 1964 [1902]), Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, (Ontario: Batoche Books, 2001 [1915]), Maurice Duverger 'Political Parties: Their Organisation and Activity in the Modern State' (London, Methuen and Co Ltd, 1954), Sigmund Neumann (ed), *Modern Political Parties: Approaches to Comparative Politics*, Chicago, (Chicago University Press, 1956), Joseph La Palombara and Myron Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1966), S. M. Lipset and S. Rokkan, (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*, (New York, Free Press), Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (Essex, European Consortium for Political Research, 2005 [1976]) and Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organisation and Power* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press) 1988.



formal institutions (including political parties) play a role in containing and contextualising some of these informal forms of politics. The second tier of the framework is employed to investigate the formal attributes of party development by assessing the formal institutional constraints on political parties, the type of parties emerging and parties' linkages with society. Each aspect features micro attributes. In analysing formal institutional constraints on parties, institutional choice, electoral design and constitutional laws pertaining to political parties are examined. Party typology is evaluated by assessing party organisation, ideology and behavioural norms. Finally, disconnection and passiveness, personalistic and clientelistic linkages, homogeneity of public opinion and emerging cleavages are appraised in relation to parties' relationship with society. Each core attribute is related theoretically to classic literature on political parties and then more closely examined with theory generated from studies of post-communist parties and party systems. Through the amalgamation of the informal tier of neopatrimonialism and the formal tier of party development a more appropriate framework is composed to assess the relationship between informal politics and party development in Kazakhstan.

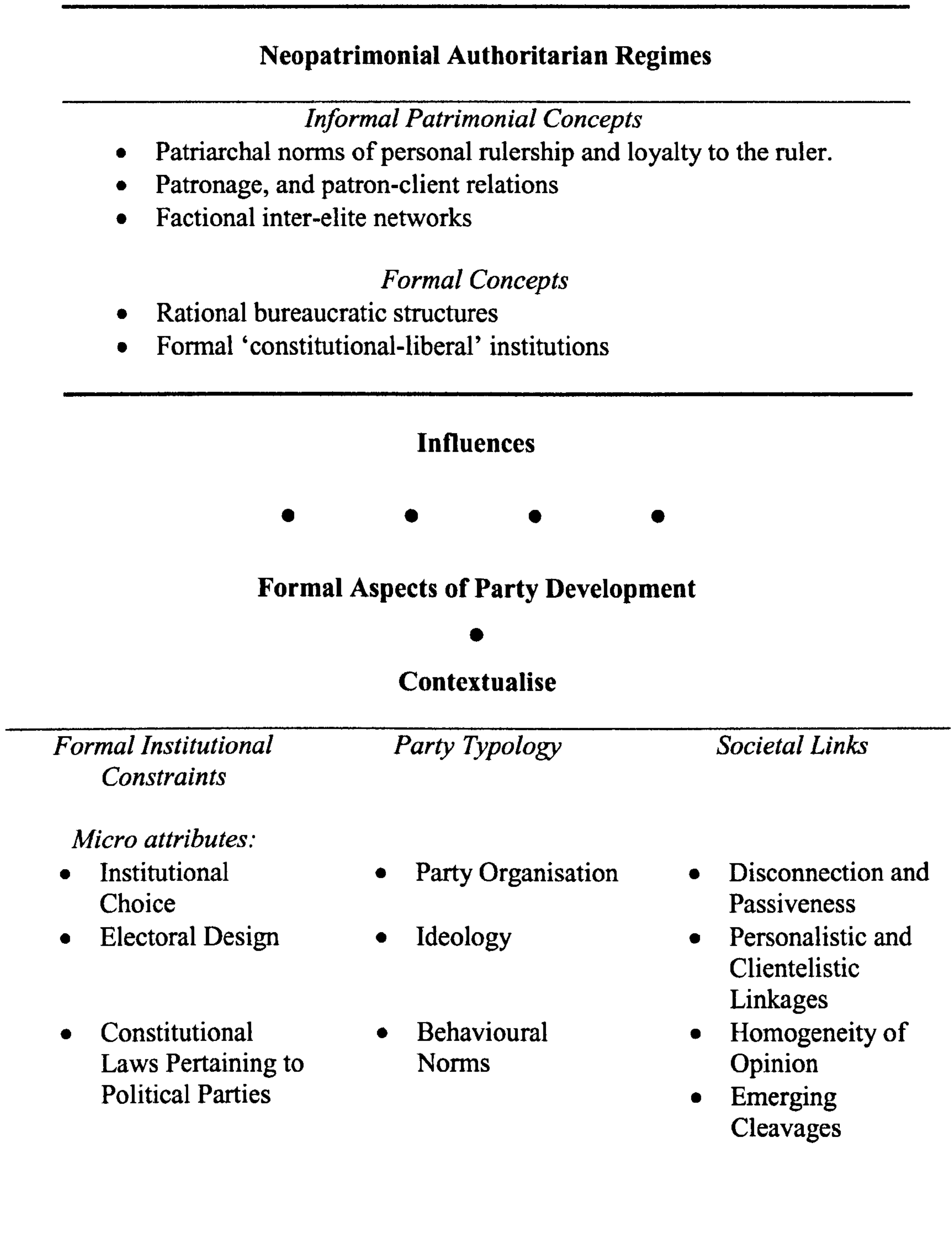
The framework functions by allowing the researcher to explore the relationship between the informal and formal at each of the three variables of party development and each related micro attribute as Figure 1.1 demonstrates. The informal components of the neopatrimonial regime, norms of personal rulership, patron-client relations and inter-elite faction conflict influence the micro attributes of formal party development. At the same time the formal components of neopatrimonial rule, as well as formal party development, provide a context within which informal politics occurs, becomes consolidated and legitimised. While the formal attributes of party development are for the most part the dependent variable, with the informal taking precedence, as alluded to above the relationship is not entirely one-way. Formal institutions, and in particular political parties, provide context for informal politics.

This chapter seeks to put forward this theoretical framework in greater detail utilising literature associated with both neopatrimonialism and formal party development. Based on the theoretical insights of prior scholarship the chapter begins by assessing patrimonialism and neopatrimonialism. Crucially this section also discusses the theoretical origins of neopatrimonialism, firstly explaining the role

of patrimonial communism but also arguing that the onus should be placed on the dynamics of transition rather than structural legacies for why informal politics has come to dominate post-Soviet politics in Kazakhstan and other post-Soviet states. Each major attribute of the formal tier is then tackled. In each case the micro attributes are analysed in relation to classic party theory and then with the more fitting theory generated from the experience of post-communist studies. The concluding remarks offer a series of tentative propositions based on the framework outlined here.



*Figure 1.1 Framework for Analysing Party Development in a Neopatrimonial Regime*



## 1. Neopatrimonialism

### 1.1 Patrimonialism

Patrimonialism was originally conceived as a Weberian typological concept of pre-bureaucratic patriarchal domination.<sup>2</sup> According to Weber, 'it is based not on the officials' commitment to an impersonal purpose and not on obedience to abstract norms, but on a strict personal loyalty.'<sup>3</sup> Personal rulership is central to patrimonial forms of rule and a ruler's legitimacy is based on personal subjugation guaranteed by traditional norms as the ruler 'endeavours to maximise their personal control.'<sup>4</sup> Patrimonial regime types are usually associated with those states viewed as resisting aspects of modernity.<sup>5</sup> Under this type of rule exists a bureaucracy infused by personal clientelist relations.<sup>6</sup> Resource allocation is dependent upon traditional bonds of loyalty and patronage and the political centre is organised around the division of spoils.<sup>7</sup> In Weberian logic this type of traditional rule is deeply distinct from rational legal bureaucracies. As Robin Theobald notes, the distinction is due to several fundamentals being absent. This includes the:

"Clearly defined spheres of competence that are subject to impersonal rules; the rational ordering of relations of superiority and inferiority; regular systems of appointment and promotion on the basis of free contract; technical training as regular requirement; and fixed salaries paid in money."<sup>8</sup>

Patrimonial regimes lack well defined spheres of competence and an unequivocal division between the ruler and the public office they appropriate.<sup>9</sup> The link between the necessity of regularity and stability in bureaucratic offices and a stable taxation system and modern forms of rational-legal regimes suggests that patrimonial regimes are inherently 'traditional'. Patrimonialism and the concepts embedded within it such

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<sup>2</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 1006.

<sup>4</sup> See Guenther Roth, Personal Rulership, Patrimonialism, and Empire-Building in the New States, *World Politics*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (January, 1968), pp. 195.

<sup>5</sup> S. N. Eisenstadt, *Traditional, Patrimonialism and Neopatrimonialism* (Beverly Hills, Sage, 1973).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Gerald, A. Heeger, *The politics of Underdevelopment* (London, Macmillan, 1974) cited in Robin Theobald. Patrimonialism, *World Politics*, Vol. 34, No. 4, (July, 1982) pp.548-559.

<sup>8</sup> Theobald, *Op. Cit.*, p. 555.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 555-556.



as patron-client relations have been the preserve of anthropologists and sociologists concerned with small communities as opposed to macro political structures.<sup>10</sup>

The most significant problem with patrimonialism is its utility and applicability as a political concept in traditional states as they transit towards modern forms of political organisation. Principally it was this issue that concerned many scholars during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>11</sup> What became evident, especially in studies related to emerging modern regimes in Africa and East Asia, was that many aspects of patrimonialism (personal rulership, patron-client relations and the arbitrary nature of leadership) were ever-present features of modern bureaucracies too. The dichotomy between tradition and modernity led to a re-conceptualisation of patrimonialism. Discernibly it became apparent that it was possible to distinguish between two forms of patrimonialism, a traditional and modern variant.<sup>12</sup> The traditional variant features partial social mobilisation and a limited range of political structures with the king as the patron and chief as the client, while the modern type is characterised by rapid social mobilisation and the variable scope of political structures with the political and economic elite as the patron and the subordinate masses as the client.<sup>13</sup> This classification of patrimonialism was constructed from empirical studies demonstrating post-traditional and post-colonial regimes consist of a combination of features from both personalised patrimonial regimes and modern rational-legal bureaucracies. In Latin America, South East Asia, Africa and Europe forms of patrimonial rule based on clientelism and patronage were found present in modern bureaucratic regimes.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For the different interpretations and applications of patrimonialism in an anthropological and sociological sense see Alex Weingrod, Patrons, Patronage and Political Parties, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 10, No. 4. (July, 1968), pp. 377-400.

<sup>11</sup> See Roth, Theobald, Eisenstadt and Jean-Claude Williams, *Patrimonialism and Political Change in the Congo*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1972).

<sup>12</sup> René Lemarchand and Keith Legg, Political Clientelism and Development: A Preliminary Analysis, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 2. (January 1972), pp. 149-178.

<sup>13</sup> Theobald, *Patrimonialism*, pp. 552-553.

<sup>14</sup> See Jean-Claude Williams, 1972, Alex Weingrod, 1968, Riordan Roett, *Brazil: Politics in a Patrimonial Society* (Westport CT, Praeger, 1999) 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Harold Crouch, Patrimonialism and Military Rule in Indonesia, *World Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 4. (July, 1979), pp. 571-587, Richard Sandbrook, Patron, Clients and Factions: New Dimensions of Conflict Analysis in Africa, *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*, Vol. 5, No. 1., (March, 1972), pp. 104-119, James C. Scott, Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 66, No. 1. (March, 1972), pp. 91-113, Jeremy Boissevain, Patronage in Sicily, *Man, New Series*, Vol. 1, No. 1. (March, 1966), pp. 18-33, René Lemarchand, Political Clientelism and Ethnicity in Tropical Africa: Competing Solidarities in Nation-Building, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 66, No. 1. (Mar., 1972), pp. 68-90, Scott Mainwaring,



## 1.2 Neopatrimonialism

As a variant of patrimonialism, neopatrimonialism stresses the function played by vestiges of traditionalism and informal politics in newly emerging modern bureaucratic regimes. A starting point for neopatrimonial regimes is the crystallisation of power in the centre in relation to the periphery. Central elites establish control over political entities, which were mainly created by previous colonial powers, and as such attempt to structurally and ideologically transform the periphery.<sup>15</sup> According to Samuel Eisenstadt:

“The central elites of these societies tended to emphasise certain types of activities of the centres more than others. Thus on the one hand, they tended more and more to monopolise in their own hands the societies’ external relations, the representation of the cosmic order, and to develop internally, mostly adaptive and ‘extractive’ administrative policies – with a very strong stress on distributive and mediatory-distributive functions.”<sup>16</sup>

What is distinctive from more traditional forms of patrimonialism is the emergence of paternalistic and distributive and extractive policies.<sup>17</sup> Tied to modern economic developmental trends, resources are extracted in institutional (state bodies) and economic forms (natural resources) and distributed along lines of informal elite clusters. Hence the power figure ‘is in a position to give security, inducements, or both, and his personal followers who, in return for such benefits, contribute their loyalty and personal assistance to the patrons design’.<sup>18</sup> What follows from this pattern of personalistic organisation of the centre is an inter-elite conflict over the distribution of resources. The power in the centre acts as a mediator between the different elite cliques vying for resources. The emergence of such groups is linked to traditional positions within society or through the mechanisms of modern economic development. The composition of these elite groups varies depending on the society

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Brazilian Party Underdevelopment in Comparative Perspective, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 107, No. 4. (Winter, 1992-1993), pp. 677-707, Richard Sandbrook, *The Politics of African Economic Stagnation* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1986), Rex Brynen, The Neopatrimonial Dimension of Palestinian Politics, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1. (Autumn, 1995), pp. 23-36.

<sup>15</sup> Eisenstadt, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 92.



being studied. However, there is an emphasis on the rules of the game regarding the cooptation to - or exclusion from - access to power and resources. Political struggle, therefore, is channelled through this type of political organisation and outside of it there is little leeway for broader more autonomous groups to access resources and positions.<sup>19</sup> The political struggles that emerge are associated with 'cooptation, change or extension of clientele and factional networks, often coupled with general populist appeals made mostly in terms of ascriptive symbols or values representing different ethnic, religious or national communities'.<sup>20</sup>

How political struggle is channelled in neopatrimonial systems 'changes the meaning or functioning of many of those institutions – like parliaments, parties, bureaucracies and judiciary which are often initially shaped according to liberal-constitutional or other 'nation-state' models'.<sup>21</sup> For example, political parties become 'instruments for the forging out of symbols of common collective identity; for regulating at least part of the access to the centre and to positions controlling distributive policies, and for extensions or changes of networks of patronage rather than representing various broader independent and/or ideological orientations'.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, parties serve as vehicles for broadening clientele and patronage networks in order to influence the centre, as opposed to mobilisation for social distribution and changing the rules of access to the centre. Parties in a neopatrimonial regime serve the interests of the cliques of elites they represent and not wider social groups or structures.

Based on Eisenstadt's ideas, this work utilises an integrated theoretical framework to characterise a neopatrimonial regime (see figure 1.2). What separates neopatrimonialism from traditional patrimonial systems is the relationship between informal patrimonial and formal institutional legal-rational structural components. I will now turn to exploring these components in more depth.

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<sup>19</sup> Eisenstadt, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

Figure 1.2 Components of a Neopatrimonial Regime

<b>Neopatrimonial Authoritarian Regimes</b>	
<u>Informal Patrimonial Components</u>	<u>Formal rational-legal institutional Components and Structures</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patriarchal norms of personal rulership and loyalty to the ruler</li> <li>• Patronage, and patron-client relations</li> <li>• Factional inter-elite networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rational bureaucratic structures</li> <li>• Formal 'constitutional-liberal' institutions</li> </ul>

### 1.2.1 Informal Patrimonial Components

#### *Loyalty to the Leader*

A key informal patrimonial element is patriarchal norms of loyalty to the leader and personal leadership. While personalism is a feature of traditional patrimonial rule it is also 'an ineradicable component of the public and private bureaucracies of highly industrialised countries'.<sup>23</sup> This has been asserted even in the case of modern political systems as scholars are beginning to address the clientelistic nature present in some democratic states.<sup>24</sup> However, newer states combining traditional and modern features, generally those of a post-colonial or post imperial nature, lack the institutional matrix of highly industrialised countries 'to such an extent that personal rulership becomes the dominant form of government'.<sup>25</sup> In this sense, norms of personal loyalty to the ruler are a central feature of neopatrimonialism that also acts as an agent for regime stability.

#### *Patronage and Patron-Client Relations*

Due to the personal nature of rulership, a leader's disproportionate access to power and resources empowers them with distributive and mediatory powers. Access, therefore, for elites is dependent upon personal loyalty to the ruler and personal

<sup>23</sup> Roth, *Op. Cit.*, p. 196.

<sup>24</sup> Herbert Kitschelt and Steven I. Wilkinson (eds.) *Patrons, Clients and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>25</sup> Roth, *Op. Cit.*, p. 196.



patronage. Consequently bonds of patron-client relations permeate through political structures and institutions.

But how is the concept of patron-client understood? The meaning of the interrelated terms patron-client and patronage depend on the disciplinary context of its use. According to Alex Weingrod, anthropologists use the term to denote a particular type of interpersonal relationship between two persons of unequal status, wealth and influence and is characterised as a “lopsided friendship”.<sup>26</sup> This bond is dependent upon a reciprocal exchange of goods and services and is generally conducted on a face-to-face basis. The classic interpretation of a patron-client relationship is a peasant-landlord relationship.<sup>27</sup> In political science patron-client relationships have a larger structural meaning. Instead ‘patronage refers to the ways in which party politicians distribute public jobs or special favours in exchange for electoral support’.<sup>28</sup> The political party is seen as the main device for arranging and distributing favours and positions. Patronage is ‘the response of government to the demands of an interest group – the party machinery - that desires a particular policy in the distribution of public jobs’.<sup>29</sup> In the African context, the governing party was usually the arena ‘where members of the elite competed for precedence and political resources’.<sup>30</sup> The emergence of dominant political parties in post-Soviet states are comparable to such arenas described above. However, patron-client networks are not exclusive to party organisation and can feature at different levels of a neopatrimonial regime. For example, a personal ruler’s first level of patronage could be with regional governors, who in turn have their own series of patronage networks at each district level. The power to appoint regional governors is a fundamental aspect of many post-Soviet presidents power, especially in Russia and Kazakhstan. It gives the president a great deal of leverage in guaranteeing loyalty to their rule. In this sense patronage networks in a neopatrimonial system are a series of hierarchically linked dyadic relationships that cut across government institutions and bureaucracies.

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<sup>26</sup> J. Pitt-Rivers, *The People of the Sierra*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (London, Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1971).

<sup>27</sup> Weingrod, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 377-379.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* p. 379.

<sup>29</sup> V. O. Key, *Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups* (New York, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1964) p. 348 cited in Weingrod, p. 379.

<sup>30</sup> Sandbrook, *Op. Cit.*, p. 109.

### *Inter-Elite Factions*

Patronage networks can result in the emergence of factional inter-elite conflict between those who seek the rulers' patronage and access to resources. It has been suggested the 'logic of building political careers leads party colleagues to compete over patronage needed to build support leading to divisive factional disputes'.<sup>31</sup> From this develops competing factions with rival ambitions. Factions in a political science sense have usually been conceived 'as conflict units operating within, and struggling for control of, formal organisations – usually in practice, political parties'.<sup>32</sup> However, factional inter-elite conflict can lead to the establishment of formal organisations for the specific purpose of conflict. While factionalism occurs within political parties, political parties themselves can be created specifically for strengthening the position and widening the influence of a particular elite group. Naturally elite factions are common in modern political systems, what distinguishes such factions in a neopatrimonial system is their personal basis. As Sandbrook has argued:

“A faction may therefore be defined very broadly as a segment of a clientage network organised to compete within one or more political arenas. It is a coalition of self-interested followers recruited personally by or on behalf of a leader, who is in conflict with another leader or leaders. To the extent that the persons surrounding the leader feel bound to him by such moral ties as friendship, kinship, or ideological commitment, rather than by mutual self-interest, they constitute a more stable core of clique”.<sup>33</sup>

The crucial element of factions within a neopatrimonial system is the extent to which personal ties and moral obligation bind the faction together. The personal tie and loyalty to the leader is important. As such, an individual's identification with a particular faction is normally cited as being 'x's [leader of group] man'. It has to be noted that relationships within factions are not just based on vertical ties as in a relationship between a client and a patron but also horizontal ties where heads of

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<sup>31</sup> Allyson Lucinda Benton, *The Strategic Struggle for Patronage: Political Careers, State Largesse, and Factionalism in Latin American Parties*, *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2007, p. 57

<sup>32</sup> Sandbrook, *Op. Cit.*, p. 111.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*



elite factional groups may unite out of securing some form of joint interest. However, such partnerships are liable to collapse, disintegration and acrimony. While factions are segments of an overall clientage network, normally the network of the national leader, they are also in themselves smaller clientage networks. Factional elite groups are common in the post-Soviet space. While in Central Asia it has been argued that such groups are based on kinship ties<sup>34</sup> and economic cleavages,<sup>35</sup> in other states factional groups appear on regional lines (Ukraine) and over competition for political and economic influence (Russia).

### *1.2.2 Formal Institutional Legal-Rational Structural Components*

Two factors distinguish contemporary neopatrimonialism from traditional forms of patrimonialism. First, personal loyalty, patron-client networks and factional inter-elite conflict influence the formal political and administrative system and second, that leaders occupy bureaucratic offices less to perform public service and more to acquire personal wealth and status.<sup>36</sup> The formal rational-legal aspects comprise of two broad elements: rational bureaucratic structures and formal 'constitutional-liberal' institutions.

#### *Rational-Legal Structures*

The rational legal system is characterised by a 'rationally organised and steered state administration, and by impersonal legal-rational rules and procedures in implementing law and administration'.<sup>37</sup> As made clear by Weber, the organisational characteristics of a rational-legal system common in modern societies includes fixed areas of defined responsibilities for officials' duties and the organisation of offices based upon on the principle of hierarchy.<sup>38</sup> While there are other characteristics observable in modern legal-rational systems, these two particular features are also present in neopatrimonial regimes. The system of political governance includes a rational organised bureaucracy where each official has clearly defined areas of

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<sup>34</sup> See the clan literature discussed in the previous chapter.

<sup>35</sup> See Barbara Junisbai and Azamat Junisbai, The Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan: A Case Study in Economic Liberalization, Intra-elite Cleavage, and Political Opposition, *Demokratizatsiia*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2005, pp. 373-392.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Bratton and Nicolas Van de Walle, 'Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa', *World Politics*, Vol. 46, No. 4. (July, 1994), pp. 453-489.

<sup>37</sup> Alisher Ilkhamov, Neopatrimonialism, Interest Groups and Patronage Networks: the impasses of the governance system in Uzbekistan, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 67.

<sup>38</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society*.

responsibility. State administration is divided into various departments as is common across all modern states, for example a department of education, health, and so on. At the same time, there is a rationally organised chain of command as according to legal rules officials are accountable to their superior officers. However, in the post-Soviet context rational offices are complicated by the absence of a law-based state and the personalised nature of politics. Political offices are heavily personalised, especially that of the presidency and regional governor. Thus, informal relations and behavior influence and de-rationalise the rational elements of administrative organisation. Other crucial aspects of a rational-legal system, abstract rules, formalistic impersonal action and appointment based on technical knowledge are either absent or less well observed.

### *Formal-Liberal Constitutions*

Besides certain rational-legal bureaucratic structures, neopatrimonial regimes also display formal liberal-constitutional institutions. Constitutions are written up which include all the formal requirements for liberal democracies. In written form, a separation of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary is evident. In post-colonial Africa, the Middle East and South East Asia, formal institutions are given constitutional prevalence but they are sunk by the weight of informal political components such as personal rulership and client-patron networks.<sup>39</sup> Formal institutions are inoperative due to being severely incapacitated by the informal nature of politics. The incapacity of liberal institutions is reflected in their weakness in truly curtailing the personal nature of power allowing presidents to rule unchecked. The introduction of formal liberal institutional rules and constitutions could be down to any number of reasons ranging from international pressure to the altruistic intentions of post-colonial leaderships or political winds of the time. However, in a post-Soviet context rational laws are designed deliberately so as to have enough leeway in them to be informally interpreted by loyal clients of the ruler. This allows post-Soviet presidents to present a chimera of rational liberal democratic rule while purposely designing formal institutions (including political parties and the rules that govern their participation in electoral competition and their genesis, organisation and activity) in a vague and generalised fashion allowing for informal interpretation with

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<sup>39</sup> Eisenstadt, *Traditionalism, Patrimonialism and Neopatrimonialism*.



preference being given to presidential parties. Therefore, formal institutions are influenced by informal politics. Such phenomena are common in former Soviet states and present a significant problem for scholars analysing formal institutions in a post-Soviet context. It is, however, precisely the way in which informal political relations and behavior influence formal institutions that is the central drive of this research on Kazakhstan. As a consequence formal institutions cannot be treated as always explicitly formal as we would do in typical liberal democracies and their creation and operation need to be constantly viewed in the light of the informal politics that forms the basis of the political system in Kazakhstan.

## 2. The Relevance of Neopatrimonialism to Former Soviet States

How useful is neopatrimonialism as an approach to analyse the politics of the former Soviet Union? Neopatrimonialism was not included in the overarching debates regarding political transition,<sup>40</sup> despite patrimonialism being a feature of the politico-administrative system of the Soviet Union and, in particular, Soviet Central Asia.<sup>41</sup> However, it has occasionally been utilised to consider post-Soviet developments.<sup>42</sup> Seemingly while the clan and regional factional perspectives outlined in the previous chapter are polarising debate in post-Soviet political studies, they are in essence explaining the same phenomena, the informal nature of politics in Central Asia.<sup>43</sup> Neopatrimonialism offers a more extensive framework to take account of broader social affiliations as opposed to just clan and regional identities. It interjects a wider structural narrative in comprehending the political trajectories of post-Soviet Central Asia. Nevertheless, neopatrimonialism is suitable not just on the grounds of utility but also by virtue of its historical relationship with Soviet Central Asia. Indeed, one

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<sup>40</sup> One major exception was Michael Bratton and Nicolas Van de Walle, *Neopatrimonial Regimes*.

<sup>41</sup> Yoram Gorlizki, Ordinary Stalinism: The Council of Ministers and the Soviet Neopatrimonial State, 1946-1953, *Journal of Modern History*, 74, December 2002, 699-736; James Critchlow, Corruption, Nationalism, and the Native Elites in Central Asia, *Journal of Communist Studies*, 4 (2), 1988 p. 145; John P. Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>42</sup> The exceptions are John Ishiyama, *Neopatrimonialism and the Prospects for Democratization in the Central Asian Republics*, in Sally N. Cummings (ed.) *Power and Change in Central Asia*, (London, Routledge, 2002) pp. 42-58 and Alisher Ilkhamov, Neopatrimonialism, Interest Groups and Patronage Networks.

<sup>43</sup> The argument that both sides of the debate regarding theories of Central Asia factionalism are explaining the same phenomena, an informal patrimonial type of politics, is put forward by David Gulette in Theories on Central Asian Factionalism: The Debate in Political Science and its Wider Implications, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 26, No. 3, (September, 2007) pp. 373-387.



of the major themes concerning neopatrimonialism has been its affect as a prior regime type on regime transition.<sup>44</sup> The idea that historical legacies and the strategic choices of actors influence the development of new political entities and economies is hardly original, but it still remains a persuasive factor in producing political outcomes and regime type.<sup>45</sup> Legacies 'at least initially shape the resources and expectations that help actors define their interests and to select the ways and means to acquire political power'.<sup>46</sup> In the case of post-communist systems this has been given great emphasis by Herbert Kitschelt who suggested three types of communist rule existed and the form of rule influences emerging party systems.<sup>47</sup> These three types are: patrimonial communism, national-accommodative communism and bureaucratic-authoritarian communism. The type relevant for this study is patrimonial communism.

### *2.1 Patrimonial Communism*

A patrimonial communist regime 'relies on vertical chains of dependence between leaders in the state and party apparatus and their entourage, buttressed by extensive patronage and clientelist networks'.<sup>48</sup> Political power is concentrated in either a small elite clique or an individual ruler with tendencies for establishing a cult of personality. Rationalisation of bureaucracy is low as the elite clique penetrates the apparatus through nepotistic appointments. These systems 'were characterised by a heavy emphasis on democratic centralism, which fit well with the hierarchical structure of dependence between leaders and the led'.<sup>49</sup> Under such systems, rulers strongly repressed any form of opposition and carefully co-opted opposition elites through incentives such as public office or material benefit. Patrimonial communist regimes typically emerged in pre-industrialised settings where they were able to construct rapid industrial development. Accordingly, an important legacy was the

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<sup>44</sup> Morten Bøås, Liberia and Sierra Leone— dead ringers? The logic of neopatrimonial rule, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 22, No. 5, pp 697–723, 2001; Bratton and Van de Walle and Snyder.

<sup>45</sup> Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: history, institutions, and social analysis* (Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2004).

<sup>46</sup> Herbert Kitschelt, Zdenka Mansfeldova, Radoslaw Markowski and Gábor Tóka, *Post-Communist Party Systems: Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation*, (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1999) p. 19.

<sup>47</sup> Kitschelt *et al*, *Post-Communist Party Systems*.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* p. 23.

<sup>49</sup> John T. Ishiyama, The Sickle of the Rose? Previous Regime Types and the Evolution of the Ex-Communist Parties in Post-Communist Politics, *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 3, June 1997, p. 300.



lack of a prior urbanised middle class, which consequently allowed patrimonial regimes to never ‘confront an alternative vision and practice of modernisation’.<sup>50</sup> Due to the co-option of any form of opposition and the paucity of any cognitive memory regarding alternative forms of progress and modernisation when the collapse of the Soviet Union took place, these regimes were able to keep hold of the reigns of power. When independence occurred, many of the elite remained and were able to continue to lead the case for their version of modernisation. In this respect continuity is important and patrimonial communism corresponds to a form of path dependency.<sup>51</sup>

## *2.2 Patrimonialism in Soviet Central Asia*

Patrimonial communism existed in Central Asia. The coexistence of patrimonial authority alongside Soviet Stalinist bureaucracy led to ‘the creation of a two-level political culture.’<sup>52</sup> As suggested in the introductory chapter, many scholars have argued the Soviet Union failed in modernising Central Asia with many traditional forms of political organisation persisting. Indeed, while factionalism remained in many forms (clan, tribe and regional) this was due ‘not so much to remnants of old cultures as to the adoption by the Soviet system of a tradition of indirect management’ of different factional networks.<sup>53</sup> Factionalist networks, therefore, were recomposed on the administrative and territorial structures of the Soviet Union. During the Brezhnev era, local cadre were left in charge of the administrative structures of the Central Asian republics and this engendered political stability in the region. The political leaders of the region consolidated extensive patronage networks around themselves.<sup>54</sup> First Secretaries of the regional parties like Dinmukhammed Kunaev in the Kazakh SSR, Sharof Rashidov in the Uzbek SSR and Turdakun Usubaliev in the Kyrgyz SSR were left by Moscow to rule autonomously for many years allowing them to establish vast patronage networks based on a form of

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<sup>50</sup> Kitschelt *et al.*, *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>51</sup> Path dependency is an idea which refers to the persistence of institutions over time. For an explicit overview of this concept see Stephen Krasner, ‘Approaches to the State: Alternative Conceptions and Historical Dynamics’ *Comparative Political Studies* Vol. 21, (January 1984), pp. 61-94.

<sup>52</sup> Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creations of Nations*, (London, I. B. Tauris, 2000), p. 85

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* p. 85.

<sup>54</sup> See Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006) pp. 104-112.

factionalism (clan, tribe and regional networks).<sup>55</sup> Consequently, their long tenure 'enabled them to put their personal stamp on the republican machinery as in a fiefdom, appointing their followers to a senior posts at republican, *Oblast* (province) and *Raion* (district) levels'.<sup>56</sup> This form of patrimonialism led to patterned occurrences of informal politics related to personnel policy including nepotism and personal devotion.<sup>57</sup> These political leaders manipulated personnel selection for those who were trusted and loyal. Besides, allegiance was owed to the leader of the Republic rather than the Party per se. Nursultan Nazarbaev, himself, was a protégé of Kunaev and found his way to high office because of Kunaev's patronage.<sup>58</sup> This form of communist patrimonialism, and the informal practices of corruption and nepotism that arose from it, was symptomatic of the Brezhnev period across the whole of the Soviet Union.<sup>59</sup> Yet, it is necessary to be clear that patrimonial communism is characterised not just by traditional mechanisms governing political behaviour but it is rather a hybrid form of modern Soviet bureaucratic practice conjoined with elements of personalistic political behaviour.<sup>60</sup>

### 2.3 Contingency of Transition

While cultural and structural legacies are certainly important in exploring the relationship between informal and formal politics in the post-Soviet context,<sup>61</sup> they do not address the differing degrees of influence of the formal and informal in different policy areas or in different parts of the Soviet world.<sup>62</sup> It is a uniform approach which does not take account of the contingencies and context of transition. The insistence that the use of informal politics is derived from cultural legacies suggests a form of pre-determinism. This research, rather than work from the assumption that informal politics have their roots in historical precedent, whether

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<sup>55</sup> For example, Dinmukhammed Kunaev was First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan from 1960-63, and 1964-1986, Sharof Rashidov was First Secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party from 1959-1983 and Turdakun Usubaliev was leader of the Kyrgyz Communist Party from 1961-1985

<sup>56</sup> James Critchlow, *Op. cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 143-145.

<sup>58</sup> Dinmukhammed Kunaev, *O Moem Vremeni* (Almaty, Daur, 1992).

<sup>59</sup> Valerie Bunce, *The Political Economy of the Brezhnev Era: The Rise and Fall of Corporatism*, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (April 1983) pp. 129-158.

<sup>60</sup> For a detailed examination of patronage relations among political elites in the Soviet Union see John P. Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR*.

<sup>61</sup> Ken Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>62</sup> Vladimir Gel'man, *The Unrule of Law in the Making: the Politics of Informal Institution Building in Russia*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 7, 2004, pp. 1021-1040.



pre-Tsarist or Soviet, argues instead that the continued use of informal politics is derived from the contingent and uncertain context of transition. In Kazakhstan, the president has relied on informal forms of politics to ensure the consolidation of presidential power and the primacy of presidential interests in the face of the uncertainty related to transitional institutional development. Moreover, the contingencies of the transition to a market economy, in particular privatisation, have offered political opportunities to elite actors leading to informal elite factional conflict over access to economic resources. These contingent factors of transition have affected the formal development of political institutions like political parties. Therefore, while cultural and historical legacies have to be taken into account the heightened sense of uncertainty in an institutional capacity and with regards to actors' interests require primary consideration.<sup>63</sup> Chapter Three covers this issue. It explores the historical context of patrimonialism in Central Asia and Kazakhstan but also examines the construction of a neopatrimonial regime during the conditions of elevated uncertainty in transition.

#### *2.4 Conceptual Issues*

How can the theory of neopatrimonialism and the embedded concepts of personalism, patron-client networks and factional inter-elite conflict be operationalised as units of analysis? Robert Kaufman has pointed to the problem of using a concept such as patron-client relationships, due to inherent problems in applying the patron-client concept from micro to macro analysis.<sup>64</sup> It is easier to operationalise and chart clientelism when analysing and uncovering narrow small-scale political relationships, as in the case of anthropological studies. In wider macro political studies, however, clientelism is susceptible to concept stretching, with its value and utility being compromised by the broadness of the study. Kaufman cites the case of Lemarchand and Legg<sup>65</sup> where the concept is expanded 'well beyond the already ambiguous meanings usually ascribed to it.'<sup>66</sup> It is also 'too narrow to encompass all of the phenomena that should be included in a paradigm of power'<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Robert Kaufman, The Patron-Client Concept and Macro-politics: Prospects and Problems, *Comparative Studies in Society and History, Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 16. No. 3, (July 1974), 284-308.

<sup>65</sup> Lemarchand and Legg, Political Clientelism and Development.

<sup>66</sup> Kaufman *Op. cit.*, p. 290.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

as it adds little to our understanding of other aspects of power including 'charismatic leadership, coercive relationships, influence or manipulation.'<sup>68</sup> What use is patron-client as a concept when it is stretched to paradigmatic levels to encompass explaining a whole political system? Neopatrimonialism, however, can provide the theoretical context within which nested concepts such as personalism and patron-client relations provide smaller more precise analytical concepts. These concepts can be utilised to analyse their influence upon, and relationship with the development of rational-legal structures and formal institutional structures. In this study, neopatrimonialism is used as part of theoretical framework to understand the relationship between informal politics and party development in Kazakhstan. The embedded concepts of personal loyalty, patron-client relations and inter-elite conflict are viewed as variables influencing and relating to formal party development. Party institutional constraints, type and citizen linkages act as variables arising from the rational-legal and formal liberal-constitutional elements of a neopatrimonial regime, which while being the primary dependent variable, do act to stabilise, legitimise and consolidate informal power. Neopatrimonialism and concepts nested within it act as a way to explicitly engage broader issues concerning power relationships and authoritarian consolidation

This section has highlighted how neopatrimonialism is a useful approach to help understand the relationship between informal political relations and behaviour and party development. The approach emphasises the role of personalism, patron-client relations and inter-elite factional conflict in influencing formal party development and the institutional rules governing their development, including the rational elements of a neopatrimonial regime such as formal institutional rules and a liberal constitution. Neopatrimonialism in Kazakhstan while having a historical precedent in the form of patrimonial communism has become prominent in the post-Soviet period due to the contingent context of transition. To explore the formal institutional variants of this work it is expedient to construct the second element of the framework.

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* p. 291.



### 3. Formal Theoretical Framework Regarding Political Parties: Institutional Factors Affecting Party Development

Neopatrimonialism, therefore, provides an appropriate theoretical framework to analyse the context within which party development occurs in Kazakhstan. As this research involves exploring the impact of, and relationship between, informal forms of politics on institutional design relating to parties, party types and societal linkages it is appropriate to address theory related in all three spheres. Figure 1.3 sets out the different micro attributes within each of the formal aspects of party development.

*Figure 1.3 Formal Aspects of Party Development*

<b>Formal Aspects of Party Development</b>		
<i>Formal Institutional Constraints</i>	<i>Party Typology</i>	<i>Societal Links</i>
<i>Micro attributes:</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional Choice</li> <li>• Electoral Design</li> <li>• Constitutional Laws Pertaining to Political Parties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Party Organisation</li> <li>• Ideology</li> <li>• Behavioural Norms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disconnection and Passiveness</li> <li>• Personalistic and Clientelistic Linkages</li> <li>• Homogeneity of Opinion</li> <li>• Emerging Cleavages</li> </ul>

Institutional choice plays a crucial role in affecting political development in post-communist countries.<sup>69</sup> Institutions shape incentives and identities of political actors and provide the context of a successful transition to democracy. Above all, two types of institutional choice perform a function in determining party development – the system of government and the type of electoral system.<sup>70</sup> Also important in post-Soviet countries are those laws specifically designed to instigate party development.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>69</sup> See Jon Elster, Claus Offe and Ulrich K. Preuss, *Institutional Design in Post-Communist Societies* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>70</sup> David White, *The Russian Democratic Party Yabloko: Opposition in a Managed Democracy* (Aldershot: Ashgate) 2006 p. 33.

<sup>71</sup> Lauri Karonen, *Legislation on Political Parties: A Global Comparison*, *Party Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 4 pp. 437-455.

### 3.1 Institutional Design Presidentialism vs. Parliamentarism

A large debate in the democratic transition literature has centred on whether presidentialism or parliamentarism aids democratic consolidation and party development.<sup>72</sup> Juan Linz's argument that presidentialism inherently hinders democracy and party development has become a widely accepted and at the same time contested norm.<sup>73</sup> The negative aspects of presidentialism are covered thoroughly in many works,<sup>74</sup> however, the tendency in presidential systems towards temporal rigidity, majoritarianism and dual legitimacy, are well established and increase the propensity for 'executives to rule at the edge of the constitution'.<sup>75</sup> Thus, presidential systems due to their liability in creating political stalemate mixed with the concentration of formal powers, are more likely to increase the chances of non-democratic outcomes.<sup>76</sup> Presidentialism can lead to legislative deadlock, weak political parties and regime breakdown. Consequently, it can have a significant affect on party development 'in countries where power resides squarely in the office of the presidency and where parliament plays a rubber stamping role' as 'the incentive for political actors to form and organise political parties is reduced'.<sup>77</sup> The weakness of parties, and institutionalised party system, creates a cycle of centralisation in the presidency as 'the more poorly institutionalised a party system the more opportunities the president has to exploit divisions among the parties and exercise

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<sup>72</sup> See Juan Linz, The Perils of Presidentialism *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 1 No. 4, 1990, pp 124-140 and Donald Horowitz, Comparing Democratic Systems, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 1 No. 4, 1990, pp 141-149.

<sup>73</sup> Those who have contested the argument that presidential forms of government are an impediment to democracy include, Matthew Soberg Shugart and John M. Carey, *Presidents and Assemblies: Constitutional Design and Electoral Dynamics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992); Maurice Duverger, A New Political System Model: Semi-Presidential Government, in Arend Lijphart (ed.), *Parliamentary Versus Presidential Government*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1992) pp. 142-149 and Giovanni Sartori, *Comparative Constitutional Engineering* (New York, New York University Press, 1997).

<sup>74</sup> See Scott Mainwaring, Presidentialism, Multipartyism, and Democracy: The Difficult Combination, *Comparative Politics Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2, July 1993, pp. 198-228; Arturo Valenzuela, Latin America: Presidentialism in Crisis, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 4, No. 4, October 1993, pp. 3-16; Guillermo O'Donnell, Delegative Democracy, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 5, No. 1, January 1994, pp. 55-69 and Alfred Stepan and Cindy Skach, Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarism versus Presidentialism, *World Politics*, Vol. 46, No. 1, October 1993, p. 1-22.

<sup>75</sup> Alfred Stepan and Cindy Skach, October 1993, p. 22.

<sup>76</sup> Juan Linz, Presidential or Parliamentary Democracy: Does it Make a Difference? In Juan J Linz and Arturo Valenzuela (eds.) *The Failure of Presidential Democracy* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 3-90.

<sup>77</sup> David White, *Op. cit.*, p. 27.



influence, even if his formal powers are weak'.<sup>78</sup> The centralisation of power in presidential systems made presidential forms of government a strong preference for post-Soviet elites who remained consolidated during the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>79</sup> Those former Soviet states that have displayed authoritarian characteristics have developed various forms of strong centralised presidencies.<sup>80</sup>

Presidentialism, therefore, correlates to weak party development and democratic erosion.<sup>81</sup> Robert Moser has posited that presidentialism has two effects on party development in post-Soviet states. The first is that directly elected presidents tend to promote less cohesive parliamentary parties, as the separate constituencies of legislative and executive power in presidential regimes fails to provide incentives for cohesive party discipline within the legislature. Simultaneously, the 'winner takes-all' aspect of a directly elected presidency promotes the consolidation of smaller parties into broader coalitions as the single political reward leads parties needing to form larger coalitions to gain the main prize.<sup>82</sup> Surveying the experience of both Russia and Kazakhstan, it is possible to see at different temporal points both of these competing effects. The early stages of presidency in both countries led to a fragmented and weak party system.<sup>83</sup> The only parties who bucked this trend were the communist parties in each respected state.<sup>84</sup> The increasing centralisation of power, in both a formal and informal sense, in the presidencies post-1999 saw the creation by the ruling regimes of larger more cohesive parties in the shape of *Edinaia Rossiia* (United Russia) and *Nur Otan* (Light of Fatherland).

The influence of the institution of the presidency in post-Soviet countries on political parties is not straightforward due to informal politics shaping its role. In the first

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<sup>78</sup> Matthew Shugart, Presidents and Parliaments: Executive-Legislative Relations, *Transition*, 13 (December 1996): 6–11.

<sup>79</sup> Gerard Easter, Preference for Presidentialism: Post-Communist Regime Change in Russia and the CIS, *World Politics*, Vol. 49 No. 2, pp. 184-211.

<sup>80</sup> This includes all the Central Asian states, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan as well as Azerbaijan, Russia, Belarus and Armenia.

<sup>81</sup> Stephen Fish, The Dynamics of Democratic Erosion, in Richard Anderson et al, *Post-Communism and the Theory of Democracy* (Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 54-95.

<sup>82</sup> Robert Moser, The Electoral Effects of Presidentialism in Post-Soviet Russia, in J. Löwenhardt (ed.), *Party Politics in Post-Communist Russia* (London, Frank Cass, 1988), pp. 55-58.

<sup>83</sup> Michael McFaul, Political Parties, in Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov and Andrei Ryabov (eds.), *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russian Post-Communist Political Reform* (Washington D.C., Brookings Institution, 2004) pp. 105-134.

<sup>84</sup> Luke March, *The Communist Party in Post-Soviet Russia* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2002).



instance, the institution itself is infused with the significant role of the agency of the president. While formally, the powers of many post-Soviet presidents are strong, such power is outweighed by the informal power granted to the president. It is the person, rather than the president who has the power. This is one of the reasons why presidents in Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Belarus and Tajikistan have held great sway and influence over legislative bodies and in shaping the agenda of institutional design. It is consistent with the dimension of personalism and loyalty to the leader evident in neopatrimonial regimes. Presidents like Putin and Nazarbaev have extensive informal networks of support. Putin for example has networks of loyal support based on former associates from the security services.<sup>85</sup> From this position of both formal and informal power, post-Soviet presidents influence the development of political parties in several ways. There is the creation of loyal dominant pro-presidential parties. An aim of many post-Soviet presidents has been to establish loyal parties to serve the interests of the incumbent president. In Russia, Putin has *Edinaia Rossiia*, while in Kazakhstan Nazarbaev has created *Nur Otan*. The purpose of such parties is for presidential interests to be dominant in the legislature. In the case of Russia and Kazakhstan this has been achieved with great success. The parties achieve such dominance due to the extensive patronage they receive from the president and the informal preferencing they receive from loyal state clients. On a formal level, however, dominant parties also provide significant elite stability which helps aid authoritarian durability.<sup>86</sup> Presidents also manage party development by establishing virtual parties to represent certain anticipated social cleavages. According to the ideas of Andrew Wilson, presidential administrations in many former Soviet states have adopted a 'many layered pie strategy'.<sup>87</sup> This involves establishing various pro-presidential parties to represent different aspects of the electorate. This has been particularly evident in Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Belarus. This creates the impression of multi-partism. Finally, another instrument of presidential influence over party development is through the cooption of opposition parties. Opposition parties' loyalty is bought by the offer of potential jobs or a guarantee of gaining seats in the next parliamentary election.

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<sup>85</sup> Daniel Treisman, 'Putin's Silovarchs, *Orbis*, Volume 51, Number 1, 2007, pp. 141-153.

<sup>86</sup> Jason Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in the Age of Democratization* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>87</sup> Andrew Wilson, *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the post-Soviet World* (Yale, Yale University Press, 2005).



It requires noting, however, that the concept of 'opposition' in the post-Soviet context is problematic. Ruling elites have become very adept at neutralising opposition and a high degree of elite stability and minimal elite differentiation makes principled opposition limited.<sup>88</sup> What has emerged in the post-Soviet context is the idea of 'loyal opposition'. That is, parties which are either constructed or co-opted by the presidential administration to create a form of institutionalised opposition which create the impression of pluralism and debate. Loyal opposition parties might consist of close associates of the incumbent president who sit squarely within his patronage and to that extent offer no genuine form of opposition. Other opposition parties feature fragmented elites who continue to have ties with the ruling regime and can be co-opted at times with the use of rewards in exchange for loyalty. Therefore, these issues need to be considered when analysing and discussing the opposition in Kazakhstan. Essentially, opposition in a post-Soviet context is not how we typically understand 'opposition' in a Western democratic sense.

Chapter Four analyses how the president of Kazakhstan in both formal and informal terms has utilised the above methods to manage party development. It will illustrate how the institutional choice of presidentialism has affected the development of political parties.

### *3.2 Electoral Design*

There is a clear correlation between electoral design and political parties. 'Duverger's Law' has long epitomised the relationship between electoral design and party systems. Duverger's hypothesis posits that 'the simple majority single ballot system favours the two party system' and 'proportional representation favours multipartism'.<sup>89</sup> While Duverger's law has received criticism for its conceptual and methodological weaknesses, the main supposition underlying the law regarding the affect of electoral systems on reducing or multiplying the number of parties remains

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<sup>88</sup> Vladimir Gel'man, Political Opposition in Russia: A Dying Species? *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2005, pp. 226-246.

<sup>89</sup> Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties: Their Organisation and Activity in the Modern State* (London: Methuen and Co Ltd, 1954) p. 216 and p. 239.

valid.<sup>90</sup> Evidently the format of the electoral system will impact on the type of party system, but it can also influence the type of political parties too.<sup>91</sup> Electoral systems can affect how parties approach party competition; undertake the responsibilities of government, whether parties remain consolidated or fragmented and the degree of personalism within a party.<sup>92</sup> As Sartori has argued, 'different electoral systems bring about different ways of competing, a majoritarian system is a winner takes all system while losing in a proportional system is a 'matter of greater and smaller shares'.<sup>93</sup> Electoral systems can affect the degree to which a party behaves responsibly depending on whether a party has to form a government or enter into a coalition. Plurality systems penalise party fragmentation, favouring party dualism while a single nationwide constituency accommodates party fragmentation.<sup>94</sup> Finally, Sartori suggests single-member districts encourage personalism within politics with the stress on individual constituency representation.<sup>95</sup>

### *3.3 Electoral Systems in Former Soviet States*

The link between electoral systems and parties is theoretically durable in well-established democracies however the consequences of electoral systems in transitional states are less predictable.<sup>96</sup> Two issues illustrate the tenuous link between electoral systems and party systems: the questionable nature of electoral processes (or electoral engineering) and electoral reform.

Electoral processes in former Soviet states are generally characterised by incidences of fraud, voter manipulation and an overall lack of transparency. Reports from Western based organisations such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), despite their normative nature, consistently find electoral processes across former Soviet States (with the exception of the Baltic republics) to

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<sup>90</sup> Giovanni Sartori, in particular, has highlighted the conceptual and methodological ambiguities of Duverger's Law in Giovanni Sartori, 'The influence of Electoral Systems: Faulty Laws or Faulty Methods?' In Bernard Grofman and Arend Lijphart, (eds.) *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences* (New York, Algora Press, 2003 [1986]), pp. 43-68.

<sup>91</sup> Giovanni Sartori, 'The Party Effects of Electoral Systems', in Larry Diamond and Richard Gunther (eds.), *Political Parties and Democracy* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 90-105.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 101-102.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* p. 101.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.* p. 102.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Byron Moraski, *Electoral System Reform in Democracy's Grey Zone: Lessons from Putin's Russia*, *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 2007, pp. 536-563.



have fallen short of international norms and expectations.<sup>97</sup> This suggests election engineering and ‘virtual politics’<sup>98</sup> obscure the relationship between electoral systems and party development to the extent that it is difficult to extract a definable law. It reflects the ‘lawlessness’ that appears in non-comprehensive democratic systems.<sup>99</sup> The ever-changing nature of post-Soviet electoral systems makes consistent theory linkages between electoral systems and parties problematic. Initially many former Soviet states introduced Mixed-Member Majoritarian (MMM) electoral systems, Kazakhstan and Russia being but two examples.<sup>100</sup> One distinct observation to be made about the cases of Russia and Kazakhstan is that the process of electoral reform has challenged conventional assumptions regarding the influence of electoral system type on party systems. Russia and Kazakhstan’s shift from MMM systems to fully proportional systems with thresholds of 7 percent have led to the consolidation of one and two party systems as opposed to typical party fragmentation. Russia’s parliamentary elections of 2007 saw the consolidation of *Edinaia Rossiia*’s grip on the Duma with 315 seats (out of 450) and likewise in Kazakhstan the president’s party *Nur Otan* obtained 100 percent of seats. This phenomenon has been characterised as democratisation backwards.<sup>101</sup> However, to describe it as such fails to take account of how electoral systems in post-Soviet states are designed to take account of elite and presidential interests and not the interests of democratic competition.<sup>102</sup>

### *3.4 Electoral Rules and the Influence of Informal Politics*

The personal nature of political decision-making and behaviour, and the influence of informal politics on electoral design are keenly felt in the conception of electoral rules which benefit pro-regime forces, such as thresholds for parliament, electoral blocs and the removal of imperative mandate. Electoral rules can influence party

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<sup>97</sup> See any of the number of election monitoring reports on the OSCE website. [www.osce.org](http://www.osce.org)

<sup>98</sup> Andrew Wilson, *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the post-Soviet World* .

<sup>99</sup> Giovanni Sartori, 2001.

<sup>100</sup> Armenia and Tajikistan began and remain with a mixed member majoritarian system. Ukraine originally had a completely majoritarian system before switching to a mixed member system with fifty percent elected by proportional representation with a 5 percent threshold. The system was then altered from the 2006 election onwards to a hundred percent proportional system with a 3 percent threshold. Georgia too currently possess’ a mixed-member majoritarian system.

<sup>101</sup> Richard Rose and Doh Chull Shin, ‘Democratization Backwards: The Problem of Third-Wave Democracies’, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 2001, pp. 331-354.

<sup>102</sup> Erik S. Herron, ‘Political Actors, Preferences and Election Rule Re-design in Russia and Ukraine’, *Democratization*, Vol. 11, No. 2, April 1994, pp. 41-59.



development<sup>103</sup> as, for example, a minimum threshold for entry into parliament in proportional systems is crucial for the development of democratic polities as it helps a few parties establish themselves as the main aggregators of citizen interests.<sup>104</sup> The practice of implementing a threshold mechanism is widespread across established and new democracies alike.<sup>105</sup> Whereas this has proved effective in some post-communist transitions such as Poland,<sup>106</sup> in post-Soviet countries such as Kazakhstan and Russia, it has been used as a tool to effectively keep opposition parties out of parliament and ensure a healthy majority in the assembly for the incumbent president. The threshold is also used in tandem to influence and manipulate electoral rules in favour of presidential forces. For instance, in both Russia and Kazakhstan the banning of electoral blocs further incapacitated opposition parties' ability to surmount the threshold for entry into parliament.<sup>107</sup> The removal of imperative mandate ensures party loyalty and contributes to stabilising and consolidating presidential authority in the legislature. If a deputy of a ruling party rebels against the party line they risk losing their seat thus ensconcing party discipline and loyalty to the president. Finally, as mentioned above, electoral processes in states such as Russia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Uzbekistan, are prone to electoral falsification, voter intimidation, the outlawing of potentially strong opposition candidates and a large degree of state administrative resources being used to favour the main presidential party or parties. What this indicates is the formal electoral process is being informally engineered to ensure electoral rules favour pro-presidential and pro-regime parties. Chapter Four will illustrate how formal rules regarding electoral competition were informally operated, due to their vague and generalised nature, to ensure presidential parties succeed. The formal rules regarding candidate registration, the formation of electoral commissions, campaigning and vote

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<sup>103</sup> David White, *The Russian Democratic Party Yabloko*.

<sup>104</sup> J. J. Linz & A. Stepan, (1996) *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1996) pp. 274-275.

<sup>105</sup> L. LeDuc, R. Nemi and P. Norris, *Comparing Democratic Elections in* L. LeDuc, R. Nemi and P. Norris (eds.) *Comparing Democracies 2: New Challenges in the Study of Elections and Voting*, (Thousand Oaks, CA and London, Sage Publications, 2002) pp. 1-39.

<sup>106</sup> Poland's first election had no form of proportional representation and therefore resulted in 29 parties being elected to parliament. For more detail see Linz and Stepan, 1996 and David White 2007 p. 21.

<sup>107</sup> For Russia see Byron Moraski, 2007 and for Kazakhstan see R. Isaacs, *Managing Dissent, Limiting Risk and Consolidating Power: The Processes and Results of Constitutional Reform in Kazakhstan*, *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2008.



counting will be examined to demonstrate the informal preferencing of those rules in favour of pro-presidential parties.

What the design of electoral systems and rules illustrate to the observer is the difficulty in making fixed theoretical links between electoral design and political parties in a post-Soviet context. An informal personal form of politics is influencing the design and choice of electoral system and rules where the preferences of incumbent presidents are preponderant. The institutional choices of powerful actors are influencing the development of weak parties.<sup>108</sup> In the case of Kazakhstan, the loyalty benefited to Nazarbaev has allowed him to construct an electoral system that ensures only his political party is guaranteed entry into parliament. The patron-client relations that have emerged under his political leadership maintain the informal engineering of the electoral process which benefits only *Nur Otan*. This process affects the development of not only *Nur Otan* but also all other parties in Kazakhstan.

### *3.5 Constitutional Laws Pertaining to Political Parties*

In post-Soviet states the artificial stimulation of party development has proved a significant factor in the emergence of political parties through the enacting of constitutional laws specific to political parties.<sup>109</sup> Such laws have been implemented as a way to artificially drive the process of party development. Whereas in established democracies political parties arose to prominence through an organic process, the states of the former Soviet Union have applied constitutional law in an effort to encourage the institutionalisation of a party system. In Russia, for example, the law was introduced under Vladimir Putin in an effort to avoid the considerable party fragmentation which occurred under Boris Yeltsin's presidency.<sup>110</sup> The law sets out the legal basis on which party organisations can be established and formalises their role within the state. Similar laws have been introduced in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Ukraine. These laws vary with regards to construction and application, but in the case of Kazakhstan it is possible to

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<sup>108</sup> Michael McFaul, Explaining Party Formation and Non-formation in Russia: Actors, Institutions, and Chance, *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 10, December 2001, pp. 1159-1187.

<sup>109</sup> Lauri Karonen, Legislation on Political Parties.

<sup>110</sup> Edwin Bacon, Russia's Law on Political Parties: Democracy by Decree? In Cameron Ross (ed.), *Russian Politics Under Putin* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 40-47.

observe three ways in which the law impacts on aspects of party development and also the way in which the informal nature of neopatrimonialism interacts with the formal law.

In the first instance, the law can impact on the organisational capability of a party by providing the legal basis on which parties can be organised. As will be highlighted in Chapter Four, the law in Kazakhstan determines the number of members a party requires for state registration and controls the principle on which a party can form. For example, the law does not permit parties founded on the principle of ethnicity, gender, and religion. Second, a law related to political parties can shape the extent to which parties can organise on regional or national interests. Again, in Kazakhstan parties can only register if they have at least 700 members in each *Oblast*, thus, attempting to create national parties as opposed to regionally focused parties. A third dimension of its impact is on opposition parties. While in some former Soviet states, such as Ukraine, the law is normally interpreted in a transparent sense, in Kazakhstan the law is construed by officials at the Ministry of Justice in such a way as to impede the registration process of political parties the ruling regime is wary of seeing active in the political process. The law is applied in the active pursuit of deterring the formation of political parties which oppose the current regime of Nursultan Nazarbaev. Again it is possible to detect the influence of informal politics. Loyalty to Nazarbaev is the imperative throughout the drafting, construction and application of the law. The law is constructed in such a fashion as to make violation easy. Therefore, informal powers of discretion are handed to loyal officials as they have the power to selectively apply the law. In cases of opposition parties it is applied with vigour and strictness. In the case of pro-presidential parties it is applied leniently. As with the informal interpretation of electoral rules, Chapter Four will analyse how the formal rules regarding political parties are selectively applied to preference pro-presidential parties and exclude opposition parties. This is achieved ostensibly due to the broad nature of the law which leaves it open to informal interpretation on the part of loyal clients of the president.

The above demonstrates that the formal constraints on political parties regarding institutional choice, electoral design, and the specific constitutional laws relating to party development can affect and shape the development of political parties. This



much is obvious. What is less so, but appears when party development occurs in a neopatrimonial state is how informal elements interact and overlap with formal institutional constraints. The personalism evident in a neopatrimonial regime influences the shape institutional constraints take when affecting party development. This combination of personal influence and institutional design epitomises neopatrimonialism, as it represents the interaction between informal political relations and behaviour, and the formal liberal constitutional elements of the neopatrimonial regime.

#### **4. Formal Theoretical Framework Regarding Political Parties: Party Typology**

As highlighted above, electoral design, institutional choice and constitutional laws pertaining to the development of political parties play a significant role in shaping party development. It was also suggested that in a neopatrimonial regime the influence of informal politics cuts across and intersects with how institutional factors affect party development. The question that arises is what types of parties are emerging from this institutional context? This section seeks to address a theoretical framework and appropriate conceptual types to understand the type of parties emerging in this situation.

Classic party types used by scholars to frame their understanding of party development have almost exclusively focussed on the experience of parties in Western advanced industrial societies. The conceptual responsiveness of mass, cadre, catch-all, electoral-professional and cartel party types can prove problematic in alternative temporal and geographical contexts.<sup>111</sup> The challenge for scholars and students of the post-Soviet world is how these might apply in a post-communist context, if at all. Classic party types also lack a certain universal coherence, as each

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<sup>111</sup> For mass and cadre party types see: Maurice Duverger *Political Parties: Their Organisation and Activity in the Modern State* (London, Methuen and Co Ltd, 1954), for the catch-all party see, Otto Kirchheimer, The Transformation of Western European Party Systems, in J. La Palombara and M. Weiner (eds.), *Political Parties and Political Development* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1969) pp. 177-200, for the electoral-professional party Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organisation and Power* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988) and for the cartel party Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair 'Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party', *Party Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1995) pp. 5-28.

type is based on just a single criterion of a party.<sup>112</sup> Ideal party types based on singular criterion produce a certain level of conceptual unevenness.

#### *4.1 Assessing Party Types in the Former Soviet Union*

Considering the complexities of appropriateness scholars have been less inclined to use classic typologies in the post-Soviet context. This has less to do with conceptual appropriateness and more to do with the considered weakness of party development in the former Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the few works that have attempted to typologically characterise parties in post-Soviet countries have made little linkage with classic party types. Instead, the uniqueness of the post-Soviet context is preferred over theoretical integration. The two types that appear most frequently are parties of power and electoralist parties.

##### *Parties of Power*

A central principal behind the *party of power* is the party's relationship with the state.<sup>113</sup> Parties of power have a close relationship with the executive branch which is seen to co-opt parties of power for their own political purposes.<sup>114</sup> Thus, parties of power are an extension of the executive where the party 'is the actual group whose members wield power in and through the executive branch of government'.<sup>115</sup> Avoiding the deep ideological nature of the communist period, parties of power portray themselves as centrist de-ideological organisations<sup>116</sup> allowing them to 'adjust flexibly to a changing environment'.<sup>117</sup> Due to their close association with an incumbent figure, parties of power adopt the same ideological outlook and policies of their patron. Consequently, the personality of the leader is central to the programmatic platform of the party. A party of power's position, therefore, is directly linked to their relationship with leading political personalities. Scholars and

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<sup>112</sup> For instance, the cadre and mass parties are posited on an analysis of organisational qualities; the catch-all party is framed in terms of ideational merits, the electoral-professional party, again on organisational characteristics and the cartel party on relations with the state.

<sup>113</sup> Zoe Knox, Pete Lentini, and Brad Williams, Parties of Power and Russian Politics: A Victory of the State Over Civil Society? *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 53, No. 1, (2006), p. 3.

<sup>114</sup> Henry Hale, Origins of United Russia and the Putin Presidency: The role of contingency in party-system development', *Demokratizatsiia*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2004 pp. 169-194.

<sup>115</sup> Hans Oversloot and Ruben Verheul, Managing Democracy: Political Parties and the State in Russia, *Journal of Communist and Transition Politics*, Vol. 22, No. 3, September 2006, p. 394.

<sup>116</sup> Regina Smyth, Building State Capacity from the Inside Out: Parties of Power and the Success of the President's Reform Agenda', *Politics and Society*, Vol. 30, No. 4, 2002.

<sup>117</sup> Andrey A. Meleshevich *Party Systems in Post-Soviet Countries*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) p. 195.



the media when assessing parties of power have generally overlooked the centrality of personality.<sup>118</sup> Examples cited as parties of power are Vladimir Putin's *Edinaia Rossiia*, Heldiar Aliev's New Azerbaijan Party (NAP) and Nursultan Nazarbaev's *Nur Otan*.

As a typology, the concept is flawed due to the lack of agreement among scholars as to the parameters of its constituent parts.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, the emphasis placed on the relationship with the state and the executive implies parties of power have decision-making and policy-making powers. Yet empirically parties of power are not parties *with* power neither can they be considered ruling parties. Parties such as *Edinaia Rossiia* and *Nur Otan* do not strictly rule or possess power and in this sense the term *party of power* is misleading. Furthermore, the concept fails to integrate with more universal theories on party typology. Distinct characterisations of parties in a post-Soviet context have not addressed the theoretical relationship between parties developing in the post-Soviet world and those more established parties in the West.<sup>120</sup> This is despite some considerable overlap between aspects of the party of power and classic party types. For instance, the state centred nature is similar to the cartel party and the de-ideological facet resonates with the catch-all party.<sup>121</sup> Naturally, utilising party theories developed in the West in a post-Soviet context is problematic. Post-Soviet parties are emerging in a distinct historical and structural context. Despite this, any typology appearing in a post-Soviet context should at least speak to the wider literature on party typology as it can tell us more about the type of party system that is emerging and how political parties are changing and developing in a global context. A closer integration would also shift the debate away from a normative understanding of what constitutes 'normal' party development. If our understanding of post-Soviet parties is not integrated to some extent within a wider typological framework then concepts such as party of power will remain exclusive to the post-Soviet context and 'abnormal'.

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<sup>118</sup> The one exception is Andrey Meleshevich.

<sup>119</sup> Meleshevich, *Party Systems in Post-Soviet Countries*.

<sup>120</sup> Hans Oversloot and Ruben Verheul categorise parties in post-Soviet Russia into seven types: Parties of the Past, Genuine Parties, Parties of Power, Party of Power Helper Parties, Favoured Opposition Parties, Harassment Parties and Vanity Parties.

<sup>121</sup> See Katz and Mair, *Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy* and Otto Kirchheimer, *The Transformation of Western European Party Systems*.

### *Electoralist Parties*

The second type of party generally recognised in the post-Soviet context, and one that is far more universal, is the electoralist party. An electoral perspective is certainly pertinent as elections are fundamental to parties' goals in seeking public office. Not surprisingly parties in the former Soviet Union have been central to electoral process<sup>122</sup> and their primary function has been to prepare all their organisational resources for the sole purpose of election campaigns so as to win public office and wield power.<sup>123</sup> Resembling the electoral-professional party, the emphasis on electoral contestation is sought at the expense of regional party building and mobilising and working with their potential electorate, thus, exposing them to being organisationally weak and thin.<sup>124</sup> It suggests political parties in the former Soviet Union have weak social bases.<sup>125</sup>

The stress on electoral contestation removes emphasis on *who* is pursuing public office. Placing the spotlight on *who* is seeking office is important, as it allows us to assess key political players and elite groups. In a post-Soviet context, parties 'typically start out as small, geographically concentrated organisations or as cliques of governing elites in the capital.'<sup>126</sup> Therefore, what is vital is not just that parties are focused on electoral activity but the key players and elites behind them. Across the former Soviet Union parties are elite dominated organisations with limited links to society.<sup>127</sup> It would be useful therefore to take account of the elites and individuals creating parties as these players might assist in explaining the nature of political conflict. Elections in the former Soviet Union are of a questionable nature and therefore, focusing on party typology solely in terms of elections may not provide enough scope to give an accurate account of parties' true nature and *modus operandi*.

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<sup>122</sup> Michael McFaul, Explaining Party Formation in Russia and Herbert Kitschelt and Regina Smyth Programmatic Party Cohesion in Emerging Post Communist Democracies, *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 35, No 10, December 2002, pp. 1228-1256.

<sup>123</sup> David White, *The Russian Democratic Party Yabloko*.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> Stephen Whitefield 'Partisan and Party Divisions in Post-Communist Russia' in Archie Brown (ed.) *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 235-243.

<sup>126</sup> Robert Moser, Independents and Party Formation: Elite Partisanship as an Intervening Variable in Russian Politics, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 1999, pp. 147-165.

<sup>127</sup> Ian McAllister and Stephen White, Democracy, Political Parties and Party Formation in Post-Communist Russia, *Party Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 49-72 and Thomas Poguntke, Parties Without Firm Social Roots? Party Organisational Linkage, Working Paper 13, *Keele European Parties Research Unit*, 2002.



In assessing both party types it is possible to observe how neither takes account of the influence of neopatrimonialism in Kazakhstan. *Nur Otan's raison d'être* is to provide unwavering support and loyalty to president Nazarbaev. The considerable personalism and devotion to the leader evident within the party's organisation, ideology and behavioural norms demonstrates the relationship between informal politics and the development of party types. Other parties in Kazakhstan, independent from the president, are based on factional groups of elites. They are established either to represent or protect business or political interests of factional elite groups, or for the personal ambition of a famous public figure. In this sense parties are used as formal vehicles for informal political activity. To map the typological character of parties in Kazakhstan a more varied approach is required offering flexibility for the post-Soviet context while simultaneously assimilating party characterisation into a wider theoretical context.

#### *4.2 A Typological Framework for Parties in Kazakhstan*

Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond have stressed that 'existing models of political parties do not capture the full range of variation of party types found in the world today.' Setting out a new fifteen-fold party genus Gunther and Diamond produced a framework for characterising parties in different geographical and temporal contexts.<sup>128</sup> Neatly, their usage of terms central to classic party types enables the theoretical integration of parties in a non-Western context to be reconciled with wider global typological understandings. Implicit in their framework is the understanding that it is possible for different types of parties to exist in different contextual and temporal settings. Duly, their framework disposes of a normative understanding of political parties. What their framework lacks in parsimony is made up in its universal appeal and theoretical integration. While this research works on a certain level of presumed uniqueness of the post-Soviet case, the overarching idea is to integrate the study of the post-Soviet world into mainstream theoretical ideas.

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<sup>128</sup> Gunther and Diamond's fifteen party typological genus consists of five main categories each with sub types within in them. These are as follows: Elite Parties including the sub types local notables and clientelistic elite parties; Mass-Based Parties including socialist and class based parties, nationalist pluralist and ultra nationalist parties and religious denominational and fundamentalist parties; Ethnicity-Based Parties includes Ethnic and Congress based parties; Electoralist Parties includes catch-all, programmatic and personalistic parties and Movement Parties includes left-libertarian and post-industrial extreme right parties.

Gunther and Diamond base their party characterisations on three criteria: a party's formal organisation, programmatic commitment and behavioural norms. A party's *formal organisation* can range from being, 'organisationally thin, while others develop large mass-membership bases with allied ancillary institutions engaged in distinct but related spheres of social life; some rely on particularistic networks of personal interaction or exchange, while others are open and universalistic in membership and appeal.'<sup>129</sup> Therefore, formal party organisation can stretch from thinly organised elite-based to a thickly developed party organisation with a mass membership. The analysis in Chapter Five illustrates that broadly speaking parties in Kazakhstan are elite driven with thin organisations.

Gunther and Diamond argue their second criterion, a party's programmatic commitment, can range from 'well-articulated ideologies rooted in political philosophies to parties with pragmatic or no well-defined ideologies'.<sup>130</sup> Some parties commit to the interests of a particular ethnic or national group. In Kazakhstan, it is possible to observe three distinctions on a programmatic level, parties with strong ideological roots, parties with an ideological front and parties with limited ideological concerns. Finally, Gunther and Diamond's distinguish parties by behavioural norms. At one end of the spectrum parties are defined by being committed to democratic rules of the game, 'are tolerant and respectful towards their opponents and are pluralistic in their views of polity and society.'<sup>131</sup> Conversely, other parties are less loyal to democratic ideals while some are exclusively anti-system parties.<sup>132</sup> In Kazakhstan it is possible to perceive two modes of behavioural norms, hegemonic parties, which are based on the principle of loyalty to the president at the expense of a fair and transparent democratic process, and non-hegemonic parties, who are in principal committed to democratic rules of the game.

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<sup>129</sup> Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, *Species of Political Parties: A New Typology*, *Party Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2003, p. 171.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* p. 171.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* p. 171.

<sup>132</sup> The term anti-system party first emerged in the writings of Sartori as a way to describe parties in a totalitarian and authoritarian regime. However, the term is more concerned with the distance a party is in terms of its ideological and programmatic commitments from the democratic norm.



In light of a criteria based on party organisation, ideology and behavioural norms parties in Kazakhstan fall broadly into two of Gunther and Diamond's categories; personalistic-electoralist parties and clientelistic-elite parties.

The personalistic-electoralist party is organisationally thin and maintains a relatively skeletal existence, however, at election time 'these parties spring in to action to perform what is unequivocally their primary function, the conduct of the campaign'.<sup>133</sup> The party's 'only rationale is to provide a vehicle for the leader to win an election and exercise power. It is an organisation constructed or converted by an incumbent or aspiring national leader exclusively to advance his or her national political ambitions'.<sup>134</sup> The appeal of the electoral party is based not so much on ideology, of which is minimal, but rather on the charisma of the leader or candidate.<sup>135</sup> The personalistic-electoralist party has the potential to be non-pluralist in outlook and potentially 'proto-hegemonic'. Taking these factors into consideration it is possible to observe the close links between this party type and the informal nature of political parties in Kazakhstan. As will be discussed in Chapter Five many parties are personalistic in nature, set up as vehicles for public figures in an effort to gain public office or protect business interests.

Clientelistic-elite parties are 'those whose principle organisational structures are minimal and based upon established elites within a specific geographical area'.<sup>136</sup> It is thinly and weakly organised and essentially, it 'is a confederation of notables (either traditional or newly emerging liberal-professional or economic elite), each with geographically, or functionally, personalistically based support.'<sup>137</sup> In general, the clientelistic-elite party's main function is to 'coordinate the individual campaign efforts of notables, usually indirectly or loosely, for the purpose of securing power at the national level'.<sup>138</sup> It has a weak relationship with its ordinary members and places minimal import in building party membership from the bottom up of party structures. It places little value in ideology and in its programmatic content. In terms

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133 Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, *Species of Political Parties: A New Typology*, p. 185.

134 *Ibid.* p. 187.

135 Piero Ignazi, *The Crises of Parties and the Rise of New Political Parties*, *Party Politics*, Vol. 2, No.4, 1996, pp. 549-66.

136 Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, *Species of Political Parties: A New Typology*, p. 175.

137 *Ibid.* p. 176.

138 *Ibid.*

of its behavioural norms the clientelistic-elite party is non-hegemonic, tolerant and collaborative with other political forces. The clientelistic-elite party is an appropriate party type for Kazakhstan through which to observe parties emerging from factional elite competition.

The institutional constraints (institutional choice, electoral design and party law) designed and implemented by Nazarbaev due to his prominent position with the political system, based on informal and formal power, has influenced the types of parties emerging in Kazakhstan. The analysis in Chapter Five will examine party types in Kazakhstan based on the theoretical types outlined here and using the criteria set out by Gunther and Diamond which is to assess party organisation, ideology and behavioural norms. Following on from party typology it is one of the arguments of this thesis the types of parties emerging in Kazakhstan are a factor shaping parties' relationship with society. It is understanding parties' relationship with society that forms the final piece of the theoretical framework.

## **5. Formal Theoretical Framework Regarding Political Parties: Societal Linkages**

### *5.1 West European Social Cleavages*

In established democratic societies, social cleavages are important as they provide the social base of political parties, subsequently structuring party competition and political conflict.<sup>139</sup> The classic typology of social cleavages as the basis of party competition was detailed in Lipset and Rokkan's *Party Systems and Voter Alignments* where they identified four historical cleavages across Western society.<sup>140</sup> The four cleavages, centre/periphery, state/church, land/industry and owner/worker were built on social conflicts which emerged out of national and industrial revolutions. Once the era of mass franchise arrived, political parties situated themselves as articulators of the interests of cleavage groups. For Lipset and Rokkan these cleavages represent the stability Western party competition is founded upon. However, Lipset and Rokkan's freezing thesis has been subject to significant

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<sup>139</sup> Stephen Whitfield, Political Cleavages and Post-Communist Politics, *Annual Review of Political Science*, No. 5, 2002, pp. 181-200.

<sup>140</sup> Seymour M. Lipset, & Stein Rokkan, (eds.) *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross National Perspectives* (New York, Free Press, 1967).



criticism, in particular from those arguing a post-materialist society has seen the emergence of new cleavages and the decline of parties traditionally based on class support.<sup>141</sup> The static nature of Lipset and Rokkan's model makes it unsuitable for explaining party system change and also the formation of new party systems. The model has also drawn criticism for its reductive nature.<sup>142</sup>

### *5.2 Social Cleavages and Post-Communism*

The extent to which the cleavage thesis can be used in a postcommunist context has been widely debated and questioned.<sup>143</sup> The transformations occurring in the postcommunist space are qualitatively different from the context within which political party competition emerged in Western democracies. It has been argued 'party system building should be measured accordingly, not by comparison to any typical Western pattern'.<sup>144</sup> Evidently parties in Western systems were based on deep seated socio-material interests, in communist systems any interest articulation, such as class, was skewed due to the dominant role played by just one party. Social cleavages in the postcommunist space cannot be taken for granted.

Religion, ethnicity and communist ideology are salient cultural and historical cleavages that have been posited as assisting the structuring of party competition in the post-communist context.<sup>145</sup> In terms of religion Catholicism, for example, has been a factor influencing political socialisation in Eastern Europe,<sup>146</sup> while Christian Democratic parties have also found considerable support in post-communist

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<sup>141</sup> See Morgans N. Pedersen, *The Dynamics of European Party Systems: Changing Patterns of Electoral Volatility*, *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1979, pp. 1-26; Michal Shamir, *Are Western European Party Systems Frozen?* *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1984, pp. 35-79; Russell Dalton (1984), *Cognitive Mobilization and Partisan Dealignment in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, *Journal of Politics* 46, pp. 264-84 and Ronald Inglehart (1987), *Value Change in Industrial Societies*, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 81, No. 4, pp. 1289-1303.

<sup>142</sup> Hans Daalder, *West European Party Systems: Continuity and Change*, London, Sage Publications, 1984).

<sup>143</sup> See Herbert Kitschelt, *Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies: Theoretical Propositions*, *Party Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1995, pp. 447-472, Elster et al, Claus Offe, *Institutional Design in Post-communist Societies*, and Stephen White, Richard Rose and Ian McAllister, *How Russia Votes* (Chatham, NJ, Chatham House, 1997).

<sup>144</sup> John D. Nagle & Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization* (London, Sage, 1999) p. 197, cited in David White, *Op. Cit*, p. 16.

<sup>145</sup> Whitefield, *Op. Cit*, pp. 191-192.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*



countries.<sup>147</sup> Ethnicity too has proven a stable cleavage structuring political support in many countries, including Slovakia and the Baltic States.<sup>148</sup> In the case of Slovakia a coalition of parties has emerged to represent the country's 10.76 percent Hungarian population.<sup>149</sup> A residual ideological cleavage has seen successor communist parties prove successful in the post-communist environment in both reconstructed and at times, unreconstructed forms.<sup>150</sup> They have relied on public support from an older generation who resent the lack of material security a post-communist economy has brought. More generally the losers of the transition to a market economy have also responded positively to the social messages of successor communist parties.

The dynamism and contingencies of transition from a planned economy to a market economy has seen parties seeking to represent the 'winners' and 'losers' of the process. Some parties clearly position themselves on the basis of representing those who favour neo-liberal reform economics and are perceived to be the 'winners' of market transition.<sup>151</sup> Conversely, there are those parties who establish themselves on the basis of the 'losers' or the forgotten classes of transition economics. As mentioned above, successor communist parties have been particularly successful in articulating such concerns.<sup>152</sup> Despite the context specific nuance of these particular cleavages, recent research has suggested social cleavages in emerging democracies are not too dissimilar to those of established democracies.<sup>153</sup> McAllister and White's analysis of cleavages in six post-communist states found that party formation

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<sup>147</sup> Adrian Karatnycky, Christian Democracy Resurgent: Raising the Banner of Faith in Eastern Europe, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 77 No. 1, January/February 1998, pp. 13-18.

<sup>148</sup> For example see, Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield, The Structuring of Political Cleavages in Post-Communist Societies: the Case of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, *Political Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 1998, pp. 115-139.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> See Tim Haughton, Explaining the Limited Success of the Communist Successor Left in Slovakia: The Case of the Party of the Democratic Left, *Party Politics* Vol. 10, No. 2, 2004, pp. 177-191; Seán Hanley, Towards Breakthrough or Breakdown? The Consolidation of KS• M as a Neo-Communist Successor Party in the Czech Republic, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 17, No. 3, September 2001, pp. 96-116; John Ishiyama, Candidate Recruitment, Party Organisation and the Communist Successor Parties: The Cases of the MSzP, the KPRF and the LDDP, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 5, 2000, pp. 875-896 and John Ishiyama, Communist Parties in Transition: Structures, Leaders, and Processes of Democratisation in Eastern Europe, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 1995, pp. 147-166.

<sup>151</sup> Yabloko and the Union of Right Forces in Russia are exemplary of this case. See David White, *The Russian Democratic Party Yabloko*.

<sup>152</sup> See Luke March, *The Communist Party in Post-Soviet Russia*.

<sup>153</sup> Ian McAllister and Stephen White, Political Parties and Democratic Consolidation in Post-Communist Societies, *Party Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2007 pp. 197-216.



continued to be dominated by class and religious cleavages, two of the original cleavages outlined by Lipset and Rokkan.<sup>154</sup> McAllister and White's results show that while the cleavages in emerging democracies are similar to those in established democracies, unsurprisingly, however, parties in emerging democracies are less effective at representing social cleavages.

While it is clear that social cleavages can be found in post-communist society, the extent to which they truly structure party competition and political conflict is unclear. It is now pertinent to consider the extent to which parties in Kazakhstan are based on social cleavages and the relationship between the structuring of party competition with the neopatrimonial regime.

### *5.3 Social Linkages in Neopatrimonial Kazakhstan*

The presumption that political conflict between parties should be based on social cleavages espousing programmatic appeals is problematic for scholars of non-west-European political systems.<sup>155</sup> As with party systems in Latin America and Africa, in Kazakhstan the relationship between parties and social cleavages is obscured by the weak democratic nature of the political system. It is difficult to qualitatively assess the linkages between cleavages, citizens and parties. If votes for parties are non-transparent and do not reflect the democratic will of citizens it becomes increasingly difficult to make a connection between the two. For analysing Kazakh parties' relationship with society, the framework utilises four empirically relevant attributes: a disconnection and passiveness between parties and society, linkages based on personalism and clientelism, a degree of homogeneity of public opinion regarding leadership in the country and emerging cleavages based on the consequences of market transition.

The relationship between society and parties in post-communist states has often been characterised by a degree of disconnection and passiveness. In Russia, for example, there has been 'a deepening disillusion with the mechanisms of representative democracy... reflected in falling turnouts at national elections (to not much more

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<sup>154</sup> The six post-communist countries McAllister and White analysed were Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russia and Ukraine. They were compared with 14 party systems in established democracies.

<sup>155</sup> Herbert Kitschelt, *Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies*.

than half in the 2003 Duma election), and a steady increase in the vote 'against all' candidates and parties'.<sup>156</sup> In Russia many citizens believe their vote will make little difference<sup>157</sup> and this is common in Kazakhstan where citizens feel that parties and politicians do not represent their interests and hold out little prospect that a vote for a political party will illicit any change. Political parties are elite dominated and, despite suggesting they serve and articulate the interests of particular social divisions instead represent the interests of those elites who established and dominate the party.

What has occurred in Kazakhstan, as a result of the elite nature of political parties, are linkages which exist on a personalistic and clientelistic basis. Herbert Kitschelt has suggested that in a post-communist context when 'voters choose new parties, one of three considerations is key: sympathy with the personality of a party's candidates, expected personal and selective tangible and intangible advantages derived from the victory of a party, or the production of indirect advantages in the form of collective goods if the party of choice wins the election'.<sup>158</sup> Kitschelt defines these linkages as charismatic, clientelistic and programmatic. Typically, charismatic and clientelistic linkages appear in formerly patrimonial communist countries where 'programmatic political structuring does not proceed very far, because political competition remains personalised'.<sup>159</sup> Voters are attracted to political parties on the basis of political personality or out of a sense of personal loyalty in relation to an exchange of goods and services. The charismatic and clientelistic forms mirror the personalistic-electoralist and clientelistic-elite parties outlined by Gunther and Diamond and provide a useful basis for assessing the bonds between parties and citizens in Kazakhstan.

On wider structural considerations, the extent to which the economic experiences of Kazakhstani citizens has diversified can also impact on determining support bases for political parties. The lack of a general economic diversification among the population has produced what Richard Ahl calls 'homogeneity of opinion'. That is, as long as economic growth continues and provides stability people are content with

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<sup>156</sup> Stephen White, Political Disengagement in Post-communist Russia: a Qualitative Study, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 57, No. 8, December 2005, p. 1121.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.* p. 1125.

<sup>158</sup> Kitschelt, *Op. Cit.*, p. 448.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.* p. 467.



the present course.<sup>160</sup> Ahl developed this idea through an analysis of Russia but it can also be applied to the case of Kazakhstan. In Kazakhstan, Nazarbaev has proved adept at carving out a grand narrative concerning the centrality of his leadership to the success and prosperity of Kazakhstan economy and security. *Nur Otan* plays a critical role in soliciting this discourse and providing its legitimacy with society. Moreover, this is achieved on the basis of the informal preference it receives from loyal clients of the president and the extensive administrative resources that it is privy to.

At the same time, however, it is possible to observe the emergence of parties who are articulating roles for themselves based on emerging cleavages which have appeared due to the transition to a market economy. Nominally, these are cleavages which represent the 'winners' and 'losers' of market transition. Such a division has been noted in post-communist Russia, and it is possible to draw similarities with Kazakhstan.<sup>161</sup> As Chapter Six will illustrate, some opposition parties in Kazakhstan are carving roles out for themselves as the guarantors of social rights, political educators and charitable foundations of those housing communities that have been displaced in construction of prestige projects in Almaty and other marginalised groups. Simultaneously many parties are rushing and claiming to represent the 'winners' of transition in the shape of an emerging middle class. In particular a party like *Atameken* (Motherland) claims its social base is that of entrepreneurs and small-medium size businesses. Yet, these emerging cleavages represent only very tenuous and limited links between society and parties and are overshadowed by the informal politics which influence much of the political system. Personalistic and clientelistic linkages remain the dominant factor with homogenous public opinion shaped by *Nur Otan* claiming the greatness and centrality of Nazarbaev. A role they are only able to play due to the informal preference and resources they receive from state actors.

The aspect of the theoretical framework which explores parties' relationship with society in Kazakhstan, will focus on the disconnection and passiveness that exists between citizens and parties in the post-Soviet context and linkages which are based

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<sup>160</sup> Richard Ahl, Society and Transition in Post-Soviet Russia, *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 1999, pp. 175-193.

<sup>161</sup> Steven Fish, The Advent of Multipartyism in Russia 1993-95, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 11, No. 4, 1995, pp. 339-366.

upon personalistic and clientelistic bonds. Importantly, it will utilise the idea of homogeneity of opinion being shaped by the president and his party regarding the centrality of his leadership to the country's future prosperity. The role of the dominant political party in this instance is crucial in providing an extension of legitimacy with the public, but is only able to on the basis of the informal preference it receives from loyal clients in the president's patronage network. Therefore, political parties are weak on those attributes typically associated with their activity in democracies and strong on attributes which aid authoritarian durability. At the same time there are a number of tenuous emerging cleavages which exist on the 'winners' and 'losers' of transition.

## **6. Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has put forward a theoretical framework to analyse the relationship between informal politics and party development in Kazakhstan. It will allow for a better understanding for some of the factors driving authoritarian consolidation and will provide a basis for comparable research on other post-Soviet states. The framework has the benefit of being able to integrate the informal nature of politics in the country with the formal development of political parties. While the approach lacks parsimony and simplicity, it does provide a greater precision to analysis rather than only viewing party development through the lens of either straightforward classic party theory or the narrow area specific framework of informal clan politics. At the same time, it provides a wider integration to general theoretical scholarship of party development and informal politics. It provides a link for Central Asia to our wider understanding of political development, as opposed to seeing Central Asian politics as completely unique.

The framework presented here consists of neopatrimonialism as an approach to understand the nature of informal and formal politics. This consists of personalism, patron-client relations and factional elite conflict alongside rational offices and liberal constitutions. Such formal elements, however, are complicated by informalism in the way they are vaguely constructed allowing for loyal clients to informally interpret formal rules. Such neopatrimonialism has a great deal of influence on the formal aspects of party development which make up the second part



of the theoretical framework. The formal aspects of the framework allows for an exploration of the relationship between informal politics and the institutional constraints on political parties (institutional choice, electoral design and party law), the type of parties emerging (organisation, ideology and behavioural norms) and parties' relationship with society (passiveness and disconnection, personalistic and clientelistic linkages, homogeneity of opinion and emerging cleavages).

The relationship between informal forms of political relations and behaviour and party development provides the observer with a series of tentative theoretical propositions:

- Political actors (in this case the president of Kazakhstan) turn to informal political relations in an effort to manage the contingent and uncertain nature of transition.
- Consequently, institutional constraints for political parties are purposively designed in a fashion so loyal clients of the president can utilise informal power to interpret and selectively apply the law to suit presidential preferences. This results in a weakening of genuine party competition due to the preference given to pro-regime parties.
- At the same time, presidential parties provide a formal institution to enhance elite stability while formal rules act to legitimise the informal forms of political behaviour and relations which influence the preference of pro-regime parties.
- The types of parties to emerge from this institutional context are clientelistic and personalistic elite based parties – which are internally prone to informal political behaviour and relations.
- Parties also provide formal constructs for elites in the process of informal factional elite conflict. They function as vehicles to protect and extend economic and political interests of the elite.
- As a result of the personalistic and clientelistic nature of parties and the overall influence of informal political relations and behaviour, parties' relationship with society is defined by disconnection and passiveness,

underscored by personalistic and clientelistic linkages and characterised by homogeneity of opinion regarding the president's leadership.

- Simultaneously, the dominant pro-presidential parties help solicit the legitimisation of the informal power possessed by the president.
- Political parties, therefore, are weak on those attributes which are typically associated with their activities in democracies and strong on factors which assist in the consolidation of authoritarian regimes.



## Chapter Two: Methodological Considerations and Research Design

This chapter explores the methodological underpinnings of this work and the core issues related to researching the relationship between informal politics and party development in Kazakhstan. It establishes a methodological framework to answer the central research question:

- *What is the nature of the relationship between informal neopatrimonial political relations and behaviour, in the shape of personalism, patron-client relations and factional inter-elite conflict and the formal institutional development of political parties? In particular, how has this relationship influenced the formal structural constraints of parties in Kazakhstan, the type of parties that are emerging and their connection with wider society? And what has been the impact of this relationship on overall political development?*

Researching political parties in a neopatrimonial context is fraught with complications with regards to data. There is no existing set of documents and sources which can adequately explain the relationship between the informal nature of the regime and the formal development of political parties. There is no set of files sitting in a government archive neatly explaining how party development, and thus, democratic development in Kazakhstan, is influenced by the personalism of the regime or the inter-elite factional networks existing in the political system. No one set of interviews reveals how party development contain and contextualise informal politics. The researcher is required to decide on not only the relative weight of each source but also how they should be interpreted and used to construct a narrative regarding neopatrimonialism and party development. While formal aspects of party development can be qualified by formal documents relating to party procedures, organisation and their participation in the electoral system, the informal interpretation and selective application of such formal procedures is much more difficult to qualify. With this in mind, careful consideration needs to be given to the methodology and design of the research. This chapter sets out such considerations and puts forward the research design and strategy required for travelling in the grey zone between the formal and informal.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first discusses grounded theory, a strategy which suits well the interpretative, constructivist and qualitative nature of this research. The second section deals comprehensively with methods of data collection, how data was selected and collected and all the issues and problems connected to the process of fieldwork in Kazakhstan. The third covers the process and problems related to analysing and interpreting the data.

## **1. Research Strategy: Grounded Theory**

This research is grounded in an interpretative and constructivist approach which aims to understand and explore the relationship between informal politics and party development. In relation to such an approach, the research is based on a qualitative research strategy based on ideas inherent in grounded theory. This section covers the rationale and aptness of using grounded theory.

### *1.1 Defining grounded theory*

Grounded theory is a strategy rather than an actual theory and is one of the most widely used frameworks for analysing qualitative data.<sup>1</sup> Punch defines grounded theory as a ‘research strategy whose purpose is to generate theory from data.’<sup>2</sup> Strauss and Corbin sum up the essence of grounded theory:

“A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory and then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge.’<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> Keith Punch, *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches* (London, Sage Publications, 1998) p. 163.

<sup>3</sup> Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (Newbury Park, California, Sage Publications, 1990).



This quote illustrates the suitability of grounded theory for this research on the relationship between informal politics and party development in Kazakhstan. The topic is a general area and the research is of an exploratory nature. Grounded theory licensed the study to follow a disciplined and logical path to the data by using a systematic set of tools for data collection and analysis. Using the procedures and techniques subscribed within, the approach allowed for the careful and consistent representation of data to provide emergent categories and concepts. This is distinct from an approach that might impose theoretical categories and concepts on the data to match preconceived generalisations and predictions concerning social phenomena. Initially prior to collecting data a more comprehensive formal institutional approach, in the shape of historical institutionalism, was pursued. However, once in the field and, in particular, once the interviews had commenced, it became clear that there was a dynamic occurring underneath the formal institutional level of political parties. This was the informal aspect of the phenomena identified by earlier research connected with informal politics in the region.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the theoretical approach shifted from historical institutionalism to neopatrimonialism and formal party theory as an integrated theoretical framework for understanding the phenomena occurring. Such a shift was not straightforward, as during the data collection process it was clear formal party theory, grounded in the experience of Western industrial democracies, was having little resonance with the data being collected. Conversely, the clan perspective, discussed in the opening chapter, also had minimal reverberation with the phenomena being observed. The issue of tribal affiliation was seen almost unanimously as being of little value as an explanatory factor.<sup>5</sup> The shift in approach towards an integrated model of neopatrimonialism and formal party theory was driven and grounded in the data. Realising that preconceived categories were failing to account for the phenomena arising in the data the shift in theoretical approach suited the emerging data. This highlights the theoretical sensitivity central to grounded theory.

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<sup>4</sup> I have the work of Kathleen Collins and Edward Schatz in mind here which were both discussed in the introductory chapter. However, as I mentioned in the same chapter, I do not agree fully with the conclusions of their work and the complete salience they give to informal identities. Instead, as proposed in this work, there is an interaction and relationship between the informal and formal.

<sup>5</sup> This was revealed by formal interviews with elites and also informal conversations with local citizens.

## *1.2 Theoretical sensitivity*

Theoretical sensitivity is a term that if anything is a prescribed human quality necessary for the development of a theory from data. Strauss and Corbin argue it is an 'attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and the capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't.'<sup>6</sup> There are several ways in which a researcher can achieve theoretical sensitivity. A researcher will come to the data with a background in the literature that can help sensitise them to the phenomena being observed. Bringing this background knowledge and insight is beneficial to providing data comprehension and inter-connection. As mentioned above, prior literature was important in enabling the research to be guided by the data being collected. Existing knowledge of previous research explaining some of the informal forms of phenomena occurring in the political life of Kazakhstan enabled a shift in the research from the purely formal aspects of understanding party development to the realisation that party development occurred in a terrain between the informal neopatrimonial political regime and the formal institutional aspect of party development.

What makes theoretical sensitivity particularly useful is its development through an analytic process. Quite simply, this can involve 'collecting and asking questions about the data, making comparisons, thinking about what you see, making hypotheses, and developing small theoretical frameworks (mini frameworks) about concepts and their relationships'.<sup>7</sup> This was a crucial aspect of the research process. The initial round of interviews with experts and analysts revealed problems with the conceptual and formal theoretical approach taken out into the field, thus leading to a re-examination of the theoretical approach which had an impact on the research. For example, early on it became apparent the presidential administration was heavily involved in managing and shaping party development based on the principle of loyalty to Nazarbaev. While being conscious of this prior to entering the field, I was not alert to the extent to which this was the case. It raised some interesting questions regarding the degree to which the principle of loyalty stretched and what other forms of informal personal politics influenced formal party development? Moreover, how should the relationship between the formal and informal be conceptualised and

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<sup>6</sup> Strauss and J Corbin, *Op. Cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 43.



understood within the current literature on Kazakhstan, Central Asia and the Former Soviet Union?

Theoretical sensitivity is also achieved by cultivating scepticism with regards to concepts and categories developed through background literature. Through such a process it is possible to maintain the rigorousness of the study by making sure concepts and categories are only provisional until they are supported by actual data. In the case of this research, scepticism with regards to the clan literature, and the central idea that kin and familial relations were the key identity in which politics was played out, and uncertainty with regards to the utility of formal institutional theory or formal party theory on their own, led to a synthesis between the two to fit the nature of the data which emerged. From the initial doubt regarding both the informal clan approach and a formal institutional approach it was possible to construct an integrated theoretical framework based on neopatrimonialism and aspects of formal party theory.

### *1.3 Criticism of grounded theory*

Despite its wide use amongst qualitative researchers grounded theory has its detractors. The major criticism is the extent to which it is truly possible that researchers can suspend any awareness of concepts or categories until the later stage of the research process.<sup>8</sup> Grounded theory stresses that categories and concepts should emerge directly from the data and should not be obscured by pre-conceived concepts and categories. However, as demonstrated in this research, it is difficult to approach data collection without any prior notion or assumptions regarding concepts and categories. This represents a challenge to any researcher attempting to use grounded theory. However, as long as correct procedures are followed concepts and categories that do arise will still emerge tightly linked to the data as demonstrated above.

There are practical issues to employing grounded theory. The procedures used for the actual analysis of the data can be time consuming. The time taken to transcribe an interview can make it difficult for researchers to carry out genuine grounded

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<sup>8</sup>M. Bulmer, 'Concepts in the Analysis of Qualitative Data', *Sociological Review*, Vol. 27, 1979, pp. 651-77.

theory analysis with its constant interplay of data collection and conceptualisation.<sup>9</sup> This was certainly the case during this research, and moreover, the great quantity of data collected can place pressure on the researcher to make judgements on which parts of data to concentrate analysis on. This illustrates how the researcher is inextricably involved with making decisions on which aspects of the data are important and pertinent. This goes against the objective nature of grounded theory where the aim has been to uncover a reality that is external from social actors.<sup>10</sup> The constructivist approach taken in this work is certainly at odds with this aspect of grounded theory, but other scholars have put forward a constructivist interpretation of grounded theory where 'categories, concepts and the theoretical level of analysis emerge from the researcher's interaction within the field and questions about the data.'<sup>11</sup>

The most prominent criticism of grounded theory is its limited capability in producing widely generalisable theory. Rather, such an approach tends to produce substantive work that is specific to certain phenomena. While research such as this is substantive and in depth it does have significant value for further comparative research. From a regional perspective this research has universal value and provides the building blocs of comparative research with party development in other former Soviet states. On a wider level it can speak to us about the development of authoritarianism and the role of political parties in that process. Despite these slight limitations, grounded theory still provided the most appropriate strategy for research on the relationship between the informal neopatrimonial regime and formal party development in Kazakhstan.

## **2. Data Collection: Methods and Process**

As is usual for a study based on a qualitative approach, the research utilised a multi-method approach to data collection. This included interviews, documentary data and observation.

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<sup>9</sup> Bryman, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 395-396.

<sup>10</sup> K. Charmaz, 'The Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods' in N. K. Dezin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, (Thousand Oaks, California, Sage Publications, 2000) pp. 509-535

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* p. 522.



### 2.1 Semi-structured interviews

Among the varying interview formats, this study applied the semi-structured format as distinguished by Fontana and Frey.<sup>12</sup> Semi-structured interviews are characterised by the use of open-ended questions with few pre-set categories for answers. The interviewer has a series of questions they may use, and while letting the respondent speak freely around the subject matter, the interviewer will prompt discussion with pre-established questions. While the respondent will be allowed to explain their feelings, understandings and interpretations of events and phenomena, the aim is to not let the interview drift off into an unstructured discussion.

This study involved intensive interviewing of party elites. The elite interview has particular advantages in that: it can help interpret documents and reports, aid the interpretation of personalities involved in decision making, provide information not recorded elsewhere and it can assist the researcher in establishing networks and access to other individuals.<sup>13</sup> Difficulties lie, however, in obtaining a representative sample, as requests for interviews can be rejected.<sup>14</sup> For the purpose of this research the aim was to speak to a selection of party elites from all political parties in Kazakhstan at both the regional and central level. This was not entirely possible as no members of the Party of Patriots were willing to be interviewed, while in the party *Adilet* (Justice) central elites were not forthcoming for interview and at the same time no regional elites from *Atameken* were prepared to be interviewed. It was also important to get a balance between both opposition and pro-presidential parties. This was for two reasons. Firstly, opposition parties are more forthcoming for interviews and therefore there was a danger the data would be heavily weighted in their views and opinions. Secondly, as *Nur Otan* is clearly the most important party in terms of its role in the political process and its connection with informal political relations and behaviour, it was central to the success of the research to have the views and opinions of its representatives weighted appropriately in the data. The table below sets out explicitly the sample breakdown for party elites interviews.

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<sup>12</sup> A. Fontana, and J. H. Frey, 'Interviewing: The Art of Science', in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (Thousand Oaks, California, Sage Publications, 1994).

<sup>13</sup> D. Richards, 'Elite Interviewing: Approaches and Pitfalls' *Politics*, Vol. 16, 1996, p. 200.

<sup>14</sup> There are other drawbacks. For example, the reliability of the interviewee can be questionable due to poor memory recollection, the willingness to be portrayed in a positive light, and the overall subjective nature of the process.

*Table 2.1 Interview Sample Breakdown by Political Party*

Party	Number of Interviews conducted	Number of central party elites	Number of regional party elites
<i>Ak Zhol</i>	2	1	1
<i>Alga</i>	4	3	1
<i>Atameken</i>	1	1	0
<b>Communist Party of Kazakhstan</b>	3	2	1
<b>Communist Peoples Party of Kazakhstan</b>	2	1	1
<b>Democratic Party Adilet</b>	1	0	1
<b>Nationwide Social Democratic Party</b>	3	2	1
<i>Nur Otan</i>	7	6	1
<b>Party of Patriots</b>	0	0	0
<i>Rukhaniyat</i>	3	2	1
<b>Social Democratic Party 'Auyl'</b>	3	2	1
<i>Nagiz Ak Zhol (as of 2008, Azat)</i>	4	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11</b>

Throughout this chapter and this work references are made to party elites, but who are party elites and why is there a focus on party elites as opposed to party members? Party elites are those figures within a political party who hold key positions within the party apparatus and are central to the development of the party as an organisation. They are not necessarily responsible for policy or ideology but are situated in the upper echelons of the party hierarchy at both the central and regional level. Party elites are distinct from ordinary party members and supporters by their greater degree of influence within the party organisation. The decision to focus solely on party elites was based on the understanding that political parties in Kazakhstan clearly demonstrate oligarchic characteristics and weak party membership. While attempts were made to gain access to general party membership those efforts were generally rebuffed and the research remained concentrated on party elites. The research reveals parties in Kazakhstan are elite led political institutions, generally constructed to serve the interests of elite groups or particular political personalities and the interview sample reflects this.



Identifying which party elites to speak to was achieved through a process of early stage supplementary interviews with regional experts. 20 semi-structured interviews were held with leading local experts and academics, representatives from regional and international NGOs and local journalists (see Figure 2.2 for breakdown). These interviews were an invaluable source for three reasons. Firstly, they provided the context and the basis on which party elites were identified for interview. Secondly, the process helped to sketch out the major themes to be addressed in the main interviews. Thirdly, these supplementary interviews provided excellent and well-grounded sources in themselves. In particular they offered a more objective balance to the partisan nature of party elite interviews.

*Table 2.2 Interview Sample of Supplementary Interviews*

<b>Journalists</b>	<b>International NGOs</b>	<b>Local NGOs</b>	<b>Local Political Scientists</b>	<b>Total</b>
2	4	8	7	21

Initially participants from the supplementary interviews were asked for their opinion on who were the most appropriate party elites to speak to. From this a provisional list was drawn up that provided the basis of the interview sample. The supplementary participants also supplied initial contact details. Once initial interviews were conducted the method of snowballing was used. In this method, participants are asked if they can recommend other people in their party for interview and as such the sample develops through a process of gradual accumulation.

### *2.2 Designing and Conducting Interviews*

Interview questions were designed to take into account the position and history of the person being interviewed as well a set of standardised questions regarding party development. Interview questions were used in a flexible and varied manner to ensure particular expertise could be maximised. For example, in the instance of interviewing a journalist specific questions were addressed on political parties' access to the media and the varying degree of media bias towards specific parties. A series of standardised questions were also asked, addressing major themes within Kazakh party development. These questions explored general themes regarding the extent of party development, the role and influence of the regime on political parties,

the link between business groups and parties, the impact of specific constitutional laws on political party development and public attitudes towards political parties. With party elites a similar approach was taken in that a portion of interview questions varied depending on the political profile of the person being interviewed and the political party they were attached to. Again, at the same time, there were a series of standardised interview questions relating to party organisation, ideologies and party history. The aim of designing and conducting the interviews in this manner was to take advantage of either the specialism of the participant or their centrality to certain crucial political events.

All participants were contacted in the first instance by telephone with the aid of a research assistant. A clear explanation was given regarding the nature of the research, the institutional affiliation, the funding bodies supporting the research and the reason why the participant was being contacted.<sup>15</sup> On some occasions participants requested a formal invite through fax and advance questions. In each instance this was provided. All of these actions represent a common approach to contacting potential participants.<sup>16</sup> Those participants who agreed to be interviewed were given the opportunity to suggest the location of the interview site. Most were comfortable conducting the interview in their office, while a few preferred designated cafés or hotel lobbies. At the beginning of the interview the participant was presented with a Participant Information Sheet detailing the aims and themes of the research, issues of confidentiality and contact information. All participants were asked if they were comfortable with the interview being taped. Only a few objected and in those cases extensive interview notes were taken.

With the exception of a few interviews most were conducted in Russian<sup>17</sup> with the aid of a translator.<sup>18</sup> There are methodological dangers in using a translator in that it potentially challenges the validity of the data. Precautions were taken to ensure translations of both questions and answers were accurately reflected. First, the

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<sup>15</sup> The fieldwork component of the research was funded specifically by the Leverhulme Trust.

<sup>16</sup> See Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, p. 114.

<sup>17</sup> Interviews are conducted in Russian as opposed to Kazakh due to the fact Russian remains the language of the elite. While Kazakh is recognised as the main state language, Russian continues to be the dominant language within the country and especially among the elite. Constitutionally Russian is recognised as the language of inter-ethnic communication.

<sup>18</sup> A few were conducted in English.



translator had a good knowledge of political language and the politics of Kazakhstan. This ensured the translation of political terms were not confused with similar phrases which may have a more conventional and common meaning. Second, my overall comprehension of Russian language was more than sufficient to pick up on inconsistencies in how the question may have been addressed. Third, a translator was also useful for picking up on subtle cultural references not always noticed by non-native speakers. Finally, there was a great deal of trust and a good working relationship with the translator which meant if any problems arose in translation they were discussed and dealt with prior to the next interview. Thus, for these reasons the validity of the data emerging from the interviews was not compromised due to translation.

### *2.3 Problems with Interviews*

There are, of course, drawbacks to using interviews as a source of data collection. As Silverman has highlighted there is an issue as to whether interview responses 'can be treated as direct access to experience or as actively constructed narratives.'<sup>19</sup> Due to the constructivist and interpretive approach taken in this work it would be fitting to see the responses from participants as constructed narratives where the data collected represents *their* interpretation of *their* experience of reality. Nevertheless, accounts produced from interviews might be inaccurate, with the participants pushing forward their own agenda.<sup>20</sup> Even when accounts might be a genuine reflection of a person's experience, there could be other factors concerning those circumstances or events to which the participant is not aware resulting in an incomplete account. These drawbacks indicate a better understanding of events can be achieved by first hand experience of the phenomena and other types of sources directly related to the events being researched.<sup>21</sup> The need to supplement interview data with other forms of sources was central to the methodology of this research. In addition to the interview data, documentary and observational sources were used to contextualise and triangulate the data from interviews.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> D. Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research* (London, Sage Publications, 2000), p.45.

<sup>20</sup> T. May, *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* (Buckingham, Open University Press, 2001).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. 144.

<sup>22</sup> The topic of triangulation is discussed in Section 2.5.

There were several practical issues that arose in relation to the interview process. As referred to earlier, access to important participants is a problem. In this instance, while opposition parties such as *Nagiz Ak Zhol* (True Bright Path) and OSDP (All-National Social Democratic Party) were willing and accessible participants, the leading pro-presidential party *Nur Otan*, and some of the smaller presidential parties such as *Adilet* (Justice) and the Party of Patriots were less enthusiastic contributors. Their scepticism is drawn from wariness towards Westerners asking probing questions regarding the politics of the country and in light of remnant Cold War attitudes is understandable and to be expected. Gaining access to *Nur Otan* was important for this study, as they are quantitatively the largest and most prominent party in the country. A research project on party development in Kazakhstan not featuring interviews with elites from *Nur Otan* would be of considerably less value. Nevertheless, a commitment of continued contact with the organisation or a particular administrative or secretarial person in the organisation can have benefits. Persistence demonstrates the participant is key to the research and the researcher is neither a salesman nor a secret agent.<sup>23</sup> Eventually, a breakthrough is made and the participant becomes a much more willing interviewee. This was certainly the case with *Nur Otan*, once a breakthrough had been made and a senior representative of the Political Council had been interviewed it became far easier to enlist other interviewees in the party, as the initial participant recommended other figures and was provided as a reference in encouraging others to participate. In some circumstances the smaller pro-presidential parties were simply unwilling to be involved no matter how many phone calls and faxes were sent. With no member of the Party of Patriots prepared to be interviewed there was little to be done and the research had to go forward without their contribution to the data set.

The interview itself can be fraught with difficulties. While the idea behind semi-structured interviews is to give a great deal of reign to allow the participant to express their views and perceptions on the topic freely, on occasions the interview can be used as an opportunity for the participant to proselytise against whoever, or whatever they see fit. Consequently, the interview can drift from the main themes the researcher is attempting to address. This occurred on a few occasions with party

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<sup>23</sup> See Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, p. 114.



elites and in those instances all that could be done was to steer the interviewee back on to the subject of interest. Even on the occasions when this did occur interesting alternative details emerged ensuring the interview was not entirely redundant. Nevertheless, managing such instances was best achieved by a flexible approach. Questions were reformulated during the interview to take account of the tack the interviewee was taking.

Typically there are ethical issues which have to be addressed in any study involving human participants, as an interview inquiry is a moral enterprise.<sup>24</sup> While party elites may not need the protection required of research that involves the general public, they do require certain safeguards with regards to their confidentiality. Even though party elites, political scientists, members from NGOs and journalists are used to making public statements and being interviewed, the nature of some of the questions were sensitive in light of the authoritarian political system in Kazakhstan. Therefore, all participants were offered explicit confidentiality at the beginning of the interview. Interviewees had the option of either: having their full name and position attributed to their statements and transcripts, being attributed only by their positional title, or to remain anonymous. Only three of the participants in the party elite sample took anonymity, the remainder were happy to be fully attributed. With the supplementary interviews a larger number wished to take anonymity especially those involved in local and international NGOs as there is the remote potential for them to receive harassment if their comments found their way into the public domain in Kazakhstan. All interviewees were coded during the transcription and analytical process.

#### *2.4 Documentary Data*

Documentary data was the main source which underpinned the data that emerged from interviews. Defined as, things that we can read and which relate to some aspect of the social world, documents have long been a source of data in the social sciences. Clearly this includes those things 'intended to record the social world – official reports, for example – but also private and personal records such as letters, diaries

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<sup>24</sup> Steinar Kvale, *Interviews: An Introduction of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oakes, Sage Publications, 1996), pp. 109-123.

and photographs.’<sup>25</sup> There were three central forms of documentary sources used in this study: primary documents, secondary documents and websites.

Primary documents, including party publications and official state documents, formed an important part of documentary sources. In terms of party documents, party programs, charters, newspapers and election manifestos were central to outlining the formal attributes of parties in Kazakhstan. Formal documents such as party programs, charters and manifestos were attained either directly from the parties, through their websites or through several specific directories published in the Russian language.<sup>26</sup> Access to party newspapers was less straightforward and proved problematic in terms of comparability of data. Not all political parties published newspapers and of those that did some only had the financial resources to publish them intermittently. Some were prone to title changes thus further making data completeness troublesome. The publication of newspapers by opposition parties, while more frequent, suffered from limited distribution. Access proved problematic. Party newspapers were not held in the national library (with the exception of *Nur Otan’s* affiliated paper *Strana i mir* (The Country and the World) and parties themselves failed to keep a library of their publications. From a data collection perspective, the variability of access and the incomplete collection of newspapers available made equal data comparability between parties evidently difficult. Other forms of primary documents included formal state documents such as constitutional laws, election results and state statistics. These were generally procured from libraries and governmental websites and were widely available and easily accessible.

Secondary sources such as newspapers, books, journals and analytic reports also formed a core basis of documentary data. A varied assortment of newspapers espousing different perspectives was sought. In Kazakhstan, generally speaking, there is a lack of independent voices in the media. Viewpoints of newspapers are either broadly pro-governmental or oppositional. Pro-regime newspapers, evidently,

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<sup>25</sup> K. Macdonald, and C. Tipton, ‘Using Documents’ in N. Gilbert (ed.) *Researching Social Life*, (London, Sage Publications, 1993) p. 188.

<sup>26</sup> There have been several directories related to political parties in Kazakhstan that have been published since independence. All were very useful sources for this study with the most recent providing the most up to date relevant information. See, for example, the most recent edition, Iuri Buluktaev and Andrei Chebotarev, *Politicheskie Partii Kazakhstana 2004 god* (Almaty, Kompleks, 2004).



are far more accessible than oppositional newspapers whose distribution is limited to mainly the two major cities in the country, Almaty and Astana. However, importantly for this study, some newspapers are connected to particular elite groups and therefore, are useful tools for exploring the political interests of these informal elite groups which otherwise might be very difficult to examine.<sup>27</sup> Due to newspapers either going out of circulation, being closed down or being sold to new owners under new titles, comprehensive data collection is difficult. Historical editions were sourced from the National Library in Almaty as well as the Library of the Kazakhstan Institute of Management, Economics and Strategic Research (KIMEP) and the Library of the Academy of Sciences. The dates of newspapers researched were concentrated on the post-Soviet period roughly from 1991 onwards. The focus was primarily on periods related specifically to events of interest in this research for example, elections (1994, 1995, 1999, 2004 and 2007) and crucial events such as the different waves of elite fragmentation (1998, 2001 and 2004). Moreover, due to the increased frequency of phenomena related to political parties and informal politics occurring while out in the field, there was a central spotlight on contemporary editions of newspapers too. The focus on specific periods within the post-Soviet context and contemporary editions was preferred as documentary data was not the central source of data. Rather it was used to produce confirmation of findings provided by interview data. Moreover, it was not practical to trawl all backdated years of newspapers due to time constraints.

Books, journals and other documents such as analytic reports were also collected as part of the research. Many were accessed from the National Library, the library at KIMEP and the Academy of Sciences. Websites were an essential form of documentary data. Many of the political parties maintain websites and these provided crucial sources for party programmes, charters and party news and events. Websites provided news and information on regional and national party activity as well as key statements of party leaderships. Two websites provided great sources for up to date political information. Kub.kz and Zonakz.net, while predominantly

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<sup>27</sup> I will not detail here the affiliation between elite groups and newspapers, as this will arise throughout the work. Furthermore, the nature of the media industry in Kazakhstan is that newspaper titles can change ownership every few years and therefore mapping ownership is not straightforward. Ownership is opaque and sometimes based on rumour and speculation and consequently cannot always be qualitatively proved.

oppositional in nature, do provide links to varied articles and sources. In summary, documentary sources in all three forms provided a varied and invaluable series of sources acting in a supplementary fashion providing correlation with interview data.

### *2.5 Observation*

The research also applied incidental forms of observation, although it has to be stressed this did not form the backbone of the data collection, but was of a supplementary and ad-hoc nature. Classically observation, as a form of research, is defined as 'acts of noting a phenomenon, often with instruments, and recording it for scientific purposes'.<sup>28</sup> Observation can 'guide us in forging paths of action and interpreting the action of others'.<sup>29</sup> In this research, an ad-hoc form of non-participatory form of observation was used.

The observation undertaken can be divided into two categories: formal and incidental. Formal observation took the form of press conferences held by parties, party rallies and public forms of protest. This form of observation was formal in the sense that those participating were presenting themselves openly for public interest. Formal observation enabled the notation and accounting of the formal actions of party leaderships and, as in the case of organised protests, the reaction of the authorities to opposition public meetings. Incidental forms of observation entailed the discreet observation of party offices when interviewing party elites.<sup>30</sup> These forms of observational data collection were not as systematic as either the interview or documentary forms but provided an additional and complementary improvised form of data collection which assisted in strengthening the overall data set.

### *2.6 Triangulation*

This work employed the technique of triangulation. For Arksey and Knight 'the basic idea of triangulation is that data are obtained from a wide range of different

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<sup>28</sup> W. Morris (Ed.), *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English language*, (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1973) cited in P.A. Alder, and P. Alder, 'Observational Techniques' in N. K. Dezin and Y. S. Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (Thousand Oaks, California, Sage Publications, 1994), p. 377.

<sup>29</sup> Alder and Alder, Op. Cit., p. 377.

<sup>30</sup> For example, when interviewing the Communist Party leader Serikbolsyn Abdil'din, the lack of any form of communist party paraphernalia in his office illustrated the party's shift from explicit Marxist-Leninist ideology to an altogether more social democratic ideology.



and multiple sources, using a variety of methods, investigators or theories'.<sup>31</sup> Clearly, as has been set out above, this study uses not only multiple methods of data collection but the integrated theoretical framework put forward in the previous chapter. This approach applies various theoretical tools to examine the relationship between the informal and formal in Central Asian politics. Triangulation is considered to have two central purposes. It can contribute towards the *confirmation* of hypotheses which is a suitable proposition for positivist studies.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand triangulation can aid the *completeness* of research.<sup>33</sup> Central to the completeness conceptualisation of triangulation is the idea that phenomena should be viewed from different angles and with different methods in order to aid the understanding of the complexity of a situation. Completeness sits well with qualitative methods and is an appropriate conceptualisation of triangulation for this work.

Following Denzin's four-fold typology of types of triangulation the data form was applied.<sup>34</sup> The research utilised multiple sources of data collection as detailed above in order to gain a more complete understanding of the relationship between informal politics and party development. The use of triangulation has strengthened and given more confidence to the central findings of the research, aiding the reliability and validity of the study. The cross referencing of data across multiple sources ensured the reliability of conclusions drawn from the data. This was achieved by only referring to a particular phenomenon if it could be cross-referenced with at least two sources within the complete data set during the data analysis process.

### 3. Data Analysis

Data analysis and data collection are not mutually exclusive activities. They are reciprocal procedures working in tandem and feeding off each other. A linear

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<sup>31</sup> H. Arksey and P., Knight, *Interviewing for Social Scientists* (London, Sage Publications, 1999), p. 21.

<sup>32</sup> N. K. Denzin, *The Research Act in Sociology: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods* (London, Butterworths, 1970).

<sup>33</sup> T. D. Jick, 'Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Method: Triangulation in Action', in J. Van Maanen (ed.), *Qualitative Methodology*, (London, Sage Publication, 1983) pp. 135-48.

<sup>34</sup> Denzin highlights four different techniques of triangulation: the methodological; data; investigator; and theoretical forms.

movement from collection to analysis would be a simplification of the two processes. Central to grounded theory, data analysis occurs throughout and alongside the collection of data. Indeed, analysis can help drive a greater precision in the data collection process. Early forms of analysis can concentrate a researcher's collection of data. In the case of this research data collection and analysis occurred as mutual processes and assisted in leading the research to focus on the relationship between the formal and informal. As consistent with grounded theory three forms of analysis were applied to the data: open, axial, and selective coding. These procedures of coding were not necessarily carried out sequentially rather they were overlapping concurrent procedures.<sup>35</sup>

### *3.1 Open Coding*

According to Strauss and Corbin 'open coding is the part of the process that pertains specifically to the naming and categorising of phenomena through close examination of data'.<sup>36</sup> Open coding is a procedure whereby data are broken down, carefully examined, and compared for similarities and differences. The process involves asking questions so as to reach a set of categories pertaining to the data. It could involve the taking apart of a sentence in an interview, an observation, or a paragraph in a newspaper. Following this a label is placed on phenomena to conceptualise and make sense of the data. The labelling process creates a set of concepts which are then grouped together under categories. Categories emerge 'when concepts are compared one against another and appear to pertain a similar phenomenon'.<sup>37</sup> The next step is to develop the category in terms of its properties and dimensions. Properties are attributes and characteristics of a phenomenon, for example, variation in differing attributes, while dimensions are the range within each property, for example the frequency of occurrence. The properties and dimensions of categories can assist in the development of relationships between categories allowing the researcher to take the analysis to the next level of abstraction. Strauss and Corbin note three ways in which open coding can be approached; through a line-by-line analysis, an analysis of sentences and paragraphs, or an analysis of an entire document. In this study all three approaches were applied.

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<sup>35</sup> Punch, *Op. Cit.*, p. 210.

<sup>36</sup> Strauss and J Corbin, *Op. Cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* p. 61.



As the interview process gathered steam a series of categories began to appear through a sentence and paragraph analysis of the interview transcripts. These concepts were also cross-referenced with data from other sources, primarily documentary. For the purpose of identifying early stage categories, documentary data were generally analysed as an entire document, although some sentence-by-sentence analysis did occur. This illustrates a multiplicity of analytical approaches to open coding and the practical use of triangulation. The dimensions of these categories were also identified by their frequency of appearance in the interview data and their relative strength within other forms of data.<sup>38</sup> In an interpretative sense this enabled the more important forms of categories to emerge as central to the phenomenon of party development. At this early stage of analysis the formal and informal dichotomy emerged as significant factor. Thus, categories at this stage were tagged as either possessing informal or formal properties. The formal were defined as those that represented official phenomena in relation to party development and the informal - those phenomena that were viewed as influencing party development but had no official nature or capacity or went beyond official jurisdiction. For example, the Central Election Commission (CEC) formally oversaw the electoral process, however, in the analysis of interview data the CEC was observed as being involved in the informal interpretation of formal rules in favour of pro-presidential parties. This happened, for example, by not releasing the official protocols of election results. This example was backed up by documentary reports such as those published by the OSCE as well as opposition parties' information on this issue.

### *3.2 Axial Coding*

Axial coding is 'where the main categories which have emerged from the open coding are interconnected with each other'.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, axial coding concerns the inter-relating of categories developed through open coding. Inter-relation is achieved

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<sup>38</sup> The process of relative strength of categories in conjunction with the documentary data set was essentially an interpretive task and dependent on the data collected. It has to be acknowledged that relevant data to a category could have been missed in the data collection process and therefore, reducing the relative strength of a particular category. To ensure the validity of categories and their emergence in the analytical process a constant process of review occurred. Essentially this entailed returning to the categories created and reviewing them in light of any new or emerging data, either in the form of interview transcripts, new documentary evidence or notations from formal and incidental observation.

<sup>39</sup> Punch, Op. Cit., p. 215.

by the use of a theoretical code which is a coding paradigm that describes a set of concepts used for making connections between categories. There has, however, been a debate amongst the creators of grounded theory about what these theoretical codes should be. For example, Glaser highlights a set of coding families<sup>40</sup> highlighting 18 ways in which connections between categories can occur.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand Strauss and Corbin formulated an 'interactionist coding paradigm.'<sup>42</sup> Their paradigm concentrates on identifying casual conditions, context, intervening conditions, action/interaction strategies, and consequences.<sup>43</sup> Glaser countered Strauss and Corbin by criticising their sole use of an interactionist paradigm, suggesting the paradigm pre-subscribes codes upon the data rather than allowing it to emerge as the analysis proceeds.<sup>44</sup>

A form of axial coding had already begun during the open coding process by the delimitation of informal and formal forms of categories. However, the axial coding process saw a more systematic inter-relation of categories with the grouping together of categories under more conceptual headings. The issue in this study was what the theoretical framework was going to begin to make sense of the inter-relation between categories. Following Strauss and Corbin's interactionist paradigm there was a concentration in trying to make the connections between the categories in relation to their casual conditions and context. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, various theoretical frameworks had been considered before and during data collection but what clearly began to emerge in the axial coding process was that formal party development was distinctly occurring in an informal context. What emerged were six general codes in which categories could be placed under in relation to the development of political parties in Kazakhstan; the role of the personal leadership of Nursultan Nazarbaev, the role of informal behaviour in the shape of patronage or patron-client relations, the connection between parties, politics and inter-elite factional groups, the formal institutional constraints of political parties, the internal structural condition of parties (their organisation, ideology and behavioural characteristics) and the link between parties and society.

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<sup>40</sup> B. Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity*, (California, The Sociology Press, 1978).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. pp. 72-82.

<sup>42</sup> See Punch, *Introduction to Social Research*.

<sup>43</sup> Strauss and J Corbin, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 99-107.

<sup>44</sup> B. Glaser, *Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis*, (Mill Valley, CA, sociology Press, 1992).



These groups were identified through a process of noting the casual conditions, context, intervening conditions and interactional strategies of a phenomena.<sup>45</sup> For example, an early open coding category that emerged was the perception that parties were elite and personalistically oriented with some surfacing from disaffected factions of the ruling elite. Using Strauss and Corbin's paradigm, the analysis sought to unpack the nature of this phenomenon by reference to its underlying contextual and causal conditions. Figure 2.3 below demonstrates how this works in relation to the phenomenon of elite based parties.

*Figure 2.3 Example of Axial Coding Process*

<b>Causal Conditions</b>	<b>Phenomena</b>
Inter-elite conflict	Elite and personalistic based parties
Personal ambition	
Protection of economic and political interests	
Presidential power consolidation	
<b>Properties of Causal Conditions</b>	<b>Specific Dimensions of Phenomena</b>
Varied access to economic resources	Different Elite cliques
Different periods of elite fragmentation	Relationship with president
Perception of public popularity	Party organisation, ideology and behavioural norms
Financial Resources	
Patron-client networks	
<b>Context</b>	
Privatisation	
Presidential patronage	
Weak civil society	
Cultural and Structural Legacies	
Uncertain and contingent political and economic transition	
<b>Presidential Strategies for Managing Conflict</b>	
Devising institutional constraints to manage new elite oppositional parties	
Strengthening of personal grip on power	
<b>Intervening Conditions</b>	
Public support for new parties (or for president)	
International pressure on constraints placed on new parties	

The underlying causations of elite and personalistic-based parties were their materialisation from inter-elite conflict driven by the personal ambitions and political and economic interests of their creators. From this it is possible to breakdown the

<sup>45</sup> Strauss and J Corbin, *Op. Cit.*, p. 100.

properties of casual conditions, the context, strategies for management and intervening conditions as illustrated by Figure 2.3. It was through this process the six overarching codes emerged. What is most notable about the above figure is how it is possible to observe an interlinking between the central codes identified, and it is through precisely this process it is possible to unpack a far broader abstract picture regarding the relationship between informal politics and party development in Kazakhstan. This wider analysis is constructed through the process of selective coding.

### *3.3 Selective Coding*

Selective coding is aimed at selecting a single core category and delimiting 'the theoretical analysis and development to those parts of the data that relate to this core category.'<sup>46</sup> The idea behind selective coding is to amalgamate and combine the unfolding analysis around a core category through which the other categories will interact. Once a decision has been made to what the core category will be, Strauss and Corbin suggest using the concept of a storyline to provide consistent integration. A storyline should not just be a descriptive narrative pertaining to the data and categories centred on the core category, but an analytical narrative. Integration can be achieved by the identification of patterns during the axial coding procedure. What occurs is 'a web, a network of conceptual relationships already there, though somewhat loose and tangled, that the analyst will have to sort out and refine later during his or her selective coding.'<sup>47</sup> Selective coding uses the same techniques that can be found in open and axial coding but at a much higher level of abstraction.<sup>48</sup> Once the data, centred on a core category and storyline, are integrated and related at the conceptual, property, and dimensional levels it is possible to begin building a theory. The grounding of theory occurs in its validation. That is, statements of relationships within the theory need to be validated against the data. Once validity has been accounted for, and any missing gaps within the data filled, the final product will be a theory grounded within the data.<sup>49</sup> It has to be noted, however, this work does not claim to produce any grand theory. Using grounded theory does not mean a theory has to be produced. Rather, the techniques inherent in grounded theory ensure

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<sup>46</sup> Punch, *Op. Cit.*, p. 216.

<sup>47</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Op. Cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>48</sup> Punch, *Introduction to Social Research*.

<sup>49</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 129-142.



the central findings of the research are valid and reliable due to their grounding in the data.

The isolated central category of this research was the informal/formal dichotomy. Here the overarching theoretical explanatory framework presented in the previous chapter helped to concentrate the storyline locating the development of political parties in the terrain between informal politics. The axial coding process underlined the interlinking connections between categories. The central codes in the axial coding process also formed the key properties in the core informal/formal category. From this emerges the central argument of the thesis that the informal condition of the neopatrimonial regime, personal loyalty, patron-client relations and inter-elite conflict, is influencing the formal development of political parties in Kazakhstan. At the same time, however, it illustrates that some formal elements of party development are emerging to contextualise, consolidate and legitimise informal political relations and behaviour. It shows how overall the informal context allows the president to place the institutional constraints on emerging parties that are driving them towards being elite-led and de-ideological institutions thus correlating to their weak link with wider society. To fit this overarching storyline and argument categories are arranged to validate the relationships between them, usually based on triangulation. Validation can emerge through a series of patterns that occurred during the axial coding process. For example, a constant pattern of patron-client relationships emerged which underlined the president's grip on power. In sum, the interconnected web of categories centred on the six central codes provides the core framework of the analytical storyline which explain the relationship between informal forms of politics and party development. The conclusions and explanations drawn from this, and what this says about party development in informal regimes and the former Soviet Union in general are grounded in the data and in the systematic analysis of the data following open, axial and selective coding procedures.

#### **4. Concluding Remarks**

This chapter simply sought to outline the methodological underpinnings of the research focussing on the research strategy and analysis of this study, highlighting at the same time the problems that arise with researching the relationship between informal politics and party development. The chapter presented a clear, structured and consistent methodological path to answer the central research questions. The use of grounded theory has demonstrated that the conclusions of the research are grounded in the data and are subject to an analytical rigour to uphold the reliability and validity of the research. It provided a methodological framework which gives an analytical consistency to the chapters that follow, making clear how the conclusions and explanation of the research, despite their interpretative nature, are grounded solidly in the data. It makes apparent the link between the informal and formal in Kazakhstan and the complexity and dynamics of this relationship. The following four chapters present the core of the research in which the data used has been collected and analysed under the terms set out here. The next chapter begins this process by firstly outlining the context of Kazakhstan's informal neopatrimonial regime and its development over time.



### **Chapter Three: Uncertain Transition: The Emergence of a Neopatrimonial Form of Rule in Kazakhstan**

If the claim is to be made that the dominant feature of Kazakhstan's post-Soviet political development is a regime underpinned by neopatrimonial characteristics, then the questions to be addressed are how did this form of politics emerge? How does it function and manifest itself? What is the context in which informal political relations and behaviour relate to the development of political parties? Scholars of Central Asia have been keen to pursue a cultural and structural legacy explanation for the dominance of informal politics and identity in post-Soviet political development.<sup>1</sup> Certainly, historical legacy is bound to be a particularly vigorous factor in shaping post-Soviet trajectories and influencing political leadership. However, the contingent and uncertain process of political and economic transition, that being newly awarded sovereignty, state, institution and nation building, define the way political actors behave and the kind of relationship that tie them together in collective action.

Scholars exploring the role of informal institutions and practices in the former Soviet Union have made reference to how informal forms of political behaviour and relationships have assisted political actors in minimising transition costs and adjusting to rapidly changing institutional environments to overcome uncertainty.<sup>2</sup> Informal politics in Central Asia and Kazakhstan is not simply explained by historical legacy. Informal forms of politics are not static and are subject to change. Traditional forms of informal political relations and behaviour changed during communist rule, creating a form of patrimonial communism. In the post-Soviet transition, informal political relations and behaviour have fused with new formal institutions (neopatrimonialism). At the same time, their prominence is explained by political actors relying on informal politics as a way to confront the uncertainty of transition. In Kazakhstan since 1991 the challenges from new or altered institutions

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<sup>1</sup> See Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics and Beyond: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan* (Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2004) and Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Vladimir Gel'man, The Unrule of Law in the Making: the Politics of Informal Institution Building in Russia, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 7, 2004, pp. 1021-1040.

such as parliament, political parties and electoral competition have led the political leadership, namely the president, to rely on informal political norms of behaviour and relationships to secure and consolidate power in an effort to confront the instability that arises with transition and new institutions. This in turn generated informal factional elite level competition resulting in a greater degree of political uncertainty and instability. This led to another round of political consolidation where informal politics was once again used. Therefore, the informal forms of political relations and behaviour present in post-Soviet Kazakhstan have arisen specific to this context. What this cyclical process highlights is the complex relationship between informal and formal politics. While formal political rules are established to legitimise the centralisation of presidential power, they are buttressed by informal politics by either acting to legitimise informal political power or being written in such a fashion that they are left open to interpretation and selective application by loyal clients.

This chapter outlines this argument by tracing the overall political development of Kazakhstan and Nazarbaev's neopatrimonial regime since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In doing so it will allow us to understand the context in which informal politics has emerged to influence the development of political parties and other political institutions. It will set out how loyalty and personalism of public office, patron-client relations and factional elite competition have come to play such a central role in political development by highlighting key instances and junctures through Kazakhstan's post Soviet development. The chapter will set the scene and draw out the main players and events that have impacted on the development of political parties, and thus the consolidation of authoritarianism in Kazakhstan. The chapters to follow will explain how the neopatrimonial regime's development described in this chapter has come to affect, influence and in turn been influenced by political parties.

The chapter is broken into five sections. The first explores the historical, cultural and structural legacies of patrimonialism which have been apparent in Central Asian history. The second examines the first years of Kazakh independence from 1990-1994 where institutional competition; emerging pluralism and electoral competition challenged the authority of the president. The third assesses the period from 1995-



1998 where in response to the challenges of early independence the president consolidated power through a formal constitutional framework which was underpinned by a system of patron-client networks. Due to the opaque nature of privatisation, this period witnessed the emergence of factional inter-elite groups. The fourth section traverses the fragmentation of this patron-client system during 1998-2004 whereby high-level elites from government and business made public their opposition to the president's rule and the influence of members of his family. The final section surveys the period from 1999-2007, when the president moved to combat this challenge to his authority by party consolidation, economic centralisation and the liquidation of independent political actors. The chapter concludes by suggesting the nature of presidential power, based on informal and formal power, placed Nazarbaev in a position to direct and construct the formal institutional framework which suits his preferences and interests. It is this institutional framework in which political parties exist and operate.

## **1. Pre-Soviet and Soviet Patrimonialism in Central Asia and Kazakhstan**

### *1.1 Patrimonialism in Pre-Soviet Central Asia*

The argument that neopatrimonialism in Central Asia has its roots in pre-Soviet history due to clan and tribal identities persisting across time and embedding informal clientelistic practices, is certainly strengthened by contemporary research. The pre-Russian administration of the region, which included the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanates of Khiva, and Khokand were politically and social organised on patrimonial principles.<sup>3</sup> Relations between the authorities and subjects consisted of 'relations of piety of the subjects towards the rulers, and that the ruler recruited his administrative staff from servants and followers of his domain.'<sup>4</sup> In the two Khanates the office of Khan (leader) was generally appropriated by the relatives of the predecessor and the Khan sold land or granted it to officials as a reward for the dispensation of their services.<sup>5</sup> Such practices were applied in an attempt to bring

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<sup>3</sup> Prior to being subsumed into the Russian Empire, Kazakhstan had its own Khanate existing from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-eighteenth Centuries. The Kazakh Khanate existed on the territory of modern Southern Kazakhstan. For a good overview of the Kazakh Khanate see Martha Brill Olcott *The Kazakhs* (Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1987) Ch. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Georg Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia: Communal Commitment and Political Order in Change*, (London, RoutledgeCurzon, 2003) p. 130.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 140-141 and 153-156.

order to the dispersed tribal nature of the region.<sup>6</sup> These patrimonial practices were also a product of tribalism, as 'progeny was a preferred resource, since it produced a web of kin-related supporters who could consolidate authority and provide labour'.<sup>7</sup> The cultural legacy of tribal and clan organisation is often proffered as an explanation for the preponderance of informal political behaviour in post-Soviet Central Asia. 'Patrimonialism and mutually beneficial networks of exchange were central to these traditional clans'.<sup>8</sup> The properties of patronage and personalism observable in kinship based clans and tribes have produced enduring social and political networks across temporal space.

Patrimonial forms of rule, whether in macro structures of political and social organisation such as the Khanates or in the micro organisations of clans and tribes, are not static entities. Like the original formation of clans and tribes in Central Asia, which took shape through successive waves of migration and invading armies, patrimonial forms of rule have evolved through interaction with colonial rulers. In the case of the Tsarist administration, while the Russians heavily influenced economic and social organisation by constructing roads and railways, they did not seek to completely transform Central Asian society. Political management was organised on the principle of dualism with two levels of authority existing; a native and a Russian tier of administration.<sup>9</sup> A fusion occurred between the limited modernising attempts of Tsarist colonial rule and the traditional patrimonial forms of relations and behaviour that dominated social, economic and political organisation. Therefore, prior to Bolshevik domination, Kazakhstan and Central Asia remained predominantly tribal societies based on nomadic pastoralism with minimal urban and industrial infrastructure.

### *1.2 Patrimonial Communism*

Pre-Soviet forms of informal political relations and behaviour indicate patrimonialism was central to social and political order. Yet Soviet rule arguably

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Edward Schatz, *Op. Cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p. 72.

<sup>9</sup> Adeb Khalid. *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998)



transformed Central Asian society leaving greater structural and cultural legacies.<sup>10</sup> Soviet hegemony established patrimonial communism, a form of rule which consisted of the interaction between traditional rule and communist political and economic organisation. Soviet rule was to have a vital influence on the structural development of Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

In the first instance, the Bolshevik government was responsible for the establishment of the Central Asian republics. By the end of the civil war in 1921 the Bolshevik government had established control over much of the region<sup>11</sup> and in 1924 the Soviet government 'decided to proceed with the division of Central Asia along national lines'.<sup>12</sup> Bolshevik national delimitation was a strategy to strengthen their position by supporting a policy of self-determination.<sup>13</sup> Equating the ethnic groups of Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Uzbek, Tajik, and Karaalpaks as nations the Bolsheviks sought to create territorial units based on these divisions. As a result, by 1936 the Soviet Socialist Republics (SSRs) of Kazakhstan, Kirgizia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenia came into existence.<sup>14</sup> It is not the scope of this work to discuss the process and problems of delimitation, but what is germane is that the states we comprehend as comprising modern Central Asia stem directly from this process. When the Central Asian Republics became independent states in 1991 they had no previous experience of sovereign statehood.

Rapid industrialisation, collectivisation and sedentarization further illustrate the impact Soviet policies had upon the region.<sup>15</sup> Combined with purges of national elites

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<sup>10</sup> For strong a structural and cultural legacy account of Soviet rule see Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Russian and the New States of Eurasia: The Politics of Upheaval* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1994), Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia* and Ken Jowitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> Geoffrey Wheeler, *The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia* (London. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964).

<sup>12</sup> Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan*, (Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2004) p. 51.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Sabol, The Creation of Central Asia: The 1924 National Delimitation, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1995, pp. 225-241.

<sup>14</sup> Kazakhstan was originally an autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and only received status as a Union Republic in 1936.

<sup>15</sup> The collectivisation and sedentarization of the Kazakh nomads occurred simultaneously from 1929 onwards. The dual process developed at a rapid rate and met considerable resistance. By 1932 70 percent of the population had been settled into collective farms. The costs of collectivisation and sedentarization were high as poor economic organisation and a decline in livestock led to the estimated deaths of 1.5 million Kazakhs through starvation and political violence. For further details



in 1928, 1937-38 and 1949-50, the process of transformation and modernisation had a lasting and overwhelming impact on the peoples and institutions of the region. This was particularly the case with informal political relations. The forms of patronage and patrimonial administration evident in pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia became even more pronounced when integrated with Soviet bureaucratic administration. Due to the economy of scarcity, interpersonal relationships were important in Soviet politics.<sup>16</sup> Gregory Gleason noted that, 'the fusion of political and economic decision making tended to invest formal positions with access to resources'.<sup>17</sup> Within Soviet bureaucracy access to resources rested on having the appropriate personal contact networks. From Stalin to Gorbachev the norm of personal loyalty was an ever-present feature of Soviet political relations at both the central and regional levels. As the Soviet system evolved patronage became the norm for political relations. Under Brezhnev neopatrimonial forms of political relations were ubiquitous. Patronage networks 'grew to include aspiring politicians sponsored by Brezhnev and his top lieutenants'.<sup>18</sup> But patron-client networks did not just exist in the centre, they prevailed at the regional level and nowhere was this more the case than in Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

During the Brezhnev period, loyalty, personalism and patronage became increasingly observable phenomena in the Central Asian republics.<sup>19</sup> Prior to Brezhnev, cadre development had been prone to instability and intermittent purges as local party secretaries were accused of bourgeoisie nationalism and regionalism.<sup>20</sup> Brezhnev, however, afforded first secretaries of the republics the responsibility to appoint cadre. If the belief previously was that local Central Asian elites had been prone to localism and informal tribal practices and needed to be modernised through the processes of collectivisation and sedentarization, then in the Brezhnev era the idea

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of this bleak part of Kazakh history see Martha Brill Olcott *The Kazakhs* (Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 1987). Ch. 8.

<sup>16</sup> Gregory Gleason, *Faith and Loyalty: Informal Authority Structures in Soviet Asia*, *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 43 No. 4, 1991, pp. 613-628.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 619.

<sup>18</sup> John P Willerton, *Patronage and Politics in the USSR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 45.

<sup>19</sup> T. H. Rigby and Bohdan Harasymiw (eds.), *Leadership Selection and Patron-Client Relations in the USSR and Yugoslavia* (Boston, Allen and Unwin, 1983) provides a good overview on the emergence of patron-client ties in the Soviet Union.

<sup>20</sup> See Gleason, *Faith and Loyalty* and James Critchlow, *Corruption, Nationalism, and the Native Elites in Central Asia*, *Journal of Communist Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1988, pp. 143-161.



was to establish a form of indirect rule.<sup>21</sup> What existed during the Brezhnev era was a form of dual authority with power located at both the regional and central levels.<sup>22</sup>

From the late 1950s until the 1980s the first secretaries of the republican communist parties in Central Asia remained largely unchanged (See table 3.1).

*Table 3.1 First Secretaries of the Central Asian Republican Communist Parties*

Republic	CP First Secretary	Entry into Office	Exit from Office
Uzbekistan	Sharaf Rashidov	1959	1983
Kazakhstan	Dinmukhammed Kunaev	1960	1986
Kirghizia	Turdiakun Usubaliev	1961	1985
Turkmenia	Mukhamednazar Gapurov	1969	1986
Tajikistan	Dzhabar Rasulov	1961	1982

(Adapted from James Critchlow, Corruption, Nationalism, and the Native Elites in Central Asia, *Journal of Communist Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1988, pp. 143-161)

As a result, each first secretary was able to construct and embed authority over their respective republic. This was achieved ostensibly through the power to appoint officials which gave first secretaries the opportunity to establish their own vast personal networks of support based on the principle of loyalty in exchange for positions and resources. The long tenure 'of the Central Asian first secretaries enabled them to put their own personal stamp on the republican machinery, as in a fiefdom, appointing their followers to senior posts at both *Oblast* (Regional) and *Raion* (District) level.<sup>23</sup> The Brezhnev era model of governance led to systematic corruption across the Soviet Union which was particularly evident in Central Asia by the 1980s.<sup>24</sup> The cotton scandal in Uzbekistan was the epitome of how patronage and vast personal networks resulted in corruption. Under First Secretary Sharaf Rashidov, a series of regionally based (and some argue kinship based) elite groups had emerged with Rashidov at the centre managing access to resources.<sup>25</sup> In 1983 the Soviet government uncovered fraud on a huge scale with regards to the management

<sup>21</sup> Indirect rule is the term applied by Kathleen Collins and it seems a wholly appropriate description.

<sup>22</sup> See Gleason, Fealty and Loyalty. This was reminiscent of the Tsarist approach to managing Central Asia.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p. 145.

<sup>24</sup> Valerie Bunce, The Political Economy of the Brezhnev Era: The Rise and Fall of Corporatism, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (April 1983) pp. 129-158.

<sup>25</sup> Demian Vaisman, Regionalism and Clan Loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan, in Yacov Ro'i (ed), *Muslim Eurasia Conflicting Legacies*, (Ilford, Essex, Frank Cass, 1995) pp. 105-122.

of Uzbekistan's vast cotton plantations amounting to the sum of 3,000m roubles.<sup>26</sup> The cotton scandal exemplifies how 'hierarchical chains of personal dependence between leaders in the apparatus and their entourage, buttressed by extensive patronage and clientelist networks' underscored political administration in a fashion resembling Kitschelt's personification of patrimonial communism.<sup>27</sup>

In Kazakhstan, Dinmukhammed Kunaev established his own vast networks of patron-client ties based primarily on loyalty in exchange for goods and services.<sup>28</sup> Generally accredited with promoting the interests of Kazakh elites, Kunaev 'built up an ethnic Kazakh, largely politico-administrative cadre and helped sponsor the educational and cultural development of ethnic Kazakhs.'<sup>29</sup> Kunaev's position as a protégé and loyal lieutenant of Brezhnev secured not only his own position but also those of his followers.<sup>30</sup> An often-cited example was the appointment of his brother as president of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences.<sup>31</sup> Nazarbaev too was a faithful protégé of Kunaev and was duly rewarded, as Kunaev was instrumental in appointing him chairman of Kazakhstan's Council of Ministers, effectively the second most powerful position in the republic.<sup>32</sup> As a witness to the method of patronage used by Kunaev and Brezhnev to manage political relations among competing elite groups, Nazarbaev would have been acutely aware of the role loyalty played in sustaining power.<sup>33</sup> He observed himself how 'Brezhnev selected the party Central Committee leaders in the republics, and they in turn appointed the heads of the regional committees completely on the basis of personal loyalty.'<sup>34</sup> Patrimonial communism proved a good schooling for Nazarbaev allowing him to develop the

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<sup>26</sup> Neil J. Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism on the Silk Road*, (Amsterdam, Harwood Publishers, 2000).

<sup>27</sup> Herbert Kitschelt, *Op. Cit.*, p. 453.

<sup>28</sup> There was a two-year break during the period 1962-1964 when Kunaev served as the Chairman of the Kazakhstan Council of Ministers. He was reinstated as First Secretary when his patron, and former First Secretary of Kazakhstan, Brezhnev came to power.

<sup>29</sup> Sally Cummings, *Kazakhstan* p. 16.

<sup>30</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, *The Kazakhs*, Chapter 10.

<sup>31</sup> Critchlow, *Corruption, Nationalism and Native Elites*.

<sup>32</sup> Sally Cummings, *An Uneasy Relationship – Power and Authority in the Nazarbaev Regime* in Sally Cummings (ed.) *Power and Change in Central Asia*, (London, Routledge, 2002), pp. 59-73.

<sup>33</sup> Of course, Kunaev's position depended upon Moscow which was made clear when he was removed in 1986. Nonetheless, until the death of Brezhnev the loyalty displayed by Kunaev to Brezhnev would have made Nazarbaev aware of the way in which loyalty and patron-client relations can sustain political leadership.

<sup>34</sup> Nursultan Nazarbaev, *Without Right and Left*, (London, Class Publishing, 1992) p.15.



bureaucratic skills and patronage necessary to rise to the top of Kazakhstan's party oligarchy.<sup>35</sup>

Nazarbaev assumed the leadership of the Kazakh Republic in 1989, later becoming the first popularly elected president and then with the collapse of the Soviet Union the head of an independent sovereign Kazakh state.<sup>36</sup> As in other former Soviet republics, independence and transition brought a greater degree of institutional competition, a re-allocation of state resources and the emergence of new powerful economic network groups, some with criminal affiliations.<sup>37</sup> The challenge for the Republics' leaders, Nazarbaev among them, was to maintain their authority and the integrity of the state they inherited.

To view the preponderance of political relations and behaviour based on informal and personal terms as solely a response to structural and cultural legacies, underestimates the extent to which contingency plays a role during periods of transition and flux. Indeed, it is clear from the above exposition that personal loyalty and patron-client relations have been persistent temporal features. Yet, such a deterministic view fails to take account of the incursion and fusion which occurs at critical temporal junctures.<sup>38</sup> Just as the change from nomadic tribal political organisation to Soviet rule engendered a fusion between traditional politics and Soviet bureaucracy in the shape of patrimonial communism, the uncertain context of post-Soviet transition elicited another fusion between political behaviour and institutions. As outlined above, each transition in Central Asian history has seen the fusion between informal politics and new institutions. Neopatrimonialism is the logical step on from patrimonial communism and its evolution occurred during a dynamic and uncertain period of political transition (see table 3.2). Informal political relations and behaviour are now fused with not only residual communist structures

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<sup>35</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise* (Washington, Brookings Institution Press, 2002) p. 28.

<sup>36</sup> K. Burkhanov, B. Sultanov and B. Ayagan, *Sovremennaiia Politicheskaiia Istoriiia Kazakhstana*, (Almaty, Institut Istorii i etnologii im. Ch. Ch. Valikhanova, 2006) pp. 57-65.

<sup>37</sup> J. Hellman, Winner Takes All: The Politics of Partial Reform in post-communist Transition, *World Politics*, Vol. 50, No. 2, 1998, pp. 203-234; Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, Central Weakness and Provincial Autonomy: Observations on the Devolution Process in Russia, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1999, pp. 87-106 and V. Volkov, *Violent Entrepreneurs of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism* (Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 2002).

<sup>38</sup> Ruth Collier & David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1991).

and behaviour but also new political institutions and actors; in formal rational offices and liberal democratic constitutional organisation. It is this uncertain context in which informal political relations become prominent as a way to minimise transaction costs and the emergence of other centres of institutional power. It is in this circumstance that informal political relations and behaviour influence political parties, but at the same time formal institutions including parties have helped legitimise and consolidate informal forms of politics.

*Table 3.2 The Evolution of informal political relations and behaviour in Central Asia*

<b>Type of rule</b>	<b>Component Parts</b>
<b>Tribal Organisation (with Tsarist administration)</b>	Personalistic and patrimonial rule (moderate Tsarist administrative structures)
<b>Patrimonial Communism</b>	Combination of informal political relations and behaviour, personalism, patron-client networks, elite factions and Soviet bureaucracy.
<b>Neopatrimonialism</b>	Fusion between informal political relations and behaviour, residual communist structural and behavioural legacies and formal rational offices and liberal constitutions taking place in a dynamic and uncertain transitional context.

## **2. 1990-1994 Institutional Conflict and Emerging Pluralism**

Independence brought significant challenges to Nazarbaev and Kazakhstan. The multi-natured dynamics of Kazakhstan's early independent period created a degree of uncertainty with regards to power and authority. This uncertainty was reflected through three broad processes: institutional competition, a degree of emerging pluralism in society manifested in the shape of new political parties and social movements, and electoral competition. These processes reflect the new political landscape post 1991 and in dealing with these challenges, Nazarbaev turned to informal politics to maintain control. This in turn was to influence the formal institutions to emerge after 1995. This section discusses the three broad processes which challenged the authority of the president and which saw him utilise informal



forms of political behaviour and relations to re-assert his power and control of the political system.

### *2.1 Institutional Competition and Conflict*

Kazakhstan's original constitution introduced in January 1993 encapsulated the degree of institutional uncertainty apparent in the political system. This uncertainty, as in other post-Soviet republics, manifested institutional competition between the president and the parliament. The constitution invested considerable powers in the presidency as parliament lacked the power to impeach.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, based on the French constitution of the Fifth Republic, the constitution enshrined a parliamentary-presidential form of government<sup>40</sup> where the president lacked powers of dissolution and the parliament 'enjoyed a wide range of formal rights including the right to approve the budget, amend the constitution and elect the constitutional court.'<sup>41</sup> The constitution embodied the considerable institutional challenge the president faced as parliament emerged as a body responsible for pivotal and important decisions. Between its inception in April 1990 until its self-dissolution in October 1993 the Twelfth convocation of the Supreme Soviet approved and introduced the post of president (24 April 1990), declared state sovereignty (25 October 1990), the Constitutional Law on State Independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan (16 December 1991) and the first constitution of independent Kazakhstan.<sup>42</sup> According to the former chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Serikbolsyn Abdil'din, the body was now 'radically different to its traditional role during the Soviet period, as it was now the original creator of laws.'<sup>43</sup>

The parliament was a hangover of the Soviet era and consisted of representatives of entrenched interests from former communist organisations, state enterprises and institutions.<sup>44</sup> A new parliament was established under the 1993 constitution, the

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<sup>39</sup> *Konstitutsiia Respubliki Kazakhstan ot 28 Yanvaria 1993 Goda.*

<sup>40</sup> K. Burkhanov et al, *Sovremennaia Politicheskaiia Istoriia Kazakhstana*, p. 68.

<sup>41</sup> John Anderson, Constitutional Development in Central Asia, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1997, p. 307.

<sup>42</sup> K.K. Aitkhozhin and I. O. Buluktaev, *Rol' Parlamenta v sisteme gosudarstvennoi vlasti* (Almaty, Tentr Analiza Obshchestvennykh Problem, 2004).

<sup>43</sup> Serikbolsyn Abdil'din, *Stanovlenie Parlamentarizma v Kazakhstane*, (St. Petersburg, Sekretariat Soveta MPA, 1993) p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> See chapter 4, Gregory Gleason, *The Central Asian States: Discovering Independence* (Oxford, Westview, 1997).

unicameral Supreme Kenges, however, the deputies of the Supreme Soviet, under the leadership of Abdil'din, were unwilling to cede power and call elections for the new body immediately. Rather the parliament was beginning to 'serve as a magnate for growing popular disenchantment with a failing economy' and the chief opponent of the president's economic reform program.<sup>45</sup>

Driven primarily by Nazarbaev, Kazakhstan's early post-Soviet economic policy was influenced by the economic trends in Russia and was concerned mainly with maintaining close economic ties with its former patron.<sup>46</sup> The economic program of price liberalisation followed the model set out by Yeltsin. Like Yeltsin, Nazarbaev appointed a number of reform-minded colleagues and officials including Erik Asanbaev as vice-president, Uzakbai Karamanov as Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Daulet Sembaev as vice-prime minister and Sergei Tereschenko as Prime Minister.<sup>47</sup> Similar to Russia, Nazarbaev's reform and destatification agenda included price liberalisation, liberalisation of the consumer market, a privatisation program and the reconstruction of the country's economic infrastructure.<sup>48</sup> All of this was reinforced by the signing of huge deals with foreign companies regarding the oil deposits in the Tengiz oil field in Western Kazakhstan and an IMF backed stabilisation program.<sup>49</sup> The de-statification program and the sell off of Kazakhstan's oil and gas deposits to foreign companies met considerable resistance in parliament.

In 1993, led by Abdil'din many deputies in the Supreme Soviet opposed the reform agenda fearing displacement from stakes they possessed in state enterprises and other organisations. As a result economic reform stalled. Nazarbaev, concerned Kazakhstan was now lagging behind Russia as well as feeling threatened by the constitutional power of parliament, invited deputies to dissolve the parliament on the basis that there had not yet been a democratic election for the body and thus their legitimacy was under question. Parliament eventually acquiesced, but only through a

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<sup>45</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise*, p.101.

<sup>46</sup> Richard Pomfret, Kazakhstan's Economy Since Independence: Does the Oil Boom Offer a Second Chance for Sustainable Development? *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 57, No. 6, 2005, pp. 859-876.

<sup>47</sup> Sally Cummings, *Kazakhstan Power and Elite*, (London, I. B. Tauris, 2005) p. 23.

<sup>48</sup> A law regarding de-statification was passed by parliament as early as June 1991; however, it was not active until March 1993.

<sup>49</sup> For an excellent overview of Kazakhstan's economy since independence see Yelena Kalyuzhnova, *The Kazakhstani Economy: Independence and Transition* (Basingstoke and London, St. Martins Press, 1998).



process of informal deal making which insured deputies were appropriately rewarded. Sally Cumming notes that in her conversations with local commentators it was suspected that Nazarbaev struck a deal with the deputies, as the president decreed the status and income of deputies. Indeed Abdil'din, himself, has noted how the president used informal techniques of persuasion. He suggests the president twisted the arms of those deputies who worked in state organisations and within the state apparatus by offering them re-election or a new post.<sup>50</sup> Such informal bargaining illustrates the powers of patronage that was at the president's disposal. Moreover, it demonstrates how the president turned to relying on such informal powers of patronage due to the institutional competition which had arisen between the legislative and executive branch. The use of informal persuasion to coerce loyalty began the president's deep dependence on informal political norms to centralise powers in his presidency. With the dissolution of parliament Nazarbaev was invested with plenipotentiary powers until new elections were held. These events began the formal concentration of power in Nazarbaev's presidency which was to have a significant impact on future institutional development, including that of political parties. This was the beginning of the process which enabled the president to determine the institutional constraints which would affect party development (see Chapter Four).

## 2.2 Emerging Pluralism

Another process contingent to transition was the emergence of pluralism, in the guise new political parties and organisations. During the Soviet period the Communist Party was the only political party permitted. The new era of openness during 1986-1989 saw the surfacing of informal political movements and discussion clubs.<sup>51</sup> The earliest of these organisations centred on ecological issues as disparate groups appeared across Kazakhstan concerned with confronting the ecological problems facing the country,<sup>52</sup> including a patchwork of independent groups in Alma-Ata called *Zelenyi Front* (Green Front).<sup>53</sup> The most famous and popular movement was the Nevada-Semipalatinsk International Anti-Nuclear and Ecological Movement. It

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<sup>50</sup> Serikbolsyn Abdil'din, *Kazakhstan: ot demokratii k avtokratii* (Almaty, KPK, 2003)

<sup>51</sup> V. A. Ponomarev, *Obshchestvennye organizatsii v Kazakhstane i Kyrgyzstane (1987-1991)*, (Alma-Ata, Glagol, 1991) pp. 13-14.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 14-15.

<sup>53</sup> M. B. Zaslavskaya, *Politicheskie partii i obshchestvennye ob'edineniia Kazakhstana na sovermennom etape razvitiia*, (Almaty, KISI, 1994) pp. 6-7.



is suspected the Soviet authorities created the movement to get a steer on developing pluralism, and Nazarbaev has claimed to be behind its creation.<sup>54</sup> The need to establish political parties and movements that would be loyal to the incumbent elites was in response to the new confidence public organisations had in organising and expressing their views and interests. Grassroots movements were appearing across urban centres in Kazakhstan.<sup>55</sup> The emergence of such pluralism was connected to events occurring at the centre. Under Gorbachev the Soviet Union was undertaking a process of gradual de-centralisation of power. Therefore, in many of the former Soviet republics the ability for new political movements and parties to emerge was as a direct response to Gorbachev's policies of reform in Moscow. Comparatively, Kazakhstan lagged behind many of the other Soviet republics (especially the Baltic republics and Russia) in terms of greater *demokratizatsiia* (democratisation). However, the process of change and reform did reach the southern states of the former Soviet Union.

The decision in Moscow in March 1990 to remove the Communist Party's constitutional right as the only political party in the Soviet Union further exacerbated the trend towards a plurality of ideas and interests being represented in the public realm across many of the Soviet republics. In Kazakhstan, although small in membership, parties were founded on strong principles, ideological tenets and particular ethnic or national interests.<sup>56</sup> The plethora of new parties signified the unpredictable nature of transition as it unleashed a plurality of ideas and interests. The key for the president was to produce top down political organisations to manage

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<sup>54</sup> Vladimir Babak, Kazakhstan: How its Multiparty System Came into Being, *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2005.

<sup>55</sup> For example at this time groups like the Alma-Ata Peoples Front, *Akikat* (Truth), *Zheltoksan* (December), an organisation set up by participants of the December 1986 riots in Alma-Ata, and Memorial, a group dedicated to rehabilitating victims of the Stalinist repressions, were challenging the intellectual and cultural domination of communist elites. See I. O. Buluktaev, C. A. D'iachenko and L. I. Karmazina, *Politicheskie Partii Kazakhstana Spravochnik 1998* (Almaty, IPK, 1998) p. 76.

<sup>56</sup> For example, there was the *Alash* party established in April 1990 on the principles of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism, the *Azat* (Freedom) Civil Movement committed to an independent and sovereign Kazakhstan, the Slav movement *Lad* created on the basis of representing Russian and Slavic ethnicities, the Social Democratic Party, founded on the principles of Scandinavian socialist democratic systems and *Edinstvo* (Unity) emerged in response to ethnic tensions between Kazakhs and other European populations regarding land seizures in Alma-Ata, committed to inter-ethnic harmony and 'arresting the problems of chauvinism and nationalism. For info on early parties and movements see V. A. Ponomarev, *Obshchestvennye organizatsii v Kazakhstane i Kyrgyzstane*, M. B. Zaslavskaya, *Politicheskie partii i obshchestvennye ob'edineniia Kazakhstana* and Vladimir Babak, Demian Vaisman and Aryeh Wasserman, *Political Organisation in Central Asia and Azerbaijan: Sources and Documents*, (London, Frank Cass, 2004)



the emerging party system and ensure a limitation of political risk. The strategy was to establish a political party which could replace the institutional dominance the Communist Party previously held. In September 1991, at the final extraordinary congress of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, Nazarbaev pushed for the dissolution of the party and the establishment of a reformist Socialist Party of Kazakhstan (SPK).<sup>57</sup> For a proportion of communist party members the decision of the 'funeral congress' was unacceptable and they established a revival committee which later re-constituted the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (KPK).<sup>58</sup> The KPK viewed themselves as true heirs to the old Communist Party and it was originally unreconstructed in its ideological beliefs, committed to the 'scientific and ideological basis of Marxism-Leninism as the uniform materialistic theory of societal development'.<sup>59</sup> While the KPK may have inherited the ideological foundation of the old Communist Party, the SPK acquired its financial and administrative resources. The SPK was a reaction to the development of competition from other political institutions and organisations, as the president sought to create a party in which he could centralise these centrifugal forces and use as an instrument that would be loyal to his political requirements. SPK, however, proved to be neither acquiescent to Nazarbaev's rule nor committed to a strong presidential republic. By 1993, the party withdrew its support for him and moved into opposition.

Unable to rely on the support of the SPK, Nazarbaev ordained another broad based pro-presidential party, the Union of People's Unity of Kazakhstan (SNEK). The party was committed to supporting Nazarbaev's policies and direction. SNEK advocated the dissolution of parliament in December 1993 and supported the president's bid for a strong presidential system. Nazarbaev was elected leader of the party, but due to the state law forbidding anyone working in state posts from being a member of a political party, Serik Abdurahmanov was selected as leader instead.<sup>60</sup> The party leadership also featured prominent figures that would later play important

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<sup>57</sup> *Programma Sotsialisticheskoi partii Kazakhstana* (Almaty, Proket, 1992).

<sup>58</sup> Ainur Kurmanov, 'Kopartiiia umerla, da zdravstvyet', *Turkestan.communist.ru*, <http://www.turkestan.communist.ru/chronic/2005/11/24/comparty>, November 2005 [accessed 04.10.2006].

<sup>59</sup> 'Programmnoe zayavlenie kommunisticheskoi partii kazakhstana', adopted 20 Congress of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, 19 September 1992. Document can be found in B. G. Ayaganov, S. Z., Baimagambetov and G. Zh. Zhumanova, *Politicheskie partii i obshchestvennye dvizheniia sovremennogo Kazakhstana Spravochnik Vypuski 1* (Almaty, TUDAP, 1994) pp. 74-75.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

roles in the political life of the country including Marat Tazhin, Serge D'iachenko and Kenzhegali Sagadiev.<sup>61</sup>

Added to the emerging melting pot of parties and organisations was the Party of People's Congress of Kazakhstan (NKK). The party was created by the leaders of the Nevada-Semipalatinsk movement and was headed by Olzhas Suleimenov, a famous Kazakh poet and writer and Mukhtar Shakanov, also a writer.<sup>62</sup> Set up in October 1991 the party was initially supported by the authorities. A split in the leadership, however, left Suleimenov in sole charge and the party shifted to what they termed 'constructive opposition'. NKK had considerable financial support from influential sponsors and private businesses. Suleimenov effectively became the head of the Kazakh opposition during 1993-94 and there was great pressure on him to challenge Nazarbaev for the prospective presidential elections in 1996.<sup>63</sup> Again, using informal bargaining to establish a patron-client relationship, Nazarbaev struck a deal with Suleimenov that saw him appointed the Kazakh ambassador to Italy.<sup>64</sup> This secured not only loyalty to the president from his chief opponent, but also it meant he would not confront a potentially popular candidate in the presidential election.

The nature of party development during this very early period of Kazakhstan's post-Soviet development (from 1989-1995) illustrates that two types of parties were emerging. There were those who formed parties under the tutelage of the president (SNEK) and those that were autonomous (KPK, NKK and other smaller parties). However, autonomous parties that posed a threat were kept out of competing for power altogether (as in the case of the KPK) or were co-opted by the presidential administration by offering rewards in exchange for loyalty (as in the case of NKK). It points to a phenomenon common within the post-Soviet context in that pluralism and the development of political parties was something that had to be managed by the ruling elite. It was not permissible to have autonomous parties and groups provoking institutional conflict and proselytising a different political outlook. It created uncertainty and instability for those in power, especially incumbent former First Secretaries of the Communist Party like Nazarbaev. Therefore, party

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<sup>61</sup> Vladimir Babak et al, *Political Organisation in Central Asia*, pp. 175-176.

<sup>62</sup> B. G. Ayaganov et al, *Politicheskie partii*, pp. 24-26.

<sup>63</sup> Vladimir Babak et al, *Political Organisation in Central Asia*, pp. 146-147.

<sup>64</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise*, p.91.



development had to be controlled from above either through the creation of pro-presidential parties (as in SNEK) or through cooption (as in NKK). Informal forms of political relations and behaviour were deployed to ensure party development from above would succeed whether through electoral manipulation in ensuring SNEK won the most seats in the legislative elections or through offering rewards for loyalty, as in the cooption of Suleimenov. In both cases informal politics was being used to manage the uncertainty of post-Soviet transition.

### *2.3 Electoral Competition: 1994 Parliamentary Election*

The third process adding to the sense of political uncertainty was electoral competition which the presidential administration sought to manage and control. For the first post-Soviet legislative election the president was allowed to appoint 42 deputies from a state list to the new 177 member Supreme Kenges. The intention was to guarantee a dependable majority of support for Nazarbaev. The process and conduct of the election was strictly controlled and the voting process closely stage-managed<sup>65</sup> to such an extent that it received heavy criticism from international observers.<sup>66</sup> Opposition figures claimed the vote was rigged and underpinned by serious violations.<sup>67</sup> The election, held on March 7 1994 saw 76 out of the 177 elected deputies connected with either parties or public organisations. Of the other deputies 59 were elected as independents and the remaining 42 provided by the presidential state list. On the surface the election result seemed to provide the president with a pliant and loyal majority with SNEK winning 30 seats to sit alongside the 42 state list candidates. However, this was not sufficient to guarantee the parliament would be subservient to presidential rule. There continued to be a large oppositional bloc within parliament focused on the Socialists and ancillary Communist Party organisations such as the Peasants Union.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* p. 102.

<sup>66</sup> See Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Report on the March 7, 1994 Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan* (Washington, D.C., Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, March 1994), p. 7.

<sup>67</sup> See Nurbulat Masanov, *Political Development of Sovereign Kazakhstan*, Speech given at the European Parliament in Brussels 10 December 2002, <http://www.kub.info/article.php?sid=2851> [accessed 14.02.2007].

<sup>68</sup> The KPK was not permitted to participate in this election.

Table 3.3 March 7 1994 Parliamentary Election Results Seat Distribution

Party or Affiliation	Seats
Union of People's Unity of Kazakhstan (SNEK)	30
Trades Union Federation	11
People's Congress of Kazakhstan (NKK)	9
Socialist Party (SPK)	8
Peasants' Union <sup>69</sup>	4
Lad (Harmony) Movement	4
Republican Council Women's Organisations	3
Democratic Committee of Human Rights of the Republic of Kazakhstan	1
Organisation of Veterans of the Republic of Kazakhstan	1
Republican Party of Kazakhstan	1
Union of Young People of Kazakhstan	1
International Public Committee 'Aral-Aziya-Kazakhstan'	1
Congress of Businessmen Kazakhstan	1
Union of Industrialists and Businessmen	1
Independent Candidates	59
State List	42

(Adapted from K. Burkhanov et al, *Sovremennaia Politicheskaia Istoriia Kazakhstana*, p.79)

Despite the loyal bloc of support for the president in parliament, the opposition demonstrated strength and resolve to some of the president's policies. In the first instance, the parliament was unwilling to elect the president's favoured candidate for parliamentary speaker, Kuanish Sultanov.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, the privatisation program under the leadership of Prime Minister Sergei Tereshchenko also met steep resistance. Buoyed by public opinion that ran strongly against privatisation, several opposition blocs materialised in the legislature determined to arrest economic reform. In May 1994, the opposition led by NKK passed a vote of no confidence in Tereshchenko's government by 111 to 28 votes.<sup>71</sup> Claiming there was no constitutional basis for the Government to resign, Tereshchenko kept his position but in July 1994 the opposition continued their sustained pressure by overriding the presidential veto on two consumer protection bills.<sup>72</sup> By now the legislature had become what Olcott describes as a 'bully pit' where the floor was used to air

<sup>69</sup> Even though they were unable to stand the KPK were represented by the affiliated Peasants Union and by other independent candidates.

<sup>70</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, *Unfulfilled Promise*.

<sup>71</sup> Only 139 deputies were present at the vote.

<sup>72</sup> Olcott, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 103-104.



concerns over Nazarbaev's leadership and policy program.<sup>73</sup> Reports of opposition deputies' speeches and criticisms of the president were published in independent media outlets and even state newspapers such as *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*. By October 1994, Tereshchenko's resignation was eventually accepted and conflict between the ever-vocal legislature and the president seemed to be approaching an impasse.

The reason for why competition in Kazakhstan was reflected along institutional lines during the period from 1990-1995 was because constitutionally the parliament still retained a significant degree of power within the constitution. The explanation for the intensification of opposition after the 1994 election can be linked to the dynamic and changing nature of transition politics. According to Olcott, 'the patronage of the president was seemingly limitless...but those who lacked personal ties to the leader were also freer to follow their own political instincts'.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, the old elite began to divide 'into those who felt advantaged by the new political and economic world and those who did not'. From this perspective, it was principally those not privy to the benefits of transition politics that emerged as the main opposition in parliament.

As noted above, opposition from parliament was acting as a roadblock on Nazarbaev's ability to see his decisions enacted. For Nazarbaev this represented an uncertain institutional context. Without a loyal parliament willing to rubber stamp his decisions and ensure his privatisation programme was passed, and as long as parliament retained a degree of power over the executive branch, there was no guarantee his position was stable. Unable to counter the opposition from parliament and stabilise his rule the president needed to extend his constitutional powers at the expense of the legislative branch. However, there was little chance of being able to achieve this with the convocation elected in the 1994 parliamentary election. As with the dissolution of the Supreme Soviet in December 1993, Nazarbaev once again relied on his informal power of patronage to dissolve the legislature affording him the opportunity to re-draw the constitutional and institutional framework of the

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<sup>73</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, 'Nursultan Nazarbaev as a Strong President' in Ray Taras (ed.) *Post Communist Presidents* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997) p. 113.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p. 92.

country. This dissolution of parliament was achieved through the backdoor. In March 1995, a failed candidate from the Abylaikhanov electoral district in Almaty, Tatiana Kviatkovskaia, filed a complaint to the Constitutional Court arguing the electoral districts for the 1994 election were disproportionate, resulting in deputies representing vastly different size constituencies.<sup>75</sup> On the 8 March 1995 the court ruled in her favour and annulled not only the result for the Abylaikhanov district but for the whole election stating that 'the Central Election Commission had broken article 60 of the constitution.'<sup>76</sup> Using the judiciary the president was able to legitimise the decision to dissolve parliament. The extent to which Nazarbaev was involved in pushing for the courts decision has been subject to speculation and may never be known. However, the fate of those people who were involved in the case demonstrates how patronage was used to make certain the president got the desired result. The main players involved found themselves well rewarded for their services. Kviatkovskaia went on to head the pro-presidential *Otan* (Fatherland) party list in the 1999 parliamentary election and served as a deputy. Kairbek Suleimenov, a deputy minister of Internal Affairs, was close to many of the judges on the court and was reported to have been influential in their final decision. After the dissolution of parliament Suleimenov was soon promoted to Minister of the Interior.<sup>77</sup>

The three processes of institutional competition, emerging pluralism and electoral competition were a product of transition from communist rule. The uncertainty of this period (1991-995) created instability for Nazarbaev's position. To overcome this uncertainty Nazarbaev used informal political relations and behaviour. Both the 1993 and 1995 dissolution of the legislature came about through informal backroom deals and the use of rewards in exchange for loyalty to the president. The emergence of political opposition in the form of pluralism was also managed either from above with the creation of loyal presidential parties or through cooption where again loyalty was bought in exchange for rewards. This period highlights two points. First, informal political relations and behaviour emerged in response to the contingent context. Second, it illustrates the fusion between new postcommunist institutions (new constitution, legislature), communist legacies (vested interests that made up

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<sup>75</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, *Unfulfilled Promise*.

<sup>76</sup> S. G Sheretov, *Politicheskaia istoriia Kazakhstana 1985-1995*, (Almaty, NVSHGY, 1997) p. 61.

<sup>77</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, *Unfulfilled Promise*, pp. 110-111.



some of the opposition in parliament) and informal forms of political relations and behaviour (the clientelism and patronage used by the president).

### **3. 1995-1998 The Consolidation of Presidential Power and the Emergence of Informal Factional Elite Groups**

After the uncertainty of the early years of independence, Nazarbaev sought to formally codify and strengthen his power in a formal constitution. Yet, this formal institutional power, exhibited in a presidential republic, was buttressed by informal power. This appeared in two ways. First, the president rewarded those parties and institutions which ensured the formal consolidation of presidential power. A number of political parties proved crucial in providing support and legitimacy for the strengthening of presidential power. These parties were duly rewarded for their loyalty by being awarded seats in the new legislature. Second, the program of privatisation saw former state assets passed onto new emerging informal elite groups who were beginning to compete for these resources. Nazarbaev assumed the position of arbitrator of elite conflict for resources. This gave him greater informal power as he was in a position to withhold or give access to resources on the basis of the extent groups can demonstrate loyalty to his leadership. This section highlights this process whereby formal constitutional power underlined by informal political power was used to insulate the president from the transaction costs from Soviet rule had involved. It will assess the formal concentration of power, the informal focus of power, the process of privatisation and the emergence of informal elite groups. However, as will be noted, rooting political power on neopatrimonialism (the combination of both informal and formal rule) proved to be as unstable as accepting the risks associated with open democratic competition for power.

#### *3.1 Formal Concentration of Presidential Power*

Free from institutional competition the president made full use of his plenipotentiary powers using the eight-month period without a legislature to implement by decree his program for Kazakhstan.<sup>78</sup> Despite ruling by personal decree Nazarbaev still

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<sup>78</sup> In the eight month period from when parliament was dissolved until being reconstituted in December 1995 Nazarbaev issued 134 decrees which had the force of law relating to a broad spectrum of policies including the privatisation of banking activities, gas, tax, land code, elections,

sought to maintain a public commitment to democracy. This commitment was embodied in the Assembly of Peoples of Kazakhstan (ANK); an institution intended to represent all peoples and ethnicities in the country. The idea that the ANK was a democratic body was undermined by the fact its members were appointed by the president himself, leading some scholars to describe the body as 'the assembly without people' and 'parliamentarism according to Nazarbaev.'<sup>79</sup> All members of the ANK relied on the patronage of the president for their position. The ANK demonstrated that establishing new institutions on the basis of loyalty and patronage could aid the consolidation and legitimisation of presidential power and mitigate against the uncertainties of institutional competition. The ANK was used as the forum to suggest and promote the extension of Nazarbaev's tenure of office until 2000 (an election was scheduled for 1996) and a new constitution limiting the powers of the legislature and strengthening the institution of the presidency.<sup>80</sup>

With any form of potential challenge to his authority deferred until 2000 the president sought to formally institutionalise the powers he had accumulated with the dissolution of parliament. The new 1995 constitution placed the prime minister as the head of the executive authority, but in reality the large number of powers residing with the president and the widespread qualitative affect of his decision-making powers, made certain the president was chief executive.<sup>81</sup> Under the new constitution the president was given power to appoint the prime minister albeit with the consent of parliament. However, 'as there is no real opposition in parliament to the head of state, he is free to appoint anybody'.<sup>82</sup> The 1995 constitution bestowed on the president the institutional right to: appoint and dismiss members of the government, without parliament's consent; appoint all members of the judiciary and the security services; give direct assignments to members of the government and preside over the government on especially important questions. The new constitution also modified the country's institutional infrastructure by creating a new bicameral

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parliament and the budget for 1996. This intensive activity contrasts with the Supreme Soviet between March 1990 and December 1993 which only accepted and passed 265 laws. See, K. Burkhanov et al, *Sovremennaia Politicheskaia Istoriiia Kazakhstana*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>79</sup> V. N. Khlupin, *Bol'shaia Sem'ia Nursultana Nazarbaeva: Politicheskaia elita sovremennogo Kazakhstana* (Moscow, Institute for Contemporary Political Research, 1998) p. 45.

<sup>80</sup> The referendum to extend Nazarbaev's mandate until December 2000 was put to a popular vote in April 2005. Ninety five percent of those who turned out voted in favour of the extension.

<sup>81</sup> *Konstitutsiia Respubliki Kazakhstan, 1995* (Almaty, Iurist, 2006).

<sup>82</sup> E. A. Borisova, *Kazakhstan prezident i vneshiaia politika* (Moscow, Natalis, 2005), p. 24.



legislature with the Senate as the upper chamber and the *Mazhilis* (parliament) as the lower chamber. The *Mazhilis* consisted of 67 seats to be elected for four-year terms while the Senate was to have two senators for each *Oblast* as well as seven senators appointed directly by the president. A referendum held in August of 1995 found approval with 89 percent of the electorate.

### *3.2 Informal Concentration of Powers: Loyal Parties and Cadre*

A number of pro-presidential parties, some newly created, played a substantial role in supporting both Nazarbaev's referendum on extending his mandate and the new constitution. SNEK, now renamed Party of People's Unity of Kazakhstan (PNEK), alongside the newly established Party of Revival of Kazakhstan (PVK), led by Altynshash Dzhaganova, and the diluted NKK (now no longer an opposition party) co-signed a declaration of support to the ANK's original decree to prolong the president's mandate beyond 1996. The campaign was reported actively in the mass media<sup>83</sup> and was followed by a similar campaign led by PNEK, PVK, NKK and another new pro-presidential party, Democratic Party of Kazakhstan (DPK) led by Tulegen Zhukeev and Altynbek Sarsenbaev, in support of the new constitution centralising power in the presidency.<sup>84</sup> The establishment of these new parties demonstrates how the presidential administration was supporting and encouraging key allies within the elite to create political parties from above as a means to loyally support and give legitimacy to the consolidation of the president's power.<sup>85</sup> The December 1995 parliamentary elections saw these political parties and elite figures receive their rewards for supporting the president. In another questionable election PNEK and DPK won the majority of seats (see table 3.4). Dzhaganova also got her prize for backing the president in the two campaigns by winning a seat too. Opposition deputies within the legislature were reduced to just 7-9 percent of the

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<sup>83</sup> S. D'iachenko, L. Karmazina and S. Seidumanov, *Politicheskie partii Kazakhstana god 2000 spravochnik* (Almaty, Information-Analytical Centre of the Parliament of Kazakhstan, 2000), p. 311.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, p. 312.

<sup>85</sup> Zhukeev and Sarsenbaev were key high-level elite figures. The DPK chairman Zhukeev was a key figure on the Security Council and had previously been deputy Prime Minister, while Sarsenbaev was Minister for Print and Mass Information. Dzhaganova had previously been the chairman of the Central Committee of the Supreme Soviet of Woman's Affairs. See, Daniyar Ashimbaev, *Kto est Kto v Kazakhstane 2005* (Almaty, Credo, 2005) and S. D'iachenko, L. Karmazina and S. Seidumanov, *Politicheskie partii Kazakhstana*.

total composition.<sup>86</sup> While not proving to be completely compliant, the new legislature was no longer a second centre of power and remained on the whole, loyal and acquiescent.

*Table 3.4 December 1995 Parliamentary Election Results Seat Distribution*

Party or Affiliation	Political Orientation	Seats
Party of Peoples Unity of Kazakhstan (PNEK)	Pro-presidential	24
Democratic Party of Kazakhstan (DPK)	Pro-presidential	12
Peasants Union	Opposition	7
Federation of Professionals	Pro-presidential	5
Union of Young People	Pro-presidential	3
Engineering Academy	Pro-presidential	5
Communist Party of Kazakhstan	Opposition	2
Peoples Congress of Kazakhstan (NKK)	Pro-presidential	1
Peoples-Cooperative Party of Kazakhstan (NKPK)	Opposition	1
Party of Revival of Kazakhstan	Pro-presidential	1
Independents	Pro-presidential	6
Total number of pro-presidential deputies		56
Total number of opposition deputies		10
Total number of deputies		66

(Adapted from S. G Sheretov, *Politicheskaia istoriia Kazakhstana 1985-1995*, p. 67).

The president sought also to secure and concentrate power within the bureaucracy and administration of Government. As Olcott has argued, 'with the muscle taken out of parliament, the cabinet and ministry system was becoming one of the few potential arenas for political contestation.'<sup>87</sup> The cabinet was slimmed down with the number of ministers reduced from 21 to 14 as well as sub cabinet committees and commissions culled so that by the end of May 1997 a third of the national

<sup>86</sup> Feruza Zhani, *Kazakhstan Kontr-evoli•tsiia parlamenta, ili Kratkaia istoriia izgnaniia oppozitsii*, *Fergana.ru*, 19 August 2007, <http://www.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=5295>.

<sup>87</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, *Unfulfilled Promise* p. 114



government had been eliminated.<sup>88</sup> The streamlining of government and bureaucratic administration escalated instability among governmental elites. Officials and functionaries were shifted from post to post and made aware they 'had been selected by the president personally and served his political interests'.<sup>89</sup> Emanating from this was the formation of a 'protectorship-client system gravitating to oligarchic forms with a supreme patron on top of the power pyramid, namely the president of country'.<sup>90</sup> Based on the principle that the president assigns all public positions, including regional *Akimats* (local administration), law enforcement bodies, courts, the cabinet and some members of the Senate, the system is based on a series of dyadic and interconnected patron-client relationships. The relationships are used for the 'bilateral exchange of resources, information, mutual help, services and other responsibilities'.<sup>91</sup> An example of how this worked was the appointment of Amalbek Tshanov as *Akim* (governor) of *Dzhambul Oblast*. *Akim* between 1995 and 1998, Tshanov removed 140 ranking officers across the region and replaced them with his own reliable and loyal clients.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, the formal consolidation of power in the 1995 constitution, which concentrated powers in the presidency, was buttressed by the power of informal patronage networks, where access to positions and resources was based on loyalty to the president.

The evolving nature of patron-client ties witnessed a staffing policy that gave increasing influence to members of the president's family and close associates. Saginbek Tursunov, the president's brother-in-law was appointed head of the presidential administration in October 1995. His son-in-law Rakhat Aliev was appointed head of the tax police. His other son-in-law Timur Kulibaev was appointed vice-president of KazakhOil, the predominant oil company in Kazakhstan.<sup>93</sup> Other close associates, related by tribe and clan, also found high

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.

<sup>89</sup> Nurbulat Masanov, Political Elite in Kazakhstan: The Changes of Kazakhstani Political Elite During the Period of Sovereignty, *International Eurasian Institute for Economic and Political Research*, (Almaty, 2000) [http://iicas.org/english/publ\\_22\\_11\\_00.htm](http://iicas.org/english/publ_22_11_00.htm).

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> See V. N. Khlopun, *Bol'shaia Sem'ia Nursultana Nazarbaeva*.

<sup>93</sup> V. N. Khlopun, *Kazakhstanskaia politicheskaia elita mezhdu modernizatsiei i traibalizom*, Report to the Second All-Russian Congress of Political Scientists, Moscow MGIMO, 22 April 2000, [http://www.iicas.org/articles/pub\\_27\\_05\\_00.htm](http://www.iicas.org/articles/pub_27_05_00.htm).

positions, for example, Akhmetzhan Esimov<sup>94</sup> was appointed State Secretary and Nurtay Abykaev became a senior presidential advisor.<sup>95</sup> These elite figures provided a sound basis of personal loyalty to Nazarbaev contained within extensive patron-client networks. These networks are evidently based on kinship (especially in the case of Tursunov, Aliev and Kulibaev), although clan based associates such as Abykaev and Esimov are much less so and their promotion was likely sought in exchange for loyalty. Therefore, while we can make the distinction between kinship based networks and general clientelistic networks (e.g. the power to appoint all *Akims*), as Nazarbaev's regime has evolved kinship based networks have become less powerful. As will be discussed later in this chapter, Nazarbaev has been willing to move against kinship related elites if he feels they threaten his power and fail to demonstrate sufficient loyalty. Therefore, kinship is not the main driver determining the influence and power of patron-client networks. For example, Aleksandr Mashkevich (see below) has no kinship ties to the president, yet has managed to secure extensive access to Kazakhstan's natural resources in exchange for political loyalty.

### *3.3 Privatisation and the Emergence of New Business Elite Groups*

The extension of the privatisation program had a decisive effect on the progression of neopatrimonialism in Kazakhstan. The selling off of former state assets led to factional elite competition for access to these resources, and Nazarbaev enhanced his authority by arbitrating these conflicts. He secured loyalty from these powerful groups as they presumed their closer proximity to the president ensured greater access to resources and increased political and economic influence.

#### *Privatisation*

The major stage of privatisation began in 1993 with the launch of a coupon privatisation program based on the Czech and Russian voucher models. Specially set up Investment Privatisation Funds (IPFs) bought shares in medium and large sized state enterprises so Kazakh citizens could then purchase shares in IPFs.<sup>96</sup> With 170

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<sup>94</sup> Esimov went on to fill many important positions in government and the executive including Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Agriculture and his current post as *Akim* of Almaty.

<sup>95</sup> Nurlan Amrekulov, *Zhuzy v sotsialno-politicheskoi zhizni Kazakhstana, Tsentral'naia Aziia i Kavkaz*, Vol. 3, No. 9, 2000.

<sup>96</sup> Richard Pomfret, *Kazakhstan's Economy Since Independence*.



IPFs registered by April 1994, it was expected citizens would have a wide choice.<sup>97</sup> However, the lack of transparency in the process saw more than three fourths of the vouchers end up in the hands of just one fourth of the funds. For example, Butya-Kapital set up by Bulat Abilov, monopolised nearly 10 percent of the total vouchers released in the scheme. The scheme established a new economic elite dominated by figures such as Abilov and Mukhtar Abliazov, the head of Astana Holding IPF.<sup>98</sup> Akezhan Kazhegeldin, the Prime Minister who oversaw the implementation of the privatisation process, was also alleged to have benefited from the sell off of state resources due to some of his former colleagues winning ownership of large metal deposits.<sup>99</sup>

Some of the new business elites were drafted into government. Galymzhan Zhakiianov, a director of two private enterprises in the city of Semipalatinsk and a protégé of Kazhegeldin, was appointed *Akim* of Semipalatinsk and then Pavlodar *oblasts*.<sup>100</sup> Abilov drew closer to the president becoming firstly a patron of the Children's Fund charity run by the president's wife Sara Alpysovna and then a presidential advisor.<sup>101</sup> Abilov was also elected a deputy in the *Mazhilis* as a member of the pro-presidential *Otan* (Fatherland) in the 1999 parliamentary elections. Abliazov was appointed Minister of Energy. Their introduction into government circles was a mechanism for the president to exhibit openness to new liberal elites. Conveniently it also proved a useful means to keep their ambitions in check. However, their emergence in the corridors of power resulted in increasing levels of factional elite conflict with older associates of the president from the communist period and family members. This was compounded by the final stage of privatisation where the sale of the largest formerly state owned factories and industries led to intense competition between elite groups in which a non-transparent process saw the most profitable industries fall into the hands of those closest to the president.<sup>102</sup> Through both patronage and privatisation a number of informal factional elite groups

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<sup>97</sup> Olcott, *Unfulfilled Promise*.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> D. R. Ashimbaev, N. Sulemenov and V. Andreev, *Pravitelstvo Kazhegeldina: privatizatsiia, korruptsiia i borba za vlast* (Almaty, Credo, 2003).

<sup>100</sup> Jonathan Murphy, 'Illusory Transition? Elite Reconstitution in Kazakhstan, 1989-2002, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 4, June 2006.

<sup>101</sup> Olcott, *Unfulfilled Promise*.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

emerged in Kazakhstan. These groups became influential in shaping the economy and forming policy. These groups form a central part of the neopatrimonial regime. Figure 3.1 provides a power map of the groups considered instrumental in political life during the post-Soviet period.<sup>103</sup> There are other factional elite groups but these examples reflect those operating at the highest level.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> As will be discussed later in this chapter, reconfigurations have occurred regarding the influence and power of these top groups.

<sup>104</sup> Second tier groups include the groups of Nurlan Balgimbaev, Imangali Tasmagambetov, Bulat Utemuratov, Marat Tazhin, Nurtai Abykaev and the president's nephew Kairat Satbaldy. For more details see Dosym Satpaev, *An Analysis of the Internal Structure of Kazakhstan's Political Elite and an Assessment of Political Risk Levels*, in Uyama Tomohiko (ed.) *Empire, Islam and Politics in Central Eurasia*, (Sapporo, Slavic Research Center Hokkaido University, 2007) pp. 283-300 and Andrei Grosin, *Kto est kto v sovremenom Kazakhstane*.



Figure 3.1 Elite Power Map in Kazakhstan

Nursultan Nazarbaev: President of the Republic of Kazakhstan				
<p><b>Rakhat Aliev and Dariga Nazarbaeva Group</b> (Son in-Law and Daughter of the President)</p> <p>Assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Sakhrnyi tsentr</i> (Sugar Centre)</li> <li>• <i>Neftianoi tsentr</i> (Oil Centre)</li> <li>• <i>Mangistaumunaigaz</i> (Mangistau Gas)</li> <li>• TV stations: Khabar NTK and KTK</li> <li>• Newspapers: <i>Novoe Pokolenie</i> (New Generation), <i>Panorama</i> and <i>Karavan</i>.</li> </ul> <p>Political Connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access and allies in the tax police, and security services</li> </ul> <p>Political Party:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Asar</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Timur Kulibaev Group</b> (Son in-Law of the President)</p> <p>Assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kaz Energy</li> <li>• Almex Holding Group</li> <li>• Halyk Bank</li> <li>• The group sold many assets of the assets off but now Kulibaev is estimated to be worth \$2.1 billion</li> </ul> <p>Political Connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited but close to Prime Minister Karim Masimov (2007 – to present)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation (ENRC)</b> Led by close associates of the president, Aleksandr Mashkevich, Patokh Chodiev and Alijan Ibragimov</p> <p>Assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Kazkhrom</i> (Kazakhstan Chrome Industry)</li> <li>• <i>Aliuminii</i> (<i>Kazakhstan</i> (Aluminium of Kazakhstan))</li> </ul> <p>Newspaper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Express-K</i><sup>105</sup></li> </ul> <p>Political Party:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Civil Party (GPK)</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Group of Nurzhan Subkhanberdin</b> (long time friend and clansman of the president)</p> <p>Assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kazkommertsbank (largest bank in Kazakhstan)</li> <li>• Newspaper: <i>Vremia</i> (Time)</li> </ul> <p>Political Connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uraz Zhandosov (ex Finance Minister)</li> <li>• Alikhan Baimenov (ex Labour Minister)</li> <li>• Altynbek Sarsenbaev (ex Information Minister)</li> </ul> <p>Political Party:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alleged links to <i>Ak Zhol</i> and <i>Nagiz Ak Zhol</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>The Group of Mukhtar Abliazov</b> (Former Energy Minister and close associate of the president)</p> <p>Assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bank Turan-Alem</li> <li>• Astana-Holding</li> <li>• Kazakhstan International Bank</li> <li>• <i>Neftianaia strakhovaia kompania</i> (Oil Insurance Company)</li> <li>• Newspaper: <i>Respublika</i></li> </ul> <p>Political Party:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Alga</i> (Forward)</li> </ul>

<sup>105</sup> The ENRC group also have assets in Ferroalloys, the Eurasian Power Corporation, Trakterbel' (which features Intergas Central Asia and Almaty Power) and Eurasian Bank.

Nazarbaev, therefore, had moved to consolidate his power and insure himself against institutional competition by instituting his power on both a formal and informal basis. Formally this was achieved by strengthening presidential power in the constitution, creating pro-presidential political parties and other institutions (ANK). Informally, Nazarbaev's power rested on informal patron-client networks and the loyalty generated from factional elite conflict arising for privatisation and competition for resources. However, by relying on informal political relations to stabilise his political position he also unleashed some destabilising forces. As will be highlighted below, the case of Kazakhstan illustrates how informal political relations can produce instability. The emergence of competing factional elite groups created instability among the ruling elite. Until 1998 conflict between the groups remained behind closed doors. After 1998, this form of closed politics burst into the public realm and despite the president's concerted effort to secure his authority, through both formal and informal means, political uncertainty and instability arose once again.

#### **4. 1998-2004 Elite Fragmentation**

In an effort to see off the challenge from other institutional centres of power, the president relied on informal political relations and behaviour to underpin his formal constitutional domination. However, in doing so he unleashed a further degree of instability. A consequence of privatisation was the growth of influential elite groups competing against one another over access to former state enterprises. Such conflict undermined the stability the president was arguably attempting to install. Some groups became disaffected with the extent of the president's power and the privilege and influence afforded to those elite groups connected with his family. This led to the phenomena of elite fragmentation; the process whereby the closed politics of factional elite competition became public and whereby leading members of the government and business openly challenged the president. It was also to have important consequences for the overall development of parties. Elite fragmentation occurred in three waves; the first in 1998 with former Prime Minister Akezhan Kazhegeldin, the second in 2001 with the emergence of Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DVK) and finally in 2004 with Zamanbek Nurkadilov and Zharmakhan Tuiakbai.



#### 4.1 First Wave 1998: Akezhan Kazhegeldin

Nazarbaev removed Kazhegeldin as prime minister in October 1997. Kazhegeldin had connections with powerful economic interests in defence related industries, and as a former employee of the KGB<sup>106</sup> was emerging as a potential rival to the president.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, he was popular with Western business having been awarded 'Reformer of the Year' in 1996 by the Adam Smith Institute for his government's privatisation program. These cumulative factors were enough for Nazarbaev to be nervous of Kazhegeldin's political ambitions. Once released from the duties of office Kazhegeldin made sharp public statements regarding the political leadership and direction of the country. While not formally criticising Nazarbaev, the text of Kazhegeldin's book published in the summer of 1998 critiqued the economic and political stagnation in the country and it was clear at whom this critique was directed:

"The Constitution does not provide the balance it should between the authorities of different branches of power. Although it proclaims the fundamental democratic principles, it does not facilitate their fulfilment. The division of power, human rights, and the superiority of rights over bureaucratic discretion remain only declarations. Those in power do not foster constructive criticism or opposition. The mass media is pressured without just cause, as those in power either try to suppress or co-opt them."<sup>108</sup>

On 8 October 1998 Kazhegeldin stated his intention to stand in the pre-term presidential election of January 1999.<sup>109</sup> The president moved quickly to ensure Kazhegeldin was unable to participate in the election by utilising state and governmental bodies to marginalise his competitor. The Central Election Commission (CEC), appointed by the president, was loyal to Nazarbaev. It denied Kazhegeldin registration as a candidate due to his conviction in October 1998 by Almaty

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<sup>106</sup> Kazhegeldin had served as an officer on Semipalatinsk Regional Department of KGB. He also trained with the KGB in Moscow.

<sup>107</sup> Olcott, *Unfulfilled Promise* pp. 115-116.

<sup>108</sup> Akezhan Kazhegeldin, *Kazakhstan: The Right to Choose, Chapter One*, (Sourced online at [http://kazhegeldin.addr.com/english/Book\\_1e/Contents.html](http://kazhegeldin.addr.com/english/Book_1e/Contents.html), original publishers unknown).

<sup>109</sup> On the 7 Oct 1998 the parliament moved to pass legislation which altered aspects of the constitution. This included bringing forward the date of the election by one year but at the same time extending the president's term in office by two years from five to seven years. There were also changes to parliamentary elections and composition. Ten seats were added to raise the number of deputies to 77. These seats were to be awarded on the basis of proportional representation through a party list system.

Medeusky District Court for participating in an unsanctioned meeting of the Movement for Fair Elections. This was followed by a campaign to completely discredit Kazhegeldin with accusations of money laundering. It is claimed that in 1998 a special team was established on the orders of the head of the KNB Alnur Musaev, a close associate of Rakhat Aliev, to liquidate the activities of Kazhegeldin and investigate his economic interests.<sup>110</sup>

Having moved into opposition, Kazhegeldin created a political platform to build on his public appeal and drive forward his political ambitions. Kazhegeldin's party, the Republican People's Party of Kazakhstan (RNPk) was established on 17 December 1998.<sup>111</sup> Kazhegeldin was elected chairman and the congress adopted a party program committed to 'a socially-oriented market economy, on the power of the people, and on unconditional respect for civil liberties and human rights'.<sup>112</sup> The party was registered with the Ministry of Justice on the 1 March and managed to win one seat in the October 1999 parliamentary election.<sup>113</sup> Due to the pressure of the investigation into his financial dealings in which charges of tax invasion and the illegal purchase of property in Belgium were brought against him, Kazhegeldin left Kazakhstan in April and moved into exile firstly in Moscow and then Europe. In September 2001 he was convicted in absentia and sentenced to ten years. The RNPk have always maintained the charges were politically motivated.<sup>114</sup>

Kazhegeldin's move into opposition is important for three reasons. First, it was the first time the politics of the elite had become public revealing the lack of elite consolidation. Second, the case of Kazhegeldin makes it possible to see the relationship between the politics of the informal and formal. Formal state bodies such as the KNB were used at the service of the president to ensure a potential rival was politically marginalised. The courts and the CEC, comprising of members appointed by Nazarbaev, were also utilised to ensure Kazhegeldin was unable to register as a

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<sup>110</sup> *Taszhargan*, June 28 2007.

<sup>111</sup> D'iachenko et. al, *Politicheskie partii Kazakhstana*.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* p. 101.

<sup>113</sup> Party registration at this time was fairly straightforward. The 1996 Law on Political Parties required that parties have 3000 registered members. In response to RNPk and other opposition parties the laws were tightened considerably in 2002. See Chapter Four.

<sup>114</sup> Press Service of RNPk, *Zaochnyi sud nad Kazhegeldinym kak rezul'tat politiki bezzakoniia i proizvola*, 7 September 2001, [http://kazhegeldin.addr.com/articles/About\\_07\\_09\\_01\\_3.htm](http://kazhegeldin.addr.com/articles/About_07_09_01_3.htm) [accessed 26.06.2008].



candidate whilst facing criminal charges. Finally, his move into opposition had an impact on the development of political parties. It was the first time a political party not sponsored by the authorities had secure financial backing. It demonstrated how parties could be used to promote the political careers and protect the economic interests of elite figures. Furthermore, the rise of an opposition party backed and funded by former ruling elites led to a rethinking by the authorities of how to deal and manage political parties. This included creating a new large pro-presidential party, *Otan* (Fatherland) and establishing tougher more restrictive party laws in 2002.<sup>115</sup>

#### 4.2 Second Wave 2001: Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan

The second wave of elite fragmentation was far larger featuring the move into opposition of many of the young liberal elite personally appointed by the president. The second wave hinged on conflict between factional elite groups, in particular between Rakhat Aliev and Mukhtar Abliazov. Once again the fragmentation process resulted in the establishment of several new opposition parties.

The fragmentation has its roots in competition over sugar. Both Aliev and Abliazov had interests in Kazakhstan's sugar market and using his contacts within the tax police Aliev ensured Abliazov's Astana-Sugar Company was subject to intense auditing, resulting in penalty fines and an increased tax burden on the company. Through this method Aliev conquered the market marginalizing Abliazov's interests.<sup>116</sup> The conflict between the groups intensified as Aliev used his position as deputy head of the KNB to take control of many of Abliazov's business including Turan Alem Bank and some media assets.<sup>117</sup> It was clear 'Aliev was gaining too much power and accruing too many business interests'.<sup>118</sup> Other leading figures came into conflict with Aliev. Galymzhan Zhakiianov, for example, believed Aliev was running a campaign to discredit him through the TV station KTK.<sup>119</sup> At the beginning of November 2001

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<sup>115</sup> The creation of *Otan* will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter and the role of restrictive party laws is analysed in the following chapter.

<sup>116</sup> Victor Shelgunov, 'Let's See Who's Come', Analytic Report, *International Eurasian Institute for Economic and Political Research*, 7 January 2000 [accessed 26.06.2008].

<sup>117</sup> Barbara Junisbai, and Azamat Junisbai, The Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan: A Case Study in Economic Liberalization, Intra-elite Cleavage, and Political Opposition, *Demokratizatsiia*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2005.

<sup>118</sup> Author's interview with anonymous senior figure in *Ak Zhol*, 18 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>119</sup> Zhakiianov-Aliev Khronika informatsionnoi voiny, *Internews.kz*, 13 November 2001, <http://www.kub.kz/article.php?sid=304> [accessed 30.05.07].



led by Abliazov a group of Kazakhstan's leading businessmen published a letter addressed to Nazarbaev in which they appealed to him to protect them against the arbitrary actions of state enforcement bodies.<sup>120</sup>

Nazarbaev at first seemed to heed the call of these notable figures by forcing Aliev to resign his position as Deputy Chairman of the KNB while some media outlets associated with Aliev were blocked.<sup>121</sup> However, two days later on 17 November Nazarbaev appeared on state television with Aliev at his side having appointed him Deputy Chief of Presidential Security. The president exonerated Aliev from any wrongdoing<sup>122</sup> arguing his relatives had 'the same right, as any citizen, to be involved in business or public service...therefore any insinuations around this question are groundless'.<sup>123</sup> The same day an auction was held to sell the state's share of the Halyk Savings Bank. Both Kazkommertsbank (owned by Nurzhan Subkhanberdin) and Astana Holdings (owned by Abliazov) had made public their interest in buying the bank only for the shares to go at the last minute to *Mangistaumunaigaz* financial group, reportedly a business with connections to Aliev.<sup>124</sup> The following day, on 18 November, those who had signed the original letter appealing for Nazarbaev's help in the informal conflict, alongside many prominent ministers and ex-members of the government, *Akims* and businessman, announced the creation of the public association Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DVK) (see figure 3.5 for table of signatures).

*Table 3.5 Signatures of the Creation of DVK, 18 November 2001*

Name	Position
G. Zhakiianov	<i>Akim</i> of Pavlodar Oblast
U. Zhandosov	Deputy Prime Minister
N.	Chairman of Kazkommertsbank

<sup>120</sup>Zhanar Serdalina, *Biznes-elita pozhalovalas' prezidentu*, *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, 1 November 2001, <http://www.kub.info/article.php?sid=211>.

<sup>121</sup>This included the TV channel KTK and the newspaper *Karavan*.

<sup>122</sup>This was surprising to many as there were rumours Aliev had been responsible for setting up a website which spread malicious details regarding Nazarbaev and his financial dealings, including notable cases of corruption with South Korean businessmen. It has to be noted this allegation has never been proved. Many political analysts and observers believed that Aliev was planning to conduct a coup against the president. The president's decision to appoint Aliev deputy head of the presidential guard may have been an opportunity to keep him close by. Later the president made the decision to send Aliev into exile by appointing him Ambassador to Austria with special dispensation to work with the OSCE.

<sup>123</sup>V dva golosa: papa ziat', *Khabar*, 17 November 2001, <http://www.kub.kz/article.php?sid=346> [accessed 30.05.07].

<sup>124</sup>Junisbai and Junisbai, *The Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan*, p. 381.



<b>Subkhanberdin</b>	
<b>M. Abliazov</b>	Ex-Energy Minister and Head of Astana-Holdings
<b>A. Ashimov</b>	Director and Actor
<b>T. Tokhtasynov</b>	<i>Mazhilis</i> Deputy
<b>B. Abilov</b>	<i>Mazhilis</i> Deputy and member of the Political Council of Otan
<b>S. Konakbaev</b>	<i>Mazhilis</i> Deputy
<b>Z. Ertlesova</b>	Deputy Defence Minister
<b>A. Baimenov</b>	Minister of Labour and Social Protection
<b>B. Imashev</b>	Chairman of the Anti-Monopoly Agency
<b>K. Kelimbetov</b>	Deputy Finance Minister
<b>T. Alzhanov</b>	Chairman of the Investment FM
<b>S. Esimkhanov</b>	Senate Deputy
<b>G. Amrin</b>	Deputy Secretary of the Security Council
<b>Z. Battalova</b>	Senate Deputy
<b>A. Mashani</b>	Senate Deputy
<b>N. Smagulov</b>	President of Kazprodkorporatsii
<b>I. Meltser</b>	Editor in chief of <i>Vremia</i>
<b>E. Tatishev</b>	Chairman of Turan-Alem

Those who signed the statement believed democratic development in Kazakhstan was in peril and 'recent events demonstrated the dangers of concentrating in the same hands the control of the security forces and the information resources of the country'.<sup>125</sup>

As a unified movement DVK did not last long. The retribution against the senior public figures participating was tough. Immediately the prime minister, Kassymzhomart Tokaev, appealed to the president to sack those in government posts involved in the movement.<sup>126</sup> The president obliged and many lost their positions and portions of their business interests.<sup>127</sup> Zhakiianov and Abliazov had what many considered politically motivated trials brought against them on charges of corruption.<sup>128</sup> Such pressures and suppressions forced some members, primarily Zhandosov, Albiov and Baimenov, to reconsider their position in being part of DVK and in doing so they created *Ak Zhol*, a political party anchored on being more

<sup>125</sup>Zaiavlenie o sozdanii obshchestvennogo ob'edineniia 'Demokraticeskii Vybor Kazakhstana, *Vremia*, 22 November 2001.

<sup>126</sup> 'Prem'er-ministr impoviziruet', *Kazakhstan Today*, 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2001, accessed from <http://www.kub.kz/article.php?sid=397> [retrieved 30.05.07].

<sup>127</sup> Andrei Chebotarev 'Politicheskii krizis oseni 2001 goda i ego posledstviia: 5 let spustia' 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2006, <http://www.kub.kz/article.php?sid=15070>.

<sup>128</sup> Human Rights Watch Report, *Political Freedoms in Kazakhstan*, April 2004, Vol. 16 No. 4

acquiescent and constructive with power.<sup>129</sup> *Ak Zhol* also split in 2005 over similar issues.<sup>130</sup>

After *Ak Zhol* was formed the remaining members of DVK created the party Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan. Zhakiianov was the figurehead of the party even though he remained in prison. DVK contested the 2004 parliamentary election in a bloc with the KPK. The bloc polled poorly in what was considered a non-transparent and unfair election<sup>131</sup> and soon after DVK was banned by the Ministry of Justice for minor infringements of the Law on Political Parties.<sup>132</sup> The party *Alga* DVK was established from DVK with Assylbek Kozhakhmetov as Chairman. Zhakiianov has since stated he has nothing to do with *Alga* and that '*Alga* is not DVK',<sup>133</sup> however, it is alleged Abliazov sponsors *Alga*.<sup>134</sup>

The 2001 wave of elite fragmentation illustrates the extent of informal politics under Nazarbaev's leadership and the influence this had on political institutions. The patronage cultivated by the president to secure his position vis-à-vis the uncertainty of transition led to conflict between informal factional elite groups as they fought over the spoils of privatisation. While family connections were important, kinship identities were not the predominant factor in who got what. Mashkevich's group which is not related to the president also found favour and patronage with the president ensuring their monopolisation of the aluminium market. The result of extensive patronage was a series of informal elite conflicts which came to a head in

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<sup>129</sup> Kazakhstan: Power shows muscles, opposition strengthens, *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2002, <http://www.Zhakiianov.info/eng/article.php?id=60> [accessed, 31.07.07].

<sup>130</sup> After the elections of 2004, Baimenov wished to pursue a closer dialogue with the authorities while the other leading figures in *Ak Zhol* did not. This led to Abilov and Zhandosov, with Tulegen Zhukeev and Altynbek Sarsenbaev to create *Nagiz Ak Zhol (True Bright Path)*. The issue of the extent to which the opposition should cooperate with the regime has divided them ever since and was a major factor responsible for the split. See Rozlana Taukina 'Raskol v partii Ak Zhol: Konflikt liderov ili idei?' *Club Polyton*, 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2005, <http://www.club.kz/index.php?lang=en&mod=analitics&submod=self&article=310> [retrieved 14.10.06].

<sup>131</sup> OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report, Republic of Kazakhstan Parliamentary Elections 19<sup>th</sup> September and 3<sup>rd</sup> October, Warsaw, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2004.

<sup>132</sup> Zaiavlenie o likvidatsii iuridicheskogo litsa, 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2004, <http://www.procuror.kz/?iid=5&type=news&lang=ru&nid=61> [retrieved: 03.05.07].

<sup>133</sup> Authors interview with Galymzhan Zhakiianov, 18 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>134</sup> After being released from prison it was a condition of his release that he remained out of politics. Since then Abliazov has officially stuck to business and was able to reclaim some of his interests in Temir Bank. However, it is widely considered among local analysts and many people I interviewed that *Alga* receives some kind of financial funding from Abliazov even though it is difficult to qualify.



2001. Those elite groups involved went on to form a number of political parties which were either an attempt to extend their political and economic interests, as in the case of DVK or as with *Ak Zhol*, a platform to protect their interests, secure them from criminal charges and an attempt to retain their political positions. Simultaneously we can observe how informal politics is contextualised by formal institution. In this instance political parties were used to formally protect and consolidate political and economic interests.

#### 4.3 Third Wave 2004: Zamanbek Nurkadilov and Zharmakhan Tuiakbai

The most recent wave of elite fragmentation occurred in 2004 when two big public figures, and previously staunch allies of Nazarbaev, openly criticised the regime. Firstly, Zamanbek Nurkadilov, a popular figure in the Southern regions of the country, former *Akim* of Almaty and Emergencies Minister, openly criticised the president accusing him and his family of corrupt practices.<sup>135</sup> Nurkadilov joined forces with the opposition party *Ak Zhol* but in November 2005 he was found dead with two gunshot wounds to the chest. The authorities declared it was a case of suicide but many in the opposition argue it was politically motivated, claiming Nurkadilov was about to produce documentary evidence proving corruption at the highest levels of the government, including Nazarbaev.<sup>136</sup>

Another occurred after the parliamentary elections of 2004. Zharmakhan Tuiakbai, deputy leader of *Otan*, and speaker of the *Mazhilis* publicly criticised the conduct of the elections in which his party won.<sup>137</sup> Tuiakbai believed the elections 'were accompanied by mass infringements of the rights of voters'.<sup>138</sup> He entered the opposition and was their unified candidate for the presidential elections in 2005 under the loose public association For a Just Kazakhstan (ZSK). In September 2006, Tuiakbai, with encouragement from other opposition parties, set up his own party, the

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<sup>135</sup> Politicehskaia 'bomba Zamanbeka Nurkadilov, *Respublika*, 12 March 2004.

<sup>136</sup> Kazakh Opposition Wants Probe of Politician's Death, *RFE/RL*, 14 November 2005.

<sup>137</sup> According to local analysts the cynical interpretation of why Tuiakbai left the president's inner circle was that his term as speaker of the *Mazhilis* was ending and he had not been offered a new post that was satisfactory to his perceived standing.

<sup>138</sup> *Vremia*, 14<sup>th</sup> October, 2004, <http://www.kub.kz/article.php?sid=7105> [retrieved 28.10.06].

All-National Social Democratic Party (OSDP).<sup>139</sup> OSDP's platform was based on social reform and social democracy.<sup>140</sup>

Nurkadilov and Tuiakbai's exit from the president's direct patronage was not as significant as the wave of 2001, but it was equally damaging for Nazarbaev. It illustrated again how instrumental informal elite conflict is for party genesis. The consequence of elite fragmentation is that the reliance on informal political relationships and behaviour, intended to consolidate power, only led to a greater degree of uncertainty. It demonstrates how neopatrimonialism (where the informal is fused with the formal) can be inherently unstable. In response to elite fragmentation a counter process was instigated which sought to reinstate and consolidate the personal rulership of the president once again. This process continued to rely on a fusion of personal informal norms of political relations and behaviour and formal political institutionalisation.

## 5. 1999-2007 Pro-presidential Consolidation

The president's re-assertion and further consolidation of power in response to the uncertainty generated by elite fragmentation took four forms: party consolidation, the centralisation of media and economic assets, the arbitrary crackdown on informal elite groups who presented themselves as potential challengers, including family members, and the formalisation of his personal rulership through constitutional changes.

### 5.1 Party Consolidation

The coalescing of pro-Nazarbaev forces began soon after the 1999 presidential election and was a reaction to the emergence of Kazhegeldin as a political rival. The Republican Staff in Support of the President decided the organisation they created to support the President's bid for re-election should transform into *Otan*. Volunteers decided 'they were unwilling to break the union up, and the leadership decided they wanted a larger united party.'<sup>141</sup> On the 19 January 1999, a constituent congress was

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<sup>139</sup> *Respublika*, 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2006, <http://www.kub.kz/article.php?sid=14413> [retrieved 04.01.07].

<sup>140</sup> *Tezisy vystupleniia Zharmakhana Tuiakbaia na uchreditel'nom s'ezde obshchenatsional'noi sotsial-demokraticheskoi partii*, [www.zonakz.net](http://www.zonakz.net), 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2006, <http://www.zonakz.net/articles/15511> [retrieved 02.02.07].

<sup>141</sup> Author's interview with K. M. Kazkenov.



held and the Ministry of Justice registered the party less than one month later on the 12 February.<sup>142</sup> *Otan* was a conglomeration of many pro-presidential parties and movements including PNEK, DPK, Liberal Movement for Kazakhstan (LDK) and For Kazakhstan 2030. The former Prime Minister, Sergei Tereshchenko, was selected as party chairman. The party was created purely as a basis to support the president.<sup>143</sup> The party competed in the 1999 parliamentary election becoming the dominant party in the *Mazhilis* allowing them to establish their own party faction (see table 3.6).<sup>144</sup> Two new pro-presidential parties also proved successful; the GPK, backed by Mashkevich, and the Agrarian Party (APK). Combined with *Otan*, these political parties ensured Nazarbaev had a forcible presence in the legislature.<sup>145</sup> In *Otan* the president had the vehicle he desired since independence, a party that was his personal political vehicle to ensure the legislature would be a compliant body. However, complete institutional dominance was not assured as other pro-presidential parties continued to vie for influence and power including, GPK, APK and *Asar* (established by Dariga Nazarbaeva and Rakhat Aliev).

*Table 3.6 Distribution of Seats won in the 1999 Parliamentary Elections*

Party or Affiliation	Seats
<i>Otan</i>	24
Civil Party of Kazakhstan	11
Communist Party	3
Agrarian Party	3
Peoples Co-operative Party of Kazakhstan	1
Republican People's Party (RNPK)	1
Business	10
Independents (Government Associated)	20
Independents (other)	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>

(Adapted from Olcott, *Kazakhstan Unfulfilled Promise*).

<sup>142</sup> S. D'iachenko, L.Karmazina and S. Seidumanov 'Politicheskie Partii Kazakhstana, p.79.

<sup>143</sup> This was to have an enormous impact on the development of *Otan* as a political party. For example, the party has yet to establish a distinct identity or branding separate from the president.

<sup>144</sup> In post-Soviet terms a faction is a parliamentary grouping.

<sup>145</sup> The 1999 parliamentary election also saw the last electoral appearance of many of the older parties which emerged in the early years of independence. *Azamat*, *Alash* and the NKK were de-registered as political parties after tighter controls of party organisation and registration were brought in 2002. See Chapter Four.

The emergence of *Asar* in 2003, on top of the critical wave of elite fragmentation in 2001, added to the sense of political uncertainty among the highest echelons of political elites in Kazakhstan. This was especially the case, as *Asar* was viewed as Nazarbaeva's vehicle to succeed her father.<sup>146</sup> With this in mind the president sought to unify all pro-presidential forces and weaken the power of independent political players, even if they were kinship related. The major process of pro-presidential consolidation began in the autumn of 2005 with the gradual assimilation of pro-presidential political parties into a national coalition to back the candidacy of Nazarbaev for the 2005 presidential elections.<sup>147</sup> The formal merger occurred at *Otan*'s congress in July 2006 when a decision was taken to join with *Asar*.<sup>148</sup> The unification of *Otan* and *Asar* was followed by the assimilation of GPK and APK later the same year.<sup>149</sup> On the 22 December 2006 a special congress of *Otan* took place which recognised the unification process by re-naming *Otan* as *Nur Otan (Light of Fatherland)*. The merger of these parties was widely considered to be the curtailing of alternative sources of power. In particular with *Asar*, it was a sign 'the president had grown tired of his daughter's experiment in politics'.<sup>150</sup>

Despite pro-presidential parties winning all but one seat in the 2004 parliamentary elections (see table 3.7) the president clearly was not comfortable cohabiting the political space with political players who possessed their own independent power bases. The emergence of parties associated with former ruling elites reinstated an atmosphere of uncertainty driving the president to seek greater consolidation with the creation of a loyal party in which he could institutionalise the informal patronage on which his power was based. In August 2007 Nazarbaev finally achieved the complete compliant and wholly pro-presidential legislature he had sought since independence.

<sup>146</sup> *Respublika Assandi Times*, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2004.

<sup>147</sup> This saw *Asar*, GPK, APK and the Democratic Party *Adilet* (Justice) establishing the People's Union of Kazakhstan. The Union provided a consolidated and formidable base from which the president comfortably won the presidential election. The logic of the Union according to one senior figure in *Otan* was that the pro-presidential forces had received a clear signal from the uniting of the opposition forces behind Tuiakbai, 'that if they kept on fighting among themselves, when the opposition was united, then the opposition forces might win. Thus, the pro-presidential parties decided they should have some kind of treaty among themselves, and decided some kind of union was necessary'. Author's interview with Sharipbek Amirbekov, Deputy Head of the Central Apparatus of *Nur Otan*, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2007, Almaty.

<sup>148</sup> *Otan i Asar stali edinyim tselym*, [www.khabar.kz](http://www.khabar.kz), 4 July 2006, [www.khabar.kz/index.cfm?id=18620](http://www.khabar.kz/index.cfm?id=18620).

<sup>149</sup> *Panorama*, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2006, p. 1 and Kolkhoznyi odobyams Agranaia partiia na vnechrednom s'ezde progolosovala za sliyanie s partei Otan', *Kazakhstan Today*, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>150</sup> Gaziza Baituova 'Vremia 'Asara' Vyshlo'

[http://iwpr.net/?apc\\_state=hrufrc322172&l=en&s=f&o=322416](http://iwpr.net/?apc_state=hrufrc322172&l=en&s=f&o=322416) [retrieved 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2007].



*Nur Otan*, in a highly questionable election, won all the seats under a new fully proportional electoral format.<sup>151</sup>

Table 3.7 Distribution of Seats Awarded for 2004 Parliamentary Election

Political Party or Affiliation	Number of Seats
<i>Otan</i>	42
AIST Bloc (GPK and APK)	11
<i>Asar</i>	4
Democratic Party of Kazakhstan ( <i>Adilet</i> )	1
<i>Ak Zhol</i>	1
Independents	18
Total	77

(Source, Kazakhstan Central Election Commission, [http://election.kz/portal/page?\\_pageid=73,1&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL](http://election.kz/portal/page?_pageid=73,1&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL)).

## 5.2 Economic and Media centralisation

Alongside the consolidation of political forces in *Nur Otan*, the president also began to centralise the economic resources of the state as a means to avoid the instability generated by elite conflict over access to economic resources. The JSC Kazakhstan Holding for State Assets ‘Samruk’ was established by presidential decree in 2006. Claiming to be based on the Singaporean ‘Temasec’ model established in the 1970s, Samruk was utilised in consolidating the economic assets and shares the state possessed in a single holding company. Companies included high profile names such as KazMunaiGaz, the Kazakh Railways and Kazakhtelecom. Some argued it was a return to the ineffective policies of the Soviet era, while other analysts suggested Samruk represented a *Krysha* (roof)<sup>152</sup> for lobbying interests.<sup>153</sup> Centralisation was also pursued in the mass media. The media, despite 80 percent officially residing in private hands, has generally held a pro-Nazarbaev and government bias. This has been maintained by a restrictive law of mass media that ‘seriously stifles free expression’,

<sup>151</sup> See Rico Isaacs, Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan August 2007, *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 2008, pp. 381-385.

<sup>152</sup> The term *Krysha* is used to denote the idea of a roof as a form of protection. In many post-Soviet states business elites and criminal groups sometimes require a *Krysha* to protect their activities and interests. This can take the form of political institutions or formal legal businesses which can provide cover for illegal activities.

<sup>153</sup> V Kazakhstane sozdan gosudarstvennye kholding ‘Samruk’, [www.zonakz.net](http://www.zonakz.net), 3 February 2006 and Kogo stanet zashchishchat’ svoimi kryl’iami ptitsa ‘Samruk’? [www.zonakz.net](http://www.zonakz.net), 10 February 2006.

resulting in a media lacking independence from the state.<sup>154</sup> Any media outlets perceived to be disloyal are marginalised or brought to public trial and face sanctions.<sup>155</sup> Despite this scenario, many of the larger media organisations were taken back under state control. For example, the large media portfolio previously managed by Dariga Nazarbaeva and Rakhat Aliev came back under state jurisdiction.<sup>156</sup> As with the consolidation of pro-presidential parties, the president demonstrated a keenness to pre-empt any form of challenge to his authority from the informal elite groups who exist under his patronage, even if that meant reducing the influence and assets of members of his own family.

### *5.3 The Aliev Affair and Controlling Elite Ambition*

Securing his authority from the political risk associated with the high degree of informal elite level conflict which had persisted under his rule, the president moved to limit the opportunities for those groups to usurp him. Principally this involved arbitrarily removing Rakhat Aliev from positions of influence. In response to the alleged involvement of Aliev in the kidnapping of two leading directors of the board of Nurbank, one of Kazakhstan's largest banks, in which he attempted to violently coerce them into handing the bank over to him, the president personally ordered the Prosecutor General and the Minister of Internal Affairs to conduct 'a detailed investigation of these criminal charges without regards for positions of privilege'.<sup>157</sup> Aliev went into hiding in Vienna as the government failed in extraditing him back to Kazakhstan for trial, while Dariga was left in no other position but to divorce Aliev. Nazarbaev's decision to cast Aliev out from his political circle surprised observers, as the prevailing assumption was that politics in Kazakhstan was about 'the family'.<sup>158</sup> Instead the president was now insuring his rule at the expense of the political ambition and clout of his own family.<sup>159</sup> The events suggest the president had tired of Aliev's

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<sup>154</sup> For example there is the recent case of Internet journalist Kaziz Toguzbayev who faced charges for insulting the honour and dignity of the president in two articles he wrote concerning the murder of opposition leader Altynbek Sarsenbayev. Toguzbayev received a two-year suspended sentence.

<sup>155</sup> Article 19, *Memorandum on Kazakhstan's Law on Mass Media*, (London, 2006).

<sup>156</sup> This included the television stations *Khabar*, Eurasia TV, and KTK and the newspapers *Karavan*, *Novoe Pokelennie* and *Gazeta KZ*.

<sup>157</sup> MVD RK: K ugolovnoi otvetstvennosti privilekaetsia Rakhat Aliev, [www.zonakz.net](http://www.zonakz.net), 23 May 2007.

<sup>158</sup> Author's interview with a representative from a leading international NGO, 31 October 2006, Almaty.

<sup>159</sup> *Rossiiskiy Vesti*, No 29, 6<sup>th</sup> September 2007.



behaviour and could no longer tolerate the potential threat Aliev represented.<sup>160</sup> Aliev has argued this was the reason why his father-in-law moved against him, as he had told Nazarbaev he would run for president in 2012.<sup>161</sup> It illustrates how state bodies were used for personal political tactics of the political ruler in a fashion similar to Weber's idea of the personalisation of public office in patrimonial regimes. In this case the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the judiciary were used to perform the personal wishes of the president in rooting out another potential competitor.

Aliev was not alone in being targeted. Timur Kulibaev, the president's second son-in-law, was removed from his position as deputy chairman of Samruk to ensure his ambition did not grow in the wake of Aliev's marginalisation. Mashkevich too had his political influence curtailed with the dissolution of the GPK. While in the wake of the Aliev affair the president presided over extensive elite reshuffling. This included the moving of Aliev's rival the former Prime Minister Imangali Tasmagambetov, who was transferred from his power base as *Akim* of Almaty, where he had cultivated much popularity, to *Akim* of Astana where the president could keep a closer check on his political ambitions.<sup>162</sup>

#### 5.4 Formal Constitutional Consolidation

The process of elite fragmentation underlined the instability of neopatrimonial politics. As a consequence of elite fragmentation the president has sought to formally introduce constitutional and institutional mechanisms to counter the threat posed by factional elite groups. This has included changes to the constitution relating to the presidency, parliament and political parties which have established mechanisms to keep challengers at bay.<sup>163</sup> The following chapter deals with this topic in greater detail in relation to political parties and won't be discussed here. It will illustrate how the institutional design created by the president, and subject to changes in response to the ever dynamic, uncertain and contingent conditions of transition, and sustained by

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<sup>160</sup> On top of the events in November 2001 and the alleged involvements of Aliev in a website spreading malicious stories about the president he had also been accused of being involved in the murder of opposition leader, Altynbek Sarsenbaev in February 2006.

<sup>161</sup> Aliev's Message, *Kazakhstan Today*, 26 May 2007.

<sup>162</sup> Kadrovyi Pas'ians prezidenta, [www.posit.kz](http://www.posit.kz), 2 March 2008, <http://www.posit.kz/?lan=ru&id=100&pub=7724>.

<sup>163</sup> See Rico Isaacs, *Managing Dissent, Limiting Risk and Consolidating Power: The Processes and Results of Constitutional Reform in Kazakhstan*, *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2008.

informal forms of politics in the shape of loyalty and patronage, have marginalised the oppositional elite who established political parties as a means of fulfilling their political ambitions and protecting their political interests.

In countering the instability and uncertainty caused by elite fragmentation the president used both formal institutional consolidation and informal politics to stabilise his rule. The centralisation of political forces in *Nur Otan*, the consolidation of economic forces in Samruk and placing previously independent media outlets under state control were all reinforced by using the power of patronage to ensure loyalty and guarantee the right result was achieved. In the case of *Nur Otan* it was using informal methods to ensure they won the election (see Chapter Four) and with competing elite groups the president leant on the judiciary to make certain Aliev faced criminal charges and was thus politically marginalised. These processes highlight the fusion and complex relationship between the formal and informal in Kazakhstan.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

This chapter has argued that informal political relations and behaviour in Central Asia are rooted in history as prior scholarship suggests. However, their use in Kazakhstan is specific to the uncertain context of post-Soviet transition. The contingent and dynamic nature of political and economic transition is a more adequate explanation for understanding why informal political norms have become so dominant during this era of political development. Moreover, the use of informal politics in the post-Soviet period denotes a new fusion between traditional informal politics, communist legacies and new post-Soviet institutions. It represents a shift from patrimonial communism (a combination of traditionalism and communist bureaucracy) to neopatrimonialism. Nazarbaev relied on informal politics to counter the political instability derived from institutional competition, pluralism and electoral competition; all contingent processes specific to the post-Soviet transitional context. The president consolidated power through formal (new constitution, political parties and other new institutions like the ANK) and informal (patronage networks and informal elite groups competing for access to resources) means. This form of neopatrimonial rule (the fusion between the formal and informal) further increased political instability and uncertainty but just in a different form. High-level factional elite competition over the allocation of resources,



distributed by the president as the patron,<sup>164</sup> led to conflict and elite fragmentation which challenged presidential rule. Again, the president responded by consolidating his power in formal terms through party consolidation and economic centralisation and informal terms by using the personalism and the loyalty to his leadership he has acquired to move against other powerful political actors, which ensured there were no political actors independent of him.

The development of Kazakhstan's post-Soviet political system has been founded on a fusion between formal and informal politics that can be characterised as neopatrimonialism. However, as will be noted throughout this work informal politics trump formal political institutions as personal loyalty to the leader, patron-client networks and informal factional elite groups are the basis of Kazakhstan's political system. The fusion between the formal and informal has seen informal political relations heavily influence the development of formal political institutions like parties. However, at the same time, as will be noted in the following chapters, political parties do assist in shaping, contextualising and legitimising informal politics. This neopatrimonial context has placed Nazarbaev in the key position, despite some of the uncertainty and instability involved, to create and organise the institutional framework that governs the activities and organisation of political institutions and organisations both connected to and separate from the state. Political parties have been especially susceptible. The institutional framework the president has adopted has been a key way in which he has been able to manage and control their development. Both the formal legal restrictions and the interpretation and selective application of formal rules by loyal clients of the president have significantly shaped the development of political parties and their relationship with informal political relations and behaviour. The chapter that follows explores this issue.

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<sup>164</sup> This has been a phenomena witnessed across the former Soviet Union especially in those countries considered to have weak states during the 1990s such as Russia and Ukraine. See David Hoffman, *The Oligarchs: Wealth and Power in the New Russia* (New York, Public Affairs, 2003); Paul D' Anieri, Robert Kravchuck and Taras Kuzio, *Politics and Society in Ukraine* (Boulder, CO, Westview Press, 1999).

## Chapter Four: Institutional Constraints on Political Parties

### Introduction

In transitional regimes institutional design is a series of choices political actors undertake in devising the rules of the game for, and the constraints of, political competition.<sup>1</sup> Institutional choice, therefore, has an important affect on regime transition, the functioning of institutions and organisations and the quality of democracy.<sup>2</sup> Many authors have sought to explore not just the effects of institutional choice but also institutional origins.<sup>3</sup> Cultural and structural legacies, elite bargaining and the uncertainty of transition have all been posited as factors explaining institutional origin and change.<sup>4</sup> This chapter is concerned with both institutional change and the institutional effects of institutional choice and design. As noted in the previous chapter, the uncertain context of transition played a central role in the decision-making process of the president of Kazakhstan and his reliance on informal political relations and behaviour and thus on his preference of institutional choice. Implicit in such a view is the assumption that 'political actors are motivated by concerns for their individual political power and choose institutions under varying degrees of uncertainty.'<sup>5</sup> What, therefore, has been the impact of political institutional choice and design on political parties in Kazakhstan? And how has the president's reliance on informal political relations and behaviour affected the operation of those institutional constraints?

Following the previous chapter, which illustrated how the president was able to consolidate his rule vis-à-vis the uncertainty of transition by relying on informal

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<sup>1</sup> Douglass C., North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Key works which have explored the effects of institutional choice are Stepan, Alfred, and Skach, Cindy, Constitutional Frameworks and Democratic Consolidation: Parliamentarism versus Presidentialism, *World Politics*, Vol. 46, No. 1, October 1993, p. 1-22 and Juan J Linz and Arturo Valenzuela (eds.) *The Failure of Presidential Democracy* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp. 3-90.

<sup>3</sup> Kathleen Bawn, The Logic of Institutional Preferences: German Electoral Law a Social Outcome, *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 37, No. 4, 1993, pp. 965-989; Pauline Jones Luong, After the Break Up: Institutional Design in Transitional States, *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 5, 2000, pp. 563-592 and Timothy Frye, A Politics of Institutional Choice: Post-Communist Presidencies, *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 5, 1997, 523-552.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Frye, A Politics of Institutional Choice, p. 524.



political relationships and behaviour, this chapter argues that the president's informal and formal institutional dominance placed him in a key position to implement institutional constraints on parties to suit his political preferences. This occurred in three forms. First, through his preponderant formal and informal position as president, Nazarbaev was able to shape party development from above through the creation of a dominant pro-presidential party, the establishment of virtual and satellite parties and the co-option of opposition parties. Second, he was in a position to define and construct the institutional constraints which affect parties' participation in electoral competition. Electoral rules were designed to increase the chances of electoral success for pro-presidential parties on the expected basis loyal clients of the president would selectively apply and interpret the electoral law to ensure victory for pro-presidential candidates. Thus, despite formal 'rational' electoral rules evolving ostensibly for the purpose of establishing pluralism and democracy, the informal interpretation of those rules guarantees presidential preferences are met at the expense of other political voices. Third, there is the law designed to formally govern party organisation and activity. By instituting a 'Law on Political Parties', the president sought to legalise, rationalise and codify the role of political parties in Kazakhstan. However, the selective application of the law on the part of government agencies and ministries ensures, similar to the law regarding electoral competition, only pro-presidential parties truly benefit. These three forms of institutional constraints reveal the complex nature of the relationship between informal politics and party development. Informal politics influence formal institutional rules governing political parties as formal rules are written in a manner which leave them open to interpretation and selective application by loyal clients of the president. This shapes party development by marginalizing all parties except pro-presidential parties, in particular *Nur Otan* (Light of Fatherland). At the same time formal rules act to legitimise such informal political relations and behaviour. Moreover, as a formal institution *Nur Otan*, provides elite stability and domination of the state apparatus, an important role which consolidates authoritarian rule.

What this chapter explains is that Nazarbaev is in a pivotal position to define the formal institutional constraints shaping party development. Simultaneously, however, the informal components of a neopatrimonial regime, in particular loyalty to the leader and the patronage of patron-client relations underscore and influence

the operation of the formal aspects of the institutional constraints affecting party development. It results in weak plural electoral competition, a marginalisation of opposition parties and the institutionalisation of the president's loyal party *Nur Otan* as the only political party that matters in Kazakhstan. Importantly, it reveals the central role *Nur Otan* plays in providing elite stability helping to consolidate and secure Nazarbaev's authoritarian rule.

## 1. Institutional Choice: The Presidency and the President

### 1.1 Structure and Agency

A major problem when considering the role of presidentialism in Kazakhstan and its impact on the development of political parties is the extent to which, as an institution, the presidency is infused with the agency of the president. Indeed, Nazarbaev and the office of President in Kazakhstan is a rather pertinent example of the complex debate between structure and agency in political science. Historically, scholars have wrestled with the issue of the extent to which political conduct shapes political context. Pluralist analysts place emphasis upon the role of decision-makers in shaping events, while structuralist authors emphasise the limited role of agency and greater power of form and structure.<sup>6</sup> The design of the presidential system in Kazakhstan was fitted and constructed around the desire of the incumbent president to retain control of the contingent and contextual circumstances of post-Soviet transition (see previous chapter). The strengthening of presidential authority in Kazakhstan 'is defined not only by pre-Soviet traditions and the Soviet period, but also by the personality of the president'.<sup>7</sup> The development, therefore, of presidentialism in post-Soviet Kazakhstan is entangled with the personality and holder of the office of president. This has implications on the 'rationality' of state institutions, as 'one person controls executive power and all other centres of powers in the country'.<sup>8</sup> The office of president is personalised to fit around Nazarbaev and consequently the rational-liberal elements of the office are diluted. For example, according to the 1995 constitution a person is prohibited from holding the office of president for more than two terms. Having stood for office under these conditions in

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<sup>6</sup> Colin Hay, *Political Analysis*, (Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> E. A., Borisova, *Kazakhstan prezident i vneshiaia politika* (Moscow, Natalis, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Author's interview with Tolen M. Tokhtassynov, Deputy Leader of the KPK, 9 February 2007, Almaty.



the 1999 and 2005 presidential elections, Nazarbaev was faced with a constitutional dilemma if he wished to stand for presidential office again in 2012. The rationality of this clause, which is to avoid one person remaining in office indefinitely and the dangers of dictatorship such longevity evokes, was overcome by the deputies in parliament introducing a new clause to the constitution in 2007 which allowed the first president of Kazakhstan (Nazarbaev) to stand for as many terms as he liked.<sup>9</sup> The personal desire for continuing in power both on the part of Nazarbaev and his loyal clients in parliament, overcame any rational-legal institutional restrictions embedded within the institution of presidency. Evidently, in Kazakhstan it is Nazarbaev who holds power not the office of presidency.

### *1.2 Formal Institutional Dominance*

The complex nature of the relationship between structure and agency in Kazakhstan should not detract from considerable strength of formal powers concentrated in the office of president. Nazarbaev's leading position afforded him the opportunity to construct the institution of presidency setting the tone for the distribution of power in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. Consequently, he has institutionalised personal political power. Formally, the powers granted to the president in the 1995 constitution were wide ranging and comprehensive with power invested in the presidency at the expense of the legislature. Article 44 of the constitution endows the president with the power to appoint the prime minister, the government, the general prosecutor, the head of the National Bank, the National Security Committee and to determine the structure of government. Furthermore, Article 45 awards the president the power to 'issue decrees and resolutions which are binding on the entire territory of the Republic...which have the force of laws'.<sup>10</sup> The powers of the legislature are limited to four short and otiose clauses. The constitutional power of the presidency gives the president in office the constitutional right to dominate and shape the political space. While this is not unusual in any given presidential or semi-presidential political system, the checks and balances apparent in established Western democracies are either absent or simply far too immature in Kazakhstan. In Kazakhstan, there is 'an expert presidential system, where the president has greater control of all political

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<sup>9</sup>Aleksei Nikitin, Nazarbaev stanet pozhiznennym prezidentom Kazakhstana, [www.kub.info](http://www.kub.info), <http://www.kub.info/article.php?sid=17526>

<sup>10</sup>Konstitutsiia Respubliki Kazakhstan, 1995 (Almaty, Iurist, 2006).

levers, and all political players, compared to the legislative and judicial branches'.<sup>11</sup> As a result, 'the government is under the total control of the president. The executive branch is totally under his control. The position of Prime Minister is not important; it is rather a position that is managerial or technical'.<sup>12</sup>

Kazakhstan is not unique in the post-Soviet world or even beyond. Many of the other former Soviet states, with the exception of the Baltic Republics, opted for strong presidential or semi-presidential systems.<sup>13</sup> Russia, for example, has seen the concentration of power in the presidency at the expense of the influence and effectiveness of other centres of power. Russia also provides an illuminating example of a phenomenon that has been present in Kazakhstan; the personalisation of presidential power. Vladimir Putin, despite no longer being president in Russia is still believed to hold power.<sup>14</sup> It illustrates that meaningful power is held not in an institutionalised established office (as present in rationalised bureaucratic polities) but instead in the personal power of an individual (as in a neopatrimonial regime). In Kazakhstan Nazarbaev not only formally possesses a great deal of power but it is buttressed and interlaced with informal personal political power. This 'informal' power is crucial to Nazarbaev's ability to see his political preferences enacted into legislation.

### *1.3 Informal Institutional Dominance: The Power of Patronage Networks*

The strong form of presidentialism in Kazakhstan is underpinned by informal personal power. This essentially flows from the president's ability to appoint vast swathes of key positions in the political system. 'The president, appoints the regional *Akims*, regional *Akims* (local governors) appoint city *Akims*, the president appoints the government, the president appoints the judges, the president controls the parliament and the senate, the *Maslikhats* (local councils) are elected by the population, but are under the control of regional *Akims*.'<sup>15</sup> Consequently, the president controls the political edifice based on a system of patronage through the

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<sup>11</sup> Author's interview with Dosym Satpaev, Political Analyst, 28 February 2007, Almaty.

<sup>12</sup> Author's interview with Senior *Ak Zhol* official, 18 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>13</sup> Gerard Easter, Preference for Presidentialism: Post-Communist Regime Change in Russia and the CIS, *World Politics*, Vol. 49 No. 2, 1997, pp. 184-211.

<sup>14</sup> Medvedev sworn in, but Putin still holds power in Russia, *Independent*, 8 May 2008.

<sup>15</sup> Author's interview with Galymzhan Zhakianov, Chairman of Public Foundation "Civil Society", 10 January 2007, Almaty.



power of appointment. Appointed by the president, local *Akims* utilise their own network of subordinate *Akims* (Raion [district] and *Auyl* [village] level), as well as local officials and state employees under their control, to secure presidential interests. The president awards positions and resources in exchange for political loyalty. Political positions therefore, are not based on rational lines of division but 'depend on the will of one man'.<sup>16</sup> Outside of state appointments important 'influence groups', those business groups that have appropriated former state enterprises through the privatisation process (see Chapter 3) also offer a degree of personal loyalty to Nazarbaev.<sup>17</sup> These elites 'support Nazarbaev and think the reason why they have all their wealth is because Nazarbaev is in power' and as a result remain loyal to him.<sup>18</sup> He is the key arbitrator of all conflicts over resources and any group failing to demonstrate loyalty can find themselves sidelined, as Mukhtar Abliazov and Galymzhan Zhakianov discovered when they formed Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DVK).<sup>19</sup> These extensive patronage networks give Nazarbaev an almost inexhaustible base of personal loyalty to his leadership.

Combined with the formal institutional powers granted to the president, Nazarbaev is able to rely on personal loyalty and extensive patronage networks to influence and foster a party system that suits his personal preference. The presidency provides a formal structure which is internationally recognised, to supplement informal powers of patronage. In this sense it represents a fusion between both formal constitutional power and informal personal power. As suggested in Chapter One, the problems associated with presidentialism, in general terms and with regard to the specific post-Soviet context, are particularly evident in Kazakhstan. Weak party development has certainly been an effect of the choice of presidential rule due to the centralised nature which presidentialism can slide towards. This is compounded by the post-soviet particularity of neopatrimonialism where informal political loyalty to the president has delivered a loyal and obedient dominant political party at the expense and marginalisation of other parties. Similar to Russia, an early effect of presidentialism

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<sup>16</sup> Author's interview with Sergei Duvanov, Independent Journalist, 28 November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>17</sup> Andrei Grosin, *Kto est kto v sovremenom Kazakhstane. Zanimatel'no – o klanovykh gruppirovkakh* (Moscow, Instituta Stran SNG, 2005).

<sup>18</sup> Author's interview with Yevgeni Zhovtis, Political Analyst, 31 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>19</sup> Both found themselves convicted of abuse of office and financial mismanagement and placed in prison, divorced from their influence, businesses and positions. See Chapter Three.

in Kazakhstan was a fragmented party system,<sup>20</sup> however from 1995 onwards, using loyalty and patronage as a tool, the president was able to shape and foster party development from above to suit his preferences. This has been achieved through three particular means: the establishment of a dominant party, the creation of virtual and satellite parties for the purpose of creating an aura of multipartism and the co-optation and marginalisation of opposition parties. While formal institutional power, underpinned by informal patronage has shaped party development, the creation of a dominant party was particularly crucial for elite stability.

#### *1.4 Establishing a Dominant Pro-Presidential Party*

The relationship between the formal institution of presidency and the informal personal nature of Nazarbaev's power bequeathed him a position of centrality in the political system allowing him to construct and shape party development to his personal preferences. Initially, the early years of independence from 1991 to 1995 witnessed a more fragmented party system which seemingly the president had less control over. As argued in Chapter Three, the contingency of transition from communism witnessed the emergence of many small political parties and public organisations.<sup>21</sup> However, from 1995 onwards there was a concerted effort to establish a cohesive party system manageable from above.

The major project undertaken by the president and his administration in relation to party development has been the creation of a political party loyal and sympathetic to presidential interests. The goal was to create a party which would fill the vacuum left by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), a party that would prove loyal to the president, provide elite stability, dominate state structures and act as a vehicle for presidential interests in the legislature and across the country. The first attempt at establishing a dominant party occurred at the 'funeral congress' of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan (KPK) in October 1991. Simultaneous to the liquidation of the KPK the president encouraged delegates to form the Socialist Party of Kazakhstan

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Moser, *The Electoral Effects of Presidentialism in Post-Soviet Russia*, in J. Löwenhardt (ed.), *Party Politics in Post-Communist Russia* (London, Frank Cass, 1988), pp. 55-58.

<sup>21</sup> M. B. Zaslavskaja, *Politicheskie partii i obshchestvennye ob'edineniia Kazakhstana na sovermennom etape razvitiia*, (Almaty, KISI, 1994) pp. 6-7.



(SPK), a more reform minded political entity. The delegates duly obliged.<sup>22</sup> The strategy was to transfer the power and privilege from the KPK to the SPK in the belief the party would be a valuable resource of loyalty and legitimacy. The SPK, however, was not forthcoming in its acquiescence to the president and a sizable proportion of its deputies in the Supreme Soviet soon emerged as the centre of opposition to Nazarbaev's economic reforms. After the failure of the SPK the president blessed the creation of another party, the Union of People's Unity of Kazakhstan (SNEK), later re-named Party of Peoples Unity of Kazakhstan (PNEK) in 1995. PNEK provided a key vehicle in coalescing other political forces around the president and the push for stronger presidential powers in 1995 (see Chapter Three). The party in its program explicitly stated that its 'mission is to provide support for the course of reforms conducted by the president of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev'.<sup>23</sup> It was the first sign of the personal attachment between the president and a political party. The basis of their foundation was to support the personal programme of Nazarbaev. It was not, however, until prior to the presidential elections of 1999 that the president began to truly consolidate a political party around him capable of imitating the role of the CPSU. The merger of several small pro-presidential parties, and PNEK, into the newly established *Otan* (Fatherland) in 1999 was a pivotal moment in the development of political parties in Kazakhstan (See Chapter Three).

The culmination of the project occurred in 2006 when other independent pro-presidential forces merged with *Otan*. The other main parties with representation in parliament *Asar* (Together), the Civil Party (GPK) and the Agrarian Party (APK)<sup>24</sup> joined forces with *Otan* at the suggestion of Nazarbaev who had called for 'the consolidation of all constructive political forces in the country'.<sup>25</sup> The assimilation of these parties into *Nur Otan* (Light of Fatherland) was widely viewed as the 'minimisation of independent political forces', in particular Nazarbaev's daughter,

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<sup>22</sup> A hardcore of disgruntled Communist Party members did later re-establish the KPK. The Ministry of Justice registered the party in 1994, and Serikbolsyn Abdil'din became the leader of the party in 1996.

<sup>23</sup> PNEK Party Programme in I. O., Buluktaev, C. A. D'iachenko and L. I. Karmazina, *Politicheskie Partii Kazakhstana Spravochnik 1998* (Almaty, IPK, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> After the mergers with *Asar*, GPK and APK possess over 90 percent of seats in the *Mazhilis*.

<sup>25</sup> 'Head of State Nursultan Nazarbayev took part in the 7<sup>th</sup> congress of the Civil Party of Kazakhstan', [www.akorda.kz](http://www.akorda.kz), 10 November 2006, [www.akorda.kz/page.php?id=353&lang=2news\\_id2535](http://www.akorda.kz/page.php?id=353&lang=2news_id2535)



Dariga, who had set up *Asar* only in 2003.<sup>26</sup> It was argued by some analysts that Dariga was ‘attempting to jump ahead of her father and that in the end he got fed up with her and saved face for her by merging the parties.’<sup>27</sup> It was felt the inspiration behind *Otan* was not so much the CPSU, although it was established to give jobs to former communist officials,<sup>28</sup> but other dominant parties across the world. The party leadership declared they were following the experience of other dominant parties such as the People’s Action Party in Singapore which has been in power since 1959, the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan which has been in office since 1958 and the *Barisan Nasional* (National Front) ruling coalition in Malaysia in power since 1995.<sup>29</sup> However, *Nur Otan* is distinct from these parties in two senses. First, many of these parties emerged in a genuine competitive atmosphere where they had struggled to assume power before becoming expert at holding on to it. *Nur Otan* is not a particularly competitive party and is regarded as consisting of ‘the least competitive people possible’, as it enjoys the substantial advantage of administrative resources.<sup>30</sup> Second, *Nur Otan* is built around the personality of the president. Typical of the personalism found in patrimonial regimes, the party’s identity, ideology and policies are tied inextricably to Nazarbaev.<sup>31</sup>

The consolidation of pro-presidential parties into *Nur Otan* indicated an important development for political parties in Kazakhstan. Coinciding with changes to the constitution in 2007, which were ostensibly introduced to expand the role of parliament and parties in the political system, *Nur Otan* was the perfect institution for the president to be able to control such changes.<sup>32</sup> Thus he was able to demonstrate to the international community a commitment to devolving power but at the same time ensuring that his power was not affected. *Nur Otan* was essential to this process. Consequently, *Nur Otan* is the only political party significantly involved in the political process. It has become a central mechanism for publicising

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<sup>26</sup> Author’s interview with Marina Sabitova, OSDP *Mazhilis* Candidate, 14 November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>27</sup> Author’s interview with independent journalist, 30 October 2006, Almaty.

<sup>28</sup> Author’s interview with senior figure in *Nur Otan*, 8 May 2007, Almaty.

<sup>29</sup> Andrei Grozin, ‘Kazakhstan is on its way to create ‘The Party of All Parties’’, *RIA Novosti*, 6 July 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Author’s interview with Marina Sabitova.

<sup>31</sup> The importance of this will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Five.

<sup>32</sup> Rico Isaacs ‘Managing Dissent, Limiting Risk and Consolidating Power: The Processes and Results of Constitutional Reform in Kazakhstan’, *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2008.



new national programmes and campaigns designed by the presidential administration.<sup>33</sup>

Importantly, the development of *Nur Otan* also illustrates two factors central to Nazarbaev's consolidation of, and sustainability in, power and the nature of *Nur Otan* itself. First, it provides an institution which can maintain elite stability and support behind the president. It is no coincidence that *Otan* emerged in the aftermath of Akezhan Kazhegeldin moving from the president's inner circle into opposition (see Chapter Three). Likewise, the consolidation of many pro-presidential parties into *Nur Otan* in 2006 was in response to the growing power and independence of political actors like Nazarbaeva and Aliev. With the lifting of the ban of senior state officials becoming members of political parties in 2007, many key figures in the elite responded by joining *Nur Otan*.<sup>34</sup> It demonstrates how political parties can be utilised to bind in the country's elite behind the leadership of the president, thus potentially protecting their grasp of power. It also illustrates how a formal institution like a political party formalises the informal power of the president by binding in the president's power of patronage. Many of the country's *Akims* rushed to join *Nur Otan* in 2007 out of loyalty. Thus it provides a formal context for some of the informal political relations and behaviour that underpins Nazarbaev's personal power. The second factor is *Nur Otan's* dominance of the state apparatus. The constitutional lifting of senior state employees becoming members of political parties in 2007 made legitimate what was already informally apparent. Previously, many state officials had always preferenced or favourably biased *Nur Otan* within state processes (see below), now as they were permitted to become members of the party, they could preference the party on a legal basis. It illustrates how *Nur Otan* has become a prevalent force within the state apparatus. While it does not resemble the complete fusion between party and state that existed during the Soviet period, it appears as a gradual and more moderate reformulation of Soviet party-state relations. *Nur Otan* is the party of the state and as such this development has been central to Nazarbaev's consolidation and reach of power across the state in Kazakhstan.

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<sup>33</sup>Obshestvennye sovety po bor'be korrupsiei, [www.ndp-nurotan.kz](http://www.ndp-nurotan.kz), 8 February 2008 [http://www.ndp-nurotan.kz/index.php?f=show&ft=27&type=11&id=89222753721].

<sup>34</sup>Three More Ministers Become Members of Nur Otan, *Kazakhstan Today*, 4 July 2007.



*Nur Otan*, therefore, was the culmination of the president's long-standing desire to possess a political party that could represent his interests in the legislature, unite the country's elite behind his leadership formally contextualising some aspects of his informal power and through which dominate the state apparatus. The party, however, is also shaped by informal political relations and behaviour as it benefits from patronage and administrative resources (discussed below). As a consequence of Nazarbaev's occupancy of the presidency the party has secured the patronage of the president and the advantages such patronage affords.

### 1.5 Constructing Multipartism: Virtual Parties

The creation of a dominant pro-presidential party has not been the only way in which the structure and agency of the presidency has shaped the development of political parties in Kazakhstan. Determined to engender credibility into a party system designed to favour the dominant pro-presidential party, 'virtual' or 'fake' parties were established for the purpose of simulating multipartism. It was a widely held view among those analysts and party elites interviewed for this research that several political parties were 'fake' or 'façade' parties. They were supported by the presidential administration to create the appearance of multipartism and to siphon votes from opposition parties.<sup>35</sup> According to Gani Kaliev, chairman of *Auyl* (Village), 'such parties have been created from the top down by *Vlast*' (power)<sup>36</sup> and emerged to create a picture of a multiparty system in Kazakhstan'.<sup>37</sup> Referring to the APK and the GPK, one analyst argued that 'these parties were all a project of the leadership of the country. The idea was that they would create a two or three party system'.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, parties such as *Rukhaniyat* (spirituality), Democratic Party of Kazakhstan 'Adilet' (Justice), Party of Patriots, *Auyl*, and the Communist Peoples Party of Kazakhstan (KNPK) emerged from the interview data as examples of 'virtual' parties. Many of these small parties fit Andrew Wilson's idea of designer

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<sup>35</sup> The majority of analysts, and some party elites, held this view. Unsurprisingly there was no consensus as to which parties were fake. Opposition figures would accuse most pro-presidential parties as being virtual, arguing they had been set up by the presidential administration. Pro-presidential elites on the other hand would argue that some of the opposition parties were fake as businessmen and oligarchs set them up.

<sup>36</sup> *Vlast* has a wider range of meaning than just 'power' in Russian. Its use also denotes the 'president' and the 'presidential administration' or the more generic 'authorities'.

<sup>37</sup> Author's interview with Gani Kaliev, Leader of The Social Democratic Party *Auyl*, 5 March 2007, Astana.

<sup>38</sup> Author's interview with Bektas Mukhamedzhanov, Director of International Institute for Modern Politics, 22 February 2007, Almaty.



parties which are either actively created or supported by the leadership of the country in an attempt to capture different sections of the electorate. *Rukhaniyat* represents cultural, moral and spiritual interests, *Adilet* judicial and educational interests, the Party of Patriots, nationalist interests and *Auyl* rural interests. According to Wilson, designer parties play an important role in managed democracies in that while outputs (election results) are politically manipulated so are the inputs (politicians and parties).<sup>39</sup>

Is it fair to describe these political parties as fake and/or virtual? If we reference the extent of their physical collateral then a case could be put forward that parties like *Rukhaniyat*, *Auyl*, *Adilet*, the Party of Patriots and the KNPK are virtual. These parties have few resources, limited memberships and a small number of formal premises.<sup>40</sup> Yet, to imply these parties are nothing more than fronts for the regime fails to take into account that these parties exist as important organisations for certain groups of political elites whose political career depend on them. Yevgeni Zhovtis, for example, argued that many of the parties 'were established by ambitious political players who had money and wanted to reflect their position'.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, as will be noted in the following chapter a case can certainly be made that many of the smaller political parties such as *Auyl*, *Rukhaniyat* and the Party of Patriots were primarily organised by charismatic political personalities seeking to reclaim some form of public office.

The debate over whether these parties are 'virtual' is misleading. These parties have meaning to those involved in them. What is important is the parties do create the impression of a multiparty system for an international audience. Yet, the president is safe in the knowledge that these parties pose no threat to the dominance established by his ruling party *Nur Otan*. Many of the parties mentioned here are loyal and serve at the patronage of the president. For many there are pay offs. Gani Kasymov, leader

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<sup>39</sup> Andrew Wilson, *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the Post-Soviet World* (Bury St Edmunds, Yale University Press, 2005) pp. 38-41.

<sup>40</sup>In particular, the fact that the Party of Patriots refused and were unable to put someone forward for an interview suggests it has a weak membership, a skeletal organisation and is primarily supported by the presidential administration to give the appearance of multipartism. Despite administrative assistants giving numbers of people to recommend for interview from the party, when called these people claimed no longer to be involved in the party and declined to be a part of the research.

<sup>41</sup> Author's interview with Yvengeni Zhovtis.



of the Party of Patriots, was selected for a seat in the Senate after the 2007 parliamentary election. Gani Kaliev and Altynshash Dzhaganova were given key places on the State Commission for Democratic Reforms in 2006. After the 2007 parliamentary elections the president established a new *Obshchestvennoi palaty* (Public Chamber) for those political parties who did not gain entry into parliament. Seemingly introduced “to provide a high level of civic participation at the most crucial stage of realisation of state legislative policy and is one of the major tools for the continuation of dialogue of all active political forces of society”,<sup>42</sup> the new body was in reality a peace offering and ‘gesture of good will from *Nur Otan*’ to those parties and elites who failed to gain entry in parliament.<sup>43</sup> It was a small offering for loyal service to the president’s cause. The chamber continues to offer a public platform for Dzhaganova, Kaliev, Maksut Narikbaev (Chairman of *Adilet*) and Vladislav Kosarev (Chairman of KNPK).

Another advantage these parties offer the presidential administration is their ability to divert votes and support from opposition parties. There are several notable cases where smaller political parties assisted the cause of the president by disrupting the development, activities and electoral opportunities of opposition parties. For example, Maksut Narikbaev, an old classmate of Nazarbaev,<sup>44</sup> established *Adilet* as a democratic party that would not criticise the president but divert interest and votes away from opposition parties.<sup>45</sup> At the time the official title of the main opposition party was Democratic Party of Kazakhstan ‘*Ak Zhol*’, *Adilet*’s original name was the Democratic Party of Kazakhstan.<sup>46</sup> Clearly, such similar names had the power to cause confusion for voters at the ballot box. The case of the KNPK is comparable. Vladislav Kosarev, a member of the Political Council of the KPK, established the party after an internal dispute with the leader of the KPK, Serikbolsyn Abdil’din.<sup>47</sup> However, many in the KPK, and other analysts, believe the split was engineered by

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<sup>42</sup> ‘Obrashchenie Obshchestvennoi palaty pri Mazhilise Parlamenta Respubliki Kazakhstan’, *Press-sluzhboj Mazhilisa Parlamenta RK*, 26 November 2007, <http://zonakz.net/articles/20194>.

<sup>43</sup> Oleg Nilov, Koshki-myshki Ak Ordy, *www.zonakz.net*, 30 November 2007, <http://zonakz.net/articles/20252>.

<sup>44</sup> Once again illustrating the power and role of patronage in post-Soviet Kazakhstan.

<sup>45</sup> Demokrat ne tot, kto kritikuët, *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 16 July 2005.

<sup>46</sup> *Adilet* was originally called ‘Democratic Party of Kazakhstan’ and only changed its name to *Adilet* in 2006, meaning Justice. This is related to the fact that the party consists of lawyers.

<sup>47</sup> Kommunisticheskaia Partiiia Respubliki Kazakhstan, *Pochemu my sozdaem novuiu partiiu* (Almaty, KNPK, 2005).



the presidential administration to weaken the KPK's chances in the 2004 parliamentary elections. Nurbolat Masanov noted that 'the KNPk was especially created to neutralise Abdil'din'.<sup>48</sup> Abdil'din is clear on the matter, 'the current regime tried to weaken the KPK, so they made a quite obvious step to divide the party'.<sup>49</sup> The argument of those who subscribe to the view that KNPk was a project of the presidential administration was strengthened by the appearance of Erasyl Abylkasymov among KNPk's ranks. Abylkasymov is a strong advocate of the government and the president and was appointed the KNPk's candidate for the 2005 presidential election.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, Kosarev is viewed as being on friendly terms with many in the presidential administration and *Nur Otan*.<sup>51</sup> There are allegations that Kosarev was 'promised something' for his role in the division of the KPK but this is an accusation that cannot be reliably corroborated.<sup>52</sup>

The most significant split, allegedly instigated by the presidential administration, was between Alikhan Baimenov and the other co-chairmen of *Ak Zhol*, Bolat Abilov, Tulegen Zhukeev, Oraz Zhandosov and Altynbek Sarsenbaev, after the fraudulent elections of autumn 2004. *Ak Zhol* had a fairly successful election in 2004 despite only winning one seat. It was evident to those in the opposition they had received far more votes than the official total released by the Central Election Commission (CEC), but administrative resources had been deployed against them to ensure victory for pro-presidential parties, particularly *Otan*.<sup>53</sup> Their emergence as a popular opposition force in the country represented a considerable threat to the president and it was entirely possible he would call upon further administrative resources of the state to halt their chances of obtaining further popularity, power and influence.

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<sup>48</sup> Author's interview with Nurbolat Masanov, Political Scientist, 4 October 2006, Almaty.

<sup>49</sup> Author's interview with Serikbolsyn Abdil'din, Leader of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, 30 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>50</sup> Loyal pro-presidential candidates were used in the 2005 presidential election to create the impression of a greater multiplicity of candidates even though they were very loyal to the president. Abylkasymov even suggested that despite being a candidate himself he would vote for Nazarbaev. Alikhan Baimenov also ran in an effort to take votes away from the official opposition candidate Zharmakhan Tuyakbai.

<sup>51</sup> When interviewing Kazbek Kazkenov, the chief historian and ideologist of *Nur Otan*, he mentioned he was close-friends with Kosarev and he openly displayed KNPk paraphernalia in his office. Author's interview with Kazbek Kazkenov, Chief Assistant to the Vice President of *Nur Otan*, 7 March 2007, Astana.

<sup>52</sup> Such a claim arose in several interviews with opposition elites. However, even they weren't able to go beyond the idea that these assertions were only allegations.

<sup>53</sup> Author's interview with Tulegen Zhukeev, General Secretary of *Azat*, former co-chairman of *Nagiz Ak Zhol*, 21 February 2007, Almaty.



Fearing the retribution that had been handed out to Zhakianov and Abliazov when they established DVK, Baimenov seemed unwilling to publicly criticise the president and the election results. Baimenov, however, argued the split occurred because he ‘wished to be transparent about negotiations with *Vlast*’.<sup>54</sup> For those other chairmen who went on to form *Nagiz Ak Zhol*, the reason was because Baimenov was ‘afraid to go against the structures of power’.<sup>55</sup> Just the dominance of Nazarbaev divides parties on how they are to interact and work with *Vlast*’.

### *1.6 Sleeping With the Enemy: The Cooption and Marginalisation of Opposition Parties*

At the same time as attempting to split opposition party votes by supporting the creation of similar parties the presidential administration has put in efforts to co-opt the opposition too. The fact that many of the main protagonists in opposition parties such as *Ak Zhol*, *Azat* and OSDP were former members of the ruling elite illustrates the problematic nature of understanding the concept of opposition in Kazakhstan and to an extent the post-Soviet world. However, we can distinguish between parties the presidential administration have some role in creating (such as *Adilet* and the KNPK) and those which presidential parties attempt to co-opt (*Ak Zhol*, *Azat* and OSDP). The opposition parties which the presidential administration attempt to co-opt are those which feature former members of the elite who are viewed as ‘business people who were created by Nazarbaev’.<sup>56</sup> They are not necessary those who we can describe as loyal opposition (KNPK and *Auyl*) because they do criticise the government. However, there is a degree of co-option with the presidential administration as there is an informal agreement that parties like *Ak Zhol*, *Azat* and OSDP will not criticise the president outright.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the president has at times held meetings with leaders from these parties in an effort to bring them on board and curtail their opposition.<sup>58</sup> While the content of these meeting are never made public, the overwhelming impression is that they are still keen to stay onside with the president as he holds the key to their potential participation in parliament and

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<sup>54</sup> Author’s interview with Alikhan Baimenov, Chairman of *Ak Zhol*, 6 March 2007, Astana.

<sup>55</sup> Author’s interview with Tulegen Zhukeev.

<sup>56</sup> Author’s interview with Sergei Duvanov.

<sup>57</sup> Author’s interview with political analyst, 24 October 2006, Almaty.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Nazarbaev and opposition leaders discussed country’s political development’, *Kazakhstan Today*, 24 April 2007.



whether they will face any legal recriminations against their business interests.<sup>59</sup> By cooperating with the presidential administration in keeping the tone of their criticisms limited to any institution or actor other than the president, these parties in the first place guarantee themselves party registration, and second hope to secure some form of benefit by winning seats in parliamentary elections. However, the degree of co-option should not be overstated. It is at times tenuous, and parties like *Azat*, OSDP and *Ak Zhol* have yet to receive any tangible benefits other than official party registration (which should not be overlooked considering the difficulties of other opposition parties such as *Alga* and *Atameken*) and are still marginalised in the electoral process. Cooption of the opposition reveals firstly another tactic in the presidential administration's arsenal of managing party development and secondly the problematic nature of how we understand the opposition in Kazakhstan (see Chapter One).

By establishing a dominant party, supporting virtual parties and co-opting opposition parties the president, in utilising the formal and informal powers of the presidency has attempted to manage and direct party development. The purpose behind it has been to ensure there is a party which represents the president's interests in the legislature while at the same time providing an institution to bind in the country's elite behind his leadership and dominating the state apparatus. The key result, however, of the presidency shaping party development has been the dominance of *Nur Otan* and the marginalisation of the opposition. The 100 percent result for *Nur Otan* in the 2007 parliamentary election despite being engineered through the use of administrative resources (see below) was a source of embarrassment for the president as he had been trying to secure the chairmanship of the OSCE for 2009. Kazakhstan was awarded the chairmanship for 2010 on the informal condition there would be reforms to the political system.<sup>60</sup> The president is keen to illustrate to the West a commitment to multipartism despite the evidential institutional dominance of *Nur Otan*. Speaking at the opening of the 2008/09 session of parliament, Nazarbaev spoke of designing an institutional mechanism which 'would allow parliament to form with the participation of not less than two parties, even if the second party does

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<sup>59</sup> Author's interview with political analyst, 24 October 2006, Almaty.

<sup>60</sup> Bruce Pannier, *Kazakhstan To Assume OSCE Chairmanship In 2010*, RFE/RL, 1 December 2007. Author's interview with political analyst, 24 October 2006, Almaty.

not overcome the seven-percentage barrier'.<sup>61</sup> Such statements and intentions have been common in post-Soviet Kazakhstan as the position of president, in both the formal and informal sense provided Nazarbaev with the tools to construct and design the institutional framework which can determine the electoral success of political parties. The following section illustrates how electoral design, driven by the president, has favoured *Nur Otan* or similar pro-presidential parties at the expense of opposition parties. The formal electoral rules are designed in such a way that they can be selectively applied by loyal clients in an effort to preference *Nur Otan*. On the surface some of the rules seem rational and democratic but the interpretive nature of some rules illustrates the way informal political relations and behaviour influence formal political rules which in turn influences political parties' ability to compete effectively in electoral competition. At the same time, however, these formal rules legitimise and make constitutional such informal forms of political relations and behaviour.

## 2. Electoral Design: Constraints on Electoral Competition

Nazarbaev's position of strength has given him the ability to establish the formal rules of electoral competition in a manner which allows for the selective application and interpretation of those rules to benefit *Nur Otan*, but also at earlier times other pro-presidential political parties. The use of informal political behaviour and relations to selectively interpret formal institutional rules, which are already politically weighted in favour of personal presidential rule, obstructs genuine party competition and political parties' ability to compete effectively. In a political society where historically political competition was muted and monocratic, this phenomenon only compounds path dependent processes. The evolution of electoral design can be divided into three periods, early stage Majoritarianism (from 1993-1998), Mixed-Member Majoritarianism (1999-2007) and Proportional Representation (2007- to the present). In each period, despite the system evolving ostensibly 'to further the democratisation of society', the narrowing of political interests has taken place, with the system giving substantial advantage to pro-presidential parties through the

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<sup>61</sup> 'Nazarbaev: Vybory v Mazhilis parlamenta RK proidut v 2012 godu', [www.zonakz.net](http://www.zonakz.net), 2 September 2008, <http://www.zonakz.net/articles/22927>



informal operation of formal laws.<sup>62</sup> This occurs in many forms but this work will examine four forms where the informal interpretation, selective application and the ignoring of formal rules, benefits pro-presidential parties: candidate registration, the composition of election commissions, the election campaign and voter falsification.

### *2.1 Early Stage Majoritarianism*

The first constitution of post-Soviet Kazakhstan in 1993 instituted a 177 seat legislature based<sup>63</sup> on a majoritarian system with 135 seats founded on territorial constituencies with the remaining 42 selected from a state list (the president's list).<sup>64</sup> Registered parties and civic organisations could nominate candidates. To be registered, a party or civic organisation was required to submit a list of 3000 members from at least 12 of the country's 19 *Oblasts*. Independent candidates could stand as long as they too submitted a list of 3000 signatures.<sup>65</sup> In the 1994 election only three parties obtained registration, SNEK, the People's Congress of Kazakhstan (NKK) and SPK. Typically, majoritarian systems produce a stable two or three party system. However, in the dynamic context of transition in which the 1994 Kazakh parliamentary election took place a fragmented party system emerged, as in other post-Soviet states, particularly Russia, which was composed of nascent parties, civic organisations and independent candidates (the election results can be found in Chapter Three).

In September 1995 a presidential decree established a constitutional 'Law on Elections'. A majoritarian system was retained<sup>66</sup> but seats available through electoral competition fell from 135 to 67.<sup>67</sup> The restructured legislature consisted of a 67 seat lower chamber, the *Mazhilis*, and a 40 seat upper chamber, the Senate. The formal changes adopted in 1995 represent the president's move away from a democratic

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<sup>62</sup>Nursultan Nazarbaev, *Novyi etap demokratizatsii Kazakhstana – uskorpennoe razvitie svobodnogo Demokraticheskogo*, [www.akorda.kz](http://www.akorda.kz), 16 May 2007, <http://www.kub.kz/print.php?sid=17456>

<sup>63</sup> The body prior to the Supreme Kenges, The Supreme Soviet, was dominated by Communist Party functionaries and related interests and met only infrequently.

<sup>64</sup> The state list consisted of two seats for each of Kazakhstan's 19 *Oblasts* and the cities of Almaty and Leninsk (Leninsk was renamed Baikonur in 1995).

<sup>65</sup> Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), *The Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan March 7 1994* (Almaty, 1994).

<sup>66</sup> A further change was that a candidate was now only considered elected if they received more than 50 percent of votes in a single constituency. Therefore, in some cases second rounds of voting would take place in constituencies where no one candidate obtained more than fifty percent of the vote.

<sup>67</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, August 30 1995.

liberal path of development and the end of what opposition members call 'the romantic liberal period'.<sup>68</sup> This is observable in the first instance in the continuing policy of presidential appointments to the legislature, as the president appointed one third of senators. This policy ensured that in the absence of a strong political party able to carry out the president's bidding in the legislature (PNEK was in its very early stages of formation), and still reeling from the scars of his early confrontations with parliament, Nazarbaev would have a large delegation of loyal supporters in the parliament who owed their position to his patronage. Another formal rule change indicating a further diversion from democracy was the increase in the cost of the registration fee for candidates.<sup>69</sup> It made electoral competition unaffordable for smaller less well-financed parties, many were of an oppositional nature, thus edging out smaller opposition parties.<sup>70</sup> The use of presidential appointments and high registration fees are evidence of the early use of formal rules to gain an advantage for pro-presidential parties.

The majoritarian system under which the 1994 and 1995 elections were conducted saw the selective application and informal preferencing of the formal rules to guarantee the victory of pro-presidential parties and candidates. The role of local *Akims* was crucial to this process. The CSCE report for the 1994 election notes how 'one candidate told Commission staff that friendly officials in a local election commission had confided that they were under orders to ensure the victory of ten candidates supported by the mayor of Almaty'.<sup>71</sup> In general terms this was achieved by the selective application of the rules on the part of state officials. For example, the Central Election Commission (CEC) arbitrarily removed prospective independent candidates during the registration process using selective application of the rules. The local courts acquiesced too, failing to overturn any decision made by the CEC regarding the disqualification of candidates. Other aspects of the electoral process saw the informal preferencing of pro-presidential candidates, despite aspects of the

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<sup>68</sup> Author's interview with Tulegen Zhukeev.

<sup>69</sup> Sergei D'aichenko, *Politicheskie partii Kazakhstana v kontekste izbiratel'nykh kampanii. Tsentral'naia Aziia i Kavkaz*, Vol. 5 No. 17, 2001.

<sup>70</sup> In the 1995 election the increase in candidate fees meant smaller parties with limited finances such as the pro-Slavic LAD, the Islamist *Alash* and the Social Democratic Party did not have the funds to put forward a significant number of candidates.

<sup>71</sup> Iurii Buluktaev, *Vybory v Kazakhstane kak indikator demokratizatsii obshchestva, Tsentral'naia Aziia i Kavkaz*, Vol. 6 No. 24, 2002.



law supposedly guaranteeing objectivity. Pressure was placed on local media to give preference and air time to pro-presidential candidates.<sup>72</sup> The administration and counting process was also subject to informal behaviour as local administrations defied the formal rules and instead falsified the vote. International observers found the voting process to have been subject to serious violations such as frequent and systemic occurrences of multiple voting and ballot box stuffing all overseen by the local *Akim*.<sup>73</sup> In both elections informal behaviour, in the shape of the selective application and preferencing, and at times simply ignoring the formal rules impacted the development of political parties not supported by the authorities. Opposition parties (SPK, KPK and NKK) found themselves subject to such selective application of rules regarding candidate and party registration, an unfavourable bias in the media and the abandonment of fair rules in the vote counting process. Local *Akims*, keen to prove their loyalty to the president, engaged in such informal political behaviour to ensure victory for approved candidates. In the 1995 election, as in 1994, the process weighted in favour of pro-presidential parties and candidates ensured 'a vast majority of the candidates who contested the elections were officials of the regional executive organs nominated by the various pro-presidential parties'.<sup>74</sup>

From his position as president, Nazarbaev was able to construct formal rules which benefited pro-presidential candidates and parties thus, impacting on the quality of electoral competition and party development. However, this was achieved through formal rules which were left open to informal forms of political behaviour such as the selective application of rules, a preferencing of pro-presidential candidates and parties in the wider media environment and even the blatant ignoring of rules in the vote counting process. The formal electoral process was undermined by such informal political behaviour where state employees were cajoled into voting and supporting approved candidates. Moreover, there was a significant media bias in favour of pro-presidential parties and candidates and the falsification of the vote counting process overseen by local *Akims* who owed their position to the patronage of the president. It illustrates the impact the emerging neopatrimonial regime was

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<sup>72</sup> CSCE, *The Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan March 7 1994* (Almaty, 1994).

<sup>73</sup> International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), *Preliminary Findings Mazhilis Elections 9 December 1995 Republic of Kazakhstan* (Almaty, 1995).

<sup>74</sup> Bhavna Dave, *A New Parliament Consolidates Presidential Authority*, *Transition*, Vol. 2 No. 6, 22 March 1996, p. 35.

having on the formal elements of the political system. The formal electoral system was being subverted by informal factors such as *Akims* pursuing loyalty to Nazarbaev by producing the desired result and using their own patronage networks to guarantee that it happened.

## *2.2 Mixed-Member Majoritarianism (MMM)*

The rules governing electoral competition were changed again in May 1999 at the behest of Nazarbaev. Internal and external factors explain why the president sought to alter the electoral system. The Kazhegeldin affair (see Chapter Three) required Nazarbaev to display his commitment to democracy to ward off internal criticism regarding the strengthening of presidential power. Externally, the criticism of the 1999 presidential election by the international community hit Nazarbaev's reputation significantly. Any illusions Nazarbaev was a democratic reformer evaporated with the conduct of the election. The OSCE declared that 'the election process fell far short of the standards to which the Republic of Kazakhstan has committed itself as an OSCE participating State'.<sup>75</sup> Eager not to be seen by the West as comparable to the excessive authoritarian leaderships in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan Nazarbaev advocated changes to the design of the electoral system to satisfy critics at home and abroad.

The new rules included a proportional element with ten new seats added to the lower chamber elected by a party list vote. The other 67 seats remained as single-mandate constituencies. A 7 percent threshold was introduced for entry into parliament for those seats available by party list. The introduction of a proportional element was praised by the OSCE as a move towards a more 'pluralistic political environment'.<sup>76</sup> The president proudly announced that the first elections held under these institutional conditions, heralded 'the birth of our multi-party democracy'.<sup>77</sup> In reality, the reforms were meagre and little more than an olive branch to the international community and critics within the country. There were also changes to the

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<sup>75</sup> Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), *Republic of Kazakhstan Presidential Election 10 January 1999: Assessment Mission*, (Warsaw, OSCE, February 5, 1999).

<sup>76</sup> ODIHR, *Republic of Kazakhstan Parliamentary Elections 10 and 24 October 1999: Final Report*, (Warsaw, OSCE, January 2000).

<sup>77</sup> *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 9 October 1999.



registration process with the registration fee for candidates reduced by 75 percent.<sup>78</sup> This eased the financial burden on less well-financed political parties and self-nominating candidates.

The 7 percent threshold acted as an institutional barrier limiting opportunities for political parties not favoured by the presidential administration. Thresholds are commonly used to ward off party fragmentation but 7 percent is at the higher end of the scale. Consequently, just four parties obtained seats from the list vote in the 1999 parliamentary election. The KPK, as one of the most well-supported and organised parties in the country, was the only opposition party to pass the 7 percent barrier. Others, such as *Azamat* (citizen) under the pressure of media bias and having administrative resources applied against them obtained just 4.57 percent.<sup>79</sup> Certainly the key pro-presidential party *Otan* and its satellite parties GPK and APK would cross the 7 percent threshold thanks to informal preference and selective application of the rules by loyal patronage networks, the formal threshold was introduced by Nazarbaev to try and ensure opposition parties would not gain representation in the *Mazhilis*.<sup>80</sup> The 2004 parliamentary election took place under similar conditions. As the more moderate opposition party *Ak Zhol* arguably had sufficient support across the country to surpass the 7 percent barrier in spite of informal bias against them, the more outright opposition bloc consisting of the KPK and Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DVK) found themselves subject to harassment and the full weight of administrative resources.<sup>81</sup> As a result, the KPK/DVK bloc only received 3.4 percent despite an earlier poll suggesting the party would emerge with 12.5 percent.<sup>82</sup> Both the KPK/DVK bloc and *Ak Zhol* focused their attention on the party list vote as opposed to single mandate constituencies because they understood local *Akims* would ensure victory for pro-presidential candidates in most instances in

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<sup>78</sup> ODIHR, *Republic of Kazakhstan Parliamentary Elections 10 and 24 October 1999*.

<sup>79</sup> The main opposition party in the 1999 election, RNPk, refused to submit a list of candidates for the party list vote in protest of their leader Kazhegeldin being refused registration as a candidate.

<sup>80</sup> *Ak Zhol* managed to win one seat through the party list vote. However, initially the *Ak Zhol* *Mazhilis* Deputy Alikhan Baimenov refused to take up his seat in protest of what he and his party considered fraudulent election results. After the split between the leadership in 2005 Baimenov took up his place in the *Mazhilis*.

<sup>81</sup> Author's interview with senior *Nagiz Ak Zhol* Official, 24 October 2006.

<sup>82</sup> Roman Kuznetsov, All Together Now, *Transitions Online*, 13 September 2004.

constituency based seats. A MMM system did not produce greater pluralism in the legislature, as *Otan* and other pro-presidential parties dominated the parliament.<sup>83</sup>

As noted by one Kazakh analyst, 'the authorities will do anything to not let opposition parties into parliament'.<sup>84</sup> The devising of formal rules which are written with the expectation they will be informally interpreted and selectively applied illustrates how the authorities achieve their desired result. It also demonstrates how informal politics affects the operation of formal rules regarding electoral competition and thus the development of political parties. Yet, at the same time it exemplifies how formal rules are used to bind in and, to an extent, legitimise the informal behaviour of clients as they seek to exhibit loyalty to their patron - the president.

### *2.3 Full Proportional (PR) System*

In May 2007, president Nazarbaev announced further alterations to the institutional arrangement of the political system. The changes were constitutionally wide ranging altering the role of parliament, the judiciary and political parties.<sup>85</sup> The key change to the electoral system was the implementation of a fully proportional electoral system by party list. The change according to the president would 'give political parties additional opportunities to strengthen their role in the political system of the country, having provided a real reflection of the distribution of political forces and the valid will of the population.'<sup>86</sup> However, the reform resulted in a one-party parliament and the marginalisation of other political parties.<sup>87</sup> The change in electoral design can be explained again by internal and external factors. The murder of Altynbek Sarsenbaev, co-chairman of *Nagiz AK Zhol* had created tension between the authorities and the opposition. A commitment to 'democratic reforms' was an effort to defuse some of the pressure and improve public perceptions of the authorities after the murder.<sup>88</sup> Kazakhstan's pursuit of the OSCE chairmanship for

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<sup>83</sup> Most of the self-nominated candidates who won seats in these elections, 24 in 1999 and 18 in 2004, were either affiliated with *Otan*, backed by local executives or supportive of the president.

<sup>84</sup> Author's interview with political analyst, 1 November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>85</sup> Vladislav Shpakov, *Zavtra Nachinaetsia segodnia*, *Ekspress-K*, 16 May, 2007.

<sup>86</sup> *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 17 May 2007.

<sup>87</sup> See, Rico Isaacs, *Parliamentary Election in Kazakhstan, August 2007*, *Electoral Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 2008, pp. 381-384.

<sup>88</sup> Sarsenbaev was found murdered alongside his driver and bodyguard in the mountains outside of Almaty. Ten people were convicted of the murders including Yerzhan Utembaev, the former chief of staff to the Senate who was convicted of requesting Rustam Ibragimov, a former Interior Ministry



2009 was also a significant driver in Nazarbaev wishing to redesign the electoral system in an effort to prove his democratic credentials.<sup>89</sup>

The changes were arrived at through a process of national and state level commissions which explored the potential of 'further democratic reform'.<sup>90</sup> The new design established a full proportional electoral system by party list and an increase in the number of deputies in parliament from 77 to 107. Nine seats were to be elected by the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan (ANK), a loyal institution, to recall the previous chapter, appointed by the president. The president, therefore, was given the constitutional right to appoint members to the lower chamber. It was understood by some elites that the shift to a fully proportional system 'in the short-term [would] cause the domination of one party.'<sup>91</sup> The amalgamation of the other pro-presidential parties into *Nur Otan* ensured, with the use of administrative resources by state agencies and local executives, no other party would surpass the 7 percent threshold. A further change to the law outlawed the use of electoral blocs in parliamentary elections. The removal of electoral blocs was an attempt to constrain the opposition's chances of surmounting the threshold. It was introduced on the basis that if the opposition parties wished to unite they would have to do so formally as opposed to a loose electoral coalition. The authorities assumed correctly that divisions between the parties were insurmountable to formally united, only *Nagiz Ak Zhol* and OSDP managed to merge, with the KPK and *Alga* refusing to be involved.<sup>92</sup> As with the MMM system many of these institutional constraints were established to assist the electoral and legislative domination of *Nur Otan* on the expected basis that formal

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employee to murder Sarsenbaev for a critical article he had written about him. The opposition, and Sarsenbaev's family, believed the official outcome of the trial to be unrealistic and have since pursued a re-investigation in to the murders. See Joanne Lillis, 'Kazakhstani Assassination Trial Concludes with Guilty Verdicts, Questions Continue', [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 9 May 2006, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav090506.shtml>

<sup>89</sup> Oraz Zhandosov, 7 bystrykh myslei v kontse zharkogo let 2001 goda, [www.kub.kz](http://www.kub.kz), <http://www.kub.info/article.php?sid=18990> 23 August 2007.

<sup>90</sup> The process and forums for the discussion of further political reform had taken the form of three bodies, the Standing Council on Proposals for Further Democratisation and Development of Civil Society (PDS) which was active from 2002-2004, National Commission for Democratisation and Civil Society (NKVD) which was active 2004-2006 and the State Commission for Democratic Reforms which was active from 2006-2007. See Rico Isaacs, 'Managing Dissent, Limiting Risk and Consolidating Power: The Processes and Results of Constitutional Reform in Kazakhstan', *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2008.

<sup>91</sup> Author's interview with Alikhan Baimenov, Chairman of *Ak Zhol*.

<sup>92</sup> 'Alga' (DVK) otklonil predlozhenie o vkhozhdenii partii v sostav OSDP, *Press-sluzhba NP 'Alga' (DVK)*, 14 June 2007.

rules will be informally interpreted and selectively applied by state agencies and local executives to ensure advantage for *Nur Otan*. Some of these changes mirror alterations in Russia where the Russian Law on Elections was also amended including the introduction of a 7 percent threshold and the banning of electoral blocs.

#### *2.4 The Influence of Informal Political Behaviour and Relations on Formal Rules*

Each wave of reform of the electoral system has been designed to create the impression of a slow evolution towards democracy in Kazakhstan. They were also designed, however, to create advantages for pro-presidential parties under the assumption that the local executives and state agencies would selectively apply, informally interpret and preference, and at times ignore the formal rules in favour of pro-presidential parties. The experience of the post-Soviet world suggests that formal rules are subject to different forms of informal politics,<sup>93</sup> here however four particular forms will be addressed in relation to Kazakhstan; candidate registration, the formation of electoral commissions, campaigning and vote counting.

##### *Candidate Registration*

In the cases of both the 1999 and 2004 elections held under the MMM system the selective application of the law, directed by local executives and other state agencies strengthened the position of pro-presidential parties and marginalised the opposition. For example, the improvements in the registration process were undermined by the barring of candidates the authorities did not want to see participating. In the 1999 election, Kazhegeldin was barred from running due to an earlier administrative penalty which had kept him from partaking in the 1999 presidential election (see previous chapter).<sup>94</sup> In the 2004 election while the initial registration of candidates was seemingly fair and open, a process of de-registration was used during the election campaign to ensure candidates the authorities considered undesirable were removed from the electoral process. The most notable example was Bolat Abilov, co-chairman of *Ak Zhol*, who was removed from the ballot on the basis of a suspended sentence for slander. In total there were 32 cases of candidates being de-registered, many close to election-day mainly on questionable grounds for financial

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<sup>93</sup> Andrew Wilson, *Virtual Politics*.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*



reporting errors.<sup>95</sup> The decisions on de-registration were held in closed sessions of the CEC and demonstrates how formal state bodies only strictly applied the formal rules regarding candidate registration in the case of opposition candidates. Candidates who were able to appeal the decision at the Supreme Court level found the decision upheld in favour of the CEC.<sup>96</sup> These instances illustrate that while formally the rules were being adhered to, the informal selective application of the rules were used by the CEC and the courts to demonstrate loyalty to the regime by making sure non-preferred opposition candidates were excluded.

### *Electoral Commissions*

Electoral Commissions are bodies that oversee the electoral process.<sup>97</sup> It has been argued by political parties that ‘commissions significantly help make the election process more fair and transparent’.<sup>98</sup> Prior to 1999, regional *Akims* were responsible for appointing the commissions. Loyal patrons, reliant on local executives for their livelihood, such as teachers or doctors, were usually selected on the basis that they represented a reliable source of patronage.<sup>99</sup> The rules were changed in 1999 so that political parties would be guaranteed at least one seat on all commissions through the process of drawing lots. Yet, concern remained that local *Akims* were influencing the selection of commission members.<sup>100</sup> The rules were altered again in 2002 so that the corresponding *Maslikhats* based on nominations put forward by political parties would elect commissions.<sup>101</sup> Despite outwardly seeming to grant political parties greater control over the electoral process the election commissions remained resolutely staffed with pro-presidential parties. For example, prior to the 2004 election *Asar* and *Otan* had 99 and 98 percent of their nominees elected to

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<sup>95</sup> ODIHR, *Republic of Kazakhstan Parliamentary Elections 19 September and 3 October 2004: OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report*, (Warsaw, 15 December 2004).

<sup>96</sup> There was one instance where the decision was overturned involving a candidate in Pavlodar, constituency 52.

<sup>97</sup> There are four levels to electoral commissions in Kazakhstan: National (CEC), Territorial (*Oblast* Level), District (*Raion* level) and Precinct (polling district level). Electoral commissions are responsible for the organisation of the election, voter lists and vote counting at each level. Each commission consists of seven members.

<sup>98</sup> Author’s interview with Adisha Amanovna, Chief Coordinator of the Almaty City Branch of *Auyl*, 25 April 2007, Almaty.

<sup>99</sup> ODIHR, *Republic of Kazakhstan Parliamentary Elections 10 and 24 October 1999*.

<sup>100</sup> ODIHR, *Republic of Kazakhstan: Review of the Election Legislation for Parliamentary Elections* (Warsaw, 18 January 2001).

<sup>101</sup> Article 10, Constitutional Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Elections (2004).

commissions compared to 51 and 20 percent for *Ak Zhol* and DCK respectively.<sup>102</sup> In 2007, opposition representation on the commissions was minimal compared to all other parties. *Nur Otan* topped the number of representatives on the commissions with 9943 (see table 4.1), but most other parties were represented fairly (all were from either loyal opposition or pro-presidential parties) with the exception of OSDP (including *Nagiz Ak Zhol*) who only had 1358 members on all election commission across the country.<sup>103</sup>

*Table 4.1 Composition of Electoral Commissions for the 2007 Parliamentary and Local Elections*

<b>Parties</b>	<b>Members of the Election Commissions Nominated by Political Parties</b>
<i>Nur Otan</i>	9943
<i>Auyl</i>	8360
<i>Ak Zhol</i> (with <i>Adilet</i> )	8343
<i>Rukhaniyat</i>	7312
Party of Patriots	6684
KNPK	4375
Other Public Associations	16605
OSDP (with <i>Nagiz Ak Zhol</i> )	1358
Total opposition representation	1358
Total pro-presidential or loyal opposition representation	616,622

(Table adapted from figures taken from a press conference given by Zharmakhan Tuiakbai, leader of OSDP, in Astana August 17, 2007).

The dominance of pro-presidential representation on the commissions was important for the regime as it allowed it to control the electoral process and guarantee a

<sup>102</sup> ODIHR, *Republic of Kazakhstan Parliamentary Elections 19 September and 3 October 2004*.

<sup>103</sup> All other parties were considered sufficiently loyal to the regime, even Alikhan Baimenov's *Ak Zhol* who after merging with the outright pro-presidential *Adilet* before the election was now considered by many of his former colleagues as 'just another pro-presidential politician'. Author's interview with Marzhan Aspandiarova, former Head of the Almaty City Branch of *Nagiz Ak Zhol*, 16 May 2007, Almaty.



predominantly pro-presidential parliament. To make certain opposition parties' appearance on election commissions was kept to a minimum, local *Akims* and *Maslikhats* were called upon to provide loyalty and assistance to generate the preferred result.<sup>104</sup> In the first instance, the *Maslikhats* are dominated by pro-presidential parties, most notably *Nur Otan* who claimed to hold 64 percent of *Maslikhat* seats across the country and it is their responsibility to elect commission members.<sup>105</sup> Therefore, it should be no surprise that *Nur Otan Maslikhat* deputies elect *Nur Otan* or other pro-presidential nominees. The voting procedure is supposed to be carried out by secret ballot, however, one opposition observer noted 'there were no cabins for secret voting, and all the members of the *Maslikhats* were sitting right next to each other while voting.'<sup>106</sup> The lack of transparency guaranteed local authorities could provide the conditions in which *Nur Otan Maslikhat* deputies upheld their duty as loyal clients of the local *Akim* and as members of the president's party by ensuring few opposition members are elected. *Akims* continued to influence the selection process by utilising their power of patronage to guarantee that state employees under their authority represent pro-presidential parties who make certain their subordinates do them same, thus informally instituting a series of patron-client relationships. For example, an *Akim* appoints the directors of schools who will then 'not allow their teachers to represent political parties other than *Nur Otan*'.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, the use of patronage by local *Akims* protects the electoral commissions from the influence of opposition parties. As a result, the authorities and the local executives have greater control over the rest of the electoral process.

### *Election Campaign*

With control over the election commissions secured through the use of patronage local executives are positioned to exert further influence over the election campaign on behalf of their patron, the president. Despite Article 27 of the Constitution prohibiting officials of state bodies from using administrative resources or the advantage of their position to influence the election,<sup>108</sup> the interference of local

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<sup>104</sup> Olga Petrova, A kem by byli do vyborov v izbirkomy, [www.kub.kz](http://www.kub.kz), 29 May 2007, <http://www.kub.info/article.php?sid=17709>.

<sup>105</sup> Politsoveta 'Otan', *O prodelannoii rabote za period s 2002 po 2006 god*, (Astana, RGKP, 2006).

<sup>106</sup> Author's interview with Amirbek Togussov, Head of the Almaty City Branch of OSDP, 15 April 2007, Almaty.

<sup>107</sup> Author's Interview with Amirbek Togussov.

<sup>108</sup> *Zakonodatel'stvo o vyborakh v respublike Kazakhstan* (Almaty, Iurist, 2006).



executives was a common feature of the 1999, 2004 and 2007 parliamentary elections. Candidate intimidation, the cross-pollination of official election activities, the distribution of *Nur Otan* party material, the threat of job losses for state employees for supporting candidates not approved by local executives and the campaigning of local executives for favoured candidates have been common instances. One newspaper report on the 2004 parliamentary election noted how the *Akim* of Northern Kazakhstan, Tair Mansurov, held a closed meeting where the *Akims* of the local districts and villages were invited and instructed to provide victory in the elections for the candidate from the AIST bloc (GPK and APK), Mikhail Troshikhin, with 70 percent of the vote.<sup>109</sup> The report makes further reference to teachers, doctors, directors of schools and heads of state factories being strongly pressured into agitating only for Troshikhin.<sup>110</sup> In the 2004 parliamentary election opposition candidates in the Karaganda *Oblast* suggested the *Akim*, Kamaltin Mukhamedzhanov, used similar tactics. They argued he applied ‘the majesty of administrative resources’ to falsify the result in favour of the preferred pro-regime candidate.<sup>111</sup> Similar excesses of *Akims* influencing the electoral process were present during the 2007 parliamentary election to the extent that it had become ‘an integral part of the operated electoral process’.<sup>112</sup>

Local executives fulfilled their loyal duties in other ways to achieve the right result in their *Oblast*. For example, *Akims* were responsible for compiling voter lists and were able to massage the numbers by including names of people who were resident in properties that had since been demolished.<sup>113</sup> In other instances, the power afforded to local *Akimats* gave them the opportunity to influence political parties’ ability to organise public meetings. To arrange public campaign meetings parties

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<sup>109</sup> *Respublika*, 1 October 2004.

<sup>110</sup> The interesting angle of this case is that the candidate who complained and put forward these allegations was from *Otan*. Indeed the intense conflict between the main pro-presidential parties was one of the features of the campaign and more likely than not a significant factor in the president deciding to unite the major pro-presidential parties in 2006. However, when the author interviewed the leader of the Civil Party, Azat Perushev, he complained of *Akim* interference against several of his candidates during the 2004 parliamentary election campaign.

<sup>111</sup> *Respublika*, 24 September 2004.

<sup>112</sup> Kazis Toguzbaev, Zharkoe leto 2007-go, [www.kub.kz](http://www.kub.kz), 29. June 2007, <http://www.kub.info/article.php?sid=18327>.

<sup>113</sup> The OSCE report for the 2007 election highlights the case of Almaty where observers noted the inclusion of over 400 persons from demolished properties on the voter list. See ODIHR, *Republic of Kazakhstan Parliamentary Election, 18 August 2007*, (Warsaw, OSCE/ODIHR, 30 October 2007).



have to request permission from local executives. With this power local *Akimats* discriminate against opposition parties by either rejecting their applications to hold a public rally or only permitting them on the basis they are held in remote locations outside the city. Rallies for *Nur Otan*, on the other hand, were granted permission to be held in main public places. The 2007 election, in particular, saw the selective application of the law used to good effect by *Akims*. OSCE observers reported that OSDP and *Ak Zhol* were given unsuitable venues in Aktobe, Atyrau, Karaganda and Almaty while *Nur Otan* was permitted to organise meetings with voters in a variety of ways.<sup>114</sup> *Akims* also allowed the distribution of *Nur Otan* material in some polling stations.<sup>115</sup> Combined with the preferential treatment given by the media throughout the country,<sup>116</sup> the selective interpretation of rules by *Akims* keen to demonstrate their loyalty to the president, offered *Nur Otan* an unparalleled advantage in the elections of 1999, 2004 and 2007. This phenomenon illustrates the centrality of loyalty and patronage to election processes. The impact on party development is clear; political parties other than the leading pro-presidential parties are marginalised.

### *Vote Falsification*

During both the 1999, 2004 and 2007 parliamentary elections instances of multiple voting, the absence of voters' names from the electoral roll, incorrect signatures on ballot papers, the presence of unauthorised persons at polling stations, transparent ballot boxes, the removal of international observers and the altering and late posting of protocols were all noted occurrences.<sup>117</sup> The biggest impact of these violations was on the opposition, in particular with the alleged altering of the protocols prior to the official announcement of the results. When discussing the 2004 election, Tulegen Zhukeev, co-chairman of *Ak Zhol* at the time, stressed 'the election results were falsified. In the evening after the election the party got 21 percent even after the government manipulated the votes, then in the morning it was announced that we

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> ODIHR, *Republic of Kazakhstan Parliamentary Election, 18 August 2007.*

<sup>116</sup> 'Rezultaty monitoringa respublikanskikh elektronnykh SMI po osveshcheniiu deiatel'nosti partii', [www.zonakz.net](http://zonakz.net), <http://zonakz.net/articles/18726>.

<sup>117</sup> See ODIHR, *Republic of Kazakhstan Parliamentary Elections 10 and 24 October 1999*, ODIHR, *Republic of Kazakhstan Parliamentary Elections 19 September and 3 October 2004* and ODIHR, *Republic of Kazakhstan Parliamentary Election, 18 August 2007.*

had less.’<sup>118</sup> Zhukeev’s argument that *Ak Zhol* received a higher proportion of the vote rather than the 12 percent announced by the CEC is supported by opinion polls prior to the vote.<sup>119</sup> The role of the election commissions was important in this process and by ensuring they were staffed with loyal supporters the *Akim* could guarantee the desired result for the president. During the 1999 election the OSCE alluded to such collusion between the *Akimats* and the election commissions, for example reporting that ‘in one district of Almaty, District Election Commission members met with the *Akim* shortly before the tabulation of results started.’<sup>120</sup> In 2007 while the formal campaign and the management of the elections by the CEC was declared to have improved significantly by international observers,<sup>121</sup> the vote counting process, under the control of smaller electoral commissions, influenced heavily by the local executives, were prone to blatant electoral violations seen in previous elections.<sup>122</sup> OSDP complained vigorously that under the supervision of local executives there were a significant number of violations in the electoral process that denied OSDP’s perceived collection of votes they claim took them over the 7 percent threshold.<sup>123</sup> For some political elites it was clear who was responsible for the falsification vote counting process, when asked directly one respondent simply replied ‘it was the *Akims*’.<sup>124</sup>

The institutional dominance of the presidency and the personal power of the president have afforded Nazarbaev the opportunity to design electoral rules to suit his ambition of centralising power in his hands. This is achieved by promoting electoral changes which provide a surface image for critics at home and abroad of democratic evolution. However, many formal rules were introduced to advantage parties supporting the president and these formal rules were designed in a fashion

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<sup>118</sup> Author’s interview with Tulegen Zhukeev, former co-chairman of *Nagiz Ak Zhol* and now currently General Secretary of *Azat*, 21 February 2007, Almaty.

<sup>119</sup> Roman Kuznestov, Better on Paper than in Reality, *Transitions Online*, 22 September 2004.

<sup>120</sup> ODIHR, *Republic of Kazakhstan Parliamentary Elections 10 and 24 October 1999*, p. 20.

<sup>121</sup> ODIHR, *Republic of Kazakhstan Parliamentary Election, 18 August 2007*, (Warsaw, OSCE/ODIHR, 30 October 2007).

<sup>122</sup> The author observed a news program on *Channel 31* (considered the only ‘independent’ TV station) where secret film footage was shown of several incidences where election precinct managers, under the authority of local executives, were caught participating in ballot stuffing and multiple voting. On election-day itself OSDP held regular press conferences and released hourly updates of their observation of electoral violations.

<sup>123</sup> OSDP Press Release, *Po dannym protokolov uchastkovykh izbiratel’nykh komissii OSDP uverenno preodolela 7 protsentyi bar’er*, Astana 23 August 2007.

<sup>124</sup> Author’s interview with senior figure in *Ak Zhol*, 18 January 2007, Almaty.



which allowed for either the selective application or complete ignoring of the rules and the informal preferencing in favour of pro-presidential parties. The extensive presence of patronage at the local level ensures the president can rely on loyal *Akims* to place pressure on their clients to make sure the electoral process is engineered in favour of loyal pro-presidential parties. Local executives use informal forms of political behaviour to undermine opposition efforts in parts of the electoral process including; candidate registration, electoral commissions, election campaigning and vote falsification. At the same time, the rules of electoral competition also provide a formal institutional context within which these informal forms of political behaviour and relations become legitimised. As the rules regarding electoral competition are strict in places it gives state actors the legitimate opportunity to apply those rules where they see appropriate, usually against opposition parties. As such, this indicates the complex nature of the relationship between informal politics and formal institutions. The effect of loyalty and patronage influencing and shaping electoral design and institutional constraints has been the eventual domination of parliament by a single pro-presidential party, now argued by many to be the modern version of the CPSU, which the president has been keen to establish since independence.<sup>125</sup> The strength of the presidency and the president's position in society goes beyond influencing the institutional constraints through electoral design as the president has also established a law affecting how parties can organise, operate and exist in Kazakhstan. 'The Law on Political Parties' is an effective measure, if not more so, than electoral rules, for guaranteeing the president can maintain dominance of the legislature and the political parties emerging in the country.

### **3. The Law on Political Parties**

Similar to the institutional constraints of the president/presidency and electoral competition, the Law on Political Parties is subject to informal forms of political behaviour and relations in the shape of selective interpretation and application of the rules. State agencies interested in proving loyalty to the president selectively apply the existing rules governing party genesis, organisation and activity in a manner which benefits pro-presidential parties. The consequence of this relationship between

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<sup>125</sup> Mukhamedzhan Adilov, *Vse vozvrashchaetsia na krugi svoia? Respublika*, 6 July 2007.

the law and its execution is the marginalisation and criminalisation of political parties the presidential administration does not wish to see active and participating in the political process. While some opposition parties are registered, it tends to be those who have previous connections with the regime and who are less stringent in their criticisms of the president. Moreover, by registering such parties the president is able to demonstrate to the international community that opposition parties are permitted in Kazakhstan. Parties such as *Azat* and OSDP possess less of a threat to Nazarbaev than the more outright oppositional *Alga*. However, the law is restrictive and places major requirements on political parties to achieve registration. The law was originally introduced in 1996 as a way to manage and define the role of political parties in the state; it was considerably altered in 2002. This section deals mainly with the reasons for the changes in the law, its affect on political parties and the relationship between formal rules and their selective application. It will again illustrate how informal political behaviour influences the development of political parties, but also how formal rules legitimise the informal behaviour of loyal state agencies.

### *3.1 Drivers for the 2002 Law on Political Parties*

The pre- and early post independence flowering of public associations and political parties in Kazakhstan saw rather limited rules governing their official status and role within society. According to one report in *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, ‘in the late eighties numerous clubs and fringe groups of different movements appeared like mushrooms after the rain. They were easily registered at the time. To file an application to local *Akimats* and add a protocol of its members meeting and rules was enough to register the group.’<sup>126</sup> It was the lack of cohesion within the law that led the president to introduce laws regarding Public Associations (adopted May 1996) and Political Parties (July 1996). The 1996 ‘Law on Political Parties’ was established to define ‘the legal role and basis for the creation of political parties, their rights and duties, guarantee activities; regulate relations between political parties, parties with

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<sup>126</sup> Zakony rabotaiut na stabilnost’ *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 1 June 2001, [http://www.kazpravda.kz/index.php?uin=1151645457&chapter=1004060102&act=archive\\_date&day=01&month=06&year=2001](http://www.kazpravda.kz/index.php?uin=1151645457&chapter=1004060102&act=archive_date&day=01&month=06&year=2001).



state organs and other organisations.’<sup>127</sup> Under Article 6 of the 1996 law a party could be created on the initiative of no less than ten citizens convoking a constituent congress. To achieve registration with the state parties must have no less than 3000 members in at least half the *Oblasts* of the country.<sup>128</sup> The law possessed no formal restrictions on the basis of which parties could organise. Therefore, parties representing various interests and segments of society were able to register officially with the state.<sup>129</sup> Under the law of 1996, political parties had minimal restrictions placed on them and in many ways it helped ‘further the development of political pluralism’.<sup>130</sup>

So what were the drivers influencing the change in the law in 2002? The change in law can be explained by the emergence of new opposition parties linked to the process of elite fragmentation. RNPK, DVK and *Ak Zhol* appeared as new political parties with financial backing, a well-organised and supported structure and fronted by well-known public figures. The presence of well-developed opposition parties posed a threat to Nazarbaev’s dominance of the political space and his monopoly of political ideas. One senior figure of *Ak Zhol* alliterated this point:

“The Law on Political Parties was created against *Ak Zhol*. The first meeting of the party was on the 16 March 2002. We were working under the previous law. We had to hold conferences in nine regions of the country and establish branches there. In order to officially register we needed 3000 members and we were able to conduct conferences in all regions of Kazakhstan. By May we filed in all regions the documents necessary to register the party. We were moving so far and so fast that the *Otan* deputies in parliament pushed through the new Law on Political Parties, which was of course created by the administration. The law was accepted and we did not

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<sup>127</sup> Zakon Respubliki Kazakhstan O politicheskikh partikh, 1996, in I. O., Buluktaev, C. A., D’iachenko and L. I. Karmazina, *Politicheskie Partii Kazakhstana Spravochnik 1998* (Almaty, IPK, 1998).

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> For example, *Alash* was based on the interests of ethnic Kazakhs and was committed to a policy of uniting all Turkic speaking people, while Compatriot’s ideology was based on the interests of ethnic Russians and ‘El Dana’ the Democratic Party of Women obviously represented the female constituency.

<sup>130</sup> Zakony rabotaiut na stabilnost’ *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 1 June 2001.

get any registration in any region of the country. We were held back and they were trying to prevent us getting registered.”<sup>131</sup>

It is clear from the perspective of this new opposition that the law was altered to impede their development, their ability to register and their chances of participating in electoral competition. A representative of DVK further stressed the correlation between new opposition parties and the change in the law. ‘We have influenced some laws. For example, the previous Law on Political Parties required that a party registers 3000 members. After the creation of DVK, which shocked the government, the number went up to 50,000.’<sup>132</sup> The process of elite fragmentation, derived from factional inter-elite competition, impacted on how the authorities used formal rules to manage party development. The emergence of competitive factional elite groups using parties as formal vehicles to promote and protect their political and economic interests was a harbinger of instability. The law was amended to manage and stabilise this phenomenon.

### *3.2 The 2002 Law on Political Parties*

It was the rise of an opposition with the potential to threaten Nazarbaev’s hold of power which prompted the alteration of the Law on Political Parties. *Otan* deputies proposed the law to the *Mazhilis* during the spring session in 2002 with the backing of both the GPK and APK factions. The Political Council of *Otan* drew up the draft law with considerable prompting, input and support from the presidential administration.<sup>133</sup> In this it is worth noting the importance of *Otan* as a vehicle for pushing through laws on behalf of the president while at the same time creating a veneer of independent activity on the part of the legislature. There were three central contentious clauses in the amended law. The first was the increase in the number of members required for parties to achieve registration with the Ministry of Justice from 3000 to 50,000. Under Article 10.5, ‘to obtain state registration, a political party must have at least 50,000 members representing structural subdivisions of the party in all *Oblasts*, with the number of members not less than 700’.<sup>134</sup> Second, under Article 6.1 the number of members required to be present at the constituent congress

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<sup>131</sup> Author’s interview with senior figure in *Ak Zhol*, 18 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>132</sup> Author’s interview with Vladimir Kozlov, leader of *Alga*, 9 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>133</sup> ‘Ispravliat’ partinoye zakonodatel’stvo’, *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 3 May 2002.

<sup>134</sup> Constitutional Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan ‘Law on Political Parties in Kazakhstan’ (2002).



increased from ten to 1,000. Third, Article 5.8 outlined how ‘no political party may be founded on the basis of a particular profession, race, nationality, ethnic origin or religion, and no local organisation of a political party may be founded within any governmental or local self governmental authorities.’<sup>135</sup>

The initial reaction from the opposition was negative. The political council of RNPk declared that the law aimed ‘to remove from the political life of the country those political parties that have offended the current administration’.<sup>136</sup> The law creates restrictive boundaries on party registration. In particular, the necessity of having 50,000 members was viewed by nearly all party elites and analysts as almost farcical. According to one analyst, ‘this law is ridiculous, Kazakhstan has a population of 15 million to have 50,000 members to start a political party is too large a number’.<sup>137</sup> Even members of *Nur Otan* argued the central weakness in the law was ‘the large numbers required for registration’.<sup>138</sup> This aspect of the law formally limits the ability of parties to obtain registration. It has acted as a lever for the authorities to control which parties can achieve registration and, therefore, compete in electoral competition. The Ministry of Justice is able to selectively apply the rules according to its discretion. Officials from the Ministry are able to check every signature fastidiously and under the rules if just one signature is found to be illegitimate then the whole registration process can be cancelled. The necessity of having a 1000 people present at the constituent congress also places formal restrictions on parties not favoured by the authorities. Opposition parties found accessing a venue capable of holding 1000 people difficult ‘as the most suitable venues require permission from the *Akimats*’.<sup>139</sup> Moreover, ‘getting together 1000 people from all regions of the country requires huge financial and human capital which is not always at the disposal of the opposition’.<sup>140</sup>

The immediate effect of the new law was the re-organisation of the party system, as all political parties were required to seek re-registration under the new rules. Of the

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<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> ‘Zakonu o partiakh – boikot!’ Zaiavlenie Iсполnitel’nogo komiteta RNPk, *Press-sluzhba RNPk*, 29 May 2002, [http://kazhegeldin.addr.com/2002/30\\_05\\_02\\_1\\_About.htm](http://kazhegeldin.addr.com/2002/30_05_02_1_About.htm).

<sup>137</sup> Author’s interview with Political Analyst, 21 November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>138</sup> Author’s interview with senior figure in *Nur Otan*, 8 May 2007, Almaty.

<sup>139</sup> Author’s interview with senior figure in *Ak Zhol*, 18 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>140</sup> Author’s interview with Vladimir Kozlov, leader of *Alga*, 9 January 2007, Almaty.

19 parties registered prior to the change in the law seven were re-instated under the new rules, four failed the new registration procedures and the remainder never re-applied. *Ak Zhol*, *GPK*, *Otan*, *APK*, *KPK*, Party of Patriots and *Auyl* were all re-registered. *Ak Zhol's* close association with the administration, their more collegial and softer approach towards *Vlast* ensured it safely navigated the pitfalls of the registration process.<sup>141</sup> The *KPK*, according to its leader, only obtained state registration because he sat with the registration committee and 'made them check all the list of signatures we had line by line.'<sup>142</sup> Other opposition parties had neither the connections nor the gravitas (*Abdil'din* is widely respected among Kazakh political elites) to ensure their parties' applications were approved. The major opposition party of the previous few years, *RNPK*, led by former Prime Minister *Akezhan Kazhegeldin*, was refused registration on the basis of invalid documentation.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, the alteration of the formal rules had guaranteed the political vehicle of *Nazarbaev's* chief political opponent had been removed from the political mainstream – unable to compete electorally and denied the opportunity to publicly appeal to the nation for support. As the deputy leader of *RNPK* had predicted the new party law was sought to 'candidly squash the opposition and other objectionable parties'.<sup>144</sup> Other opposition parties also failed to make it through the registration process; *Azamat*, *Alash*, *NKK*, *SPK* and *Compatriot* were all rejected official party registration by the Ministry of Justice.<sup>145</sup> All parties were liquidated on the basis that some of the documents they submitted for registration were considered void. Most pro-presidential parties had little difficulty obtaining registration even with little visible membership and support.<sup>146</sup> Evidently, the Ministry of Justice had a great deal of discretion with regards to what is acceptable in terms of how they applied the rules.

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<sup>141</sup> 'Na 9 iunia v Kazakhstane zaregistrovano 10 politicheskikh partii', *Kazinform* 10 June 2004, <http://www.nomad.su/?a=3-200406100019>.

<sup>142</sup> Author's interview with *Serikbolsyn Abdil'din*.

<sup>143</sup> 'V Kazakhstane likvidirovany chetyre partii', [www.nomad.su](http://www.nomad.su), 12 May 2004, <http://www.nomad.su/?a=3-200405120021>.

<sup>144</sup> 'Zakonu o partiiakh – boikot!' Zaiavlenie Iсполnitel'nogo komiteta *RNPK*, *Press-sluzhba RNPK*

<sup>145</sup> 'Skol'ko v Kazakhstane partii?', *Press-Sluzhboi Mazhilis*, 10 April 2003, <http://zonakz.net/articles/?artid=3125>.

<sup>146</sup> The one outright pro-presidential party not to be officially re-registered was *Altynshash Dzhaganova's* Party of Revival of Kazakhstan which according to the Ministry of Justice did not submit documents in accordance with the new law. However, while her party was denied registration in March 2003, she reconstituted her party as *Rukhaniyat* and was quickly registered with ease in October of the same year.



The introduction of a Law on Political Parties was ostensibly introduced in 1996 to manage and codify the role of political parties. However, tough and restrictive amendments to the law in 2002 were established to manage the emergence of new opposition parties who had appeared due to elite level factional competition. The law was designed in such a way that actually meeting the targets for membership numbers required for registration was incredibly difficult. As a result, it gave a great deal of informal power to officials at the Ministry of Justice with regards to how they applied the law. As might be expected, the law was applied leniently to pro-presidential parties and strictly to opposition parties, as officials sought to impress upon the president their loyalty.

### *3.3 The Selective Application of the Formal Rules: The Case of Alga*

The above factors illustrate the relationship between the institutional law governing party genesis and organisation and informal political behaviour. The law consists of formal articles that are strict and violable which allows for the interpretation of the rules to be left to the personal judgement of officials keen to illustrate loyalty. Yevgeni Zhovtis outlined this phenomenon, 'the law not only has restrictive democratic provisions but inherent in the nature of this legal act is wording which provides for discretion and manipulation. The authorities misinterpret it and implement it in a way to benefit the ruling elite. This law, the 50,000 required for membership and the necessity for getting a 1000 people in one place is absolutely stupid and it is clear that it has nothing to do with any desire to create a viable political system and political parties.'<sup>147</sup>

The most prominent case of selective application of the formal rules being used against a party is *Alga*. *Alga* was created after DVK was liquidated by a court in Almaty on the grounds the party was responsible for undermining the 'social harmony, political stability and the national security of the state', due to encouraging people to undertake actions of civil disobedience after the falsified parliamentary elections of 2004.<sup>148</sup> A new amendment was added to the law after the liquidation of DVK which ruled out parties taking on the name of political parties that had been

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<sup>147</sup> Author's interview with Yevgeni Zhovtis, Director of Kazakhstan's International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law', 31 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>148</sup> 'Zaiavlenie o likvidatsii ioridicheskogo litsa, [www.procuror.kz](http://www.procuror.kz), 13 December 2004, <http://www.procuror.kz/?iid=5&type=news&lang=ru&nid=61>.

banned. As a result, under the leadership of Assylbek Kozhakhmetov, the remaining members of DVK established *Alga*. The party has attempted to register with the Ministry of Justice on two occasions, but at the time of writing the party still remains unregistered and unable to participate formally in electoral competition. *Alga's* process of registration provides a vivid example of how the explicit application of the rules by government agencies can ensure a party fails in its registration process. *Alga's* first attempt was in 2005 after they had failed to overturn the verdict on the liquidation of DVK. Despite collecting 63,000 members registration forms the Ministry of Justice used delaying tactics and then discrimination against *Alga* to deny registration. The Ministry of Justice is required by law to give a political party a decision on their registration within 30 days. However, after 30 days *Alga* 'received notification that state registration process was to be suspended in necessity for the Ministry of Justice to check all the documents.'<sup>149</sup> Five months later after finding 469 'inaccuracies' among the documentation the party was refused registration. According to senior party figure Vladimir Kozlov, 'the party's registration was refused on the basis of just 0.7 percent falsifications.'<sup>150</sup> For example, the falsification in the number of people who nominated Nazarbaev for the presidential election was 1.5 percent. This is the official figure announced by the Ministry of Justice, but still the president was allowed to compete in the elections.'<sup>151</sup> It exhibits how the tough nature of the formal rules gives scope to loyal clients of the president to selectively apply the rules to discriminate against political parties critical of the president.

In an attempt to overcome the fastidious approach of the Ministry of Justice towards their registration, *Alga* ensured themselves against alleged falsification of documents 'by copying every new members identification documents on the back of each application'.<sup>152</sup> The authorities once again used a delaying tactic informing the party on the last day legally possible that their registration process has been suspended

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<sup>149</sup>Vystuplenie predstavitelia Narodnoi partii Alga! Vladimira Kozlova na soveshchanii OBSE po chelovecheskomu izmereniiu, [www.npdvk.kz](http://www.npdvk.kz), 4 October 2007, [http://www.npdvk.kz/index.php?part=announcement&message\\_id=2222](http://www.npdvk.kz/index.php?part=announcement&message_id=2222).

<sup>150</sup> Falsifications are essentially those members' application forms where the person listed on the form is either in fact deceased or no longer residing at the address stated on the form.

<sup>151</sup> Author's interview with Vladimir Kozlov.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*



while a check on all documents was undertaken.<sup>153</sup> However, the authorities employed other tactics and in particular local executives and the KNB played crucial roles in disrupting the formal process of *Alga's* registration. During their 2006 campaign to recruit members to the party in the Almaty region, *Alga* party activists were arrested and had their belongings and party papers taken from them on the instruction of the *Akim*.<sup>154</sup> In Kostanai *Oblast* unidentified persons attempted to include a number of applications which were forgeries of deceased persons thus filling *Alga's* party documents with falsified applications.<sup>155</sup> However, after the submission of documents, there were allegations from all the regions of the country that *Akims* were using informal powers of patronage to get state employees who registered with *Alga* to retract their membership by 'threatening non payment of wages and grants'.<sup>156</sup> The KNB, according to the party, was utilised to intimidate people who signed up. The party received several letters from the Ministry of Justice on behalf of members from Pavlodar *Oblast* who wished to retract their registration as members, due to intimidation by the KNB.<sup>157</sup> The case of *Alga's* attempts at registration illustrates how the relationship between the formal institutional rules and the informal political behaviour of the president's clients influence party development by not allowing for a pluralism of political parties to officially register. In particular, the role of *Akims* highlights how their patronage and patron-client networks, based on their ability to award state jobs, allows them to influence the process by cajoling party members to resign and retract their registration papers. Local executives and state agencies such as the KNB, the courts and the Ministry of Justice have consistently proved loyal to Nazarbaev by ensuring DVK and *Alga* are kept out of the political process.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> 'Ko mne prikhodili iz Mininosta, ia boios', *Press-Sluzhba Alga*, 11 January 2007, <http://www.kub.info/article.php?sid=15811>.

<sup>154</sup> This was attested to by a letter shown to the author by the then leader of *Alga*, Assylbek Kozhakhmetov from the party organisers in the region. Author's interview with Assylbek Kozhakhmetov, 26 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>155</sup> *Nasha oppositsiia...partia Alga delaet tret'iu poytku gosudarstvennoi registratsii*, *Panorama*, 10 November 2006.

<sup>156</sup> 'Ko mne prikhodili iz Miniusta, ia boius', *Press-Sluzhba NP Alga*, 11 January 2007.

<sup>157</sup> The author observed these letters in a meeting with Vladimir Kozlov where he presented eight letters of this nature.

<sup>158</sup> *Alga* is not the only political party who currently is awaiting registration with the Ministry of Justice. *Atameken* (Motherland) another opposition party is also frozen out of the political process. Similar tactics by state agencies have been used to disrupt the party's efforts. The leader, Yerzhan Dosmukhamedov, has often accused state agencies, including the KNB, of disrupting their registration process, intimidating party members and of attempting to engineer a split in the party.



The selective nature of the implementation and operation of the 'Law on Political Parties' can be illustrated by contrasting *Alga's* difficulties with that of smaller less well-financed pro-presidential parties.<sup>159</sup> Two good examples of this are the cases of *Adilet* and the KPPK whose registration process was fast, efficient and not subject to the rigours applied to opposition parties. *Adilet* was originally announced as a political party on April 6 2004,<sup>160</sup> six months prior to the scheduled parliamentary elections. With crucial support from the presidential administration they were registered in time for the election without any signatures being questioned.<sup>161</sup> The KNPK had a speedy registration process too. The creation of the party was announced on the 10 March 2004,<sup>162</sup> their constituent congress held on 24 April,<sup>163</sup> the registration documents were handed to the Ministry of Justice on the 20 May<sup>164</sup> and the Ministry registered the party on the 21 June.<sup>165</sup> That parties who support and are linked to the presidential administration are fast tracked through the party registration process is no surprise. What it does illustrate is the relationship between informal forms of political behaviour and formal legislation. The law is framed in such a way that violation is almost inevitable. The immense hurdles parties are required to overcome mean that most parties are likely to violate the law in some fashion or another. Therefore, officials are left with the informal power to selectively

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Dosmukhamedov currently resides abroad in Europe and has stated that he will not return to Kazakhstan until both *Atameken* and *Alga* are registered.

<sup>159</sup> *Alga* is believed to be a well-financed party and Assylbek Kozhakhmetov admitted in the author's interview that 'money is not a problem for the party'. They maintain a well-kept large office space for their headquarters in Almaty and the offices in the regions are generally well funded and active as a result. It is widely believed among almost all the analysts interviewed as part of this research that Mukhtar Abliazov (ex-energy Minister, key elite figure and founder of DVK) funds the party. This, however, it has to be stressed cannot be reliably corroborated due to the opaque nature of party funding. It was also the opinion of some analysts that Abliazov allegedly also funds *Atameken*. Again, however, the same proviso applies, although when the author met with Dosmukhamedov he did suggest that he shared a close relationship with Kozhakhmetov and that he represented the opposition abroad and Kozhakhmetov inside Kazakhstan.

<sup>160</sup> 'Maksut Narikbaev zayavil ob obrazovanii politicheskoi partii', *Kazinform*, 6<sup>th</sup> April 2004, [accessed from <http://www.nomad.su/?a=3-200404060021>], retrieved 01.05.2007.

<sup>161</sup> 'Demokrat ne tot, kto kritikuet', *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2004, [accessed from <http://www.nomad.su/?a=3-200407190013>] retrieved 06.05.07.

<sup>162</sup> 'Kompartiyo rvut na chasti', *Novyi vestnik*, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2005, [accessed <http://www.nomad.su/?a=3-200403170015> - retrieved 01.05.07].

<sup>163</sup> 'Est' takaia partiia!', *Politika*, [accessed <http://www.nomad.su/?a=0-200404300000>], 27<sup>th</sup> April 2004 - retrieved 01.05.07].

<sup>164</sup> 'Novye kommunitcy podali dokumenty na registratsiyo', *Politika*, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2004, [accessed <http://www.nomad.su/?a=3-200405210008>], retrieved 01.05.07].

<sup>165</sup> 'Segodnia poluchila cvidetel'stvo o gosdarstvbennoi registratsii Kommunisticheskaiia Narodnaia partiia Kazakhstana', *Politika*, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2004, [accessed <http://www.nomad.su/?a=3-200406220014>], retrieved 05.05.07].



apply the law as they see fit. Out of loyalty to the president they discriminate against opposition parties such as *Alga* and favour pro-presidential parties such as KNPk and *Adilet*.

This section has illustrated how the institutional constraint of a law regarding the genesis, organisation and activities of parties has been implemented at the behest of the president as a way to manage and control party development. Due to the instability of elite fragmentation and competition, which produced new well-financed opposition parties which threatened his power, the president sought the law to maintain control of independent political forces. However, the law is constructed in such a strict fashion that violation is mostly inevitable. Therefore, it gives a degree of informal power to loyal clients of the president to selectively apply and interpret the law as they see fit. This results in the marginalisation and criminalisation of opposition parties and the favouring of pro-presidential parties. In this instance the relationship between informal and formal politics can be distilled into two points of interest. Firstly, informal politics is influencing the development of genuine party competition due to the exclusion of opposition parties. Loyal officials have an informal degree of power regarding the application and interpretation of the law. They do so due to being linked into a patronage network where their position is dependent upon the patronage of either the president or a subordinate of the president. Second, the nature of formal rules acts to legitimise these informal forms of political behaviour and relations.

#### **4. Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has sought to explain the relationship between president Nazarbaev's position, in both formal and informal terms, and the design of institutional constraints affecting political parties. Nazarbaev's political position is sustained by the formal powers attached to the presidency underpinned by informal powers of patronage based on an extensive patron-client network. From this position the president is able to construct institutional constraints which suit his political preferences at the expense of other political voices while at the same time appealing to the international community by talking the language of democracy and reform. Institutional constraints such as the presidency and rules concerning electoral

competition are seemingly rational in nature. However, it is the informal underlying operation of those institutional constraints which impact significantly on political parties. It is the informal powers Nazarbaev possesses such as the extensive patron-client network underpinning his rule which invests a great deal of loyalty in his leadership, which has helped Nazarbaev control and manage the political system. This has ostensibly been achieved by the establishment of a dominant political party in the shape of *Nur Otan*, the creation of small satellite parties and the cooption of the opposition. Through the formal and informal powers of the presidency the president has been able to shape the emergence of a party system which reflects his political interests and helps maintain his political control. Simultaneously, the formal institution of a dominant party provides a vehicle for elite stability binding in factional elite groups and previously independent actors, and greater control of the state apparatus. This has been crucial to the president's centralisation of power.

Formal rules regarding electoral competition have evolved over time as a way to appease critics at home and abroad. However, the formal rules are written in both a broad fashion and feature tough articles that give loyal officials of the president scope to selectively apply the rules as they see fit. Local executives and state agencies interpret and at times ignore the rules to ensure victory for pro-presidential parties. This culminated in the 2007 parliamentary election where *Nur Otan* now monopolises parliament. All other political parties are marginalised from the political process. Similar to electoral rules the constitutional law specifically pertaining to political parties is restrictive in its formal form. The law was initially introduced as a way for the administration to manage the emergence of political parties and public associations in the early period of independence. It was updated to include more restrictive provisions as a way for the authorities to manage the emergence of opposition parties, which were created in the aftermath of the different waves of elite fragmentation. The scope of the law, however, and in particular the restrictiveness of some of the articles regarding state registration, makes violation a likely outcome. This gives informal power to state officials to selectively apply the law. In the case of pro-presidential parties it is applied leniently and in the case of opposition parties such as *Alga* it is applied strictly.



This chapter has highlighted how Nazarbaev, from his critical position within the political system, is able to design institutional constraints that limit the development of political parties which are critical of his rule. He relies on his informal powers of patronage to ensure loyal clients interpret and selectively apply formal rules, which are designed with such informal political behaviour in mind, to benefit parties who sign up to his political agenda. This has resulted in the complete domination of *Nur Otan* within the party system. It illustrates the complex nature between both informal and formal politics. While informal political behaviour and relations are clearly affecting the ability of a party system which allows for pluralist views, formal rules such as those concerning electoral competition and party genesis and organisation, are acting as a way to bind in and legitimise such informal politics.

## **Chapter Five: What Type of Parties? Membership, Organisation, Ideology and Behavioural Norms**

Underpinned by informal powers of patronage and an extensive patron-client network the president of Kazakhstan has been able to define and manage the formal institutional boundaries within which political parties emerge and operate. Formal rules, while for the most part are seemingly operating at a rational level in order to appeal and impress the international community are designed on the assumption and expectation that state agencies and local executives will demonstrate loyalty to the president in exchange for their political positions by ensuring the marginalisation of political voices which are critical of the regime. It has led to a party system dominated by the president's party *Nur Otan*. What affect, therefore, have these formal institutional constraints, influenced by the selective application and informal preferencing of formal rules, had on the types of parties that have emerged in Kazakhstan? How have parties memberships, organisations, decision-making structures, ideologies and behavioural norms been affected by both the informal and formal rules of the game within which they have to operate? Moreover to what extent, and in what shape, does the formal-informal dynamic apparent in neopatrimonial regimes appear internally within political parties? This chapter seeks to address these questions.

As discussed in Chapter One, the party types that have appeared in the post-Soviet literature through empirical studies are those generally organised for the purpose of competition in electoral politics or alternatively those parties which have been created, designed or co-opted to represent or protect elites in power. As will be highlighted in this chapter, Kazakh parties display similar characteristics of being predominantly vehicles for electoral competition as well as being designed to protect the interests of elite groups (although not always those elites who are in power). However, this work, and more specifically this chapter, will move away from using these post-Soviet specific typologies, in particular the concept of party of power. As also discussed in Chapter One, the concept of party of power is a confused and at times misdirected term that seems to suggest a party of power possesses power and decision-making capabilities. It infers that parties of power are 'abnormal' parties specific to the former Soviet Union. As discussed earlier, many parties considered



parties of power including *Nur Otan*, the New Azerbaijan Party and *Edinaia Rossiia* (United Russia), do not actually possess or wield power and policy-making faculties. Instead, rather than using party types that have evolved in the specific context of the experience of the former Soviet Union this chapter will apply the typological framework conceived by Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond. As explained in Chapter One, Gunther and Diamond's framework is preferred as it empowers the observer to place parties' characteristics in a specific temporal and geographical context while simultaneously allowing for a more integrative approach with classical party typological theories.

What is the relationship between the institutional constraints discussed in the previous chapter, in both the formal and informal sense, and the types of parties emerging in post-Soviet Kazakhstan? While the formal constraints of the Law on Political Parties signifies on the surface mass nationwide parties the informal constraints, characterised by the use of patron-client networks to favour pro-presidential parties ensure that membership throughout parties is overall opaque, non-voluntary and weak. Party organisation and ideology too is affected by the dominance of informal behaviour and relationships. The central role of loyalty and personalism in the political system has led to the emergence of parties dedicated to serving the interest of political elites, either those close to Nazarbaev, or Nazarbaev himself, or those who were once part of the ruling regime and are now in opposition. The ideology of political parties in Kazakhstan is therefore reflective of this and has a tendency to be based on the personality and personal views of the party leaders. Informal forces too have affected behavioural characteristics. The majority of pro-presidential parties are subservient to the hegemonic vision of Nazarbaev and his party *Nur Otan* and reflect the loyalty and personalism inherent in the political system. The influence of local executives and state agencies in preferring pro-presidential parties in the laws and process of electoral competition ensures those parties have a competitive advantage without developing genuine competitive characteristics. On the other hand, opposition parties seemingly on the surface present a commitment to democracy and non-hegemony. However, there are concerns that the interest in the language of democracy is only a means to an end in their struggle for power and interests. Formal and informal constraints have pushed opposition parties to the margins of the political system and therefore they are using

the terminology of democracy and transparency as a means of public appeal at home and abroad.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to explicitly unpack the structural and typological nature of parties in post-Soviet Kazakhstan thus observing their organisational, ideological and behavioural characteristics and their relationship with the informal forms of political behaviour and relationships that are evident in neopatrimonial regimes, some of which have been highlighted in the previous two chapters. It will explore not just how the external nature of the informal-formal dynamic influences parties, but also how it occurs within them. The chapter explains how political parties' formal membership is only of surface appeal and that parties are reliant on informal patron-client networks and other informal political techniques to acquire and expand party membership. Parties' formal organisations are based on a Soviet model which attempts to direct power and decision-making upwards from the party base. Informally, however, power lies almost solely with party elites who are constructing political parties either for the purpose of protecting, securing or representing their economic and political interests or for the purpose of obtaining public office for, and increasing the public profile of, a political individual. Consequently, while most parties formally put forward ideologies in some shape, ideologies are in fact based on the informal politics of personality and personalism. Most parties proffer a form of ideological pragmatism which sees them ditch any ideological commitments in favour of the best means to meet their political goals and economic interests. The chapter will also reveal how parties' behavioural norms are also affected by the informal-formal dynamic. Formally they all claim a commitment to democratic rules of the game, however, informally some parties are proto hegemonic, supporting and consolidating the personal rule of Nazarbaev. Other parties are complicit in this hegemony by legitimising Nazarbaev and *Nur Otan's* preponderance, while some are committed to democratic norms but seemingly only because it offers them the best chance of protecting their economic and political interests.

The chapter is set out as follows: It begins by tackling the opaque and informal characteristics of party membership before assessing formal party organisation, the power of party elites and the different models of the organisational rationale of



parties. The chapter then explores the ideological and programmatic content of political parties. It is achieved by placing parties into three categories: those who have a strong ideological basis, those parties who attempted to base themselves on a particular ideology, and those parties which lack any form of ideological distinctiveness. However, it is argued that due to the domination of *Nur Otan*, most parties in an effort to compete lean on ideological pragmatism and political personality. Finally, the chapter explores parties' behavioural norms and divides parties into three types: those who are hegemonic, those who are complicit in hegemony and those who do pursue a democratic and pluralist outlook.

## **1 Memberships, Organisation and the Power of Party Elites**

### *1.1 Party Membership*

As discussed in Chapter Four, Article 10.5 of the 'Law on Political Parties requires parties to have at least 50,000 members in order to obtain registration with the Ministry of Justice. Consequently, the official membership figures of parties are quantitatively large for a country of just 15 million people (see table 5.1). It suggests that nearly 12 percent of the total population is a member of a political party. From the official statistics it is clear the main pro-presidential party *Nur Otan* has the largest membership with 607,557 members. The Party of Patriots, OSDP and *Ak Zhol* are listed also as having six-figure memberships. Taking these statistics at face value would infer that parties in Kazakhstan have mass memberships and would therefore fit rather adroitly Duverger's concept of a mass party.

*Table 5.1 Party Membership of currently registered parties (as of 2008)*

<b>Party</b>	<b>Official Membership</b>
Communist Party (KPK)	54,246
<i>Nur Otan</i>	607,557
Party of Patriots	172,000
Kazakhstan Social and Democratic Party “ <i>Auyl</i> ”	61,043
<i>Ak Zhol</i>	175,862
Rukhaniyat	72,000
Communist People’s Party of Kazakhstan (KNPK)	90,000
Democratic Party of Kazakhstan ‘ <i>Adilet</i> ’	70,000
<i>Azat</i> (Formerly <i>Nagiz Ak Zhol</i> )	87,012
National Social Democratic Party (OSDP)	140,000

(All official membership data was taken from the Central Election Commission. See [www.election.kz](http://www.election.kz)).<sup>1</sup>

The official party statistics regarding membership are unreliable and unlikely to be representative of the true level of party membership. As a researcher, obtaining up-to-date membership statistics is difficult as not all parties are willing to disclose the information, moreover, some party elites admitted to not keeping up to date figures on the level of their membership.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, reading into official party membership statistics is neither particularly revealing or relevant to understanding the nature of party development in Kazakhstan. However, if we examine party membership through the lens of the informal element of the political system some useful insights can be observed in relation to how political parties, and in particular pro-presidential parties, rely on the powers of patronage to enlist and ensure people join and sign up as party members.

### *1.2 The Informality of Party Membership*

There are several informal characteristics observable in parties’ membership in Kazakhstan linked to the neopatrimonial nature of the regime. The first is that some analysts and party elites have noted a tendency among pro-presidential parties to use non-voluntary forms of party membership based on patron-client relations to bolster their membership base. One analyst interviewed suggested that when the Civil Party

<sup>1</sup> *Atameken* and *Alga* are not included, as they are not officially registered as political parties. No figures for *Atameken* were available, but *Alga* provided a membership total of 54,487 as of 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Author’s interview with Kuanysh Assylbekovich, Head of the Astana City Branch of *Adilet*, 6 March 2007, Astana.



(GPK) was operating, due to it being financed by Aleksandr Mashkevich and the other members of the Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation (ENRC), 'any person who was to take up a position in one of their factories would have to write a letter of acceptance for the job and at the same time write a letter applying to become a member of the GPK'.<sup>3</sup> Joining a political party, therefore, is analogous to working in one of the industries owned by ENRC. One figure in *Nur Otan* admitted that 'not all the people who joined the party became members through voluntary means'.<sup>4</sup> What this suggests is that clients join political parties as a way to ensure they do not lose their positions. This of course favours pro-presidential parties like *Nur Otan* and previously GPK because 'people are frightened to be associated with anti-government parties as it means they would automatically lose their jobs'.<sup>5</sup> *Akims* have the power of appointment over many state employees from those employed in schools to the health services. *Akims* use their power of appointment to ensure if people join a political party it is the president's party. According to a senior official in the *Auyl* (Village) party, 'even members of *Auyl*, when they get jobs in the public sector, they get to hear "why don't you join *Nur Otan*?" That's how *Nur Otan* gets its members'.<sup>6</sup> The informal nature of politics at the heart of the neopatrimonial regime in Kazakhstan has a deep impact on how members are recruited by political parties and the use of patron-client ties to bind people into the ruling party. At the same time the relationship works both ways. *Nur Otan* as a political party is often portrayed as a viable framework for career development. *Nur Otan* is viewed as the 'party of bureaucrats'<sup>7</sup> and therefore a position within the party is desirable as 'people think they can make a career out of the fact they are in *Nur Otan*'.<sup>8</sup>

A degree of neopatrimonialism exists within opposition parties. In the first instance there is a tendency for the leaders of the opposition to bring their 'own' people with them when they establish new political parties. When the *Akim* of Pavlodar

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<sup>3</sup> Author's interview with analyst from an NGO, 2 November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>4</sup> Author's interview with senior figure in *Nur Otan*, 8 May 2007, Almaty.

<sup>5</sup> Author's interview with local Journalist, 30 October 2006, Almaty.

<sup>6</sup> Author's interview with Erkin Zheynullaevich, Head of Central Apparatus of the Social Democratic Party '*Auyl*', 5 March 2007, Astana.

<sup>7</sup> Author's interview with Tulegen Zhukeev, General Secretary of *Azat*, former co-chairman of *Nagiz Ak Zhol*, 21 February 2007, Almaty.

<sup>8</sup> Author's interview with Bektas Mukhamedzhanov, Director of the International Institute for Modern Politics, Member of *Nur Otan* Political Council and former Member of *Asar*, 22 February 2007, Almaty.

Galymzhan Zhakianov established Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK) in 2001, he took with him some of his own personnel, people who owed their positions to his patronage. For example, Bakhyt Tumenova current leading member of *Alga's* Political Council highlighted this phenomena relating to her own experience.

“I came here as a person of Zhakianov. When he came to power in 1994 as *Akim* through business structures he invited me to work with him in the *Akimat*. I came to the party in 2001 following Zhakianov, because he is the person that introduced me to power, and he probably did that because I worked in health care, by education I am qualified doctor”.<sup>9</sup>

There is nothing necessary negative regarding the political relationship between Tumenova and Zhakianov. The cultivation of a protégé is a familiar political practice across all kinds of political systems. However, it does illustrate the ingrained nature and importance attached to patron-client ties in party membership development at the higher elite level. In terms of the broader mass membership opposition parties have seemingly at times been accused of using informal means to augment their party membership numbers during the registration process. As highlighted in the previous chapter, *Alga* was subject to, or implicit in, the phenomena of including *mertvye dushi* (dead souls) to their membership list.<sup>10</sup> The Ministry of Justice refused *Alga's* registration on their first attempt in 2006 on the basis that *mertvye dushi* were included in their membership list, *Alga* has never denied this, but on their second attempt they tried to ensure this did not occur again (see Chapter Four), however they accused *Vlast'* of attempting to include *mertvye dushi* in their application documents for party registration.<sup>11</sup> It is indicative of the way in which political parties use informal methods to present an image of being well populated with members. Moreover, even though they may have used informal methods to guarantee registration, political parties are not obliged to maintain their membership, so parties can operate with just two to three members'.<sup>12</sup> In some of the smaller pro-

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<sup>9</sup> Author's interview with Bakhyt Tumenova, Head of the Central Apparatus of *Alga*, 6 February 2007, Almaty.

<sup>10</sup> Authors interview with representative from local a NGO, 21 November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>11</sup> NP *Alga!* K povtornoii registratsii – gotovy, *Press-sluzhba NP Alga (DVK)*, 8 November 2006

<sup>12</sup> Authors interview with representative from local NGO, 21 November 2006, Almaty.



presidential parties this is clearly the case.<sup>13</sup> The lack of membership is illustrated by the discrepancy between purported membership numbers and the votes received in parliamentary elections.<sup>14</sup> Membership retention is clearly an issue as one figure in *Nur Otan* noted that during the mergers of *Asar*, GPK and the Agrarian Party (APK) with *Otan* all parties involved undertook a survey of party membership and found that *Asar* had lost 10 percent of their membership and GPK 50 percent.<sup>15</sup>

All these factors highlight the opaque and informal nature of party membership in Kazakhstan and consequently it can explain the tendency for low party membership activity other than during election periods.<sup>16</sup> It demonstrates that a key part of neopatrimonialism, that of patron-client ties, alongside other informal forms of political behaviour such as the use of *mertvye dushi*, penetrate party membership and are contributing factors to overall membership weakness across all political parties in Kazakhstan. The weakness of party membership is indicative of the central role party elites play in party genesis and organisation. There is nothing unusual about elite level actors dominating party organisations in the post-Soviet world and beyond, but what we can examine is why and for what purposes political elites are using parties. It highlights the utility of political parties for key elite actors and the use of parties for qualitatively different purposes than that which political scientists are used to in Western style democracies. The next section tackles this issue by exploring party organisation in Kazakhstan.

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<sup>13</sup> For example, on the experience of this author it is unlikely the Party of Patriots continues to maintain a membership of 172,000, as they could not produce a single person for interview and the people they did provide claimed to no longer be involved with the party.

<sup>14</sup> There were several smaller parties who received less votes in both the 2004 and 2007 parliamentary elections than their official membership numbers. The Party of Patriots, for example, claims an official membership of 172,000 yet received only 26,287 and 46,436 votes at the 2004 and 2007 elections respectively. *Rukhaniyat* claims an official membership of 72,000 yet only gained 20,826 and 22,159 in the most recent elections. The fact these parties cannot collect as many votes as they supposedly have members illustrate the considerable problem and unreliability of official membership figures. Of course, fraudulent elections could explain the discrepancy, as could members voting for *Nur Otan*. Nonetheless, the authorities have nothing to fear in these parties, as they are overtly pro-presidential. It is more likely, as suggested by many analysts interviewed, that their membership numbers are considerably overstated.

<sup>15</sup> Author's interview with senior figure in *Nur Otan*, 8 May 2007, Almaty.

<sup>16</sup> Most political parties, with the exception of *Nur Otan*, admitted in interviews that the activity and agitation of the general party membership needed to improve. Levels of membership activity range depending on the party and external factors, for example party memberships are more active during election periods. However, overall the majority of political parties do not sustain high levels of membership activity. *Nur Otan*, however, has been keenly developing its youth section, *Zhas Otan* (Young Otan), in recent years, and with the aid of administrative resources and prospects for career development, it has been cultivating strong membership participation. For further details on the activities of *Zhas Otan*, see their website <http://www.ndp-nurotan.kz/index.php?type=16&ft=1>.



### 1.3 Formal Party Organisation

Before unpacking the dominance and power of party elites it is worth outlining the formal structural components of party organisations in Kazakhstan. Formally party organisations all follow a similar model. As defined by Article 16 of the Law on Political Parties, ‘the supreme governing body of a political party shall be its congress.’<sup>17</sup> How political parties organise their other supervising governing bodies is not defined by the law, although parties do have to adhere to a territorial principle by having a branch in each of the 14 *Oblasts* (region) and two special city regions (Almaty and Astana). Nevertheless, all parties follow a similar structure that has its roots in the model set by the CPSU. Whereas the CPSU consisted of a Congress, Central Committee and a Politburo led by the General Secretary, the current formulation of party organisation in Kazakhstan comprises of similar bodies – a Congress, Political Council and a Presidium led by the party chairman.<sup>18</sup> Disaggregate elements are also comparable to the old CPSU structure with party organisation based on a three level territorial principle featuring *Oblast* (regional), *Raion* (district) and Primary Party Organisations (PPOs).

It is implicit within the general organisational structure of parties (see figure 5.1) that power flows upwards from the party congress which is formally laid out as being the supreme body within all parties’ charters.<sup>19</sup> Congress is made up of representatives from *Oblast*, *Raion* and PPOs level branches and it is at Congress that important decisions are seemingly voted on such as the election of the Political Council, Presidium and Chairman of the party and the selection of candidates for electoral competition. This too is reflective of the formal power that was invested in the Congress of the CPSU which elected the Central Committee of the Party, which in turn elected the Politburo.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> *Zakon Respubliki Kazakhstan o politicheskikh partiiakh ot 15 Iulia 2002*

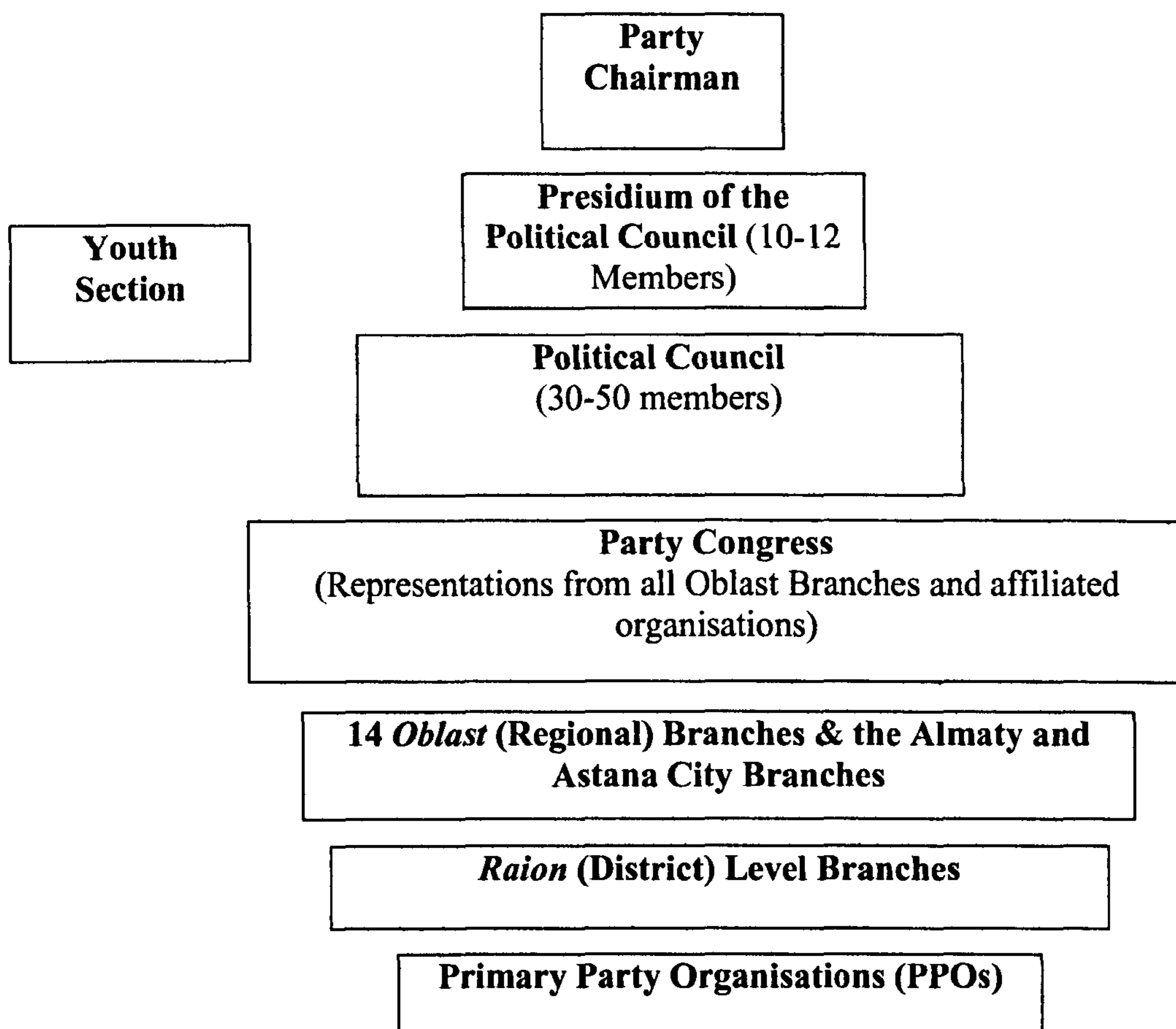
<sup>18</sup> Not all parties use the same name to refer to these bodies as illustrated by *Nagiz Ak Zhol* who call their equivalent of their Political Council – the Central Council. Nevertheless, despite the semantics all parties have similar organisational structures and these bodies all perform similar functions.

<sup>19</sup> This assertion is taken from a survey of all political parties charters. All of the charters follow an identical format, and are governed by the principles of organisation and power dispersion that are set out in the Law on Political Parties. The Party Charters surveyed included, *Nur Otan* (2006), *Nagiz Ak Zhol* (2005), OSDP (2007), *Ak Zhol* (2005) KNPk (2004), *Rukhaniyat* (2003), *Auyl* (2003), *Adilet* (2006), the Communist Party (2004) and the Party of Patriots (2002).

<sup>20</sup> Leonard Schapiro, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1971)



Figure 5.1 General Organisational Structure of Political Parties in Kazakhstan



The power Congress has to elect the top bodies and positions demonstrates the way in which ordinary members of the party are theoretically able to hold their leadership to account, indicating members have a stake in the party. Congress, however, is only obliged to meet at least once every four years<sup>21</sup> and in the periods in-between power resides with the Political Council which is convoked no less than once every three months. When the Political Council is not in session power and decision-making lies with the Presidium and most notably the party chairman. The reality of internal power distribution in party organisation is that political elites dominate the decision-making processes and the general orientation and direction the party takes. This is due on one level to the weakness of general party membership but on another level

<sup>21</sup> Each party on average holds Congress at least once a year.

these parties are essentially the creation of elites and are used by these political elites for varying purposes which will be outlined below.

#### 1.4 *The Power of Party Elites*

The model of decision-making responsibility being directed from the bottom up through the delegation of powers to party elites does not reflect accurately internal party power distribution. Instead decision-making powers lay in the hands of party elites or in many cases just one individual. This is corroborated by party elite perceptions of where power lies in their party organisations. In interviews with party elites all were asked the same question regarding what they considered the most important level within their organisation in terms of party decision-making. According to a senior member of *Nur Otan* 'it is 50-50. The first 50 percent is Nazarbaev. He can make any decision he wants inside the party and outside the party. The other 50 percent is the party leadership, the political council and congress.'<sup>22</sup> The case of Nazarbaev as Chairman of *Nur Otan* is not exceptional. Alikhan Baimenov, Chairman of *Ak Zhol*, stated that 'it is the presidium. This includes fifteen people and the chairman of the regional branches'.<sup>23</sup> This suggests that a small group of elites determine the decisions, strategies and policies of the party. This phenomena is not isolated to pro-presidential or regime friendly parties. Opposition parties too have similar perceptions concerning where power and decision-making lies. Tulegen Zhukeev, co-chairman of *Nagiz Ak Zhol*, stated that the presidium was the most important part of their organisation in terms of decision-making and that beyond that 'the every day work is done by the three co-chairmen'.<sup>24</sup> While a member of *Alga's* Presidium suggested that 'by law it is Congress but really it is more the Political Council'.<sup>25</sup>

Elite perceptions confirm what was suggested earlier by the weak participatory nature of general party membership, that is political parties in Kazakhstan are elite driven vehicles. That power and decision-making resides at the very top of party organisations is no real surprise. The more interesting issue, however, is the different

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<sup>22</sup> Author's interview with Kazbek Kazkenov. Assistant to Vice President of *Nur Otan*, 7 March 2007, Astana.

<sup>23</sup> Author's interview with Alikhan Baimenov, Chairmen of *Ak Zhol*, and deputy of the Mazhilis, 6 March 2007, Astana.

<sup>24</sup> Author's interview with Tulegen Zhukeev.

<sup>25</sup> Author's interview with Bakhyt N. Tumenova.



types of rationale behind party organisations and who are driving them. Parties are generally established to represent and organise the interests of factional elite groups and charismatic politicians. According to Dosym Satpaev:

“Political parties are not classical political parties. In this sense they do not play the role of institutions representing the interests of social or electoral groups. Instead, an influential person might establish a political party, for example, Aleksandr Mashkevich and ENRC established GPK. Either pressure groups or a single individual establishes most political parties. Gani Kasymov, for example, established the Party of Patriots, and if he were ever to leave the party it would no longer exist. Other political parties were established by elite groups.”<sup>26</sup>

This is not a view isolated to external analysts. Party officials are only too aware of the extent to which political parties are established and pivoted on the basis of elite interest. According to a regional official of *Alga*, ‘particular individuals create most of the parties in Kazakhstan, for example, *Nagiz Ak Zhol*, or OSDP, or any other party is created by certain individuals and centred around their interests no matter whether they are opposition parties.’<sup>27</sup> These individuals and groups of elites are using political parties as a way of protecting their economic interests. A member of *Nur Otan*’s Political Council highlighted, ‘political parties are either based on people holding power or certain individuals and personalities who have enough financial resources, or a group of people supporting them who have enough financial resources, to form political parties to protect business or private interests’.<sup>28</sup> Parties are products of their neopatrimonial environment. Their organisational basis is founded on the informal power held by factional elite groups and charismatic individuals found in neopatrimonial regimes. Parties are dominated by informal factional elite groups who mobilise their own personal power networks in an attempt to capture or protect their interests – either in the shape of economic businesses or political positions in formal state structures. Party organisations are characterised by patronage networks, or at the very least the membership is defined by the deference and power members give to party elites. Parties therefore, are organised on the basis

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<sup>26</sup> Author’s interview with Dosym Satpaev, political analyst, 28 February 2007, Almaty.

<sup>27</sup> Author’s interview with Yelefov Abdurashid, Chairman of the Zhambyl Branch of the *Alga*, 13 March 2007, Taraz, Zhambyl *Oblast*.

<sup>28</sup> Author’s interview with Bektas Mukhamedzhanov.

of narrow elite interests with power and decision-making concentrated in groups of elites at the very top not just of political parties but at the top of politics, business and society. Arguably, political parties in Kazakhstan have been established from a point of oligarchy.<sup>29</sup> Parties, therefore, provide formal institutional constructs for elites to protect and extend their interests. This is particularly the case for elites caught up in informal factional conflict. The varied rationales for party organisation in Kazakhstan are evidence of the influence the informal aspects of neopatrimonialism have, and continue to have, on party development in the country.

### *1.5 Five Types of Party Organisational Rationale*

The several types of rationale behind party organisation reflect the interaction between the informal and formal in Kazakhstan. As discussed above, parties do possess formal structures but are inclined towards having weak memberships that have, at times, been appropriated through informal means. At the same time parties' formal structures are underpinned by the power of factional elite groups or charismatic individuals sustained by extensive networks based on forms of patronage and patron-client ties. The five different types of organisational purpose outlined in this section reflect, broadly speaking, Gunther and Diamond's thinly organised clientalistic-elite and personalistic-electoralist parties discussed in Chapter One.<sup>30</sup>

The five types are parties:

- Created or co-opted by a 'charismatic' personality for retention or reclamation of public office
- Established by 'liberal-professional' elite groups who are attempting to protect, secure or retain their political and economic interests.
- Created by oligarchs who use them to represent and protect their interests in parliament.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, (Ontario: Batoche Books, 2001 [1915]).

<sup>30</sup> It is not possible to clearly illustrate the clientelistic mechanisms that define clientalistic parties. It is difficult to outline the different exchanges of goods and services that define the patronage at the heart of clientelism. However, different types of party organisational rationale demonstrate the interaction between informal and formal politics in Kazakhstan.

<sup>31</sup> The term 'oligarch' used and applied in the post-Soviet world is distinct from classical definition. Rather than specifically relating to influential political figures at the top of government, oligarchs in the post-Soviet sense are analogous with business magnates. The term is expressly used in post-Soviet countries to reflect the power associated with those business elites who captured significant



- Established as spoiler parties sanctioned by the presidential administration as an attempt to obstruct and derail opposition parties efforts during a parliamentary election.
- Created specifically for supporting and representing the president in the legislature and in state and government institutions.

These types of party rationale are not the only reason why elites and political figures form political parties. It is quite possible there are multiple explanations for party genesis such as ideology, public good and certain socio-economic cleavages. However, the five types described below are viewed as the principle factor in elite party formation or cooption.

*Parties created by a 'charismatic' personality for retention or reclamation of public office*

This first type of party rationale is those parties established by charismatic public figures in an effort to hold on to and solidify, or regain, their position in public office. Parties falling into this category include *Auyl*, Party of Patriots, *Rukhaniyat*, and to a certain extent the KPK. The cases of *Auyl* and Party of Patriots are similar as both their chairman Gani Kaliev (*Auyl*) and Gani Kasymov (Party of Patriots) were elected to the second convocation of the *Mazhilis* (Parliament) in 1999. Kaliev was a member of the *Otan* Political Council and Kasymov was elected as a self-nominated candidate in a single mandate constituency.<sup>32</sup> Both were distinguished and well-known figures that had significant careers during the Soviet Period.<sup>33</sup> After being elected in October 1999 Kaliev established *Auyl* in March 2000 and Kasymov created the Party of Patriots in June of the same year. Kaliev broke ranks with *Otan* over the issue of agro-economics believing the party 'did not have the support of the

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proportions of former state assets. The terms itself indicates the influence such business elites have on political development and politicians. Moreover, oligarchs in post-Soviet countries often gravitate towards participation in politics as a way of protecting their assets.

<sup>32</sup> Gani Kasymov, although a self-nominated candidate, did have government affiliation as his previous position was as Chairman of the Customs Committee of the Ministry of Finance.

<sup>33</sup> Gani Kaliev had a successful career in the agro-economic sector as director of the Kazakh Scientific Agricultural Institute and as President of the Kazakhstan Academy of agricultural sciences he was also a deputy in the 12<sup>th</sup> Convocation of the Kazakhstan Supreme Soviet from 1990-1994. Gani Kasymov rose rapidly to prominence during the Soviet period in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



farmers'.<sup>34</sup> Thus, he established *Auyl* to represent the interest of the agrarian community. Notwithstanding, the party clearly offered Kaliev the opportunity to increase his public profile and strengthen his chances of retaining public office at the next election.<sup>35</sup> Gani Kasymov established the Party of Patriots to be the political vehicle to capitalise on his charisma and popular appeal in an effort to win public office.<sup>36</sup> Despite their formal structures and officially large memberships these parties are centred on the political interests of their leading personalities, they struggle with finances and are mainly inactive outside of election periods.<sup>37</sup> These are ambitious political figures who often find themselves in the media and while establishing a political party has not translated into election victories, both Kaliev and Kasymov have been rewarded by the president for their persistence in the public arena and the support of his leadership. Kasymov was given a seat in the Senate in 2007 and Kaliev has often headed various commissions set up by the president to explore issues of democracy and political reform.

The case of the KPK is different as it is considered to be a 'classic party'.<sup>38</sup> It has a recognised constituency and ideological platform. The party's leader, Serikbolsyn Abdil'din, is a well-recognised figure from the Soviet period and in the early period of independence. He was a former colleague of Nazarbaev and had served as a

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<sup>34</sup> S. D'iachenko, L.Karmazina and S. Seidumanov '*Politicheskie Partii Kazakhstana, god 2000. Spravochnik*', Almaty, 2000 p.122

<sup>35</sup> It would be fair to suggest that if Gani Kaliev was purely motivated by retaining public office then he would have remained with *Otan*. However, at the time *Otan* had not fully established itself as the dominant party in the political system. This was still a time of fluidity. Moreover, such a premise that a political actor would take the least risky option for retention of public office makes the assumption that the actor is rational and always makes rational decisions. This author believes not all actors and their actions are rational.

<sup>36</sup> Daniyar Ashimbaev, *Kto est Kto v Kazakhstan* (Almaty, 2005). Another example of a party representing a public figure attempting to increase their public profile, stabilise their political career and strengthen their chances of obtaining public office is *Rukhaniyat*. The chairman of the party, Altynshash Dzhaganova, had previously been a deputy in the 12<sup>th</sup> and last convocation of the Supreme Soviet. Dzhaganova lost her seat after parliament was suspended and the new constitution introduced. Soon after in 1995 Dzhaganova created the Party of Revival of Kazakhstan which focussed on issues of gender, spirituality and culture.<sup>36</sup> In 2003 the party was renamed *Rukhaniyat*. The creation of the party provided a formal vehicle to keep up a public profile with the hope of reclaiming a seat in parliament.

<sup>37</sup> One anecdote told by an official from NGO was that when meeting with these parties the main thing they were interested in was whether the organisation could offer them any financial assistance. An example of activity being concentrated during election periods can be observed by their websites. Party of Patriots and *Auyl* did not have websites until they sprung up prior to the 2007 election. Since the election they have been rarely updated offering no evidence or examples of party activity other than the statements of their leaders.

<sup>38</sup> Author's interview with Iuri Buluktaev, Professor of Political Science and the Kazakh Academy of Sciences, 1 November 2006, Almaty.



deputy of, and the Chairman of, the Supreme Soviet until December 1993.<sup>39</sup> Abdil'din was also the centre of opposition to Nazarbaev in the early post-Soviet period and had mustered the oppositional forces in the Supreme Soviet to block the president's economic reform package. Since becoming leader of the KPK in 1996 Abdil'din and the KPK have become synonymous. With the KPK he had appropriated a political vehicle in which he could use to mobilise support for the purpose of reclaiming a seat in parliament and to act as a magnate for opposition against the president. Abdil'din reclaimed a seat in parliament in the 1999 parliamentary elections and also stood as the main opposition candidate in the presidential elections of the same year.<sup>40</sup> The relationship between the KPK and Abdil'din was, and remains, mutually beneficial. The KPK needed Abdil'din to raise their profile and Abdil'din needed the KPK to pursue his ambition of returning to parliament and establishing an organisational structure with which to compete against Nazarbaev. Consequently, KPK's survival is tied to the personal political leadership of Abdil'din. According to one leading political analyst, 'the Communist Party is lucky that it has such a leader. If Abdil'din were to leave the party, the party would die out.'<sup>41</sup> Abdil'din's desire to return to a form of public office may have waned in recent years either due to age (he is 71) or commitment to his academic post at the Agrarian University in Almaty. In the 2007 parliamentary election the KPK refused to participate, correctly believing the whole process to be a waste of time as they would not win any seats due to the president and *Nur Otan*'s grip on the whole political system.<sup>42</sup> That the KPK did not wish to participate in the election when typically we understand electoral activity to be a key defining feature of parties, illustrates the different nature of parties in Kazakhstan. Despite a sound membership base and a strong ideology, the KPK is less a mechanism for electoral representation and more a personal vehicle for Abdil'din to maintain a public profile.

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<sup>39</sup> S. D'iachenko, L.Karmazina and S. Seidumanov '*Politicheskie Partii Kazakhstana, god 2000. Spravochnik*' p. 40

<sup>40</sup> Abdil'din was forced out as chair of the Supreme Soviet when Nazarbaev cajoled deputies into self-dissolution in December 1993. See Chapter Three.

<sup>41</sup> Author's interview with Nurbolat Masanov, Political Scientist, 4 October 2006.

<sup>42</sup> The KPK will have to compete in the next election or face dissolution. According to the Law on Political Parties, any party which fails to participate in two successive legislative elections will be dissolved.



*Parties as organisations for the protection of the political and economic interests of a new liberal-professional elite*

Parties organised for the purpose of protecting the political and economic interests of a new liberal-professional elite are those that emerged as a product of elite fragmentation (see Chapter Three). DCK, *Ak Zhol*, *Nagiz Ak Zhol (Azat)*, The Republican Peoples' Party of Kazakhstan (RNPK) and *Alga* were all created by newly emergent liberal-professional elites of the post-Soviet period who had benefited both from both the privatisation process of the 1990s and Nazarbaev's patronage.<sup>43</sup> The elites responsible for creating these parties, prominent figures such as Galymzhan Zhakianov, Bolat Abilov and Akezhan Kazhegeldin, obtained significant resources during the sell off of former state enterprises or were connected with those who had. The conflicts these elites engaged in, either directly with the president or with his close relatives (son-in-law Rakhat Aliev) meant they faced the prospect of losing, in whole or in part, their economic assets and political patronage of, and access to, the president.<sup>44</sup> Dispersed from the loci of power these elite groups required formal political vehicles, through which they could secure, protect and promote their economic interests and their continued political ambitions. According Assylbek Kozhakhmetov, they established parties and 'came into opposition because they wanted to keep their positions and ownership of business'.<sup>45</sup> Parties were a useful tool with which to frame their opposition to the president and his authoritarian rule in full public view. For these elites parties are the perfect vehicle to attract public and media interest and organise their network of supporters and clients. The emergence of young Western and liberal oriented businessman and politicians who created political parties as a way of attempting to defend their interests strikes a similar note with the 'liberal-professional or economic elites'.<sup>46</sup> Gunther and Diamond describe when characterising the clientalistic-elite based party. Moreover, Gunther and Diamond's belief that the clientalistic-elite party's principal function is

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<sup>43</sup> Dosym Satpaev, 'An Analysis of the Internal Structure of Kazakhstan's Political Elite and an Assessment of Political Risk', in Uyama Tomohiko (ed.), *Empire, Islam and Politics in Central Eurasia*, (Sapporo: Slavic Research Centre, Hokkaido University), 2007, pp. 283-300.

<sup>44</sup> This was especially the case with Abliazov, Galymzhan Zhakianov, Kazhegeldin and Abilov who all found themselves on trial for varying charges, but it was also the case that many who held positions in government and were part of the elite fragmentation process lost their positions too. This included Baimenov and Zhandosov.

<sup>45</sup> Author's interview with Assylbek Kozhakhmetov, ex-Chairman of the Presidium of the Political Council of the Party *Alga*, 26 January, 2007, Almaty.

<sup>46</sup> Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, 'Species of Political Parties: A New Typology,' p. 176.



the realisation of notable elites securing power at a national level and therefore, securing their political and economic interests mirrors Kazakhstan's 'new elites' attempts to do the same. Therefore, by establishing parties these elites are building organisations which not only support them in their efforts to protect, secure, reclaim and retain their economic interests, but also organise and coalesce their network of supporters, act as a centre for opposition to the president and increase their public profile. In this respect political parties are a crucial formal political institution for those elites engaged in informal behind the scenes conflict with the president and his family.

*Parties as organisations for the representation of oligarchic interests in the parliament*

The GPK is the primary example of a party established to represent the interests of oligarchic groups in parliament. The GPK was widely perceived to have been the political front of the Eurasian National Resources Corporation (ENRC), a business led by Patokh Chodiev, Aleksandr Mashkevich and Alizhan Ibragimov, which possess substantial assets in Kazakhstan's alloys, iron ore and alumina industries. GPK was utilised by the ENRC 'to oversee interests and head off and fix any problems'.<sup>47</sup> In alliance with the APK, ENRC had 14 deputies in parliament representing their economic interests. It is illustrative of parties being created and organised as formal institutional vehicles through which oligarch groups can informally influence the policy process and decision-makers for their benefit. Indeed, the case of GPK is a succinct example of the way in which formal and informal politics intersect.

*Asar* can also be viewed as a party created to represent the interests of a powerful oligarchical group. Formed by Dariga Nazarbaeva at the beginning of 2003, analysts and observers viewed the party as a 'family project'<sup>48</sup> that was 'created in the shadows, using the authority of president Nazarbaev.'<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, the party was also a convenient way for both Dariga and Rakhat Aliev to establish their own political organisation which could represent their business interests in the *Mazhilis*

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<sup>47</sup> Author's interview with analyst from NGO, 2 November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>48</sup> 'Muzhestvennoe destvie Dariga Nazarbaeva', *Respublika Assandi Times*, 14 February 2003.

<sup>49</sup> Bruce Pannier, 'Nazarbaeva's *Asar* party moving ahead quickly', *RFE/RL*, 29 January 2004.

and give both of them an independent platform from the president. The party was crucial not just in formalising political representation of informal economic interests but also in developing a network of clients and alliances to consolidate and extend their political position. Soon after establishing the party, a number of independent deputy members threw their support behind *Asar* and formed a parliamentary faction, while family members such as Aliev's father, Mukhtar Aliev, a leading surgeon in the country, were awarded top positions in the party.<sup>50</sup> Informal forms of patronage were clearly present in the creation of *Asar*, from the fact that it was supported by the presidential administration and the gravitation of deputies and notable figures in its ranks due to the illustrious and influential leadership of the party.

The mergers of GPK and *Asar* into *Nur Otan* in 2006 saw the end of parties' specifically organised to represent oligarchic interests in parliament. The president was keen to ensure that oligarch interests were arbitrated personally through him and that they did not form a power base for independent actors.<sup>51</sup> He was aiming to reduce their ability to influence the political process and strengthen their political position through these parties.<sup>52</sup> The president's move against Aliev in 2007 demonstrates this was the case – no strong political rivals were to be permitted.

#### *Parties organised as 'spoiler parties'*

Spoiler parties are linked to the 'virtual parties' discussed in Chapter Four, those that are set up by, or with the blessing of, the presidential administration in an effort to create the impression of multipartism. Spoiler parties are 'set up to take away votes from other parties.'<sup>53</sup> The spoiler party is used to confuse and confound voters at the polls as a way of containing the opposition vote. This can be achieved by having similar names or by the parties pivoting on similar electoral constituencies of parties the presidential administration perceive as a threat to presidential hegemony of the party system.<sup>54</sup> Two primary examples are *Adilet* and KNPK and as explained in Chapter Four these parties provided a useful tool for the presidential administration

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> It is widely believed that Alexander Mashkevich enjoys a close relationship with the president.

<sup>52</sup> Author's interview with senior figure in OSDP, 14 November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>53</sup> Author's interview with director of Local NGO, 21 November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>54</sup> Andrew Wilson, *Virtual Politics*.



in diverting votes and public interest from opposition parties that shared either a similar name or electoral constituencies. They were both established prior to the 2004 parliamentary election and it was their role to take votes from *Ak Zhol* and KPK.

The dilemma for spoiler parties is after the election they left with out an organisational purpose. *Adilet* did succeed in getting one member elected to the *Mazhilis*. However, since the mergers of *Asar*, GPK and APK into *Nur Otan* these parties have been seeking to find new allies to strengthen their organisational purpose. In the first part of 2007 the KNPk came very close to re-uniting with Abdil'din's KPK, but eventually failed to find a path forward agreeable for both sides.<sup>55</sup> And, *Adilet* merged with *Ak Zhol* prior to the 2007 parliamentary election. However, after they failed to win any seats they have since split, raising the possibility the party merger was not intended to survive the election in any case.

*Parties created on the basis of political personality for representation of presidential interests in the legislature*

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Nazarbaev sought to establish a political party that would act in the same way as the CPSU. As discussed in Chapter Three in the early years of independence Nazarbaev had attempted to create such a party but none had proved reliable or sustainable. However, since 1999 Nazarbaev has managed to institutionalise a political party that acts as his platform for re-election, ensures there is no opposition to his legislative program in parliament and provides him with a political vehicle for elite stability and state dominance. Also, as highlighted in Chapter Three, this party, *Nur Otan*, was completed as a political project in 2007 when after the merger with *Asar*, APK and GPK the party went on to win all the seats in parliament in the 2007 parliamentary election. The party has consolidated Nazarbaev's hold over the legislature. With his power over local executives, state agencies, the judiciary and the government Nazarbaev has full control of the political system.

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<sup>55</sup> KNPk ne budet ob'ediniat'sia s KPK, *Kazakhstan Today*, 11 June 2007.

Consequently, *Nur Otan* is typically viewed as a 'party of power' or a cartel party.<sup>56</sup> Katz and Mair suggest cartel parties are 'agents of the state, and employ the resources of the state to ensure their own survival'.<sup>57</sup> *Nur Otan* has a close association with the state and many of its critics argue it uses state resources and buildings for party organisation and activities.<sup>58</sup> Besides, the party is considered the party of bureaucrats, the party in parliament, and since the 2007 elections the party of government.<sup>59</sup> Its links with the state are strong and evident. However, the state aspect of *Nur Otan* is secondary to its overall purpose, organisation and identity. To define it solely as a cartel party or a party of power would be overlooking its *raison d'être*, which is to be the vehicle, voice, and extension of the president in parliament. Being a cartel party or a party of power would insinuate a degree of power with regards to policy making and decision-making within state bodies. *Nur Otan* instead is a vehicle through which Nazarbaev can advance his political ambitions. The consolidation of presidential forces was the construction of a party for which Nazarbaev could secure his political ambitions by liquidating the political organisations of other independent players. *Nur Otan's* primary function is to compete and win national and regional elections on behalf of the president. Therefore, the central feature of *Nur Otan* is not its relationship with the state or the cooption of the party by the executive, as suggested by a party of power perspective, but the fact that it relies on the president for its popularity and existence. If the president were to pass from the political scene *Nur Otan* would cease to exist in its current form and would more than likely split into factions and different parties.

These five party types are representative of the empirical nature of party development in Kazakhstan; however, they can all be more broadly linked to two particular party types identified by Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, that of

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<sup>56</sup> Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, 'Changing Models of Party Organisation and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party'.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> For example, according to Aleksandr Kholodkov, chairman of the Central Committee of the KNPK, 'the President gave to *Akims* the task of building offices not only in cities and regional centres but also in towns and small villages for *Nur Otan* party use. All the offices will be paid for out of the state budget.' Author's interview 24 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>59</sup> This relates to the fact the 2007 constitutional changes allowed persons in position of state authority to be members of political parties. This allowed Nazarbaev to take up the post of Chairman of *Nur Otan*, but also saw a raft of government ministers; *Akims* and other assorted state officials become members of the party. For example see, Akim Almaty sdela svoi Politicheskii vybor, [www.zonakz.net](http://zonakz.net), 26 June 2007, <http://zonakz.net/articles/18273>.



clientelistic-elite and electoral-personalistic parties. The clientelistic-elite parties are reflected in those parties attempting to protect or secure their economic and political interests while personalistic-electoralist party can be seen as those parties established by political figures to gain some form of public office, spoiler parties and most notably *Nur Otan*. What is clear from the above exposition of party membership and organisation in Kazakhstan is that political parties defined by the formal and informal constraints set out by Nazarbaev and his form of neopatrimonial rule have developed weak party memberships and are elite and personality centred institutions. Within both party membership and organisation characteristics of informal forms of politics typical in neopatrimonial regimes are evident and pervasive. The dominance of personalism within political parties such as the concentration of party organisation around single political personalities also has a considerable affect on party ideology as the next section uncovers.

## **2. Ideology and Programmatic content**

Parties' relationship with ideology is symptomatic of the neopatrimonial regime in Kazakhstan. While formally ideologies are presented as central to the ethos and identity of parties, informally ideology and programmatic content is centred on the personality of the party leaders. As discussed above, parties are organised around the interests of elite figures either for the retention or reclamation of public office, the protection of business interests or the representation of presidential interests. Therefore, political parties, with a few exceptions, are not in possession of unambiguous ideologies. They exhibit a tendency to deal in vague generalisable values rather than presenting coherent ideologies. Instead, the focus is on the goals and ambitions of the party chairmen or the attractiveness of their personality and charismatic strength. It illustrates how parties' ideologies are subject to the personalism that is ever pervasive in Kazakhstan's political system.

Formally parties claim to possess ideological foundations positioned on the left-right spectrum (see table 5.2). However, these positions are of only surface value and some elites when asked directly about party ideology declined to put their party on an ideological spectrum at all. The head of the Zhambyl Branch of *Nagiz Ak Zhol*, declared his party 'is on the right path, not on some ideological spectrum – we just

work with, and for, the people'.<sup>60</sup> Others interpret their parties' ideological position in relation to their attitude to, and relationship with, the president. For example, a senior figure in the Almaty city branch of *Auyl* argued 'we are centrist party because we do not completely oppose the president'.<sup>61</sup> These responses suggest that parties possess an uneasy relationship with ideology quite possibly as a product of the over ideologisation of the Soviet period.

*Table 5.2 Parties Formal Position on the Ideological Spectrum*

Ideological Position		Party
Left		KPK KNPK
	Left of Centre	OSDP Party of Patriots
Centre	Centre	<i>Nur Otan</i> <i>Adilet</i> <i>Auyl</i> <i>Rukhaniyat</i>
	Right of Centre	<i>Azat (Nagiz Ak Zhol), Alga</i>
		<i>Atameken</i>
Right		

(Adapted from A. Zh. Shomanov and N. I. Musmafaev, *Partiinoye stroitel'stvo v Kazakhstane: opyt, sostoyanie i perspektivy*, *Analytic*, No 4, 2002 p. 11. Additional information was provided directly from interviews with party elites and their party programs.)

Therefore, while synthetically parties present an ideological platform, it is not their central focus. Rather, parties' ideologies, programs and policies are centred on the personality of their leader or leaders. Moreover, the personal nature of power in Kazakhstan extends its influence to the development of party ideology due to programmatic content being driven by the personal interests and personality of party leaders. In exploring the nature of party ideology the analysis presented here divides parties into three categories: 1) those with unambiguous ideological positions, 2) those who are attempting to represent clear ideological foundations, and 3) those parties who lack ideological clarity. What emerges is a form of ideological pragmatism used by political parties to counter the influence and dominance of *Nur Otan*, and the centrality of personalism in party ideological construction and presentation. In those parties who have unambiguous ideologies and those who

<sup>60</sup> Author's interview with Makhmedun Kossybayev, Chairmen of Zhambyl *Oblast* Branch of *Nagiz Ak Zhol*, 15 March 2007, Taraz.

<sup>61</sup> Author's interview with Adisha Amanovna, Chief Coordinator of the Almaty City Branch of *Auyl* Party, 25 April 2007, Almaty.



attempt to have distinct ideologies, personalism of political leadership continues to be a dominant factor.

### *2.1 Parties with Unambiguous Ideological Positions*

The KPK and the KNPk are the only two parties who are based on a distinct ideological foundation. According to the KNPk's program, the party is based on the 'scientific and ideological basis of Marxism-Leninism's uniform materialistic theory of social development.'<sup>62</sup> Their policies stem from this principle and are of a clearly defined ideological nature, for example this includes a strong role for the state 'to restore: free of charge education, public health services, provision for old age pensioners and the guaranteed right to work, rest and dwelling.'<sup>63</sup> The KPK also, predictably, presents a clear outlined ideology stating that 'it is a Leninist type party'<sup>64</sup> which 'represents the interests of the workers'.<sup>65</sup>

Despite their apparent ideological lucidity the KPK's position vis-à-vis the complexities of a post-communist context highlights some underlying problems with their commitment to ostensible ideological clarity. According to the deputy leader, the party now 'recognises different forms of ownership of property – and is an entirely different party from the Communist Party of the past'.<sup>66</sup> This suggests Abdil'din's KPK has shifted to a social democratic position and tallies with the KPK's willingness to compete in the 2004 parliamentary elections in an electoral bloc with the right-wing business oriented Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (DCK).<sup>67</sup> The move away from the far left presented those figures in the Central Committee who wished to pursue closer ties with the president a perfect opportunity and justification for leaving the party to create the KNPk. In the words of one senior member of the KNPk, 'the ideological difference between the parties (*the two communist parties*) is Abdil'din's willingness to remake the party into a social-

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<sup>62</sup> Programa kommunisticheskoi narodnoi partii Kazakhstan, 6 June 2004.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Programa kommunisticheskoi partii Kazakhstana, 11 January 1997.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Author's interview with Tolen Tokhtassynov, deputy leader of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, 9 February 2007, Almaty.

<sup>67</sup> Interestingly Abdil'din's instance that the party should work with DVK in the 2004 election is posited as a reason for why Kosarev and others left the party to form KNPk.

democratic right wing party'.<sup>68</sup> Abdil'din's shifting of the party rightwards, as well as being prepared to enter into an electoral bloc with DCK, demonstrates a level of pragmatism and willingness of political elites to dispose of certain ideological core values in the pursuit of achieving electoral or political goals. The central role of Abdil'din in determining the direction the KPK takes, illustrates that despite a degree of clarity with regards to ideological positioning the party is still centred on the personal motivation of its leader. The party remains defined not so much by communism but by Abdil'din himself, as mentioned above the party and Abdil'din are irrevocably tied and the personal nature of leadership is representative of the way the informal nature of politics in Kazakhstan intersects with the formal nature of political parties.

## *2.2 Parties who attempt to present ideological foundations*

Two new parties emerged in 2006 attempting to demonstrate a clear link with ideology. OSDP, led by Zharmakhan Tuiakbai is posited as a centre left social-democratic party, and *Atameken*, led by Yerzhan Dosmukhamedov, a former associate of the president's son-in-law Timur Kulibaev, situates itself as centre-right party committed to the values of a free market.<sup>69</sup> Despite this, the role of personalism and the centrality of the party leader tend to supersede the clarity of ideological presentation.

OSDP's programme puts forward an ideology 'based on ideas, principles, values, positive historical experience and the modern practice of international social democracy'.<sup>70</sup> On this basis Zharmakhan Tuiakbai stressed a commitment to instituting a social-oriented economy due to Kazakhstan being a country in transit

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<sup>68</sup> Author's interview with Aleksandr Kholodkov, Secretary of the Central Committee of KNP, 24 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>69</sup> There is also a Union of Businessmen called *Atameken* which is led by former GPK leader Azat Peruashev, the two organisations have no relationship. Dosmukhamedov used to sit on the governing committee of the Union as a representative of the oil industry and Timur Kulibaev. Dosmukhamedov sought to create a party from the Union but other members were reluctant. As a result, he decided to create his own party. The party *Atameken* merged with *Alash* and *Compatriot*, two parties who failed to meet the registration requirements of the 2002 Law on Political Parties. They provided a support base for the party and for Dosmukhamedov.

<sup>70</sup> Programma respublikanskogo obshchestvennogo obedineniia obshchenatsional'naiia sotsial-demokratichesaia partiia, 10 September 2006.



and therefore needing partial state regulation of the market.’<sup>71</sup> The idea of the state acting as an intermediary between the excesses of capitalism and those in society who get left behind is central to the idea of social democracy. However, the party’s ideological clarity begins to unravel when exploring three features of OSDP’s ideological underpinning. The first concerns the fact that the party bases its programmatic content on the values of ‘Freedom, Justice and Solidarity’.<sup>72</sup> Yet, these values mean different things in different ideological contexts and according to one analyst, ‘these values are declared in all political programs of political parties in Kazakhstan’.<sup>73</sup> Second, the party has no links to any trade unions. Observers in Kazakhstan have argued that ‘Tuiakbai’s party is not social-democratic as it is not based on a trade union movement – the experience in the West shows that social democratic parties are based on trade unions.’<sup>74</sup> Lastly, the ideology of OSDP is secondary to the personality and the charismatic attributes of the leader. The character and charisma of Zharmakhan Tuiakbai is a primary factor in people joining the party, not the programmatic commitments to social democracy. One member of the party explained that he joined the party because of his personal feelings towards Tuiakbai, ‘I view Zharmakhan Tuiakbai as a really honest and strong person. He is a person with strong leadership qualities and a strong will. All this taken together made me feel dear towards him.’<sup>75</sup>

*Atameken* was viewed as borrowing directly from Western right-wing parties<sup>76</sup> due to the party’s insistence ‘that today it is crucial to create conditions conducive to domestic entrepreneurs and self-employed workers – the most energetic group familiar with the market economy.’<sup>77</sup> This centre-right ideological position is connected to clear policy positions typically associated with centre right political

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<sup>71</sup> Zharmakhan Tuiakbai speaking at the Politon discussion club in Almaty, 6 November 2006. Transcript can be found at [www.club.kz](http://www.club.kz).

<sup>72</sup> Programma respublikanskogo obshchestvennogo obedineniia obshchenatsional’naia sotsial-demokratichesaia partiia, 10 September 2006.

<sup>73</sup> Iuri Buluktaev speaking at Politon discussion club in Almaty, 6 November 2006.

<sup>74</sup> Author’s interview with Yevgeni Zhovtis, Director of the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law, 31 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>75</sup> Author’s interview with Amirbek Togussov, Head of the Almaty City Branch of OSDP 25 April 2007, Almaty.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Kazakhstan: New Political Party Borrows from Western Right’, *Eurasianet.org*, 30<sup>th</sup> October 2006

<sup>77</sup> ‘Declaration of the Principals of the Centre Right Political Party of Kazakhstan’, in Yerzhan Dosmukhamyedov, *Atameken Building Democracy in Kazakhstan*, Almaty 2006 p.146.

parties.<sup>78</sup> The party has attempted to re-affirm this by seeking alignment with other centre-right parties across the world including the Union of Right Forces in Russia, the Republican Party in the US, and the UK and Canadian Conservative parties.<sup>79</sup> In the national press much was made of *Atameken's* ideological distinctness arguing that since the collapse of the Soviet Union there had been no party based on the ideas of the market economy on which becoming free and democratic depends.<sup>80</sup> Despite this degree of ideological clarity the parties' ideological and programmatic presentation is tied and entwined with the personality of Dosmukhamedov. All of *Atameken's* publicity and propaganda is directly focused on, and attributed to, Dosmukhamedov.<sup>81</sup> *Atameken* has been portrayed as Dosmukhamedov's vanity project in order to fulfil his political ambitions. According to one elite figure, 'Atameken is Dosmukhamedov's creation, he wanted to be the leader of a party and he is naturally ambitious.'<sup>82</sup> Therefore, while ideologically the party is clear the presentation of ideology is inseparable from the personal leadership of Dosmukhamedov.

While OSDP and *Atameken* do formally present clear unambiguous ideology and programmatic commitments, the personal nature of political leadership ensures any coherent ideological position is second place to the neopatrimonial personalisation of party leadership. The reliance on personality is not constrained to parties who are attempting to emerge with solid ideological and programmatic foundations. The medley of the informal role of personality and formal ideology is central to the majority of political parties in Kazakhstan.

### *2.3 Parties without clear programmatic distinctions*

Most other parties in Kazakhstan do not demonstrate clear programmatic perspectives. Analysts believe 'there are no strong ideologies in any parties, because all of their programs are alike and none of them have introduced anything new that

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<sup>78</sup> For example the party has stated that it is committed to 'cutting corporate income tax rates for small and medium-sized business from 30 to 20 percent', *Ibid.* p. 151.

<sup>79</sup> See *Atameken* website - [www.atameken.info](http://www.atameken.info).

<sup>80</sup> *Nasha partiia ne vznikla na ukazke administratsiiax prezidenta...Atameken: sdelat' reformy real'nyimi*, *Central Asia Monitor*, 3 November 2006.

<sup>81</sup> A quick examination of the *Atameken's* website makes this evident [www.atameken.info](http://www.atameken.info).

<sup>82</sup> Author's interview with Azat Perushev, Head of the *Atameken* Business Union and former leader of the Civil Party of Kazakhstan, 18 February 2007, Almaty.



will make society interested in these parties.’<sup>83</sup> Despite formally being able to place political parties on a left-right spectrum,<sup>84</sup> ‘most parties do not have distinct ideologies’.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, most parties share strikingly similar programmatic values (see table. 5.3).

*Table 5.3 Programmatic Values of Parties*

<b>Party</b>	<b>Value Statements</b>
<i>Adilet</i>	Validity, rights and justice for all people of Kazakhstan.
<i>Ak Zhol</i>	Democracy, Freedom and Equality
<i>Auyl</i>	Independent, strong and democratic State
<i>Nur Otan</i>	Prosperous and democratic state for all people of all ages, trades, nationalities and creeds
Party of Patriots	A prosperous Kazakhstan
<i>Rukhaniyat</i>	Political stability, spiritual revival and social justice
<i>Nagyz Ak Zhol</i>	Independent, prosperous, free and democratic Kazakhstan

One member of *Adilet* admitted their ‘party program does not differ from others’.<sup>86</sup> This is reflected in specific policy proposals. For example, in the pre-election programmes for the 2007 parliamentary election all parties committed themselves to increasing public spending to raise living standards for all groups in society. *Nur Otan* led the way with commitments to; raise the level of the average monthly income by 2 times, raise the salary of doctors and teachers, the construction of 150 new public health service centres, considerable investment in medical and health services to the sum of 100 billion tenge, improvements in the system of social benefits, and increase in the size of the average pension by 2.5 times.<sup>87</sup> Other parties followed with *Auyl* committing themselves to increasing social security, Party of Patriots to increasing pensions and *Ak Zhol* to building more hospitals.

<sup>83</sup> Author’s interview with Andrei Chebotarev, Political Analyst, 20 November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>84</sup> See A. Zh. Shomanov and N. I. Musmafaev, *Partiinoe stroitel’stvo v Kazakhstane: opyt, sostoianie i perspektivy*.

<sup>85</sup> Author’s interview with Iuri Bulaktaev, Political Scientist, 1 November 2007, Almaty.

<sup>86</sup> Author’s interview with Kuanysh Assylbekovich, Head of the Astana City Branch of *Adilet*, 6 March 2007, Astana.

<sup>87</sup> Nur Otan, *Za protsvetanie Kazakhstana i blagopoluchie Kazakhstantsev* (Astana, July 2007).

The problem for all parties, with the exception of *Nur Otan*, is that none of them are likely to have the opportunity to implement their programmes whether ideologically oriented or not. Even if a party was to gain one or two seats in the *Mazhilis* it would have very little influence on policy or decision-making process due to the imbalance of power in the presidential executive and in the legislature, let alone a chance of implementing any of its policies. *Nur Otan*, therefore, is pragmatic in its ideology and policies, simply following those set out by the president and also focused heavily on his charisma and personality. Therefore, the dominance of *Nur Otan* and their grip on public support due to their close association with Nazarbaev leads all parties into a political space where they have to compete with *Nur Otan* on the terms of ideological pragmatism and political personality. All parties, including those who have an overall sense of ideological commitment, rely on pragmatism and personality as a way to compete with *Nur Otan*. The section below discusses how ideological pragmatism and a reliance of political personality are two of the key features of parties' ideological make up, including those who possess on the surface a clear commitment to ideology.

#### *2.4 Ideological Pragmatism*

*Nur Otan* is a party that claims to speak for all the people of Kazakhstan and the party is only able to make this assertion because of its political proximity to Nazarbaev. Nazarbaev is portrayed as father of the nation and a symbol of unity and stability. Consequently, all parties are competing with *Nur Otan* not just in terms of its command of state and administrative resources, but also their dominance of ideas and policies. As such, parties have to pursue a pragmatic approach where a strong commitment to an ideological basis is jettisoned in favour of a course of action or a series of ideas which can best serve the goals of party elites. As discussed earlier in this chapter, elites are using party organisations to pursue certain objectives all of which, in essence, involve the seeking of public office for protection of political or economic interests. The use of ideological pragmatism in pursuit of elite interests can be illustrated by the split between *Ak Zhol* and *Nagiz Ak Zhol* in 2005 and the merger between *Nagiz Ak Zhol* and OSDP prior to the parliamentary election in 2007. The 2005 *Ak Zhol* split was a result not of ideological disputes, but instead personalistic differences over how the party leadership could best achieve the goal of



obtaining power in the face of Nazarbaev and *Otan's* political dominance.<sup>88</sup> The split centred on whether the party should work more closely with the presidential administration to achieve their goals or come out and defiantly oppose him. This demonstrates the pragmatism inherent in political parties. The differences among the *Ak Zhol* leadership concerned the best methods to achieve their aims, not difference over policy. Consequently, in terms of ideology, after the partition, few differences could be found between *Ak Zhol* and *Nagiz Ak Zhol's* party programmes.<sup>89</sup>

The merger of OSDP and *Nagiz Ak Zhol* prior to the 2007 parliamentary election also demonstrates how party elites eschew ideological and programmatic commitments in favour of pursuing a more pragmatic approach. In June 2007 the co-chairmen of *Nagiz Ak Zhol* and Zharmakhan Tuiakbai, leader of OSDP, announced that their two parties were merging so as to fight the 2007 parliamentary election campaign.<sup>90</sup> What was surprising about the merger was the fact their party platforms were ideologically opposed. *Nagiz Ak Zhol* represented a more free market neo-liberal economic agenda while OSDP had placed itself as a social democratic party intent on the redistribution of wealth. The purpose of the merger was tactical and pragmatic as was set out in a statement by the co-chairmen of *Nagiz Ak Zhol*: 'The strategic purpose of the association of *Nagiz Ak Zhol* and OSDP is to create a real democratic opposition, capable of becoming the alternative to the party in power, *Nur Otan*, led by its leader Nursultan Nazarbaev. The tactical purpose of the association is to achieve the maximum results in the forthcoming elections to the Mazhilis.'<sup>91</sup>

These two instances reveal how parties in Kazakhstan exhibit a pragmatic streak as opposed to ideological commitment. Moreover, ideological concerns are secondary to the goals that are being pursued by their leading political personalities. This in turn, illustrates a prominent theme in parties' programmatic content – the central role of personality over the formality of ideology.

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<sup>88</sup> Rozlana Taukina, 'Raskol v partii Ak Zhol: Konflikt liderov ili idei?' *Klub Polyton*, 29 April 2004, <http://www.club.kz/index.php?lang=ru&mod=analitics&submod=self&article=277>

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> The merger was pursued because changes to the constitution banned the formation of electoral blocs for the purpose of competing in elections.

<sup>91</sup> From a statement released by *Nagiz Ak Zhol* to members of the party on the 23 June 2007, accessed [http://www.akzhol-party.info/activity/statements/2007/06/23/statements\\_1617.html](http://www.akzhol-party.info/activity/statements/2007/06/23/statements_1617.html)

## 2.5 Centrality of Personality

It has been argued that parties' ideologies are linked only to the goals and aspirations of the elites that lead them. For example, Sergei Duvanov claimed, 'whenever I hear about a political ideology of any party I cannot take it seriously because nobody has an ideology yet, they just have their own goals they want to reach.'<sup>92</sup> As suggested above, this has been the case with the parties *Ak Zhol*, *Nagiz Ak Zhol* and OSDP. The central role of personality and personalism within party ideology is illustrative of the relationship between the informal and formal within Kazakh politics. It is evident across all parties in Kazakhstan, but it is *Nur Otan* which sets the template across the country.

As noted in Chapter One, one of the dominant typologies of parties in the former Soviet Union is the party of power. As analysed in Chapter One, the term party of power is fraught with conceptual difficulties, one of which is the lack of emphasis it places on political personality. *Nur Otan* despite being referred to as a party of power in fact relies heavily on the personality of Nazarbaev for its popularity and ideology. *Nur Otan's* party's programme is the president's programme. According to one senior figure in the party, '*Nur Otan* follows the path set out by the president',<sup>93</sup> and 'with all the statements made by the president each year, it is the party's responsibility to make them come true and implement them'.<sup>94</sup> For example, in 2007 the party based its whole electoral platform on the president's annual address 'New Kazakhstan in a New World'.<sup>95</sup> Throughout their party platform the majority of instances of commitments are based on the president's address from earlier in the year. This includes commitments on the growth of social benefits, increasing the ethnic Kazakh population, and the building of new schools and hospitals in some of the remoter areas of the country all of which were announced in the president's

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<sup>92</sup> Author's interview with Sergei Duvanov, Journalist and opposition activist, 28 November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>93</sup> Author's interview with Galiaskar Dunaev, *Nur Otan* Political Council's representative in Almaty, 22 August 2007, Almaty.

<sup>94</sup> Author's interview with Sharipbek Amirbekov, Deputy Head of the Central Apparatus of the Political Council of *Nur Otan*, 10 February 2007, Almaty.

<sup>95</sup> Nursultan Nazarbaev, 'Novyi Kazakhstan v novom mire', [www.akorda.kz](http://www.akorda.kz), 28 February 2007, [http://www.akorda.kz/www/akorda\\_kz.nsf/sections?OpenForm&id\\_doc=BC3DF7C6FB65732E46257291002A9331&lang=ru&L1=L2&L2=L2-22](http://www.akorda.kz/www/akorda_kz.nsf/sections?OpenForm&id_doc=BC3DF7C6FB65732E46257291002A9331&lang=ru&L1=L2&L2=L2-22).



speech.<sup>96</sup> Ideologically, the party claims to ‘represent all of Kazakh society and all layers of the population in the country’.<sup>97</sup> This reflects the president’s position as the key person who represents and balances the interests of all people in Kazakhstan. *Nur Otan* deploys this image of Nazarbaev to great effect in its electoral material. In 2007, election posters displayed Nazarbaev among ordinary people: with miners, labourers, different ethnic groups and young people. The party’s main slogan was ‘we are together with the President! We are for Nur Otan!’ (*My vmeste s prezidentom! My – za Nur Otan!*)<sup>98</sup> The party’s ideology and platform, therefore, are focused on the president, his personality and his centrality to the country’s prosperity. It is the informal politics of personality as opposed to formal ideological ideas driving party presentation.

With parties’ organisations based on the interests of informal factional elite groups or individual political figures, either for attempting to gain public office or protecting economic interests, it has followed that the formal ideology of parties has been sidelined in favour of the personal ambitions of party leaders and their personality and charisma. Political personality is preferred as a political tool as opposed to an overarching commitment to ideology.<sup>99</sup> Parties are willing to cut loose any ideological foundations if adjusting programmatic content could assist the political leadership in achieving their political or electoral goals. Even those parties with clear ideological foundations (KPK, KNPK), or those seemingly rooted in certain political ideas (*Atameken*, OSDP) rely on, or are shaped by, the informal politics of personalism. All other political parties in Kazakhstan lack ideological distinctiveness and depend on ideological pragmatism to achieve political goals and following the example of the president’s party, rely almost solely on the personality of their leader or leaders to distinguish them as political entities in the public space. According to

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<sup>96</sup> *Nur Otan: Za protsvetanie Kazakhstana i blagopoluchie Kazakhstantsev*, Almaty, 2007.

<sup>97</sup> Author’s interview with Sharipbek Amirbekov.

<sup>98</sup> This was the main slogan that could be found on most of the campaign materials collected by the author during the election campaign for the 2007 parliamentary election.

<sup>99</sup> Political parties in the West are increasingly accused of such pragmatism and populism as opposed to acting on the basis of an ideological core. It is possible to point to political leaders such as Tony Blair, Gerard Schröder and Bill Clinton who were willing to fight without the core values at the heart of their parties so as to achieve the goal of reaching political office. In this sense political parties in Kazakhstan are no different and are effectively demonstrating that parties in Kazakhstan can be integrated into a wider typological framework of political parties.



one analyst, 'the main function of political parties is to promote their leaders.'<sup>100</sup> Thus personalism of leadership and the central role of personality, key components of neopatrimonialism, displace any commitment to formal political ideology.

### 3. Behavioural norms

As noted above, parties are organised for the interest of either informal factional elite groups or individual political personalities and as a consequence it is their ambitions and personality which define any relationship towards ideology. However, how are these parties willing to act in search of achieving their goals? And, to what extent are they willing to accept certain democratic rules of the game? More succinctly, what are the behavioural norms displayed by political parties in attempting to achieve organisational and ideological goals?

The extent to which political parties are dedicated to democratic rules of the game influences the extent to which pluralism and democracy becomes institutionalised.

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On the formal level all parties in Kazakhstan claim to support and be committed to democratic rules of the game. However, using the parameters Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond put forward in their typological framework (see Chapter One) it is possible to observe three types of behavioural norms in relation to parties in Kazakhstan, which all go beyond a surface commitment to democratic rules. The first type is proto-hegemonic parties where behaviour is non-competitive and includes an unwillingness to participate in fair, democratic and transparent processes. Consequently, these parties have been, and continue to be, central to the president's consolidation of his personal neopatrimonial authoritarian rule due to their compliance to non-competitive electoral processes. In Kazakhstan, the main proto-

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<sup>100</sup> Author's interview with Sergei Duvanov.

<sup>101</sup> The term that is frequently applied to parties that are not committed to democratic rules of the game is an 'anti-system' party. In much of the literature on political parties the term 'anti-system' refers to those parties which are seen as opposing democratic rules of the game and wish to destabilise emerging democratic systems. The term 'anti-system' is problematical to apply in the context of Kazakhstan. This is because the system itself is non-democratic. So those parties, such as *Nur Otan*, who support the maintenance of the current political system, would possibly be considered 'anti-system' in a fully-fledged democratic system. *Nur Otan* is, however, pro-system in so far that it supports and maintains the president's further consolidation of power. On the other hand, opposition parties in Kazakhstan may be considered non-anti-system parties in a well-developed democracy – but in Kazakhstan itself they are considered radical. Therefore, the term anti-system is problematic and complex in the case of Kazakhstan and likely to cause confusion and difficulties in analysis.



hegemonic party *Nur Otan* has strengthened, supported and promoted the personal regime of Nazarbaev. The second type reflects those parties which are complicit in legitimising proto-hegemonic behaviour. They provide legitimacy to the neopatrimonial authoritarian regime that Nazarbaev has implemented by creating the impression of multipartism. The final type is parties committed to democratic rules of the game as it increases their chances of achieving the protection of their political and economic interests. Conversely, they are unable to enter into fair and democratic competition because of the leverage and attention given to those parties who are proto-hegemonic. These parties are prepared to participate by rules of the game which are non-transparent and unfair, as they wish to present themselves at all times as law abiding and non-radical so as not to be painted by pro-presidential forces, and perceived by the population, as parties threatening the apparent stability of the country.

### *3.1. Parties with a proto-hegemonic outlook*

Essentially, just one party possess proto-hegemonic characteristics. *Nur Otan* believes fully in the president's idea of 'step-by-step reform and democratic evolution'.<sup>102</sup> However, step-by-step reform in Kazakhstan has effectively seen the consolidation of the personal authoritarian rule of Nazarbaev. Thus *Nur Otan*, despite a formal commitment to democracy, is central to, and the beneficiary of, political processes that are anti-democratic and have overseen the solidification of one man's personal neopatrimonial rule. This proto-hegemonic nature can be evidenced by the lack of external and internal competition in the party. Externally, it has never had to participate in a truly competitive election and this in turn does not provide candidates and deputies with the mentality and tools required for truly democratic and competitive elections. For example, *Nur Otan's* election victory of 2007 in which they received 88 percent of votes was achieved under conditions where 40 percent of polling stations were subject to electoral violations.<sup>103</sup> An internal and external culture of competition is absent. An election campaign specialist who was asked to run some training sessions with *Nur Otan* party

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<sup>102</sup> Author's interview with Kenzhegali Sagadiev *Nur Otan* Deputy of the Mazhilis of the 3rd and 4th Convocations, 22 August 2007, Almaty.

<sup>103</sup> This was the figure claimed by the OSCE in the preliminary report. International Election Observation Mission, Parliamentary Election, Republic of Kazakhstan 18 August 2007. Published 20th August 2007.

members highlights this issue, 'I have never seen more weak and less prepared, but at the same time confident people in my life. These are people who do not understand political competition.'<sup>104</sup>

The lack of external competition is a result of the party's disproportionate access to state, administrative and mass-media resources. In the 2004 and 2007 parliamentary election *Nur Otan* received the majority of positive and favourable media coverage. A report from the OSCE concerning the 2007 parliamentary election notes, 'the state media gave preferential treatment to *Nur Otan* in news coverage' and 'political parties did not always enjoy equitable campaign conditions, including access to venues for meetings. There were instances of favourable treatment of *Nur Otan* by the authorities.'<sup>105</sup> Any observer of post-Soviet politics would not be surprised by the advantage afforded to a presidential party. What it does reveal, however, is the affect on the competitive characteristics of the party. A figure in *Nur Otan*'s Political Council recognised that 'there is no real competition within the party and among party members'.<sup>106</sup> The electoral advantage afforded to *Nur Otan* resulted in a limited competitive spirit within the party. Moreover, the alleged use of state resources for party purposes, generally based on the patronage of local executives and state agencies loyal to the president, further illustrate the non-transparent methods and tools which provide the party with a comparative advantage over other political parties.<sup>107</sup> Internally, democratic norms are rejected in favour of ensuring political process is guided by a hierarchical principle. For example, the selection of candidates for the *Maslikhats* are decided not by PPOs, but instead from lists drawn up by regional leaders of 'potentially good quality candidates like doctors or teachers'.<sup>108</sup>

Aside from deficient external and internal competition *Nur Otan* has been a useful tool for the president in consolidating neopatrimonialism. The idea that a national political figure uses a political party to consolidate their own form authoritarianism

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<sup>104</sup> Author's interview with political consultant for OSDP, 14 November 2007, Almaty.

<sup>105</sup> OSCE/ODIHR, 'Republic of Kazakhstan Parliamentary Election August 2007 Election Mission Observer Report', Warsaw, 30 October 2007.

<sup>106</sup> Author's interview with Bektas Mukhamedzhanov.

<sup>107</sup> See Chapter Four.

<sup>108</sup> Author's interview with senior *Nur Otan* official, 8 May 2007, Almaty.



has been witnessed in places like Malaysia and the Philippines.<sup>109</sup> President Nazarbaev is institutionalising a similar process and *Nur Otan* is central to its success. For instance, the constitutional changes introduced in May 2007 that ostensibly introduced measures to promote and increase democracy in Kazakhstan, were in fact a series of changes that allowed Nazarbaev to exert further his informal control of the legislature by formally institutionalising his power in the form of *Nur Otan*. This was achieved through the perceived fraudulent election in which *Nur Otan* won all the seats and complete control of the legislature. As a result, the president has hegemonic control of the legislature through his own political party.<sup>110</sup>

### *3.2 Parties who are acquiescent to the dominance of a proto-hegemonic party*

*Rukhaniyat*, Party of Patriots, *Auyl*, KNPk and *Adilet* do not strictly illustrate characteristics of proto-hegemony, but are complicit in legitimising the proto-hegemonic dominance of *Nur Otan* and the consolidation of the president's personal power. Their participation in, and reaction to, official processes undertaken to ostensibly further democratisation has legitimised Nazarbaev's extension and consolidation of personal power. At the same time their ambivalent attitude towards, and support of, the *Nur Otan* mergers and fraudulent election processes legitimises *Nur Otan's* dominance of the party system.

*Rukhaniyat*, Party of Patriots, *Auyl*, KNPk and *Adilet* were integrally involved in the 'State Commission for Democratic Reforms Under the President', a process that led to constitutional changes introduced in 2007. The alterations seemingly initiated democratic improvements to Kazakhstan's political system.<sup>111</sup> The reforms, however, in effect increased the personal power and control of Nazarbaev by essentially making him president for life.<sup>112</sup> *Rukhaniyat* and *Adilet* engaged in supporting and constructing these reforms. Altynshash Dzhaganova, leader of *Rukhaniyat*, believed 'the reforms added up to great changes in the political

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<sup>109</sup> See Jason Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in the Age of Democratisation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>110</sup> D. Kislov and F. Dzhani, 'Na parlamentskikh vyborakh v Kazakhstane snova pobedil president strany', *www.kub.info*, 21 August 2007, <http://www.kub.info/article.php?sid=18973>.

<sup>111</sup> This included amendments aimed at giving greater responsibility to parliament and political parties and moving towards a electoral system based on proportional representation.

<sup>112</sup> Aleksei Nikitin, Nazarbaev stanet pozhiznennym prezidentom Kazakhstana, *www.kub.info*, 18 May 2007, <http://www.kub.info/article.php?sid=17526>.

system'.<sup>113</sup> One senior member of *Adilet* noted that 'as a party we are really pleased the president took all our suggestions into consideration and we are also pleased they will be implemented'.<sup>114</sup> Yet, the reforms led to the president's increased control over the legislature and *Nur Otan* proto-hegemonic domination of the party system. The tacit support of the smaller pro-presidential parties provide legitimacy for the consolidation of Nazarbaev's personal neopatrimonial rule.

The smaller pro-presidential parties ambivalent attitude towards the *Nur Otan* mergers and fraudulent election of 2007 illustrate how they are encouraging, and complicit in, legitimising *Nur Otan's* hegemony of the party system. Many in those parties considered the *Nur Otan* mergers to be a progressive step forward believing that 'it will have a positive effect'<sup>115</sup> in 'strengthening the party system'.<sup>116</sup> These parties did not join the chorus of disapproval surrounding the 2007 election, arguing instead that 'the results should be recognised and the elections have ended with a full and unconditional victory of the party in power, *Nur Otan*. Not recognising the results of voting means to not recognise the opinion of the overwhelming majority of the people in Kazakhstan.'<sup>117</sup> While KNPk and *Auyl* have been party to some of these proto-hegemonic supporting processes, since the outcome of the reform process and the election they have moved away from so tacitly supporting the status quo. The KNPk counter signed a letter from the opposition parties to the president criticising the election and asking the president to cancel the results and call a new election.<sup>118</sup> However, all five parties since decided to participate in the *Obshchestvennaya palata* (Public Chamber), the body set up after the 2007 election as 'a sign of goodwill on behalf of the party which won all the seats in the election'.<sup>119</sup> The body has no power, no right to make legislation and undoubtedly will have limited impact. Nevertheless, it demonstrates how smaller political parties by refusing to oppose the president, and *Nur Otan*, are legitimising and nourishing the

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<sup>113</sup> Author's interview with Altynshash Dzhaganova, Leader of *Rukhaniyat*, 7 March 2007, Astana.

<sup>114</sup> Author's interview with Kuanysh Zhalakov, Chairman of the Astana City Branch of *Adilet*, 6 March 2007, Astana.

<sup>115</sup> Author's interview with Altynshash Dzhaganova.

<sup>116</sup> Author's interview with Kuanysh Zhalakov.

<sup>117</sup> *Kazinform*, 21 August 2007.

<sup>118</sup> 'Otkrytoe pis'mo Politicheskikh partii k Prezidentu Respubliki Kazakhstan', [www.zonakz.net](http://zonakz.net), 28 August 2007, <http://zonakz.net/articles/19115>.

<sup>119</sup> Oleg Nilov, 'Koshki-Myshki Ak Ordy', [www.zonakz.net](http://zonakz.net), 30 November 2007, <http://zonakz.net/articles/20252>.



hegemony of the president and his personal rule. Consequently, the president is able to make the case that multipartism exists in Kazakhstan and despite *Nur Otan's* dominance there is an inclusive process.

### *3.3 Parties with a tolerant and pluralistic outlook*

The major opposition parties, *Alga*, *Ak Zhol*, *Nagiz Ak Zhol*, *KPK* and *OSDP* could be considered non-hegemonic and pluralist in outlook. Non-hegemony is an attribute of many of these parties due to their general pledge to democratic norms and political reform in Kazakhstan. By consistently contesting the unfair electoral process they are subject to these parties reveal a commitment to democratic norms. For instance, *OSDP's* electoral program is built on pledges to reform Kazakhstan's political system so there is 'fair and transparent government for the people' and the establishment of the rule of law.<sup>120</sup> *Alga*, too believes in changing the political system in Kazakhstan so it reflects a more plural and transparent democracy, Assylbek Kozhakhmetov, stated that:

“The parliament should be a real parliament with full representative power. The parliament should appoint the prime minister, and all ministers. The president should have the power to appoint only the *KNB*, intelligence and foreign office. The rest should be the sphere of the government. Of course, all *Akims* should be elected at all levels. Local representatives, the *Maslikhats*, should have enough power to hold the *Akim* to account. As the parliament should have a connection over the government the same should be for *Akims* and *Maslikhats*. Again our local parliaments do not have any real influence over *Akims*. We should have fair elections, and the election of the judiciary. Of course we should also have a free mass media as well as a commitment to stop corruption, or at least stop the development of corruption. We should have full transparency.”<sup>121</sup>

It is evident that on a formal level these parties share a dedication to democratic norms and fair rules of the game. However, it can also be argued that these parties are former government elites and were previously closely associated with the

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<sup>120</sup> *OSDP, Za Novyi Kazakhstana!* (Almaty, July 2007).

<sup>121</sup> Author's interview with Assylbek B. Kozhakhmetov, former Chairmen of the Political Council's Presidium of *Alga*, 26 January 2007, Almaty.

president. Therefore, from this perspective they only committed themselves to democratic rules of the game as a way of protecting their political and economic interests from the arbitrary persecution of Nazarbaev's neopatrimonial regime. As Yevgeni Zhovtis has noted:

“Yes, of course they start to use democratic rhetoric, and keep in mind they are oriented to the West, and at a certain point when they began to be persecuted and harassed or oppressed they begin to turn this democratic rhetoric, to some extent, into convictions. To some extent their rhetoric and convictions became closer and closer they would argue that freedom of speech is needed because they could not speak through official channels and therefore they came to the conclusion that they needed freedom of association and so on.”<sup>122</sup>

The conclusion some observers have drawn is that the different opposition parties, which emerged from the elite fragmentation process, were established not out of a belief in democracy but in an effort ‘to try and save that side of the political elite through political mechanisms...DVK was far from democratic they were simply opposing the other side of the elite’.<sup>123</sup> Formally they argue for democracy and transparency but they only arrived at this point because of factional inter-elite conflict and that democratic rules offered them protection.

Parties' behavioural norms represent another dimension of the relationship between formal and informal politics. Key elements of neopatrimonialism are evidently linked to, and shaping, parties' behavioural norms. Formally all parties state a commitment to democracy in some shape or form, but underlying this formal commitment to democratic behavioural norms are informal priorities. With *Nur Otan* the informal priority is hegemony of the party system which is gained through the bias and selective application of formal rules by loyal local executives and state agencies. As a result, the party lacks external and internal competition. With the smaller pro-presidential parties their informal priorities is to be included in the political system in the hope of some form of gain (e.g. participation in big national

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<sup>122</sup> Author's interview with Yevgeni Zhovtis, Director of the Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law, 31 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>123</sup> Author's interview with Sergei Duvanov.



bodies or commissions). Their ambivalent attitude and acceptance of *Nur Otan* and Nazarbaev's dominance make them complicit in the consolidation of the president's hegemonic neopatrimonial regime. With the opposition parties, while on the surface they are committed to democracy and greater transparency, they remain as a part of the political elite engaged in factional informal conflict with the pro-Nazarbaev part of the elite. Therefore, their belief in democracy was arrived at through a degree of pragmatism that it would provide shelter from potential persecution of Nazarbaev loyal state agencies and elites.<sup>124</sup>

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

What this chapter has exposed is that while the external tension between formal and informal political behaviour and relations affects party type, internally parties are prone to similar informal political phenomena. Informal political behaviour and relations affect party membership and organisation. Major pro-presidential parties like *Nur Otan* and GPK have relied on patronage networks of patron-client relations to increase party membership. To an extent opposition parties are affected by these phenomena too. Party organisation is based on the personal economic and political interests of informal elite groups or individual public figures resulting in party ideology being driven by personalism and pragmatism. Parties' behavioural norms are also being shaped by informal politics. Nazarbaev's control of the political system has seen loyal local executives and state agencies provide administrative advantage to *Nur Otan* ensuring their electoral dominance. Consequently, the party is proto-hegemonic and lacking the experience of political competition. Smaller pro-Nazarbaev parties' accept this hegemonic dominance in exchange for participating in public and state bodies. The opposition, on the other hand, are seemingly committed to democratic norms only for the pragmatic purposes of interest protection due to their involvement in factional inter-elite conflict.

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<sup>124</sup> It should be stressed the establishment of political parties has not helped opposition elite protect themselves from perceived state persecution. In September 2008 criminal cases were being brought against Bolat Abilov, leader of *Azat*, Amirzhan Kosanov deputy leader of OSDP, Vladimir Kozlov leader of *Alga*, and Assylbek Kozhakmetov. All these figures are considered by some analysts to be objectionable in the eyes of Nazarbaev and their criminal cases have been instigated by the presidential administration as a way of discrediting the opposition prior to another pre-term parliamentary election. See, Il'ia Berezin, 'Ugolovnoe presledovanie Bulata Abilova vygodno Zharmakhany Tuiakbairu?', [www.geokz.tv](http://www.geokz.tv), 29 September 2008, <http://www.geokz.tv/article.php?aid=6264>

As a consequence of this relationship between formal and informal political behaviour and relations, we can broadly typologically map most parties in Kazakhstan within two types in Gunther and Diamond's framework. The influence of neopatrimonial politics on the structural criteria of parties can be reflected back in Gunther and Diamond's clientelistic-elite and personalistic-electoralist parties. The informal patron-client networks which underpin some political parties and the central role of elite groups in party organisation and ideology fits the thinly and weakly organised clientelistic party<sup>125</sup> which 'is a confederation of notables (either traditional or newly emerging liberal-professional or economic elite), each with its own geographically, or functionally, personalistically based support'.<sup>126</sup> Other parties where the party organisation and ideology is driven almost solely by the ambitions and personality of the political leader broadly resemble the personalistic-electoralist party which is organisationally weak and thin.<sup>127</sup> However, at election time 'these parties spring in to action to perform what is unequivocally their primary function, the conduct of the campaign.'<sup>128</sup>

Placing parties in Kazakhstan within these two broad types makes it possible to integrate them with other parties, including those not limited to a post-Soviet context. Electoralist-personalistic parties, especially *Nur Otan*, share characteristics with other parties across the globe. For example, Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan's People Party, Alberto Fujimori's Cambio 90, Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia*, Thai Rak Thai Party of Shinawatra and of course, Putin's party. Of course, each party has its own complexities and contextual specificities but they share certain similarities, in the sense that they are personalistic vehicles, and highlight that party development in Kazakhstan, and even in the wider former Soviet Union, is not abnormal but symptomatic of party development in weak democracies, semi-democracies and the more benevolent authoritarian systems.

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<sup>125</sup> Nagiz Ak Zhol, OSDP, Ak Zhol, Alga, Asar and GPK fit this broad party type.

<sup>126</sup> Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, 'Species of Political Parties: A New Typology', *Party Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (2003), p. 176.

<sup>127</sup> Parties who arguably fit within this party type are *Nur Otan*, KPPK, KNPK, *Adilet*, *Auyl*, *Rukhaniyat* and the Party of Patriots.

<sup>128</sup> Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, 'Species of Political Parties: A New Typology'. p.185.



What this chapter has indicated by highlighting the relationship between formal politics and informal political relations and behaviour within political parties is that parties in Kazakhstan are inward looking institutions. Their role is not to appeal to society and perform the role of representing social interests but rather to act as formal constructs for the purpose of informal political elite interests, ambitions or conflicts. That parties are top down institutions impacts and affects the relationship they have with wider society and the linkages we typically expect parties to establish with citizens. The following chapter seeks to explore this issue.

## Chapter Six: Parties and Society

Driven by the uncertainty and contingency of transition the president of Kazakhstan has relied on a fusion between informal forms of political behaviour and relationships and formal constitutional power to establish his authority. This fusion represents neopatrimonialism, a logical transition from patrimonial communism, where traditional forms of political behaviour and relations and residual communist legacies are combined with new formal liberal institutions. With power underpinned by both formal and informal means, the president depended upon the informal powers bestowed upon loyal clients to interpret and selectively apply formal rules to ensure pro-presidential parties monopolised the party system thus, assisting in consolidating his rule. Naturally the major party to benefit from this formal and informal bias was *Nur Otan*, the party organised to serve the president's interests. As noted in the previous chapter, the parties to emerge in this context were elite and clientelistic focused serving fundamentally the interests of those elites or charismatic individuals seeking to retain or contest power. In these parties general membership is weak and party ideology is centred on the interests and ideas of the elites leading the party organisation. However, parties do not exist in a vacuum and traditional sociological interpretations of party development would require us to consider parties' relationship with society. Therefore, this chapter seeks to assess Kazakh political parties' broader relationship and linkages with citizens. Additionally, it will seek to address how informal forms of political relations and behaviour have affected parties' relationship with, and utility within, society and how parties have assisted in legitimising and consolidating Nazarbaev's rule.

As argued in Chapter One, it is not suitable to take a social cleavage approach to understanding party society relations in the post-communist world due to the lack of clear definable social cleavages understood in the typical Western sense.<sup>1</sup> Rather, this chapter argues that party-society relations in Kazakhstan are defined by a disconnection between parties, citizens and the state and a passivity and disinterest on the part of society towards parties. This is caused primarily by a fusion between the clientelistic and personalistic nature of political parties, which are a result of the

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<sup>1</sup> See Seymour M. Lipset & Stein Rokkan, (eds.) *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross National Perspectives* (New York, Free Press, 1967).



dominance of informal forms of political relations and behaviour in Kazakhstan and some residual communist legacies related to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The most dominant personalistic party is *Nur Otan* which has assisted in shaping homogeneity of opinion within society regarding the centrality of Nazarbaev's leadership to the prosperity of the country. They have been able to achieve this on the basis of being the president's party (thus claiming to represent the interests of all Kazakhstani citizens); through achieving supremacy of visual recognition and structural organisation; and by occupying a majority of positions in state and local executive bodies. The latter has been accomplished by the preferential treatment the party receives from the state media and local and state executive bodies. This gives the party a greater advantage over all other parties allowing it to shape the context within which all parties establish bonds with society. Moreover, *Nur Otan* in acting as the chief cheerleader for Nazarbaev's leadership and plays an important role in explaining the durability of his authoritarian leadership by providing the president with further legitimacy with the public. While *Nur Otan* and the president define and dominate the space within which all political parties have to build and establish linkages with citizens, some parties are attempting to establish connections with citizens by acting as social guarantors and public educators of the most marginalised communities in the country. Devoid of the traditional role parties' play in terms of interest articulation, many parties carry out acts of public good and charity similar to that of NGOs. At the same time many political parties are rushing to represent and articulate the interests of the emerging middle classes. However, parties are generally restrained in doing so by the neopatrimonial nature of the political system, where small to medium size businessmen fear recriminations for supporting any party not sanctioned by the presidential administration. These developing linkages are limited and operate at the very margins of the political system. They represent only emerging shoots of party citizen representation and articulation, because broadly speaking the relationship between parties and society is defined by the personalistic and clientelistic nature of political parties.

The chapter is broken into three sections. The first discusses the disconnection and passivity apparent in Kazakh society and the explanations for this in structural terms with regards to the particularity of Kazakh social organisation and the legacy of the CPSU and in terms of the role of agency with the personalistic and clientelistic

nature of parties. The second section deals with the issue of homogeneity of opinion within society regarding the centrality of Nazarbaev's leadership. It discusses the nature of this discourse and how *Nur Otan* actively and importantly promotes this narrative within society. The section pays particular attention to how *Nur Otan's* dominance in the regions in a structural, visual and representative sense aids the facilitation of this key message about the president's leadership. Crucially the section deals with how this is achieved through the informal preference and advantage the party receives in the state media and from state and local executive sources. The final section explores emerging avenues of party-citizen linkages. It assesses four areas where parties are engaging in limited forms of interest articulation at the margins of political society: acting as guarantors of social rights, public and civic educators, acting in the public good and representing emerging middle class interests. This section does stress, however, that these are only very limited emerging shoots.

## **1. Disconnection and Passivity: The Gap Between Parties and Society and the Political Disinterest of Citizens in Kazakhstan**

### *1.1 The Great Disconnection: Parties, Citizens and the State in Kazakhstan*

Traditionally in Western party systems political parties act as a connecting force between citizens and the state. Cadre and mass parties generally acted as instruments to represent different interests groups within civil society.<sup>2</sup> In Kazakhstan there is an observable trend that 'parties are isolated from citizens and exist in a totally different world.'<sup>3</sup> As the previous chapter discussed, party elites dominate parties in both a formal and informal sense with party organisation and ideology focused on their own political and economic objectives. Consequently, a gulf exists between citizens and parties due to this inward self-interested character. While parties might speak the language of interest articulation it is not clear how this is formally channelled, if at all.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, from a pluralist perspective it is difficult to observe where, and how, society is connected to the state through political parties. One factor to explain this

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<sup>2</sup> See Richard Katz and Peter Mair 'Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy: The Emergence of the Cartel Party', *Party Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1995) especially pp. 8-13.

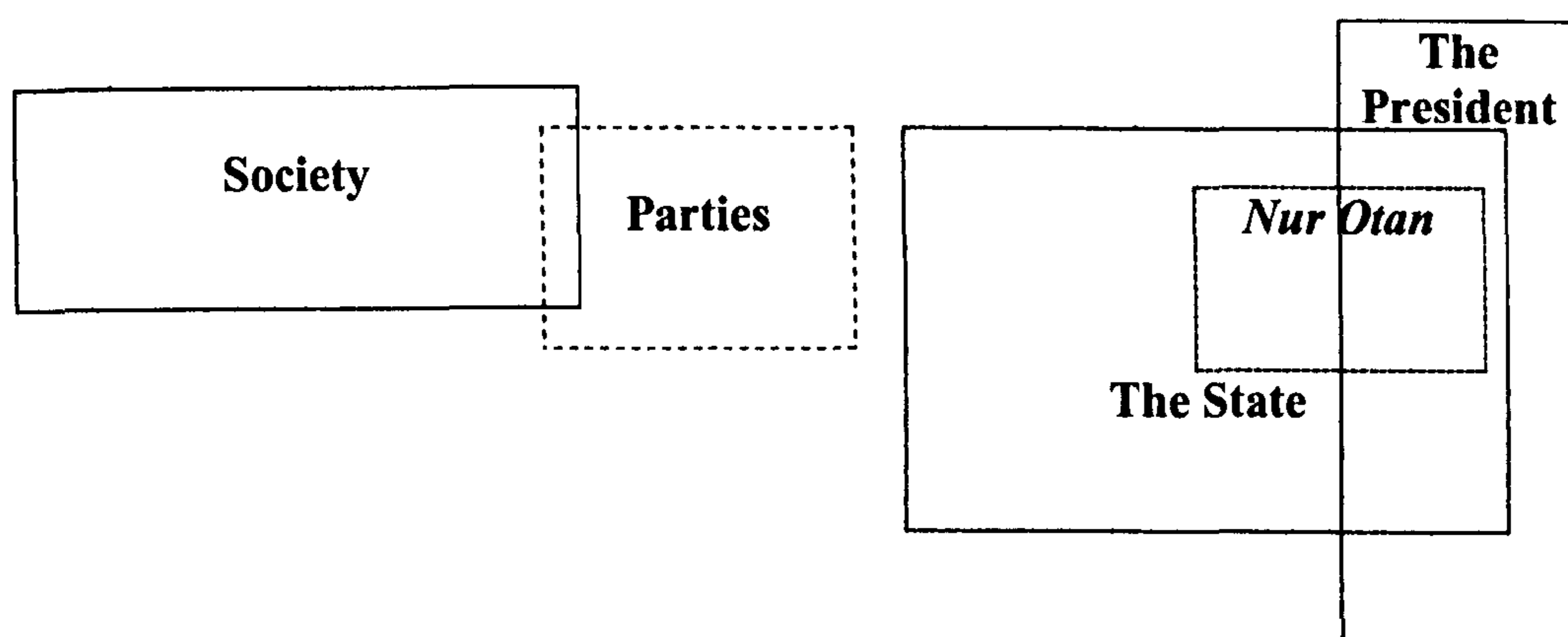
<sup>3</sup> Author's interview with political analyst, 21 November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>4</sup> There are some cases where the formal channelling of societal interests and party-citizen linkages are emerging. These will be addressed towards the end of the chapter.



disconnection is the role of *Nur Otan* as the preponderant political party in the system. As will be highlighted later in this chapter, *Nur Otan's* dominance of state and local executive bodies and its role as chief cheerleader for the president's programme makes it the only party functionally able to represent and articulate interests. In the view of the deputy chairman of *Rukhaniyat*, of all the parties which have appeared in post-Soviet Kazakhstan 'none have been able to influence the political situation in the country. Therefore, it was quite natural for *Nur Otan* to appear. It has taken the place of the CPSU and while it doesn't have it formally written that it can influence government cadre, it does have the opportunity because of its position in parliament, local representative bodies and the state'.<sup>5</sup> *Nur Otan's* preponderance, achieved primarily through its informal relationship with the president and other state executive actors means it is the dominant channel between society and the state. *Nur Otan*, however, is also the personal political vehicle for the president to establish greater control of formal political institutions and other state bodies. It is not a channel to articulate societal interests. With no other parties having any purchase with the state, and limited influence in, and with, society, due to the informal supremacy of political elites and personalities in their construction and organisation, there is a disconnection between society, political parties and the state as figure 6.1 highlights. This disconnection between society, parties and the state exacerbates an already existing passivity of society towards political parties and politics in general.

*Figure 6.1 The Disconnection between society, parties and the state in Kazakhstan*



<sup>5</sup> Author's interview with Anatolii Volkov, deputy leader of *Rukhaniyat*, 27 March 2007, Almaty.

## 1.2 The Passivity of Society

The focus on personality politics, the blurring of class identities, greater affluence and the emergence of other forms of social mobilisation have added to a general sense of social disinterest in political parties, weakening the traditional links between parties and society in the West.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, in the experience of Kazakhstan, any argument regarding the passivity of society towards national level politics and political parties is not limited to a post-Soviet and neopatrimonial context. Such a phenomenon is observable in many different countries. Opinion among analysts and party elites in Kazakhstan is generally firm in their belief that society possesses a passive attitude towards parties and politics. Yevgeni Zhovtis argued that ‘people are apathetic they do not trust political parties, as there is no possibility to change anything’.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, passivity of society is borne out of the limitations citizens might feel about the ability of parties to affect power and instigate change. In the view of one analyst, ‘the citizens of Kazakhstan consider that it does not matter which political parties there are, because they do not play a major role, because they still think there is one large Communist Party. Only about five percent of the population actually look through party programmes to see what their ideologies are...if you ask people what kind of parties there are in Kazakhstan they would not be able to answer this question, accept maybe that there is *Nur Otan*. And this is only because there are a lot of news materials on TV and other mass media sources about them.’<sup>8</sup> The ability for people to see parties instigating or affecting change is limited by the monopoly *Nur Otan* has in state bodies and across media outlets.<sup>9</sup> This exclusive control is achieved primarily via the benefits *Nur Otan* has acquired through informal political behaviour and relations as discussed in previous chapters, such as local *Akims* ensuring state employees vote for the party. This directly shows how the informality and personal aspect of Kazakhstan’s neopatrimonial regime can affect the relationship between parties and society. Faced with formal rules

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<sup>6</sup> Jose Ramon Montero and Richard Gunther, ‘Reviewing and Reassessing Parties, in Richard Gunther, Jose Ramon Montero and Juan Linz (eds.), *Political Parties: Old Concepts and New Challenges* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2002) pp. 1-35.

<sup>7</sup> Author’s interview with Yevgeni Zhovtis, Political Analyst, 31 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>8</sup> Author’s interview with political analyst, 21 November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>9</sup> The role of *Nur Otan*’s dominance in affecting and underwriting the relationship between political parties and society in Kazakhstan will be covered in greater detail in the ‘Homogeneity of Opinion’ section below. It is interesting to note that at the end of 2008 *Nur Otan* announced it was establishing its own media holding company, illustrating the even tighter reign it is likely to develop over the media.



selectively applied to favour *Nur Otan*, citizens feel no other party is able to break these links and affect power and change. As Zharmakhan Tuiakbai has stated, 'the majority of society does not get the idea of the necessity of political organisations. For today the main criteria for defining party interests among the population is either pro-power or oppositionist. Today the main concerns of people are the negative processes of power, the authoritarian regime and the inability to change power'.<sup>10</sup> From this perspective it has been argued that 'people are not stupid, they understand that political parties are not going to serve the interests of people in Kazakhstan'.<sup>11</sup>

While Kazakhstan possesses 'a politically passive society', it is not built on increasing affluence or the decline of previously distinct social cleavages, which were not present in the first instance, but rather on the fact that citizens view politics and political parties as unreachable.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, in opinion surveys when asked about their voting intentions the largest category of respondents are those who are either 'against all' or 'not sure'.<sup>13</sup> For example, regular opinion polls taken by the Association of Sociologists and Political Scientists (ASIP) revealed when directly asked the majority of citizens are either against all parties or have no answer about their preferences. A poll conducted in May 2006 illustrates that 21 percent of people interviewed were against all political parties with 35 percent unable to answer who they might support in an election. In the poll, the party with the most support was *Asar*<sup>14</sup> with 11 percent then *Otan* with 5 percent and then all other parties receiving support of 2 percent or less.<sup>15</sup> A poll from two years earlier in 2004 produced very similar results with 29 percent against all and 28 percent unable to provide a

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<sup>10</sup> Author's interview with Zharmakhan Tuiakbai, Leader of OSDP, 30 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>11</sup> Author's interview with Dosym Satpaev, Political Analyst, 28 February 2007, Almaty.

<sup>12</sup> Author's interview with Andrei Chebotarev, political analyst, 20 November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>13</sup> The opinion polls and surveys used in this chapter do derive from fairly reputable agencies unless stated otherwise. The Association of Sociologists and Political Scientists (ASIP), the Centre of Social Technologies (TsST) and the Kazakhstan Institute for Socio-Economic Information and Forecasting (KISEP) are independent agencies. This is reflected in their data which generally illustrates less bias for pro-presidential parties. For example, in pre-election polls *Nur Otan*'s vote is usually situated at about 50 percent compared to the 80 or 90 percent normally found in state friendly polling agencies such as Ksilon Astana.

<sup>14</sup> At the time the public perception was that *Asar* was a more popular party than *Otan*. An explanation for this is that Dariga Nazarbaeva and Rakhat Aliev managed several TV channels and popular newspapers that provided them with important channels of propaganda and a wider reach into the public's consciousness.

<sup>15</sup> 'Mai – mesiats tsveteniia partiino-politicheskogo 'prfogizma' Kazakhstantsev', *Assotsiatsiia sotsiologov i politologov Kazakhstana*, <http://www.asip.kz/arch/kk.html> [accessed 7 April 2007].



definitive answer.<sup>16</sup> These polls exemplify that the majority of society is neither overwhelmingly interested in political parties, nor has close identification with them.<sup>17</sup> It reveals that two clear factors persist with regards to parties' relationship with society: that there is a disconnection between parties, state and society and that society is overwhelming passive and disinterested in parties. Disconnection and passivity derives from both structural and agency sources. Structurally, the legacy of the CPSU has defined citizens' mostly negative prior experiences of political parties, while the personalistic and clientelistic nature of parties and party elites is cultivating disinterest and passivity in the post-Soviet transition. Before touching upon this it is worth exploring the extent to which the particularity of traditional Kazakh social stratification (another form of structure) can also explain the nature of party-citizen relations in Kazakhstan.

### *1.3 The Particularities of Kazakh Social Stratification*

We have to consider that Kazakhstan's social organisation, like that of many of the other Central Asian states, is not historically comparable to Western socio-political development. Rather Kazakh society has long been stratified along tribal lines. Society has been divided by three *Zhuzs* (translated literally as a hundred), which in Kazakh historiography denotes tribal unions, 'which are conscious of being of one Kazakh nationality and inhabit a piece of the Kazakh territory fixed in tradition'.<sup>18</sup> The three *Zhuzs* are the *Uly Zhuz* (Elder *Zhuz*), *Orta Zhuz* (Middle *Zhuz*) and *Kishi Zhuz* (Younger *Zhuz*) and within each exists a confederation of smaller tribal units viewed as geopolitical and ethno-territorial entities.<sup>19</sup> Traditionally, members of the Elder *Zhuz* have held the most powerful senior political positions while the Middle *Zhuz*, even though they are more numerous, have occupied lower-level political and military positions. The Younger *Zhuz* is more rural based and far less influential than either of the other two. For example, both Dinmukhamed Kunaev and Nazarbaev were members of the Elder *Zhuz*. Those scholars who have purported a clan

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<sup>16</sup> 'Kazakhstan i Kazakhstantsy nakanune parlamentskikh vyborov: elektroral'naia aktivnost' i partiinye prespochtenia v II kvartale, 2004', *Assotsiatsiia sotsiologov i politologov Kazakhstana*, <http://www.asip.kz/arch/kk.html> [accessed 7 April 2007].

<sup>17</sup> ASIP have been one of the leading organisations collecting data regarding public opinion and attitudes towards political and social issues, events, parties and politicians. A great deal of data can be found on their website – which has not been updated since February 2007 <http://www.asip.kz/>

<sup>18</sup> Nurlan Amrekulov, *Zhuzy v sotsial'no-politicheskoi zhizni Kazakhstana*, *Tsentral'naia Aziia i Kavkaz*, Vol. 3, No. 9, 2000.

<sup>19</sup> N. Masanov et. al, *Istoriia Kazakhstana: narody i kul'tury*, (Almaty, Daik-Press, 2001).



perspective (see Introduction) argue that these tribal and clan distinctions based on kinship remain important in post-Soviet politics. *Zhuz* affiliation has continued to play a key role in Nazarbaev's elite personnel policy, as it did under Kunaev during the Soviet period.<sup>20</sup> The president has had to balance the demands and interests of the more influential elder and middles *Zhuzs*.<sup>21</sup> This has included giving key political positions to those from his tribe, while at the same time placating those from the Middle *Zhuz* with positions while seemingly high up and significant that are actually lacking importance.<sup>22</sup> While such tribal affiliations may seem important, *Zhuzs* are not 'functional organisational structures such as existed in medieval Scotland and still exist in some African and Asian countries. Kazakhstan's *Zhuz-clans* are more a way of thinking, a way of interpreting ongoing processes through the prism of the genealogy of the individual or group.'<sup>23</sup> The idea of tribal identity as an ongoing psychological process, as opposed to an institutional (both formal and informal) driver of political development, makes sense in neopatrimonial Kazakhstan where what defines political behaviour is not *Zhuz* affiliation so much, but economic interests. 'Only economic interests, not tribes, not other factors, only economic factors are the most important in Kazakhstan.'<sup>24</sup>

Does the *Zhuz* system have any impact on party development? And can it explain the disconnection and passivity inherent in the relationship between parties and society? In formal terms any form of influence is difficult to assess. There are no parties established along tribal divisions or cleavages, nor has there ever been any attempt to. Moreover, the restrictive 'Law on Political Parties' with its limitations on parties establishing themselves on any form of ethnic or religious basis precludes any effort to establish *Zhuz* or tribal based parties. Informally, however, it might be possible to see a connection. Some of the major opposition figures over the last 17 years have been members of the Middle *Zhuz*. Serikbolsyn Abdil'din, Akezhan Kazhegeldin, Olzhas Suleimenov, Galymzhan Zhakiianov and Nurbolat Masanov are members of

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<sup>20</sup> N. Masanov, The Role of Clans in Kazakhstan Today, *Jamestown Monitor*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1998.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Kunaev carried out the same policy during his time as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan. He was careful to place elite from the Middle *Zhuz* in positions that looked important but were in reality of a secondary nature. He also tended to promote those from the Younger *Zhuz*, as such elites were fewer in number and lacked the power bases to challenge his authority and thus supplied a more reliable source of loyalty to the more numerous and powerful Middle *Zhuz*.

<sup>23</sup> Masanov, 1998, *Op. Cit.*

<sup>24</sup> Author's interview with Dosym Satpaev, Political Analyst, 28 March 2007, Almaty.



various tribes from the Middle *Zhuz*. From the opposition's perspective Nazarbaev has established Elder *Zhuz* domination of the political system. Therefore, those from the Middle *Zhuz* moved into opposition unsettled by their exclusion from power.<sup>25</sup> Yet considering three of most high profile opposition figures to emerge came from the Elder *Zhuz*; Zharmakhan Tuiakbai, Altynbek Sarsenbaev and Zamanbek Nurkadilov such an argument is weakened in its validity. And, moreover, many who moved into opposition from both *Zhuzs*, did so on grounds of protecting political and economic interests,<sup>26</sup> although the increasing influence of the president's family (from the Elder *Zhuz*) was a factor.<sup>27</sup> The case, therefore, for *Zhuz* influence on party development is neither clear nor apparent. The situation is complex, and tribal clan and family interests are entwined with political and economic interests which cut across clan affiliation. The battle between the Elder and Middle *Zhuzs* confirms that politics, and the establishment of political parties, is agency driven and isolated to the manoeuvrings of factional inter-elite conflict. Thus, the disconnection between parties and citizens remains based on personalistic and clientelistic linkages and not necessarily the social particularity of Kazakh social organisation.

#### *1.4 Formal Structural Influence: The Role of the CPSU*

As highlighted in the introductory chapter, Soviet structural legacies have been utilised to explain post-Soviet political development.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, neopatrimonialism in the post-Soviet case can be seen as a fusion between traditional politics, residual communist legacies and new formal institutions (see Chapter Three). In the case of parties' relationship with society in Kazakhstan we can see both the influence of agency, in the shape of informal political relations and behaviour and structural legacies in the form of the CPSU. The legacy of the CPSU has produced negative perceptions among society about the role and place of political parties in the political system. Citizen passivity and disinterest in emergent political parties is directly

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<sup>25</sup> It is argued that the majority of opposition members derive from the Naiman and Argyn tribes of the Middle *Zhuz*. See Nurlan Amrekulov, *Zhuzy v sotsial'no-politicheskoi zhizn Kazakhstana* and N. Amrekulov, *Puti k ustichivomu razvitiuu, ili razmyshleniia o glavnom*, (Almaty, 1998).

<sup>26</sup> See Barbara Junisbai and Azamat Junisbai, The Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan: A Case Study in Economic Liberalization, Intra-elite Cleavage, and Political Opposition, *Demokratizatsiya*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> However, with the president moving against his son-in-law Rakhat Aliev in 2007 and the demotion of Dariga Nazarbaeva within *Nur Otan*, we are now witnessing a decrease in family influence.

<sup>28</sup> Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002).



affected by the previous dominance of the CPSU and its behaviour. This legacy has impacted on citizens' perceptions of parties in several ways. Firstly, citizens have become sensitised to a single party system. According to one political analyst, 'people are used to there being only one party and the electorate has developed immunity, not only for realising the plurality of parties, but also participation in them and voting for them.' Secondly, the authoritarian and monolithic structure, bureaucracy and corruption associated with the CPSU bequeathed to people a negative perception of political parties. The long monopoly of the CPSU failed to encourage multipartism and discredited the term 'party'.<sup>29</sup> 'Soviet citizens had grown tired of the party and the image of political parties as a result was negative. They did not understand how political parties could help them.'<sup>30</sup> The CPSU was heavily associated with over politicising society. This helped mould a mentality within the population of political indifference and distrust. It reflects the idea put forward by Edwin Bacon that a legacy of CPSU rule was that 'the freedom not to participate in politics is an attractive gain of the post-Soviet era.'<sup>31</sup> Indifference has been engendered by the formal structural legacy of the Party's domination, while the influence of informal political behaviour and relations in the shape of corruption has eroded political trust in political parties. Finally, as a result of the domination of one party, it has been argued that there is a broader legacy of Soviet rule which has led to a form of 'totalitarian regime dependency'.<sup>32</sup> This is the view that the state has a significant role in caring for its citizens. According to a senior figure within *Nur Otan*, 'Kazakh society, similar to other Central Asian societies and Russian society are based on collectivism and the mentality of paternalism that the state should take care of us'.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, 'the government is supposed to help everybody and political parties do not play a major role in the political system and in helping people'.<sup>34</sup> These factors demonstrate how the structural legacy of the CPSU, and the

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<sup>29</sup> Stephen White, Russians and their Party System, *Demokratizatsiia*, Vol. 14, No. 1, Winter 2006, p. 19-20.

<sup>30</sup> Author's interview with Sergei Duvanov, journalist and opposition activist, 28 November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>31</sup> Edwin Bacon, Russia: Party Formation and the legacy of the One-Party State, in John Kenneth White and Philip John Davies, *Political Parties and the Collapse of the Old Orders* (New York, State University of New York Press, 1998) pp. 205-222.

<sup>32</sup> Author's interview with Zharmakhan Tuiakbai.

<sup>33</sup> Author's interview with Kazbek Kazkenov, Assistant to Vice-President of *Nur Otan* and chief party historian, 7 March 2007, Astana.

<sup>34</sup> Author's interview with Andrei Chebotarev. This is something opposition parties are attempting to rectify and will be discussed later in section on emerging cleavages.

informal political behaviour and relations within it has contributed to shaping the passivity and disinterest of society towards political parties, adding to the disconnection between parties and society in post-Soviet Kazakhstan.

Examining only structure (legacy of the CPSU) alerts us to only one aspect of what is generating disconnection between society and parties. The disconnection between parties, state and society and the passivity of citizens is driven by both the legacy of the CPSU and role of personalistic and clientelistic elite based parties. It is through the role of elite agency and in particular the personalistic and clientelistic linkages on which citizens' relationship with parties are predominantly based upon, that we can observe how the underlying influence of informal political behaviour and relations, highlighted in previous chapters, has affected the relationship between parties and society.

### *1.5 The Influence of Informal Politics: Charismatic and Clientelistic Linkages*

The clientelistic and personalistic complexion of political parties, in other words parties organised for, and revolving on, the interests of political personalities or elite groups, has cemented any pre-existing disconnect between parties and society and citizen passiveness. This is due to the self-interested and introspective character of political parties in Kazakhstan. Therefore, the linkages to emerge between parties and society are based on bonds of personalism (charisma) and clientelism (loyalty) rather than an explicit relationship of interest articulation and representation.

As highlighted in Chapter Five, political parties in Kazakhstan are elite-created institutions. They 'represent the elites struggling for authority, rather than organisations defending the interests of society'.<sup>35</sup> Centred on the politics of personalism and loyalty, political parties in Kazakhstan are underpinned by informal political relations and behaviour. Organisation and membership are solicited through both patron-client relations, such as tying in party members in exchange for employment, (*Nur Otan* and GPK) and through inter-elite factional conflict (DVK, *Ak Zhol* and *Nagiz Ak Zhol*). Political parties, therefore, are a result of 'inter-elite

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<sup>35</sup> Otrazhaet li sushchestvuioshchii partiinyi spektr Kazakhstana real'noe sostoianie obshchestva, *Liter*, 10 March 2006, <http://www.liter.kz/site.php?lan=russian&id=172&pub=3213>.



processes which see people [society] playing a supportive and subsidiary role.’<sup>36</sup> These forms of informal politics have assisted in defining the relationship between parties and society on the basis of charismatic and clientelistic linkages that are present in the structuring of post-communist party competition.<sup>37</sup> The political agency of personalistic and clientelistic elite driven parties has solidified the disconnection and passivity between parties and society.

### *Personalistic Linkages*

Personalistic linkages between parties and society are essentially based on the dominant personality of the leader of the party. Party elites recognise this phenomenon themselves. The deputy leader of the KPK noted that ‘there is no difference between party programmes; the electorate are oriented towards personalities and leaders. To an extent Abdil’din, me, and some other colleagues in the KPK have a certain space with the electorate’.<sup>38</sup> To this extent citizens are voting and connecting not with political parties’ ideas or programs but on the basis of the charisma and personality of leading political elites. As noted by the deputy leader of *Rukhaniyat*, ‘there always were charismatic leaders who want their own parties and it does not matter which group they are representing, it just matters that they have their own party. Most parties have such charismatic leaders.’<sup>39</sup> That the link between parties is based on personalistic ties is supported by opinion polls. A poll conducted by ASIP in May 2004 found that respondents had a far greater awareness of party leaders as opposed to parties and party programs.<sup>40</sup> When given the opportunity to indicate the party connected to a particular political personality in most cases three quarters or less of respondents could not connect the party to the personality. The one major exception was Dariga Nazarbaeva where 58.1 percent of respondents were

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<sup>36</sup> Author’s interview with Yevgeni Zhovtis.

<sup>37</sup> Herbert Kitschelt also identifies a programmatic party-voter linkage, however, as discussed in Chapter Five it is arguable as to whether programmatic parties in Kazakhstan are evident due to the lack of clear distinction in ideological tenets and programmatic commitments. For Kitschelt’s theoretical propositions on clientelistic and charismatic party-voter linkages see, Herbert Kitschelt, Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies: Theoretical Propositions, *Party Politics*, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1995, pp. 447-472.

<sup>38</sup> Author’s interview with Tolen M. Tokhtassynov, Deputy Leader of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, 9 February 2007, Almaty.

<sup>39</sup> Author’s interview with Anatolii Volkov.

<sup>40</sup> Bakhytzhamal Bekturganova, Partii lidery, programmy: reitingi uznavaemosti v mae 2004 g, [www.zonakz.net](http://zonakz.net), 15 June 2004, <http://zonakz.net/articles/6474>.

able to connect her to *Asar*.<sup>41</sup> As table 6.1 illustrates, all parties had a recognition rate of less than 24 percent. Other surveys also highlighted that political personalities have a higher public recognition and support in the public consciousness than the parties they represent.<sup>42</sup>

*Table 6.1 Average Recognition of Party Leaders and their Parties from May 2004 (percentage of respondents)*

Personality	Party	Percentage of Respondents Recognition
Dariga Nazarbaeva	<i>Asar</i>	58
Serikbolsyn Abdil'din	KPK	24
Bolat Abilov	<i>Ak Zhol</i>	21
Galymzhan Zhakianov	DVK	20
Gani Kasymov	Party of Patriots	13
Alikhan Baimenov	<i>Ak Zhol</i>	13
Azat Peruashev	GPK	8
Amangeldy Ermegiiiev <sup>43</sup>	<i>Otan</i>	8
Oraz Zhandosov	<i>Ak Zhol</i>	8
Altynshash Dzhaganova	<i>Rukhaniyat</i>	7
Altynbek Sarsenbaev	<i>Ak Zhol</i>	7
Romin Madinov	APK	3
Gani Kaliev	<i>Auyl</i>	3

(Adapted from ASIP opinion poll data from 15 June 2004 see footnote 40).

Party-citizen linkages in Kazakhstan, therefore, can be viewed as being based on a personalistic form and this is particularly the case with *Nur Otan*. Part of *Nur Otan*'s electoral success and position in society is linked to the central use of Nazarbaev's personality and charisma in party propaganda. As mentioned in Chapter Five, *Nur Otan* leans heavily on Nazarbaev for its own identity. In truth Nazarbaev is *Nur*

<sup>41</sup> There should be no surprise in such a high figure due to Dariga Nazarbaeva's stratospheric profile as the president's daughter. *Asar*, due to Dariga and Rakhat Aliev's management of several key media companies, and with a degree of support from the presidential administration, was able to heavily promote the party and the fact Dariga was party leader. What is maybe more surprising is that 42 percent of respondents could not identify *Asar* with Dariga Nazarbaeva.

<sup>42</sup> Data produced by Ksilon Astana CG revealed higher levels of recognition and trust for political personalities that led parties to actual levels of support their parties receive. See Ksilon Astana CG <http://www.ksilon.kz>. Ksilon, however, is a polling agency believed to have links with the authorities.

<sup>43</sup> Until 2007 Nazarbaev was unable to officially take up his place as leader of *Nur Otan* due to it being unconstitutional for members of the executive to be members of political parties. Amangeldy Ermegiiiev at this time was acting chairman of the party, even though Nazarbaev was effectively de-facto head. Ermegiiiev stood down in March 2004 and was replaced by Bakhytzhan Zhumagulov who himself made way for Nazarbaev to become official chairman of the party in 2007 when the ban on executive members becoming party members was lifted.



*Otan's* identity. For instance, election posters from the 2007 parliamentary election pictured Nazarbaev surrounded by hundreds of workers all holding *Nur Otan* flags, while the slogan read, *My vmeste s prezidentom! My za Nur Otan* (We are together with the president! We are for *Nur Otan*). The emphasis, however, on the personality of political leaders undermines parties' claims of, or intention to, articulate and represent social interests. Rather, the focus on elite personalism only serves to widen the disconnection between parties and society continuing to engender the passive and disinterested attitude of citizens towards political parties.

### *Clientelistic Linkages*

Clientelism is also another broad form of party-citizen linkage observable in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. In Kitschelt's theoretical proposition, clientelistic party-citizen linkages are based on clientelistic parties which 'make high investments in organizational structure...to provide a constant flow of resources ('club goods') to their following'.<sup>44</sup> In Kazakhstan a clientelistic linkage appears in two instances. The first, discussed in Chapter Five, is where local *Akims* use their power of patronage to coerce state employees under their charge to become members of political parties, most notably *Nur Otan*.<sup>45</sup> In this sense the investment in organisational structure is not in the party itself, but in the networks of the patrons of the party. The clientelistic party-citizen linkage is clearly defined by the nature of the patron being able to offer or prise away employment on the basis of whether they join and support the patron's preferred party. At the same time, however, a clientelistic linkage can be observed in a far broader social context. For example, the view of many political elites and analysts was that citizens assessed their relationship with a political party on the basis of what parties can offer. According to one senior figure in OSDP, 'the main question from potential party members was what political parties could give them. This is their main motivation for becoming a member and supporting a political party. It is not a question of politics or policy it is a question of consumerism.'<sup>46</sup> Citizens, therefore, are interested mainly in the 'social benefits a party brings'.<sup>47</sup> Inherently, there is nothing unique about a supply and demand linkage between

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<sup>44</sup> Herbert Kitschelt, *Op. Cit.*, p. 449.

<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the GPK solicited party membership from those employees who worked in industries owned by the Eurasian National Resources Corporation (ENRC).

<sup>46</sup> Author's interview with Marina Sabitova, Senior Advisor to Zharmakhan Tuiakbai, and parliamentary candidate for the OSDP, 18 August 2007, Almaty.

<sup>47</sup> Author's interview with Zharmakhan Tuiakbai.

citizens and parties. The idea of an economic theory of democracy affecting party spatial competition has been both popular and persuasive in Western scholarship,<sup>48</sup> while recent scholars have also pointed to the clientelism inherent in modern Western democratic party systems<sup>49</sup> and post-Soviet scholars have proposed a market model to study some post-Soviet party systems.<sup>50</sup> It links back to the legacy of the CPSU where citizens expect the state and the chief organs of the state to play a paternal role, ensuring citizens are cared for. In Kazakhstan, however, the propensity towards citizens demanding social benefits from parties, and seeing that as the only pretext for involvement, support and interest in their activities, is driven by 'a mix of Soviet patrimonialism and Western capitalism'.<sup>51</sup>

The personalistic linkage is increasingly important in established democracies too, as individual political personalities now play a much larger role in shaping the relationship between the electorate and parties. Citizens are ostensibly more likely to identify with a party leader than they are with the ideology of the party. So while Kazakhstan may not be unique in developing linkages associated with personalism and clientelism, its experience is qualitatively different in the sense that in established democracies leadership positions are rationalised. A party leader may rely on the use of charisma and personality to form a bond with the electorate but once removed from the political scene the office remains. In Kazakhstan, that is not the case. Most political parties will not outlast their leaders. Even the KPK, considered the most 'natural' party' in Kazakhstan, since it has a clear ideology and identifiable social base (pensioners), is considered to be finished if, and when, Abdil'din leaves.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, *Nur Otan* is so closely tied to Nazarbaev that it is considered 'only a short term party and will only be there as long as the president is.'<sup>53</sup> Clientelism and personalism are two key linkages between parties and society in Kazakhstan and they are a product of the informal political relations and

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<sup>48</sup> See Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957).

<sup>49</sup> Herbert Kitschelt and Steven I Wilkinson (eds.), *Patrons, Clients and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>50</sup> Henry Hale, *Why Not Parties in Russia? Democracy, Federalism, and the State* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>51</sup> Author's interview with political analyst, 14 November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>52</sup> Author's interview with Nurbolat Masanov.

<sup>53</sup> Author's interview with Mamashev Sadykovich, Chairman of the Zhambyl *Oblast* Branch of the KNPK, Taraz, 13 March 2007.



behaviour shaping much of politics in Kazakhstan. The inherent personalism and clientelism is augmenting the disconnection between parties, society and the state and the passiveness and disinterest of society.

Structurally speaking, while the particularity of Kazakh social organisation may have had little impact, the legacy of the CPSU fused with the clientelistic and personalistic disposition of political parties has forged the distance between parties and society. The imperious informal forms of political relations and behaviour underpinning neopatrimonialism in Kazakhstan are key in influencing parties' relationship with society. The inwardness of parties, and their use as personal vehicles for public office, or units to protect and secure political and economic interests in the fall out from inter-elite conflict, are only serving to establish them as entities unable to resolve the issues of ordinary citizens. They are incapable of grasping power and affecting change. This ingrains within the population a considerable level of passiveness and disinterest in their activities to such an extent they rarely know what parties stand for and have difficulty connecting well-known politicians to the parties they are the leader of. *Nur Otan* and its close association with Nazarbaev personify this personalism and clientelism. The party does manage to have a degree of purchase with the general population due to its close relationship with the president, assisting Nazarbaev in constructing and disseminating a broad narrative regarding the centrality of his leadership for the prosperity of the country. It has achieved this through relying on, and being privy to, patronage and preference from local and state executive bodies and the mass media. This permits the president's party to aggressively pursue the president's message, helping to consolidate a degree of homogeneity of opinion regarding the president's rule. *Nur Otan's* domination due to its close association with Nazarbaev, has resulted in other parties' isolation and the stunting of any form of growth in parties' traditional democratic role in representing and articulating social interests. Importantly, it illustrates the key role played by *Nur Otan* in sustaining and consolidating the president's authoritarian rule, providing political legitimacy with society and offering political stability among elites.

## 2. Homogeneity of Opinion

Rather than the relationship between society and parties being defined by the articulation and representation of interests, due to the personalistic and clientelistic centred nature of parties, it is instead dominated by the presence of the president and the idea that the president's leadership is central to the prosperity of the country. This is a view put forward by the president and promoted, cultivated and expressed by *Nur Otan* which has received wide acceptance in society. It is within this context of homogeneity of opinion regarding Nazarbaev's leadership that political parties have to find and build support with society. *Nur Otan's* role in pushing this message has been critical and illustrates the extent to which the party, as a personal political vehicle for the president, has been central to the maintenance of the president's authoritarian neopatrimonial regime. *Nur Otan's* leading role as chief propaganda tool for the president, and its relative success in this capacity, is achieved primarily through two means. The first is its positioning, on the back of Nazarbaev's support, as a party representing the interests of the whole of the Kazakh nation and promoting national unity and ethnic stability. The second is their dominance in the regions, achieved primarily through a monopoly of airtime in the mass media and through the patronage of local executives.

The following sections illustrate how the president and *Nur Otan* have cultivated this homogeneity of public opinion, hence aiding the configuration and context within which parties develop bonds with citizens and fortifying the disconnect and passivity of society. *Nur Otan's* role in disseminating this grand narrative in support of the president exemplifies the influence informal political behaviour and relations have on determining the relationship between citizens and parties. *Nur Otan's* reliance on the bias it receives from the state media, the informal patronage of state executives and the vast networks of support they provide, and structural and financial resources from the state, ensures their message above all others reaches the furthest parts of the country.

### *2.1 Homogeneity of Opinion: The Centrality of Nazarbaev's Leadership*

One of the key messages circulated by the presidential administration is Nazarbaev's centrality to guaranteeing the prosperity of the nation and securing the independence



and stability of the country. It is a view widely accepted.<sup>54</sup> Nazarbaev has sought to publicise this himself: 'I have great experience of policy. I know that the most significant is peace in our people and political stability'.<sup>55</sup> These values of inter-ethnic peace and political stability and the president's success in achieving these through the utilisation of *Nur Otan* in parliament, are often juxtaposed with the experience of other CIS states. For instance, one senior *Nur Otan* figure argued, 'it can be said that in some states where the president has not been able to influence parliament at all, such as Azerbaijan and Russia, well these states have faced crisis.'<sup>56</sup> The prospect of crisis and conflict is often proposed as a likely outcome if the country moves away from the president's policy of gradual reform.<sup>57</sup> In particular, Kazakhstan's near neighbour Kyrgyzstan is often cited as an example of what can go wrong when radical change is attempted. Video footage of the chaos and looting which took place in Kyrgyzstan's capital Bishkek in the aftermath of the forcible removal of President Askar Akaev in March 2005 was often aired on state TV as a means to hammer home this point. Opposition elites also argued that radical change and the experience of other countries are not suitable templates for Kazakhstan. One leading member of *Alga* noted that, 'it is wrong to take examples of the surrounding countries like Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan or Georgia, because each country has its own path. It is wrong to say that because it happened in Kyrgyzstan it should happen here.'<sup>58</sup> The idea of stability over radical change is broadly

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<sup>54</sup> It should be noted that while the president's proportion of votes for the 2005 presidential election may seem inflated, and arguably is, it is clear that he is popular. Analysts interviewed in this research often mentioned that even under fully free and fair elections Nazarbaev would win easily with 60-70 percent of the vote. While the obedient state media might assist in such a task it nevertheless demonstrates that the president is genuinely popular and is perceived to have done a very good job in managing Kazakhstan's post-Soviet transition, in particular with the promoting of Kazakh ethnicities, not seemingly at the expense of other ethnic groups. Another perceived success has been the consistent high level of growth in the economy since 1999.

<sup>55</sup> 'Nursultan Nazarbaev: Moia tsel' –postroit' normal'noe demokraticeskoe obshestvo', *Kazakhstanskaiia Pravda*, 7 February 2002, [http://www.kazpravda.kz/index.php?uin=1151645457&chapter=1002020700&act=archive\\_date&day=07&month=02&year=2002](http://www.kazpravda.kz/index.php?uin=1151645457&chapter=1002020700&act=archive_date&day=07&month=02&year=2002) [accessed 27.10 2007].

<sup>56</sup> Author's interview with Sharipbek Amirbekov, Deputy Head of the Central Apparatus of the Political Council of *Nur Otan*, 10 February 2007, Almaty.

<sup>57</sup> Yevgenni Konovich, Politicheskie reformy: k demokratii cherez stabil'nost', *Kazakhstanskaiia Pravda*, 7 December 2004, [http://www.kazpravda.kz/index.php?uin=1152520370&chapter=1102378861&act=archive\\_date&day=07&month=12&year=2004p](http://www.kazpravda.kz/index.php?uin=1152520370&chapter=1102378861&act=archive_date&day=07&month=12&year=2004p) [accessed 6 May 2007].

<sup>58</sup> Author's interview with Bakhyt N. Tumenova, Head of the Central Apparatus of *Alga*, 6 February 2007, Almaty.



acknowledged across the political class and society as a whole.<sup>59</sup> One opposition elite stated that, 'I have communicated with all classes of society, journalists, doctors and so on. They have stated that they support changes but not a revolution. They want a smooth transition.'<sup>60</sup> This view is given credence by opinion polls suggesting a majority of citizens support the direction the president is taking the country. One poll conducted by a reputable agency found that 68 percent of people supported the president's general policy direction, with only 11 percent against and 22 percent unable to answer.<sup>61</sup>

This homogeneity of opinion has been utilised by the president to place himself at the centre of maintaining stability and peace in the country, guaranteeing the well-being of all Kazakh citizens and protecting the integrity of the nation's independence vis-à-vis Russia. The view of many presidential supporters is that Nazarbaev has played a critical and historical role in the development of an independent Kazakhstan and in the progression of the Kazakh economy<sup>62</sup> has made in recent years.<sup>63</sup> Because of this he is deemed 'a very smart and wise leader'.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the perceived success of the economy has been one of the underlying linchpins for the president's popularity and as long as he continues to provide economic stability he remains popular with citizens. It resembles the similar relationship that existed between the Soviet leadership and citizens during the Brezhnev era, where a social contract sought political compliance in exchange for social security.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, Nazarbaev is

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<sup>59</sup> Informal conversations this author had with ordinary Kazakh citizens outside the political class fleshed out the view normal citizens had about this subject. It was evident from these conversations that the majority of people believed that the 'coloured revolution' model was not a path Kazakhstan should travel. Nazarbaev's key message of stability over radical change was believed to be the correct road the country should take. Even those who were critical of the president still believed a gradualist model was the most suitable path of development.

<sup>60</sup> Author's interview with Bakhyt N. Tumenova.

<sup>61</sup> The poll was conducted by the Kazakhstan Institute of Social-Economic Information and Forecasting (KISEP) that was led by the well-respected social and political analyst Sabit Zhusupov. See, 'V ozhidanii peremen', *Pravila Igry*, No. 8, November 2005, p. 56.

<sup>62</sup> The Kazakh economy has achieved significant growth since 1999 averaging 10 percent growth year on year. The president has been largely accredited with this success which has been built to a large degree on the revenue the government has received from the country's natural energy resources. The president's strategic aim for the economy, to get Kazakhstan among the top 50 competitive states in the world, has been widely praised.

<sup>63</sup> Zhazira Bukina, Tak priniato: konstitutsionnaia reforma priobrela real'nye ochertaniia, *Liter*, 19 May 2007.

<sup>64</sup> Author's interview with Galiaskar Dunaev, *Nur Otan's* Political Council's Representative in Almaty, 22 August 2007, Almaty.

<sup>65</sup> Linda Cook, *The Soviet Social Contract and Why it Failed* (Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1994).



praised for maintaining ethnic stability. Despite the ethnic diversity in the country, Nazarbaev has been successful in avoiding conflict between ethnic groups and ‘has been working to maintain ethnic stability in the country and consequently there have been no inter-ethnic conflicts’.<sup>66</sup> Due to these perceived successes and the coalescing of opinion around the conviction that the president is central to the country’s successful development, pro-presidential forces are attempting to define Nazarbaev as a father of the nation figure bordering on the iconic and almost mythical. This was underlined in 2008 when *Nur Otan* deputy Sat Tokpakbaev proposed the renaming of the capital Astana to Nursultan.<sup>67</sup> As one journalist noted, ‘people think that as he is the first president he should be the icon of the nation, like Lenin was for the Soviets or Atatürk was for the Turkish and Mao in China. It is the belief that there should be some legendary figure.’<sup>68</sup> Additionally, while he may have promoted the interests of ethnic Kazakhs – the president has positioned himself as a leader who is concerned with all those who live in the Kazakh nation, not necessarily just ethnic Kazakhs, but those of different ethnicities and faith.<sup>69</sup>

## *2.2 Nur Otan: The Party of National Unity*

*Nur Otan* has played a significant role in helping forge the homogenised discourse regarding Nazarbaev’s leadership. This is achieved through two means. Firstly, by positioning the party on the same policy goals and values as Nazarbaev and as a party representing the interests of the whole Kazakh nation, and secondly through its command in the regions which results from the extensive preference the party obtains from state bodies and local executives.

The party projects itself as supporting wholesale the president’s agenda and program. For example, stating in its 2007 election programme that ‘we support the strategic course of our leader, president of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev on the acceleration of the socio-economic development of the country for the well-being of all Kazakhstani citizens’.<sup>70</sup> The party espouses the same message as the

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<sup>66</sup> Author’s interview with Galiaskar Dunaev.

<sup>67</sup> Mazhilis: V den’ gosudarstvennykh simvolov palatoi odobrena popravka v konstititsionnyi zakon, [www.nomad.su](http://www.nomad.su), 4 July 2008, <http://www.nomad.su/?a=3-200806050425>.

<sup>68</sup> Author’s interview with independent journalist, 30 October 2006, Almaty.

<sup>69</sup> Indeed the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan, created by the president, was established to represent the diverse ethnic groups of Kazakhstan.

<sup>70</sup> Nur Otan, *Za protsvetanie Kazakhstana i blagopoluchie Kazakhstantsev* (Astana, 2007).

president and shares his commitment of stability and gradual democratisation. One senior figure in the party argued, 'the party's values are stability, inter-ethnic peace and step-by-step democratisation, not democracy at once'.<sup>71</sup> What this illustrates is that *Nur Otan* acts as a political vehicle in shaping the homogeneity of opinion that has become commonly acknowledged across the country, that of the president's policy of stability and gradualism. Simultaneously, it builds on the president's position as leader of a unified nation. *Nur Otan* has established itself as the party representing the interests of all people in the Kazakh nation. One senior member of *Nur Otan* suggested the party's creation was 'the phenomenon of a union of classes', and moreover, 'the party is protecting the interests of all layers of the population including teachers and doctors...we are also trying to get many of the different ethnicities into the party.'<sup>72</sup> That 'the party represents the interest of all Kazakh society', should not be surprising considering the party is an extensive political tool of the president.<sup>73</sup>

*Nur Otan*, therefore, supports the president in consolidating the homogeneity of opinion regarding his leadership, while at the same time appealing to the public, as the president does, as being the party to represent the interests of the whole nation. In a sense the party is trying to appeal above any factional or divisive cleavages within society. The party's allure however is sustained, more or less, only on the basis of being the president's party. So while it is an important institution for the president in promoting his message and leadership, the party is only able to have any success in connecting with the public due to the president being the party's main champion. However, it would also be true that the president might not be so successful in cultivating homogeneity of opinion around his policies and leadership without a vehicle like *Nur Otan*. The party offers the president a formal political vehicle for embedding his legitimacy with society. Conversely, *Nur Otan's* relationship with the president guarantees the party has a stronger connection with society compared with any other party while simultaneously providing the president with an important vehicle to consolidate his leadership. This symbiotic relationship has been achieved due to *Nur Otan's* preponderance in the regions which is supported by the significant

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<sup>71</sup> Author's interview with Sharipbek Amirbekov.

<sup>72</sup> Author's interview with Kazbek Kazkenov.

<sup>73</sup> Author's interview with Sharipbek Amirbekov.



preference the party receives, some informally, from state bodies (in particular the state media) and local executives. Consequently, the reliance on such preference and informal political behaviour and relations to achieve such political monopolisation is shaping *Nur Otan's* relationship with society. It further aids the president's and *Nur Otan's* ability to cultivate wide acceptance of Nazarbaev's leadership and policies, thus consolidating his authoritarian neopatrimonial regime. The following two sections explore this issue.

### *2.3 Nur Otan's Dominance in the Regions*

Aside from orienting on Nazarbaev's policies and leadership, *Nur Otan's* key strength is its reach into the regions of Kazakhstan. This greater presence gives the party far more potency in spreading and cultivating the president's message of stability over change. This strength in the region is present in two forms. First, it exists in the larger number of party branches and Primary Party Organisations (PPOs) *Nur Otan* possesses and their ability to provide a visual presence across the country compared to the weakness of other parties. Second, it is expressed in the considerable representation the party has in the local *Maslikhats* (councils) and that many local *Akims* (governors) are associated with the party. This provides *Nur Otan* with the valuable commodity of being able to demonstrate to citizens their ability to be active and productive as a party, involved both in public activities and in governing the regions.

#### *The Structural and Visual Strength of Nur Otan*

According to one observer, '*Nur Otan* is the only important party in the regions'.<sup>74</sup> This is in part due to the party's organisational strength, 'there are representations of the party in every city and all the regions have well-developed party branches'.<sup>75</sup> The party has PPOs 'that reach all the way down to *Auyls*'.<sup>76</sup> Such supremacy of organisational strength enables the party to have greater presence across the country with which to extend the discourse concerning the centrality of Nazarbaev's leadership and *Nur Otan's* role in supporting his leadership. Indeed the 'party's logo

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<sup>74</sup> Author's interview with independent journalist, 30 October 2006, Almaty.

<sup>75</sup> Author's interview with Sharipbek Amirbekov.

<sup>76</sup> Author's interview with Kazbek Kazkenov.

can be found everywhere', both during and in-between election periods.<sup>77</sup> Such ubiquity can be observed when visiting a city like Taraz in *Zhambyl Oblast*. Many of the main streets in the city are adorned with party posters attached to lampposts, while a wide banner stretches across the main road in the city proclaiming '*Otan* – the party which is always with you'.<sup>78</sup> Such a visual presence can be observed in Almaty and Astana, but it is evident these are not isolated cases and that *Nur Otan* has such a commanding presence across the country. The consequence of such visual strength is that citizens have far greater recognition of the party, they are only too aware that *Nur Otan* is the major political party in the country and is connected with, and supports, the president. An opinion poll undertaken by the Kazakhstan Institute for Social and Economic Forecasting (KISEP) just prior to the 2007 parliamentary election found that 60 percent of citizens polled knew well the activities and policies of the party as opposed to 28 percent for *Ak Zhol* and 15 percent for OSDP.<sup>79</sup>

*Nur Otan's* prevalence in the regions in both organisational form and in terms of visual representation can be contrasted with the weakness of other parties in Kazakhstan. In particular, the major opposition parties evidently suffer limitations in organisational strength. According to one senior figure in *Alga*, 'one of the main weaknesses of all opposition parties, including this party, is that the connections with the regions are very weak'.<sup>80</sup> It is a criticism often levelled by those in pro-presidential parties at the opposition, discussing the development of Zharmakhan Tuiakbai's party OSDP, Kazbek Kazkenov, a senior figure in *Nur Otan*, questioned whether OSDP would be able to reach beyond the main urban centres of Almaty and Astana. 'Will he (Tuiakbai) be able to work not just in Almaty or Astana, but also the countryside and the rest of the country? Will he be able to structure the party so that it will have a presence not just in the centre but also in villages?'<sup>81</sup> The centring of other political parties organisational strength in either Astana or Almaty is evidenced by many of the party elites pointing to either branch as confirmation of a strong regional activity. Some parties' elites were open enough to admit that not all their regional branches were active and strong. For example, one senior figure from

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<sup>77</sup> Author's interview with independent journalist, 30 October 2006, Almaty.

<sup>78</sup> The author observed this banner outside of an election period.

<sup>79</sup> KISEP, 'Effektivnost' izbiratel'nykh kampanii partii Kazakhstana v parlamentskikh vyborakh 2007 goda, [www.zonakz.net](http://www.zonakz.net), 9 August 2007, <http://zonakz.net/articles/18810>.

<sup>80</sup> Author's interview with Bakhyt N. Tumenova.

<sup>81</sup> Author's interview with Kazbek Kazkenov.



*Adilet* commented that, 'I can't say that all the branches of the party are strong. In many regions party branches do not conduct a lot of work. One of the strongest branches is the Almaty branch.'<sup>82</sup> This lack of organisational strength and restricted presence in the regions can be explained by the shortage of financial resources compared to *Nur Otan* (the advantage *Nur Otan* possess in terms of financial and state resources will be discussed in section 2.4).<sup>83</sup> Notwithstanding deficient resources, some commentators have pointed to the role of agency and poor leadership as a reason for weak party branches.<sup>84</sup> The consequence of regional organisational weakness is that other than *Nur Otan* the majority of political parties, and in particular opposition parties, are at a great disadvantage when trying to connect with citizens. Furthermore, they struggle to be heard when putting forward an alternative message to society regarding the president's leadership. Opposition parties have weaker recognition and lack the tools and ability to shape their relationship with society on their own terms as opposed to the terms set by the president and *Nur Otan*.

#### *Dominance of Local Representative and Executive Structures*

The second feature of *Nur Otan's* scope in the regions is its supremacy of local government structures. The party claims to hold 64 percent of all seats in the *Oblast* level *Maslikhats* and 72 percent of *Raion* level *Maslikhats*.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, many regional *Akims*, at *Oblast*, city and *Raion* levels, are members of the party.<sup>86</sup> Such a forcible presence in the regions provides the party with effectiveness in undertaking visible public projects. Such control in local government structures allows party

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<sup>82</sup> Author's interview with Kuanysh Zhalakov, Head of the Astana City Branch of *Adilet*, 6 March 2007, Astana.

<sup>83</sup> Vladislav Iuritsyn, 'Problema neravnykh uslovii v financirovanii politicheskikh partii Kazakhstana', in Andrei Chebotarev, Serei Elomnikov and El'vira Pak (eds.), *Voprosy prozrachnosti deiatel'nosti politicheskikh partii i ikh vzaimodeistviia s institutami vlasti, biznesa i obshchestva: kazakhstanskii i zarubezhnyi opyt*, (Almaty, Transparency Kazakhstan, 2004) pp. 38-41.

<sup>84</sup> Author's interview with Bakhyt N. Tumenova.

<sup>85</sup> See, *Kratkii ochet o prodelannoi rabote za period s 2002 po 2006 god*, *Political Council of Otan* (Astana, 2006). This figure could be significantly higher due to some independent deputies or deputies of other bodies (such as non-governmental organisations (more than likely government approved) sit with and support *Nur Otan* factions in regional bodies.

<sup>86</sup> Many have only become official members of the party after the law was changed in 2007 allowing those who hold official state positions to become members of political parties. Previously becoming a member of a political party was not allowed for *Akims*, however, this is not to say that they did not implicitly support and worked closely with the *Nur Otan* members in their corresponding *Maslikhat*. With their powers directly attributable to the president, as he has power of appointment, *Akims* were more likely to favour *Nur Otan* over other political parties.



factions to assert the interests of their regions to state bodies. The party has 'created deputy groups in the *Maslikhats* where they can state the specific needs of the regions and pass it on to the central organs of the party who can pass it on to the executive bodies of the state'.<sup>87</sup> Other analysts, however, have argued a more convincing account of the relationship, arguing that the party only works on the basis of command from above with 'the central party giving an order to the *Akim*, and the *Akim* giving the order to *Maslikhat* deputies'.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, the party can clearly demonstrate to citizens that it is active and trying to work for their benefit.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, this dynamic exists at the national level too. The party possesses all the seats in the *Mazhilis*, thus giving it the opportunity to publicly highlight its work and effort on legislation, policy and other national projects. For example, in 2008 the party was given responsibility for conducting a nationwide campaign against corruption.<sup>90</sup> This adds to the perception that the party is working on behalf of the president, who is working on behalf of all the people in Kazakhstan.

The advantage *Nur Otan* exhibits in demonstrating its participation in high profile visible projects ensures greater recognition with citizens. This when contrasted with the position of other political parties, is quite significant. Nearly all other political parties have minimal to non-existent representation in local government structures. Much of the work other parties carry out in the regions is inward looking and designed at party strengthening and consolidation rather than outward expressions of activities concerning public interest. The fact many of these parties have to spend significant time and effort on constructing PPOs, recruiting new members and simply discussing their program with their members is a symptom of a wider problem for these parties, which is the advantage enjoyed by *Nur Otan* in the media, a principle source of influence of the wider population, and the extensive patronage the party receives from state bodies and local executives. The party's supremacy in the regions is as a result of the wide advantage and preference it receives.

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<sup>87</sup> Author's interview with Sharipbek Amirbekov, Deputy Head of the Central Apparatus of the Political Council of *Nur Otan*, February 10, 2007, Almaty.

<sup>88</sup> Author's interview with political analyst, 20 November 2006, Almaty.

<sup>89</sup> For example, see this article regarding the party promoting business interests of women in the Akmola region, [www.ndp-nurotan.kz](http://www.ndp-nurotan.kz), 13 November 2008, <http://www.ndp-nurotan.kz/index.php?f=show&ft=27&type=26&id=58249875422>.

<sup>90</sup> *Obsuzhdeny voprosy sovershenstvovaniia antikorrupsionnogo zakonodatel'stva – Nur Otan* [www.ndp-nurotan.kz](http://www.ndp-nurotan.kz), 4 November 2008, <http://www.ndp-nurotan.kz/index.php?f=show&ft=27&type=11&id=44524233637>.



#### 2.4 The Importance of Media Preference and Informal Politics in Consolidating Nur Otan's Position

The role of the media and the informal inclination of state bodies and local executives to give preference to *Nur Otan* underpins their ability to be so dominant in the regions. This preference gives the party greater scope in cultivating homogeneity of opinion regarding the president's leadership, thus defining and consolidating the relationship between *Nur Otan* and the majority of citizens, and legitimising Nazarbaev's authoritarian rule. Additionally, this phenomenon shapes the context within which all parties build relations with society. The media, for example, as in any country, is one of the most influential tools for shaping public opinion. This is particularly important in the regions where media access is limited to the state run channels and newspapers. As one analyst noted, 'the majority of influence in the regions comes from the mass media, and the majority of influence from *Otan*, *Asar* and maybe *Ak Zhol*. It is connected to the possession of mass media resources. For people who live far away in distant rural areas they perceive politics through the TV and newspapers, and most of the newspapers they get in rural areas are pro-presidential.'<sup>91</sup> Opposition newspapers like *Respublika* and *Svoboda Slova* are limited in their distribution to the larger cities such as Almaty and Astana. Moreover, periodically these newspapers are subject to closure by the authorities.<sup>92</sup> In the regions 'people do not have access to the informational resources of the opposition'.<sup>93</sup> The preference *Nur Otan*, and other pro-presidential parties receive in the media is confirmed by various opinion polls and surveys. A poll conducted by the Centre of Social Technologies (TsST) in 2005, found that when those surveyed were asked about which activities of political parties they observed the most on the state TV channels *Khabar*, Kazakhstan and *El Arna*, 60 percent said *Otan* and 49 percent mentioned *Asar*.<sup>94</sup> While during the 2007 election TsST undertook periodic surveys of mass media sources and found, unsurprisingly heavy preference given to *Nur Otan* across all state media outlets. For example, during the week of July 9-15 2007 TsST reported that 18 articles appeared in the state press discussing the

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<sup>91</sup> Author's interview with political analyst, 1 November 2007, Almaty.

<sup>92</sup> See Tsentr Sotsial'nykh Tekhnologii, Ob'ektivna li informatsiia kazakhstanskikh gosudarstvennykh telekanalov? [www.zonakz.net](http://www.zonakz.net), 7 November 2005, <http://zonakz.net/articles/10080>.

<sup>93</sup> Author's interview with Dosym Satpaev, 28 February 2007, Almaty.

<sup>94</sup> See Tsentr Sotsial'nykh Tekhnologii, Ob'ektivna li informatsiia kazakhstanskikh gosudarstvennykh telekanalov? [www.zonakz.net](http://www.zonakz.net).



activities of *Nur Otan*, while there was only one report of the main opposition party OSDP. Moreover, the tone of articles concerning *Nur Otan* was usually positive or neutral in nature while articles about other parties were wholly neutral.<sup>95</sup> That the president's party receives such overwhelming preference in state media sources, and some independent media sources, is not surprising.<sup>96</sup> It does, however, illustrate how *Nur Otan's* ability to deliver the president's message and agenda, and establish a bond with citizens, is underpinned by the advantage and preference it receives within the media. The media sources available to the majority of the population are state run and these sources, generally speaking, do not permit opposition viewpoints, only those of the president and *Nur Otan*.

The preference and advantage *Nur Otan* receives from local executives and state agencies has been documented in earlier chapters of this work. State law is selectively applied and interpreted in their favour in circumstances of party registration, large public meetings, electoral commissions and in other aspects of the electoral process. Local *Akims* will urge their subordinate clients to vote or preference *Nur Otan* in electoral competition. The threat of job loss, in either a pronounced or perceived sense, ensures a loyal network of support for the party in these circumstances. These informal forms of political behaviour and relations give the party representative security in *Maslikhats* across the country at all levels ensuring their command at the regional level. This in turn allows the party plenty of public space to promote, cultivate and hang on to the coat tails of Nazarbaev. For example, one regional elite member from KNPk noted how 'the president adopts a decree about opening some organisation and then *Nur Otan* turns up and says we are *Nur Otan* - we are opening this organisation'.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Tsentr Sotsial'nykh Tekhnologii, Rezul'taty monitoringa upominaemosti politicheskikh partii pechatnymi i setevymi sredstvami massovoi informatsii za period s 9 po 15 iulia 2007 goda, [www.zonakz.net](http://zonakz.net), 17 July 2007, <http://zonakz.net/articles/18508>.

<sup>96</sup> When considering the nature of the media in Kazakhstan reference should be made to a form of self-censorship practised by many journalists. This is the tendency on the part of journalists to self-censor any form of potential criticism of the president and pro-presidential forces due to the perceived threat to their position from writing critical articles. Self-censorship is a significant form of informal power held by the executive. Even the simple perceived threat of action enables journalists to fall in line with the official position. The authorities do not have to actually carry out a threat; rather the perceived threat is a strong enough incentive for journalists to be obedient and loyal to the regime. Self-censorship represents a residual legacy from Soviet times – as self-censorship, was unsurprisingly, commonly practiced by journalists under communist rule.

<sup>97</sup> Author's interview with, Mamashev Sadykovich.



With extensive patronage networks available, the party can utilise such support to establish an active base in the regions, calling on people to come out to public rallies and other activities if necessary. This illustrates to the public at large that the party possesses a popular support base, whether real or not. At the same time, however, the party is privy to extensive state and administrative resources, not just in the vast human resources and patronage networks available to local *Akims*, or in the preference afforded the party in the mass media which was highlighted above, but in structural and financial resources too. The party is perceived to be the recipient of new buildings paid for by state resources on the request of the president. One senior figure in KNPk suggested that, 'he [the president] gave the task of building offices for *Nur Otan* party use, not only in cities and *Oblasts* but also in towns and small villages. And all the offices will be paid for out of the state budget'.<sup>98</sup> It is certainly true that *Nur Otan* holds offices in large expensive buildings in most cities across the country and the president is often reported opening new plush party offices.<sup>99</sup> Where *Nur Otan* obtains its finances from is a contentious issue but it is largely believed to benefit from being financed through state coffers largely due to the support of *Akims*. The financial and administrative support appears in diverse ways including 'the compulsion of businessmen to endow money in cash departments of the party before rendering free-of-charge services in the parties' interest, transport, premises, foodstuffs, rendering of informational support, etc.'<sup>100</sup> Due to the patronage of *Akims*, *Nur Otan* is able to pool together access to resources which other parties are simply not privy to. This gives the party a demonstrable advantage over all other parties, it enables the party to have a higher visual and structural recognition with society, monopolise local representative structures (due to the way in which local *Akims* can still informally influence the local election process – see Chapter Four) and assist in promoting the message of Nazarbaev's centrality to the country, thus consolidating further his authoritarian rule.

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<sup>98</sup> Author's interview with Aleksandr Kholodkov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the KNPk, 24 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>99</sup> 'Head of the state Nursultan Nazarbaev took part in the opening ceremony of the new office of the Otan Republican Party's regional branch and visited the Koktem housing estate in the city of Aktobe', [www.akorda.kz](http://www.akorda.kz), 8 September 2006, [http://www.akorda.kz/page.php?page\\_id=356&lang=2&news\\_id=2238](http://www.akorda.kz/page.php?page_id=356&lang=2&news_id=2238).

<sup>100</sup> Vladislav Iuritsyn, 'Problema nepravnykh uslovii v finansirovanii politicheskikh partii Kazakhstana' p.40.

The homogeneity of opinion in Kazakh society is that Nazarbaev's leadership has so far been successful and is crucial to securing the future prosperity, security and sovereignty of the country. *Nur Otan* has played a central role in promoting this message and thus assisting in consolidating and legitimising Nazarbaev's rule aiding regime durability. It achieved this by positing itself entirely on the basis of the president's policy direction and in claiming to represent all national interests. Additionally, its visual, organisational and representative preponderance in the regions heightens citizen awareness of the party and its core message. Such supremacy is achieved on the basis of media preference and the informal advantage the party receives from state bodies and local executives.

### 3. Emerging Cleavages?

As argued above, the disconnection between parties and society and the passivity of citizens is driven by structural legacies and the clientelistic and personalistic character of political parties. The broader context within which political parties have to develop a relationship and linkages with society is underpinned by a large degree of homogeneity of opinion concerning Nazarbaev's leadership, promoted successfully by *Nur Otan* due to their political dominance. Essentially, *Nur Otan* is the ultimate personalistic party relying on the patronage of state bodies and local executives. In the face of such factors, and the supremacy of the president and *Nur Otan*, it is difficult for other parties to develop linkages of substantial interest articulation and representation. Rather, political parties are pushed to the margins of the political process where there are some signs of emerging shoots of interest articulation and representation. There are four areas where such phenomena can be observed: parties acting as guarantors of social rights, parties as public educators, parties acting in the public good, and parties emerging to represent developing social cleavages. For the most part, however, these efforts of interest articulation are located at the margins of society.

#### 3.1 Protecting Citizens' Social Rights

Some opposition parties have begun to emerge perceiving themselves as guarantors of citizens' social rights. A pertinent example of this has been the on-going *Shanyrak* dispute. *Shanyrak* is a housing settlement on the outskirts of Almaty where



thousands of people without homes or land built and constructed their own dwellings in the years after independence.<sup>101</sup> Many had migrated from less affluent areas of the country. Initially, there was little resistance from the authorities regarding the construction of these new housing developments and officials were quite content to aid these new communities by developing local infrastructure such as schools and bus routes.<sup>102</sup> However, by the early part of the new millennium, the land outside the city had become prime real estate and the local *Akimat* moved to try and remove people from this land so it could be sold. Violent clashes occurred as the authorities forcibly removed some residents from their homes by bulldozing down houses.<sup>103</sup> Many of these settlements represent the 'losers' of Kazakhstan's rapid economic growth. They are the marginalised, poor and jobless.

Since 2006 *Alga*, and in particular its former leader Assylbek Kozhakhmetov, have sought to try and guarantee the rights of the residents of the *Shanyrak* district. According to Kozhakhmetov, 'people (from *Shanyrak*) came to the party for protection, but we had to say, no, we can't protect you, but we can teach you how to defend yourselves'.<sup>104</sup> The party assisted in helping residents organise their own union, *Shanyrak*, which is now led by Kozhakhmetov, and in creating publicity and media attention regarding the authorities' actions. Led by Kozhakhmetov and senior officials from other parties, the Union is trying to work with the authorities to solve the problems occurring at *Shanyrak*.<sup>105</sup> Those political parties who have participated in the negotiations between the citizens of *Shanyrak* and the local *Akimat* see their role as that of protecting the security and rights of citizens. According to Serikbolsyn Abdil'din, 'the KPK is trying to protect the interests of citizens. The instances where people are being hurt by the government are occurring more often, for example, the destruction of peoples' property in *Shanyrak* outside of Almaty.'<sup>106</sup> Parties in these

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<sup>101</sup> Interestingly, a *Shanyrak* in Kazakh is the top and centre of a Yurt (traditional movable home of Kazakh nomads) which is generally a wooden rim with a cross in the middle. It acts as a ventilation system and skylight. The *Shanyrak* symbolises peace and stability in Kazakh mythology which is of course, rather unfortunate considering the destruction and confrontation facing its modern namesake.

<sup>102</sup> Andrei Grishin, 'Shanyrak – novyi symbol sotsial'nogo protivostoianiiia', [www.Ferghana.ru](http://www.Ferghana.ru), 17 April 2006, <http://www.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=4350>.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Author's interview with Assylbek Kozhakhmetov, Chairman of *Shanyrak* Kazakhstan and former Leader of the *Alga* Party, 26 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>105</sup> Printsip ravenstva pered zakonom ne dolzhen organichvat'sia Almaty, *Press-sluzhba Shanyrak Kazakhstan*, 29 October 2007, <http://www.kub.info/article.php?sid=19844>.

<sup>106</sup> Author's interview with Serikbolsyn Abdil'din, leader of the KPK, 30 January 2007, Almaty.



circumstances are acting as intermediaries between the local *Akims* and disgruntled citizens.<sup>107</sup> Crucially *Alga* is aware of the limits of its influence, suggesting that while some regions have specific problems there is not much they can do, as they do not hold any power. But according to Kozhakhmetov they ‘can show people they can protect themselves if they unite.’<sup>108</sup> While some opposition parties might view themselves as acting to represent and protect the interests of the most marginalised groups in Kazakh society, essentially they can only help organise and educate. Opposition parties’ lack of power, and limited ability to influence those in authority, such as regional *Akims*, demonstrates their lack of effectiveness as articulators of interests. However, while parties may have been unsuccessful in halting the removal of some residents from *Shanyrak*, by drawing attention to the issue, publicising it and assisting in organising the residents, they have shone a light on the actions of authorities. The case of *Shanyrak*, and parties’ attempts to protect the interests of some of the most marginalised and vulnerable groups in Kazakh society, demonstrates the beginning of a movement away from the clientelistic and personalistic behaviour that has defined political parties in the post-Soviet era.

### 3.2 Public Educators

As evident in the case of *Shanyrak* one of the key roles some political parties have assigned themselves is that of public and civic educators. Opposition parties, in particular, see it as their role to educate citizens in not just their social rights but also in their political and democratic rights. According to Kozhakhmetov, ‘the task is to teach people civil intelligence so they should be brave enough to protect their own rights.’<sup>109</sup> It is a strategy opposition parties feel enables them to advance the development and sophistication of civil society in Kazakhstan, while making citizens more aware of real democratic processes. One regional official for *Alga* commented on how this works in practice, ‘our party has a program called door-to-door and this basically involves going to every person in the city to explain what the party wants, how it is going to deal with the problems in society and how it all works in general. The aim is to raise peoples’ awareness’.<sup>110</sup> Parties, therefore, are aiming to build a

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<sup>107</sup> Author’s interview with Assylbek Kozhakhmetov.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Author’s interview with Mamashev Sadykovich, Chairman of Zhambyl *Oblast* Branch of *Alga* Party, 13 March 2007, Taraz.



link between themselves and citizens based on empowering citizens with knowledge about how to effectively employ their political rights in the face of authoritarianism. According to one senior figure in *Alga*, 'we try to encourage people to demand their rights not make them wait for their rights from any leader, either the president or the opposition'.<sup>111</sup>

In the most part, parties' role as public educators is limited to those in their own party. In the closed political space in which political parties try to operate the opportunities for public political agitation are restricted. Parties, therefore, tend to concentrate on their own members. The leader of OSDP highlighted this, 'the main task of the party between elections is structuring the party and educating the activists of the party so they will understand their ideology and be ideologically prepared for the next election.'<sup>112</sup> According to another senior figure in *Alga*, 'we try to educate our members and teach them. This is why we provide every regional branch with assistant staff and computers. Regional leaders and members need to understand how to use computers. They need to understand the party program and to understand what is going on in the country. We spend a lot of time on their education.'<sup>113</sup> It is primarily *Alga* which is performing this role. Without official registration the party, by demonstrating their continued presence to their members, and by encouraging them to become more politically literate and active, is trying to ensure it retains a public presence given its inability to compete in elections.

Parties, and in particular, opposition parties such as *Alga*, are simply attempting to readdress the imbalance and gap existing between political parties and citizens caused pre-dominantly by the personalistic and clientelistic disposition of parties. With little space within which to manoeuvre because of the supremacy of the president and *Nur Otan* and the successful cultivation of homogenised discourse around the issue of the president's leadership, parties such as *Alga* rely on roles as public educators and guarantors of social rights as a means to build relations with citizens and to assist in developing civil society. However, it is a role that exists on

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<sup>111</sup> Author's interview with Vladimir I. Kozlov, leader of *Alga*, 8 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>112</sup> Author's interview with Zharmakhan Tuiakbai, leader of OSDP, 30 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>113</sup> Author's interview with Bakhyt N. Tumenova, Head of the Central Apparatus of *Alga*, 6 February 2007, Almaty.

the periphery of the political process representing the interests of some of the most marginal groups in society.

### 3.3 Acts for the Public Good

An additional bond parties are attempting to construct between themselves and citizens is that of acting on behalf of the public good and charitable causes. Broadly speaking this involves parties both responding to public crises and contributing, generally in financial terms, to their resolution, or organising and participating in public events seen to benefit worthy groups. A prime example of this is was the case of the infection of children with HIV through blood transfusions at a number of hospitals in the South Kazakhstan *Oblast*.<sup>114</sup> After these tragic incidents some political parties acted to show solidarity and support, helping the families of those affected. One senior figure from *Adilet* noted that, 'after the events in Shymkent, where children were infected with the HIV virus, the party organised the collection of one day's salary from all members of the party and we transferred this to the fund for these children. Also, many party members and activists visited the children and parents of those children to give financial and moral support.'<sup>115</sup> Aside from acting on such tragic events, parties are keen to be seen publicly supporting popular causes or charities. In 2008, in the context of worsening economic conditions, *Ak Zhol*, *Auyl*, KNPk and *Rukhaniyat*, made public their support for the long time put upon miners in Karaganda declaring their 'solidarity with associations of workers, the collectives of workers who are actively defending their legitimate interests and rights'.<sup>116</sup> Other parties explicitly point to their acts of charity, *Alga* for example highlight their support of disabled associations in which they assisted groups in obtaining office space and applying for grants.<sup>117</sup>

Such acts of public good are illustrative of a tentative link developing between parties and citizens. Yet it remains a very limited role at the periphery of the political system. The preponderant presence of *Nur Otan* and the president, sustained by loyalty and patronage, has left little room for political parties to actively engage with

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<sup>114</sup> Bruce Pannier, Fourteen Children Infected with HIV in Hospitals, [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 22 July 2006, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/civilsociety/articles/pp072206.shtml>.

<sup>115</sup> Author's interview with Kuanysh Zhalakov.

<sup>116</sup> *Ak Zhol*, *Auyl*, KNPk and *Rukhaniyat* Zaiavlenie, [www.zonakz.net](http://www.zonakz.net), 6 February 2008, <http://zonakz.net/articles/20910>.

<sup>117</sup> Author's interview with Assylbek Kozhakhmetov.



citizens. Parties are left to pursue only functional roles as sponsors of charities and public causes rather than actively influence policy and provide representative interest articulation. It could be argued parties are simply fulfilling the role usually played by NGOs and other groups within civil society.<sup>118</sup> The shortage of genuinely autonomous groups means parties, restricted in their ability to function along the traditional lines present in democratic systems, are able to occupy this space. Moreover, parties' role in acting as benevolent institutions assists in strengthening the clientelistic linkages between parties and citizens. If people understand parties as institutions they go to when they need something, although there may be no guarantee of exchange of support for the party on behalf of the client, then it will embed that form of relationship between parties and citizens. At the same time, parties are working in the available space at the margins of society as a way to guarantee political survival and to demonstrate political relevance. In this sense, the roles some opposition parties have carved out for themselves are entirely appropriate and rational given their marginal status at the periphery of the political process.

### *3.4 The Development of the Middle Class*

The three emerging forms of party interest articulation highlighted above, focus predominantly on the 'losers' of transition, the marginalised and least well off, but what of the winners? The economic growth witnessed in Kazakhstan has seen the emergence of a small middle class cohort. Large oil revenues and foreign investment have assisted in facilitating the emergence of a middle class with disposable income.<sup>119</sup> The growing use of the Internet and mobile telecommunications, as well as a burgeoning cosmopolitan lifestyle in cities such as Astana and Almaty, are increasing the perception of growing wealth in Kazakhstan. With initiatives like the state sponsored Kazakhstan Mortgage Company helping people buy their own homes and the president's *Bolashak* (the future) education program sending 3000 Kazakhstani students abroad each year to study, there is an increasing sense of affluence among some sections of the population. To what extent, however, has this emerging middle class developed a political consciousness and to what extent are parties emerging in response to its development?

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<sup>118</sup> This is not to suggest, however, that political parties are not multi-purpose with varying functions and that acts of charity should not be a function of parties.

<sup>119</sup> John C. Daly, *Kazakhstan's Emerging Middle Class*, Central Asia –Caucasus Institute, Silk Road Paper, March 2008.



The initial appearance of DVK, *Ak Zhol*, and *Nagiz Ak Zhol*, from the process of elite fragmentation has been argued as the first political flowering of the political arm of Kazakhstan's growing middle class and independent businessmen. According to Tulegen Zhukeev, 'today there are certain parties emerging that are representing particular groups like entrepreneurs, business and the middle class. Our party (*Nagiz Ak Zhol*), sees our main electorate as representatives of the emerging middle class and representatives of business structures, and these are the people we orient around and these are the people who we get support from.<sup>120</sup> It would be difficult to truly describe the emergence of DVK et al., as parties emerging from middle class interests, as these were high profile big business figures of considerable wealth and prominent government officials, not small businessmen. Additionally, *Atameken*, which emerged in 2006 under the leadership of Yerzhan Dosmukhamedov, was purposely designed to appeal to middle class businessmen and entrepreneurs.<sup>121</sup> Engaging middle class support, however, is not limited to opposition parties, *Nur Otan*, for example, when it talks about growing prosperity and stability, is reaching out to the growing middle class in Kazakhstan and suggesting that emerging affluence can only come with the stability of the president's leadership.

To what extent, however, is such middle-class representation viable? In the first instance, the growth of the middle class is still far from widespread as affluence in Kazakhstan tends to be pocketed in the major urban areas such as Almaty, Astana and the key oil city of Atyrau.<sup>122</sup> Second, and most importantly with regards to the scope of this work, those who could be described as middle class are reluctant to support political parties which have been established principally for their representation, if those parties are not connected to the presidential authorities. Arguably an explanation for this phenomenon is the threat of recriminations if independent small to medium size businessmen openly engage with a party

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<sup>120</sup> Author's interview with Tulegen Zhukeev, General Secretary of *Azat*, former Co-chairman of *Nagiz Ak Zhol*, 21 January 2007, Almaty.

<sup>121</sup> Yerzhan Dosmukhamedov, *Atameken: Building Democracy in Kazakhstan* (Almaty, 2006).

<sup>122</sup> According to the United National Development Program (UNDP) as of 2004 16.1 percent of people still live below the poverty line in Kazakhstan, living on less than \$2 a day, a significantly reduced figure from 1996 when 34.6 percent were assessed to live below the poverty line. However, the poverty gap between urban and rural areas has been steeply climbing in recent years. See UNDP, *The Great Generation of Kazakhstan: Insight into the Future* (Almaty, UNDP, 2005).



considered the opposition by the authorities. In a famous statement in 2002 the president claimed he 'could take any businessmen to jail in Kazakhstan'. Simply, he understands and knows that most successful businessmen in Kazakhstan have made their wealth on the back of non-transparent corrupt practices, overseen by the Nazarbaev neopatrimonial regime. In particular, the poorly administered taxation system ensures businesses are less likely to pay taxes to the state and instead pay less to those officials from the tax office that checks taxes.<sup>123</sup> Therefore, just this informal tool of fear of recriminations and being estranged from profitable businesses is enough to ensure those emerging middle class businessmen do not join opposition parties and instead remain compliant to the president. According to Vladimir Kozlov, 'any businessman can face charges in court. These are the rules of the game and as a result businessmen cannot join the party as the party is carefully watched. I used to be a businessman. When I joined the party I had a legal profitable business. Then representatives from the KNB came to me, and as they were my friends they advised me to give the business to someone else...otherwise they would have had to destroy the business as a potential source of financing the party.'<sup>124</sup> The ability for emerging political parties to represent middle class interests is limited in the face of the threat from state enforcement agencies. Moreover, if prosperity and security of business interests is secured under Nazarbaev's leadership there is little motivation for emerging middle class interests to support a party that is not connected to him. In the current climate, the only way a political party can emerge to successfully represent the interests of middle class Kazakhstani citizens is if it has the blessing of the presidential administration.

This section has sought only to demonstrate despite the connections between parties and society being based on personalistic and clientalistic linkages, as a consequence of the neopatrimonial political system, and the dominance of *Nur Otan* in shaping public opinion, there are small pockets where parties are attempting to base themselves on emerging interests within society. Opposition parties are establishing themselves as parties with a growing organisational capacity to represent and protect the interests of some of the most marginal groups in society and to publicly educate

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<sup>123</sup> Dosym Satpaev, *Korruptsiia v Kazakhstane: metody neutralizatsii* (Almaty, Tsentral'noaziatskoe agentstvo politicheskikh issledovani, 2001)

<sup>124</sup> Author's interview with Vladimir Kozlov.

citizens and their own party members of their social and political rights. Many political parties, on the other hand, are keen to demonstrate their role in acting for the public good by financially supporting victims of tragedies, supporting groups seeking better pay conditions or participating in charitable acts. These, however, are very limited activities existing on the margins of the political process and the political system. They do not represent the full extent of parties' representative and articulative capabilities. Moreover, they offer no satisfactory substitute for the fact those parties currently do not possess genuine representative and articulative powers or the ability to participate in policy and decision making. The emerging middle class is one social group many political parties are keen to associate with in terms of interest articulation. However, the prosperity and security guaranteed under Nazarbaev, and the fear of potential sanctions against business interests for supporting political parties not connected to the president, creates difficulty for political parties trying to actively engage and support middle class interests.

#### **4. Concluding Remarks**

The informal forms of political behaviour and relations present in Kazakhstan which form part of its neopatrimonial regime and discussed throughout this work, such as personalism, patronage and patron-client relations, and informal factional elite conflict, are affecting parties' formal development of relations with citizens and society. The informal nature of political elite conflict appears to citizens as occurring in an arena separate and far away from them. The personalistic and clientelistic nature of parties, that is they are inward looking institutions interested only in their own political careers, is shaping disinterest and passivity.

The relationship between parties and society is defined by a disconnection between parties, society and the state and a degree of passivity and disinterest on the part of citizens. This is explained by the fusion between the residual legacy of the CPSU and the personalistic and clientelistic nature of political parties. Consequently, citizens possess a negative attitude towards parties and instead linkages between parties and citizens are built on personalistic and clientelistic terms. The overall context of passivity and disconnection is shaped by homogeneity of opinion regarding the centrality of Nazarbaev's leadership to the prosperity and stability of



the country and his position as chief representative of the interests of all citizens of Kazakhstan. This homogenised discourse is achieved and sustained with support from *Nur Otan*. *Nur Otan* are able to be so effective in spreading the president's message due to placing itself on directly the same position as the president, by dominating the regions in an organisational and representative sense and through the informal patronage and preference it receives from the state media and local executives. *Nur Otan*, therefore, plays a central role in drumming up public support for the president and ensuring the president's supporters and ideas reach to all levels of the country. *Nur Otan* is a key political vehicle for the president in consolidating and legitimising his authoritarian rule. Similar to the way the constitution and the electoral process give formal legitimacy to Nazarbaev's rule both at home and abroad, the use of *Nur Otan* legitimises and confirms Nazarbaev's strong bond with society. The party provides the formal context within which the president's legitimises his informal power (patron-client networks) with the country. Despite the disconnection and passivity it is possible to observe limited 'green shoots' where parties are representing and attempting to articulate emerging interests. These pockets are focused primarily on attempting to protect and represent the interests of the most marginal groups in society, as well as the emerging middle class, while at the same time acting as political and civic educators and undertaking acts for the public good. Such attempts at interest articulation, however, are at the margins of the political process and illustrative how little room parties have to pursue other forms of interest articulation and representation due to the dominance of the political space by Nazarbaev and *Nur Otan*.

## **Conclusion: Informal Politics and Party Development in Kazakhstan and Beyond**

Over the preceding chapters this work has assessed the relationship between informal and formal politics in the Central Asian Republic of Kazakhstan as a way to examine the development of political institutions (in this case political parties) and the overall nature of post-Soviet transition in the region. In this account, informal forms of political relations are illustrated to have influenced and shaped the development of formal political institutions, thus affecting the nature of post-Soviet transition by aiding authoritarianism. At the same time, however, formal institutions have been significant in that they provide elite stability, legitimation of informal forms of political behaviour and relations, and vehicles for the purpose of informal conflict. This concluding chapter seeks to place the study in the context of wider debates and generalise the main findings in the comparative context of other post-Soviet states.

This work has argued that the interaction and influence between informal and formal politics through the lens of party development is one of the key factors explaining why effective democracy has failed to materialise in Kazakhstan. In the case of party development in Kazakhstan we can conceive the interaction between the informal and formal as occurring in a neopatrimonial political system. Personalism of power, loyalty to the leader, patron-client relations and factional inter-elite conflict (the patrimonial - informal political relations and behaviour) occur in a system governed by rational rules and formal institutions (the neo - rationalised office, surface constitutional separation of powers, elections and political parties). This neopatrimonial political system, centred on the president Nursultan Nazarbaev and the formal and informal power at his disposal, impacts on the development of democracy and pluralism due to the preference the system gives to pro-presidential parties (namely *Nur Otan*) at the expense of other political voices. While the high degree of personalism and extensive informal patronage influences the development of parties by the preference and advantage *Nur Otan* receives, parties and other formal institutions also provide an institutional context for the informal behaviour and relations occurring. *Nur Otan* has been used to support the president in



exercising personal political control, developing elite cohesion (in the aftermath of elite fragmentation) and providing internal political stability. The party is an important factor in explaining durability of authoritarianism in Kazakhstan. Simultaneously, political parties are formal vehicles for those fragmented elites caught up in a struggle for power. In this context, parties are formal units that have emerged in the process of factional elite conflict and are used to stabilise the political and economic interests of those elites who were once a part of the ruling elite. Formal rules are used to formalise the president's informal power over the electoral process. They are designed in a broad manner leading them to be susceptible to selective application and interpretation by loyal clients of the president. Therefore, the case of party development in Kazakhstan illustrates that the relationship between informal and formal politics is complex. It represents a process of mutual influencing and impact. This relationship assists in explaining the limitations of democratic and pluralist progress, as informal political relations contribute to the consolidation of the president's authoritarian rule while formal institutions provide a legitimising and stabilising context for his informal power.

This study yields nine main conclusions that expand our understanding of the relationship between informal political relations and behaviour and formal institutional development (in this case political parties) in post-Soviet authoritarian political development.

- (1) Informal political relations and behaviour and formal institutional development are not processes or phenomena occurring separate from each other. They share a complex and entwined relationship (best conceptualised as neopatrimonial) where both play a crucial role in shaping political development and assisting in the consolidation of authoritarian regimes.
- (2) The use and appearance of informal political relations and behaviour derive from a fusion of structural and behavioural legacies and the emergence of new political institutions (neopatrimonialism) and centres of power which threaten the power base of incumbent political elites. It is in this context, political elites turn to informal forms of political behaviour to manage the contingent and dynamic nature of transitional politics.

- (3) In transitional regimes where political elites are seeking to consolidate their political rule, formal institutional constraints are purposively designed in a broad and at times violable fashion so loyal clients of the incumbent leadership are able to selectively apply and interpret the formal rules to suit the preferences of the leadership. In the case of political parties, it leads to party system development from above and weak party competition where pro-regime parties receive preference.
- (4) Conversely, formal political institutions and rules can, due to their broad interpretative nature, legitimise informal political behaviour and relations which stem from instances of personalism of office, patronage and patron-client relations. Formal institutions like dominant political parties can also induce elite stability by binding in and providing cohesion of a country's political elite.
- (5) Due to the above nature of the relationship between informal political relations and formal institutions, those formal institutions that emerge from this context tend to be oriented towards personalism and clientelism. Political parties are particularly susceptible to this.
- (6) Formal institutions can also provide constructs that provide shelter for fragmented elite groups who are participating in factional elite conflict common to transitional politics. As they fight over access to resources, institutions like political parties act to protect and extend their political and economic interests.
- (7) Due to the dominance of personalism and clientelism in both the informal interpretation of formal rules and formal institutions themselves, formal institutions like parties develop a relationship with society based on disconnection and passiveness. Linkages with wider citizens are established on personalistic and clientelistic terms.
- (8) At the same time, formal institutions like political parties help solicit the legitimisation of a leaders' power by developing and articulating homogeneity of opinion regarding the centrality of the incumbents' leadership to the prosperity of the country.
- (9) In a neopatrimonial political system where informal forms of political behaviour and relations are fused with formal institutions, political parties



while weak on those attributes typically associated with assisting democratic consolidation (interest articulation, representation) are strong on those attributes which help the consolidation of authoritarian regimes.

### *Reorienting the Formal and Informal*

As discussed in the Introduction, scholarly research on post-Soviet political development in Central Asia has focused on a debate between two perspectives. On the one hand there are those who argue that informal politics, based on tribal kinship and familial ties, has been central to shaping political and institutional development, in particular regime trajectory.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, scholars have argued that formal Soviet structural legacies have been the main causal factor in political institutional development.<sup>2</sup> Is it the case that informal political organisations such as kinship based tribes and clans are the most important driver in post-Soviet Central Asia? Are formal institutions in Central Asia of less value and are they outweighed by the dominance of informal political relations and behaviour? The case of party development in Kazakhstan suggests not. This study has attempted to move the debate on from implicitly viewing either as the most preponderant and instead has explored the relationship between both informal politics and formal institutions. While working from the position that informal politics has a central role in the post-Soviet space, as noted by other authors, the study seeks to take a closer examination of the relationship between informal politics and formal institutions, in this case parties.<sup>3</sup> It has revealed that naturally in a region still dominated by traditionalism informal forms of politics are influencing and shaping new formal political institutions, but at the same time formal institutions are not invalid. While of course formal institutions in Central Asia such as constitutions, elections and political parties do not resemble comparable institutions in consolidated democracies, they do

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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006) and Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics and Beyond: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan* (Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Anna Ledeneva, *How Russia Really Works: The Informal Practices that Shaped Post-Soviet Politics* (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 2006), Vladimir Gel'man The Unrule of Law in the Making: the Politics of Informal Institution Building in Russia, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 7, 2004, pp. 1021-1040 and G. Helmke, & S., Levitsky, 'Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda', *Helen Kellogg Institute*, Notre Dame University, Working Paper N307, 2003, [www.nd.edu/\\_kellogg/wps/307.pdf](http://www.nd.edu/_kellogg/wps/307.pdf).

execute an important function in legitimising the informal forms of political relations and behaviour which underline the nature of power in Central Asian states. Therefore, in transitional states where new formal institutions are weak and lacking maturity with regards to the functions we typically expect of them in lending themselves to democratisation, they are rather utilised for a very different purpose. Instead formal institutions function to provide a form of legitimisation of underlying informal political power. The drawing of formal institutional rules in either a broad fashion or in a manner which makes violation almost inevitable allows for the selective interpretation or application of formal rules. This is undertaken on the part of loyal clients to serve the interests and preferences of the patron. Formal institutions are utilised to bind in elites and engender political stability, thus assisting in the consolidation of authoritarian rule. It illustrates that the relationship between the formal and informal, especially in transitional states where political elites are seeking to consolidate power, is complex. It is not so straightforward that informal politics always trump formal political institutions or that formal institutions are a charade. Formal institutions in post-Soviet states do act as political facades in terms of their utility to democratisation, but they are crucial in legitimising informal power, providing elite stability and authoritarian durability.

Scholars such as Collins and Schatz are correct to argue that informal political relations and behaviour are important for modern power relations and political development in Central Asia. However, as argued in this work and elsewhere, these forms of informal politics are not necessarily based on kinship ties.<sup>4</sup> Rather, clan politics in Central Asia orients not necessarily on kinship ties, although they are a factor, but rather on economic interests. It is access to resources and potential revenue streams which has incited political competition and elite actors have worked together in shared interests across tribal and kinship based cleavages.<sup>5</sup> In addition, how we conceptualise informal politics is important for our broader understanding of the region and its place in a broader context. As discussed in the introduction,

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<sup>4</sup> See Barbara Junisbai and Azamat Junisbai, The Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan: A Case Study in Economic Liberalization, Intra-elite Cleavage, and Political Opposition, *Demokratizatsiia*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Scott Radnitz, Networks, Localism and Mobilisation in Aksy, Kyrgyzstan, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 2005, pp. 405-424.



defining the kinds of informal politics that occur in Central Asia and have been highlighted in this study of Kazakhstan is difficult. We can not so easily understand them as informal institutions. Personalism of office, patronage networks and instances of clientelistic exchange are not patterned or necessarily rule bound. For example, this study has illustrated that obedience to informal rules does not guarantee rewards. If this was the case, then political figures like Maksut Narikbaev and Alikhan Baimenov who have demonstrated loyalty to Nazarbaev would have been rewarded with at least a seat between them in the 2007 parliamentary election. Moreover, as highlighted above, kinship has been an important tie at times for Nazarbaev and other times not.<sup>6</sup> These cases illustrate that there are no consistent patterns related to informal politics in Kazakhstan and thus it is difficult to talk about them in institutional terms. While Collins conceptualised clans as organisations, rather than institutions, it does not make a great deal of sense to understand the broader and more general types of informal politics that occur in Central Asia and other former Soviet states as organisational. Rather, again this study has attempted to move the debate on and view the informal political relations and behaviour which occur in Central Asian post-Soviet politics and their relationship with formal institutions through the lens of neopatrimonialism.

### *Neopatrimonialism*

Conceptualising informal politics through neopatrimonialism is significant in several ways allowing scholars to make greater sense of the relationship between informal political relations and behaviour and formal political institutions. It creates a suitable framework within which to chart and observe the relationship between aspects of patrimonial rule (personalism, patronage, patron-client relations and factional elite conflict) and new formal institutions which have emerged in post-Soviet states. Post-Soviet transition has seen states develop a complex web of informal and formal cross cutting institutions, actors and behavioural norms through which political struggle and process is channelled. Neopatrimonialism allows us to unpack some parts of this matrix by allowing us to view the informal and formal as congruent and a part of the

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<sup>6</sup> It is clear the charges brought against Rakhat Aliev (see Chapter Three), the president's son-in-law and the demotion of Dariga Nazarbaeva and Timur Kulibaev illustrate that kinship based ties are not as central as previously thought. These events indicate that kinship is no guarantee of political survival in Kazakhstan.

same system, not necessary as separate entities. Importantly, in the case of Central Asia, neopatrimonialism allows us to understand how the temporal developments of political systems emerge over time in a gradual fusion of institutions and practices. In Kazakhstan, neopatrimonialism represents the logical conclusion of a fusion between traditional informal politics, communist patrimonial bureaucracy and new formal institutions (see Chapter Three). Moreover, neopatrimonialism provides a broader conceptual framework within which greater comparative analysis can occur. Beyond just Kazakhstan and Central Asia where all states possess the irrational personalism of office, excessive loyalty to the leader, the panoply of patron-client networks and factional elite conflict alongside formal constitutional liberal institutions, other post-Soviet states too exhibit neopatrimonial features. In Russia for example, after becoming president in 2000 Vladimir Putin increasingly personalised the presidential office. Putin gained the power to appoint all regional governors in his first term of office and marginalised the political power of the oligarchs replacing them with various factional elite groups who compete for access to resources and power.<sup>7</sup> Using neopatrimonialism to study the role and utility of informal politics and their relationship with formal institutions in post-Soviet states allows scholars to compare and generalise findings with post-colonial transitions.<sup>8</sup> It means Central Asia, and the predominance of informal politics within those countries, are not isolated from political phenomena in other parts of the world and thus are not deemed abnormal or culturally pre-determined towards authoritarian rule.

Neopatrimonialism is problematic in some instances. While it provides a suitable framework to draw out correlations between informal forms of political behaviour and relations (personalism, patron-client relations and factional elite conflict) and formal institutions (constitutions, elections and parties etc.) it does not provide for a framework to understand actors' motivations. There is little within the approach to understand *why* actors persist with either traditional forms of political norms or formal rational and liberal institutions. It leads to a dilemma of understanding what role structure and agency plays in a neopatrimonial system. For the most part

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Sakwa, *Putin: Russia's Choice*, (Oxford, Routledge, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Michael Bratton and Nicolas Van de Walle, 'Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa', *World Politics*, Vol. 46, No. 4. (July, 1994), pp. 453-489.



neopatrimonialism involves interpreting both the structural and agency considerations inherent in systems where traditionalism and modernity meet. The intrinsic personalism in such systems presumes a significant role for actors to shape and influence new institutions, as in the case of Nazarbaev being able to design the institutional constraints which have shaped party development (see Chapter Four). Yet, at the same time structural legacies in the shape of traditional forms of politics and former communist structures (CPSU and the Supreme Soviet) shape actors preferences. It leads to a further problem of distinguishing the hierarchy of causation. To what extent do traditional norms play a larger role than Soviet structures in shaping actors interests and motivations? And what role does the contingency of the post-Soviet period play in determining how political actors behave and construct new institutions? There are no direct answers within neopatrimonialism to these questions. In this study, rather than viewing either rational forms of politics or even communist structures as the predominant causal variable, it is rather the fusion of these factors in the shape of the contingent process of transition and the emergence of new institutions which influence how political actors behave.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, in the case of Kazakhstan it is the fusion between traditional politics, communist bureaucracy and new institutions which define neopatrimonialism in a post-Soviet context.

Despite such drawbacks, neopatrimonialism is an appropriate framework to study political development in Central Asia. This research has illustrated that the study of formal institutions in Central Asia cannot be done without paying heed to the important role of informal political behaviour and relations. In the case of Central Asia, and many other former Soviet states, studying formal institutions on their own (elections, constitutions and political parties) would not be particularly insightful. As highlighted in this work on Kazakhstan, elections, constitutions and political parties have little influence over the political process. Yet when viewed within the context of their relationship with informal political relations and behaviour we can understand the role formal institutions play in legitimising informal political power and providing elite stability. Thus any study of formal institutions in post-Soviet Central Asia cannot be undertaken using the same methods we use to study formal

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<sup>9</sup> Vladimir Gel'man, *The Unrule of Law in the Making: the Politics of Informal Institution Building in Russia*, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 7, 2004, pp. 1021-1040.

institutions in established democracies. As with the lack of utility of the democratisation literature in the case of post-Soviet transitions, the study of formal institutions need to take into account different approaches and methods to fully realise their role and significance. It is not simply enough to just apply theories relating to institutions derived from the study of formal institutions in established or consolidating democracies. We have to take into account the role of the informal. This is why an integrated framework which utilised neopatrimonialism and theories that apply to party development was appropriate for this study. Therefore, building on the approach set out in this work, which has sought to study the relationship between informal and formal politics rather than just either or, other studies could go on to assess the relationship between informal political relations and behaviour and other formal institutions in either single case or comparative studies. Much would be gained by a comparative analysis of the relationship between informal politics and formal institutional development in Central Asia taking in executive, legislative and judicial institutions.

### *The Importance of Contingency*

As noted above, and discussed in Chapter Three, the informal political relations and behaviour which shape formal institutions in a post-Soviet transitional environment derive from a fusion between traditional political norms, communist bureaucracy and the emergence of new institutions. This is a different approach from those who imply that traditional legacies related to informal forms of political and social organisations explain much of post-Soviet political development and those who suggest Soviet legacy take primacy.<sup>10</sup> Rather it is the critical juncture, a contingent and dynamic transition process, in which informal political relations and behaviour are utilised to minimise the transaction costs of transition and to manage the emergence of new competing centres of power. The distinction here is that it is not presumed that cultural legacies mean that it is inevitable informal politics will emerge, as informal political relations and behaviour are subject to change and influence by exogenous and endogenous factors. Thus the reliance on informal politics by political actors depends on their perceived interests during the dynamism of post-Soviet transition.

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<sup>10</sup> Collins, *Clan Politics*, Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics and Jones Loung, Institutional Change and Political Continuity*.



In the case of Kazakhstan, the institutional conflict which emerged at this critical juncture challenged the certainty of Nursultan Nazarbaev's power. It was in the interests of Nazarbaev to utilise his powers of patronage and offer rewards in exchange for loyalty to those actors and institutions threatening his position. The empirical example of Kazakhstan is mirrored in other post-Soviet states. Many other post-Soviets states also found themselves at a similar critical juncture where earlier pre-Soviet forms of political norms fused with patrimonial communist bureaucracy were amalgamated with new formal institutions. This dynamism shaped how political actors reacted. For instance, in Uzbekistan, President Karimov relied on the patron-client networks developed through the communist period to strengthen his hold on power and keep a lid on emerging pluralism and institutions such as the oppositionist Erk/Liberty Party led by the writer Muhammad Salih.<sup>11</sup> Likewise in Russia, Boris Yeltsin relied on the informal power and resources of wealthy oligarchs to secure his re-election in 1996 when the unpredictability of electoral competition resulted in the prospect of a return to power for the communists. Putin too has relied on the informal power of competing networks to gain greater control of the commanding heights of the economy to underpin and consolidate his power.<sup>12</sup>

### *The Influence of the Informal on Institutional Constraints*

This reliance on informal political behaviour and relations to manage the emergence of new institutions gave post-Soviet actors the opportunity to consolidate their role on the basis of both informal and formal power. New constitutions generally centralised executive powers in the presidency which gave considerable power of appointment to presidents, thus allowing them to establish informal power on the basis of patronage and patron-client networks. This was particularly acute in the Central Asian states as well as Russia. It suggests that in terms of post-Soviet transitions the debate has moved on from just focusing explicitly on formal institutional frameworks as highlighted in the democratisation literature and focus more on the role and influence informal political power has on the formal

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<sup>11</sup> Resul Yalcin, *The Rebirth of Uzbekistan: Politics, Economy and Society in the Post-Soviet Era* (Reading, Ithaca Press, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> See, Olga Kryshstanovskaia and Stephen White, Inside the Putin Court: A Research Notes, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 57, No. 7, November 2005, 1065-1075 and Daniel Treisman, 'Putin's Silovarchs', *Orbis*, Volume 51, Number 1, 2007, pp. 141-153.

institutional framework and its ability to function effectively according to democratic rules.<sup>13</sup> As in Kazakhstan, other post-Soviet leaders due to their strong position of power (situated on both formal and informal authority) have been able to craft the institutional environment within which political parties develop. In Russia, for example, Putin has used similar methods to Nazarbaev to manage party development establishing a dominant party, creating virtual parties and co-opting the opposition. *Edinaia Rossia* (United Russia) originally established as *Edinstvo* (Unity) in September 1999, prior to the December parliamentary election, as a decoy to defeat the anti-Kremlin party Fatherland All-Russia (*Otechestvo – Vsia Rossiia*).<sup>14</sup> The party, however, was commandeered by the presidential administration to act as the legislative representation of Putin's policy preferences. Since then *Edinaia Rossia* has become the dominant party in Russia with Putin officially becoming leader of the party in April 2008, not long after Nazarbaev officially became the leader of *Nur Otan*. As with *Nur Otan*, *Edinaia Rossia* dominates the legislature and is a personal political vehicle for its leader.<sup>15</sup> It draws in government elites and regional governors offering Putin a structure for elite cohesion. Russia also provided the model for the 'many layered pie' theory of party development.<sup>16</sup> Party development has been managed from above by the establishment of virtual parties. Andrew Wilson gives the example of Vladimir Zhirinovskii's Liberal Democratic Party of Russia [LDPR] but the founding of *Spravedlivaia Rossia* (A Just Russia) in 2006 saw the Kremlin attempt to construct a loyal opposition to *Edinaia Rossia*. At the same time there has been the co-option of the opposition with, in particular, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) becoming more docile and less critical to the presidential administration. Furthermore, recent allegations have been levelled that all parties in Russia have been funded by a secret unaccountable fund

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<sup>13</sup> See Juan Linz, The Perils of Presidentialism *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 1 No. 4, 1990, pp 124-140 and Donald Horowitz, Comparing Democratic Systems, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 1 No. 4, 1990, pp 141-149.

<sup>14</sup> Henry Hale, 'The Origins of United Russia and the Putin Presidency: The Role of Contingency in Party-System Development', *Demokratizatsiia*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2004, pp. 169-194

<sup>15</sup> *Edinaia Rossia* holds 315 of the 450 seats in the *Duma*.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Wilson. *Virtual Politics: Faking Democracy in the post-Soviet World* (Yale, Yale University Press, 2005).



from the Kremlin, thus further pointing to the complete management of Russia's party system from above.<sup>17</sup>

The dominant party model exemplified by the cases of Russia and Kazakhstan is not exclusive to either state. In Azerbaijan Heydar Aliiev created the New Azerbaijan Party (NAP) in 1993 from former communist members and other minor political groups after he was elected president. The party was dedicated to representing his interests in the *Milli Mezhlis* (parliament) and allowed Aliiev to establish elite stability and cohesion. After his death the party was taken over by his son Ilham Aliiev. In Kyrgyzstan the *Edinaia Rossia*, *Nur Otan* and NAP model has proved influential with Kurmanbek Bakiev establishing a new presidential party, *Ak Zhol*, prior to the 2007 parliamentary elections.<sup>18</sup> All these cases exemplify how in the process of state building formal institutions can become subject to personalism and the power of charisma. The decision to adopt a presidential system is fraught with the danger that executive power becomes synonymous not with the office of president but with the individual occupying the office. The presidency becomes the container in which personal power is held. The outcome is a greater propensity towards a single political actor being able to manage the development of political parties through both the formal power invested in the presidency and the informal personal power (patronage) available. The institutional constraint of the presidency is shaped by the informal nature of power.

Informal political relations and behaviour also influence other types of institutional constraints on political parties in neopatrimonial states. This research has highlighted how institutional constraints are designed purposively to be influenced by informal political behaviour and relations. Formal rules are designed to look progressive on the surface but are in fact broadly composed. It presents clients of incumbent executive actors with the opportunity to selectively apply and interpret the rules in an effort to meet the preferences of the leadership. States in the former Soviet Union present scholars with examples of how political actors use formal rules, designed to

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<sup>17</sup> Natalia Morar, *Chernaia kassa kremlia*, *Novoye Vremia* 17 December 2007, [<http://www.nazlobu.ru/press/article2455.htm>].

<sup>18</sup> *Ak Zhol* won 71 of the 90 seats in the December election - an amazing result for a party only created two months prior to the election.

look rational and impersonal on the surface, to consolidate their personal political power by using informal political relations and behaviour to selectively apply and interpret the formal rules. Therefore, the application of the law shifts from impersonal operation to a particularistic personal implementation of the law on behalf of a political ruler.<sup>19</sup>

In Russia in 2005, Putin adopted changes to the electoral system shifting it from a Mixed-Majoritarian to a fully proportional system where deputies are elected by party list. The threshold for entry into parliament was increased to 7 percent and a ban on electoral blocs was also introduced, these institutional changes are similar to the constitutional changes Nazarbaev introduced in 2007 in Kazakhstan.<sup>20</sup> Yet these changes, existing as they do with seemingly liberal tendencies (full proportionality) and at the same time restrictive tendencies (7 percent threshold), are subject to selective application, informal bias and at times blatant ignoring of the formal rules. In the case of Russia, electoral fraud, the manipulation of electoral commissions in favour of *Edinaia Rossia* and pro-Putin candidates, media bias, bias of state agencies in favour of pro-Kremlin parties and the arbitrary exclusion of undesirable opposition candidates from competing are frequent practices.<sup>21</sup> Similar to Kazakhstan, the patronage of local executives is used to engineer a large vote for Putin's party.<sup>22</sup> International criticism of the new election code suggests there is an overwhelming advantage to *Edinaia Rossia* which makes it increasingly difficult for new and smaller parties to compete effectively.<sup>23</sup> Such a relationship between formal rules and the informal behaviour of interpreting those formal rules can be observed in other post-Soviet authoritarian regimes. In Kyrgyzstan, despite being considered more liberal and democratic throughout the post-Soviet period, incidents of electoral

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<sup>19</sup> See Anna Ledeneva, *How Russia Really Works*.

<sup>20</sup> With the exception of the 7 percent threshold – which illustrates in this instance the institutional environment in Kazakhstan possibly influenced Russia.

<sup>21</sup> Electoral fraud is widespread with practices like the 'carousel' where voters are given filled out ballots by shady workers outside polling stations and then return the blank ballot they receive inside to the workers as proof that they have cast the marked version. See Nikolaus von Twickel, Election Officials Share Fraud Stories, *Moscow Times*, 23 August 2007.

<sup>22</sup> During the 2007 parliamentary election it was claimed that local executives were threatening public sector workers with the loss of their job if they failed to vote for Putin's party *Edinaia Rossia*. See Luke Harding and Tom Parfitt, Fraud Intimidation and Bribery as Putin Prepares for Victory, *The Guardian*, 30 November 2007.

<sup>23</sup> 'Russian Duma Elections not Held on a Level-Playing Field', OSCE, 3 December 2007 [<http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Press/StopPressView.asp?ID=1979>]



fraud and state preferencing of presidential parties have often occurred. In the 2007 parliamentary elections President Bakiev relied on similar tactics to ensure the 'necessary result'. Administrative resources were utilised: media coverage remained biased in favour of *Ak Zhol*, opposition candidates discouraged from standing by threats to their businesses or simply removed from the ballot, opposition parties faced harassment and multiple voting and falsified voting practices were commonplace. In these cases the impact on formal party development is palpable. The incumbent leader's party wins a large majority (usually close to 100 percent), thus diminishing the formation of a consolidated and effective multi-party system.

Another feature of how informal political relations and behaviour affect the formal institutional constraints affecting party development is the use of a law on political parties. It is a direct constraint that can be utilised by a political leadership to manage and control the development of political parties. In states where multipartism has little history a party law can be contrived to legalise the place of parties, but as with electoral design, formal rules within the law can be drawn in a broad and violable manner so selective application and interpretation can be administered by loyal clients of the leadership. In the post-Soviet case, Kazakhstan is not a sole instance of this phenomenon. For example, the Russian Law on Political Parties shares many similarities with the Kazakh version. It places significant obstacles in front of parties attempting registration with the Ministry of Justice. Originally, the Russian Law on Political Parties required that political parties have 10,000 members with branches in at least 50 regions with each branch having at least 100 members. In 2005, the law was altered so parties required 50,000 members in at least 45 branches with at least 500 members in each branch. Chapter 9 of the law provides great scope for the authorities to liquidate opposition parties on various grounds of violating federal laws. The interpretation, however, of what constitutes violation remains at the digression of the Ministry of Justice. Changes to the party law have also been used to remove the opposition.<sup>24</sup> Similar laws regarding political parties have been established in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

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<sup>24</sup> The Republican Party, which had a single seat in the Duma, was banned under the new rules, as was the National Bolshevik Party. The Other Russia was also prohibited under the new law to compete in the 2007 parliamentary election on the grounds that it did not sufficiently meet the requirement for membership numbers.



All feature less restrictive articles than those in the Russian and Kazakh versions. However, in all cases the law is generally used to limit the activities of political parties presidential administrations would rather not see operating. This is achieved in the most part by designing the law in a manner where violation is likely and then only selectively enforcing the law in cases of violation to those political parties not supported by the authorities.

In Kazakhstan, recent changes that have been announced to the institutional framework concerning elections and political parties only confirm what this study has illustrated regarding how formal rules are framed with interpretation and selective application in mind.<sup>25</sup> These changes will have little impact on political party development and continue the policy of designing laws which are still broad and violable allowing for interpretation and selective application on the part of the Central Election Commission and the Ministry of Justice. Local *Akims* will continue to curry favour with the president by ensuring only pro-Nazarbaev parties (namely *Nur Otan*) will be able to succeed electorally in their region. Despite the government claiming that they are enforcing democracy from above, by ensuring there will be at least two parties in the next parliament, in reality it just allows the presidential administration the opportunity to choose which party should be the second force in parliament.<sup>26</sup> There will continue to be a high number of members required for party registration providing the Ministry of Justice with plenty of room to interpret the registration process as they wish. They will continue to reject or stall party applications on the basis of parties not being favoured by the presidential administration. While the changes indicate that there is to be a ban on refusing party registration on the grounds of 'minor violations' ostensibly offering parties like *Alga* and *Atameken* the opportunity to register, the wording of the law will be crucial. The term 'minor violations' leaves the law wide open to the personal interpretation of

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<sup>25</sup> The changes have been pushed through at the request of OSCE prior to Kazakhstan taking up the chairmanship of the organisation in 2010. The amendments include; parliament to feature no less than two parties even if other parties (other than *Nur Otan*) fail to pass the seven percent threshold, parties now require 40,000 members for registration with at least 600 members per region, parties given one extra month (from 3-4 months) to collect signatures and submit documents and there will also be a ban on the refusal of registration in cases of minor violations of the party law. See Joanna Lillis, Astana's Reform Drive Ahead of OSCE Chairmanship Disappoints Opposition, [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 4 December 2008, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav120408.shtml>

<sup>26</sup> Bruce Pannier, Kazakh Government Prepares to Impose Elements of Democracy, *RFE/RL*, 17 November 2008.



officials at the Ministry of Justice who will be more than comfortable with interpreting the law to the preference of the presidential administration. They will continue to have the power of selective application. Thus there is no guarantee opposition parties will now have a far easier time when registering.

### *Formal Institutions and Authoritarianism*

Presidential power that is based on both formal and informal factors, gives the authority to an incumbent leader to be able to design institutional constraints to suit their preferences. As a result, the nature of the relationship between formal rules which are designed purposively to be interpreted and selectively applied, and the informal political behaviour which ensures they are, affects the ability of formal institutions to operate effectively in terms of their contribution to democratisation. In a political system where informal political relations and behaviour are prevalent, formal institutions and rules take on a different function from that which we would typically expect of them in a democratic system. Therefore, formal institutions are cosmetic in terms of their relationship to democratisation,<sup>27</sup> but at the same time can play an imperative role in establishing durable authoritarianism.<sup>28</sup> In Kazakhstan and many other post-Soviet states the formal rules which are designed to be selectively applied, interpreted or ignored act to legitimise such informal forms of political behaviour. It makes it acceptable and common practice that regional governors who are personally appointed by the president (as is the case in Russia and Kazakhstan) to cajole employees under their jurisdiction to vote for the president's party. The informal political behaviour where officials at the Ministry of Justice apply the rules strictly to opposition parties but with deftness to pro-presidential parties illustrates how the devising of formal rules in such a fashion is a way to make legitimate this kind of behaviour. Political parties as formal institutions can also assist in stabilising authoritarian regimes. The dominant parties established by post-Soviet leaderships have proved effective tools for regime stability. Parties like *Nur Otan*, *Edinaia Rossiia*, NAP and Bakiev's *Ak Zhol*, have been central to the engendering of elite cohesion which has formed a stable power base for authoritarian leadership. In

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<sup>27</sup> As implied in the clan literature.

<sup>28</sup> Jason Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in the Age of Democratisation* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007)

particular the case of Kyrgyzstan's *Ak Zhol* illustrates how, as in Kazakhstan, a dominant party has been used to build elite stability. The considerable fracturing of elites in the latter years of Askar Akaev's presidency and in the post-Tulip revolution period led to great instability and placed Bakiev's nascent presidency on a precarious footing. Bakiev established *Ak Zhol* in the hope that he could build and sustain a reliable and stable elite coalition around his leadership. To this extent he has been successful. The party won the majority of seats in the December 2007 parliamentary election and Bakiev's position has become securer as a result. Political parties, therefore, have a central role to play in binding in elite support to a ruler's leadership.

### *Personalism, Clientelism, Factional Elite Conflict and Formal Institutions*

When institutional constraints are designed in a manner to be influenced by selective application and interpretation and when formal rules bind and legitimise this informal political behaviour, there is a tendency for political institutions to emerge from this institutional context inherent with personalistic and clientelistic features. As discussed in Chapter Four, the institution of the presidency in Kazakhstan is infused with personality of the office holder. This has been common in many post-Soviet states. In Russia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Belarus among others, it is personal power not institutional power which defines political process. As Chapter Five highlighted, political parties in Kazakhstan are particularly susceptible to personalistic and clientelistic features. The types of parties emerging in the post-Soviet context enlighten us to the interdependent nature of the relationship between the informal and formal. While political parties are informal in the sense that they are personal political vehicles influenced by aspects of patronage and clientelism, they are also formal units for political elite groups to protect or extend their economic and political interests. Fragmented elite groups use political parties as formal vehicles as they seek to shelter and protect their interests in the midst of factional elite conflict. They act to formalise informal elite competition.

Dominant parties which base their organisation and ideology on the personality and policies of its leader to such an extent that the party is no more than an extension of that leader and not a separate entity can be observed across the former Soviet Union.



As with *Nur Otan*, personalistic-electoralist parties are common in post-soviet states. *Edinaia Rossia* purposefully engages in supporting Putin wholesale. The party's ideology is centred solely on the policies and vision of Putin's Russia. The party's pre-election programme for the 2007 Duma elections puts forward 'Putin's Plan' for the further development of Russia as its election manifesto.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the party leans on Putin's image for most party propaganda. *Edinaia Rossia* has become the personalised political vehicle for Putin.<sup>30</sup>

NAP in Azerbaijan too was a personalistic-electoralist party for Heydar Aliiev. It helped promote his rise to power, assisted in consolidating his position and was a critical vehicle in the transfer of power to his son. Despite his death the party remains very solidly about the personality of Heydar Aliiev as a father of the nation and now represents his son Ilham in a very similar fashion. Bakiev's *Ak Zhol* in Kyrgyzstan did not exist until he created it and illustrates how a party which now dominates the Kyrgyz legislature does so as the personal political vehicle of the president. In Tajikistan the Peoples Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDPT) fulfils similar functions as a personalistic party on behalf of the president, Emomalii Rahmon. What all these cases illustrate is how political parties have been used as personalistic extensions of presidential rule. They are political parties which are defined ideologically and organisationally by presidential figures and their policies. This personalisation of political parties, or parties essentially established to represent the interests of a single political figure, is not isolated to the former Soviet space. As mentioned in Chapter Five, one of the benefits of using Gunther and Diamond's framework is that parties from varying temporal and geographical contexts can be viewed under the same rubric, allowing us to understand wider trends in party development. Personalistic parties, while of course arising in different contexts and for different reasons, can be observed across the world. Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan's People Party, Alberto Fujimori's Cambio 90, Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia*, Thai Rak Thai Party of Thaksin Shinawatra are personalistic parties that share some

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<sup>29</sup> The Pre-Election Programme of the All Russian Party Edinaia Rossia, Plan Putina – dostoinoe budshchee velikoi strany, [www.edinros.er.ru](http://edinros.er.ru), [accessed 21.12.08  
<http://edinros.er.ru/er/rubr.shtml?110099>]

<sup>30</sup> It still remains his personal vehicle after relinquishing the presidency.

similar characteristics with the personalistic-electoralist party evident in the post-Soviet space.

In an institutional context defined by the relationship between informal political relations and formal rules, clientelistic-elite parties can also emerge. In the former Soviet Union parties have emerged representing the interests of oligarchic and professional liberal elites. In the Kazakh case, parties like *Asar*, the Civil Party, Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan and *Ak Zhol* emerged to reflect the interests of various elite influence groups. It illustrates how political parties provide important institutions for elites involved in factional elite competition. Parties provide institutions which can represent elite interests in parliament related to their economic assets. Simultaneously, they can provide vehicles which enable fragmented elites to maintain a public profile and compete for power assisting in protecting their political and economic interests. Kazakhstan is not a sole example. In Ukraine, for example, Yulia Tymoshenko a prominent businesswoman who made her vast wealth in the gas industry leads the All-Ukrainian Union 'Fatherland'. Regional oligarchic interests are also well represented in parties, elites from the Donbas region founded the Party of the Regions (originally called Revival of the Regions), while the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (United) represented the interests of elites from Kiev.<sup>31</sup> In particular the Party of the Regions illustrates the ideologically pragmatic nature of elite parties in the post-Soviet space. Prior to the 2004 parliamentary elections it ideologically repositioned itself on the left of the political spectrum in an effort to squeeze the Communist Party. It was successful, taking a large proportion of the communist electorate in Eastern Ukraine. As in Kazakhstan, these parties provide formal structures in which elite groups can protect or extend their economic interests during protracted factional elite conflict.

### *Informal Politics, Formal Institutions and Society*

In an institutional environment where an incumbent leader has been in a position of power so as to design formal rules allowing for informal interpretation and selective application to suit their preferences, there has emerged a disconnection and

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<sup>31</sup> The Party of the Regions also contains a considerable personalistic feature too as, Renat Akmetov, Ukraine's richest man, de facto owns the party.



passiveness between the institutions emerging in this context and citizens. While political parties in Kazakhstan illustrate only one instance of an institution, it does reflect on how the nature of the relationship between informal political relations and behaviour and formal institutions can shape how society perceives and develops any purchase with that institution. However, returning to the dilemma regarding a hierarchy of causality, it is difficult to observe where structural or behavioural factors play a prominent role in determining this disconnection and passivity. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union has contributed to this phenomenon due to its legacy of over politicisation of society (suggesting citizens are now appreciative of the freedom to *not* be political), the normalisation of one party rule and the contamination of the concept of 'party'. Simultaneously, the behaviour of political elites who establish parties as personal and clientelistic vehicles has made politics distant and unreachable for most citizens. To what extent do either structural legacies or behavioural factors take primacy in engendering the disconnection which exists between citizens and many formal political institutions? This work has suggested that similar to the emergence of neopatrimonialism, and the utilisation of informal political relations and behaviour, the relationship between parties and society represents a fusion of structural and cultural legacies and the actions of political elites in a specific contingent context. Of course, disconnection and passiveness between parties and society exists in advanced democratic systems, however they are particularly acute in the former Soviet Union where there is not the historical background of well-developed interest articulation and cleavage representation. Parties in Kazakhstan are exemplary of the feeling among citizens in many post-Soviet countries that politics is unreachable and political institutions do not act in the interests of the population, but only serve the interests of those elite groups at the apex of society. It illustrates how the informal nature of post-Soviet politics influences the purchase political institutions have with society.

Analogous to Kazakhstan many other post-Soviet states possess parallel issues regarding the relationship between parties and society. In Russia, there has been an evident gulf between citizens and parties. The level of trust in Russian parties is low

often coming bottom in surveys of trust in public institutions.<sup>32</sup> The development of the idea of personalistic and clientelistic linkages between parties and citizens was based on the case of Russia in the mid 90s.<sup>33</sup> Little has changed and the personalisation of politics around Putin and his character have only consolidated personalistic linkages. Kyrgyzstan is another example where the informal nature of the political system shapes the connection that exists between citizens and political institutions. In Kyrgyzstan, citizens are unaware and uninterested in the activities of parties and view them as institutions that are used for inter-elite conflict.<sup>34</sup>

Formal political institutions in the post-Soviet context are not entirely shaped by informal politics in terms of their relationship with society, as might be implied by the clan perspective.<sup>35</sup> Rather, as Chapter Six highlighted, formal institutions like political parties help solicit the legitimisation of a leaders' power by developing and articulating homogeneity of opinion regarding the centrality of the incumbents' leadership to the prosperity of the country. The formal institution of a party assists in legitimising political leadership. They are used to advocate the benefits a ruler's leadership can bring and their centrality to the stability and prosperity of the country. Utilising the informal preference a dominant party receives creates a monopoly on mass-media and bequeaths it extensive finances not available to other political parties. From this position it can dominate the terms of public discourse and homogenise opinion regarding a ruler's leadership. Usually dominant parties in these instances put forward an argument that their country requires 'strong leadership' which masks that fact that it is 'authoritarian leadership'.

Such a role played by dominant personalistic-electoralist parties is common in the former Soviet Union. In Russia, *Edinaia Rossia* backed by a large degree of administrative resources has been instrumental in putting forward a discourse

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<sup>32</sup> Stephen White, Russians and their Party System, *Demokratizatsiia*, Vol. 14 No. 1, Winter 2006, pp. 7-22

<sup>33</sup> In the mid 90s it was considered that there were programmatic parties such as the liberal *Yabloko* and the KPRF. Still these parties continued to be focused at the time on the dominant personalities of their leaders Grigory Yavlinsky and Gennadii Ziuganov.

<sup>34</sup> Institute for Public Policy, *Popular attitudes towards political and public institutions in Kyrgyzstan*, (Bishkek, M Vector, 2006).

<sup>35</sup> See Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia* and Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics and Beyond*.



regarding the importance of Putin's leadership to the success and stability of the country. Compared to how Russia's international reputation suffered under the presidency of Boris Yeltsin and the domestic weakening of the Russian state, it is argued that Putin has brought back stability and respect to Russia. He is portrayed as a strong leader who was tough on the unpopular oligarchs who had stripped Russian citizens of their public assets in the 1990s. He is perceived as having been strong in standing up to the international community who are viewed as interfering in Russia's geopolitical backyard by encouraging former Soviet states to join NATO and the EU. Putin, like Nazarbaev, is seen to have managed the economy well making the most of Russia's reliance on high oil prices to drive economic development. State employees are paid and pensions have been raised while a middle class has begun to emerge. Putin fits typically the tradition of strong authoritarian leaders in Russian history – protecting and securing the interests of the Russian state. His image as a young and strong leader buys into the overall discourse regarding his leadership and it is an opinion widely accepted among the population. Like Nazarbaev, Putin would easily win a free a fair democratic election. Even though he no longer remains president it is believed that he is still in charge and that it is a case of when he will return to occupy the presidency rather than if.

Without informal support from local and state agencies *Edinaia Rossia* would be unable to be so successful in promoting the discourse regarding Putin's leadership. Additionally, without Putin as a patron the party would not be privy to such preference. However, as with *Nur Otan*, it is unlikely Putin's power and leadership would remain so durable without *Edinaia Rossia*. The cases of *Nur Otan* and *Edinaia Rossia* exemplify how crucial personalistic pro-presidential parties can be. Kazakhstan and Russia are not lone examples. Many other parties of a similar ilk play a key role in promoting the homogeneity of opinion regarding the centrality of their president's leadership to the prosperity of the country which helps consolidate authoritarian rule. In Azerbaijan NAP elevated Heydar Aliiev to mythic status as father of the nation while in Tajikistan the PDPT play a similar role for Emomaliiev Rahmon. In Belarus and Uzbekistan, presidents Aleksandr Lukashenko and Islam Karimov have relied on several obedient pro-presidential parties as opposed to one

dominant party, but nonetheless the tactic is the same. Political parties are important in building support and legitimising political leadership in society.

What the analysis in this study has revealed is that in a post-Soviet neopatrimonial political system where informal forms of political behaviour and relations fuse with formal institutions, formal institutions take on different functions to those we might typically expect of them. It has confirmed that informal political relations and behaviour shape the role and relevance of formal institutional development that has been highlighted by other scholars. Yet it has also shown that it is not simply the case that formal institutions in post-Soviet regimes are façade institutions or simple window dressing for the international community. It is neither no surprise nor revelation that informal political relations and behaviour appear to assist in preferencing pro-presidential parties and the incumbent leadership through the selective application and interpretation of formal rules. What this study has exposed is the important and crucial role of political parties, and formal institutions more broadly, in consolidating a leader's power, providing elite stability and legitimacy with society. In Kazakhstan, as in other post-Soviet states, political parties while weak on those attributes typically associated with assisting democratic consolidation (interest articulation, representation, reconciling of interests, participation, communication and democratic control), are strong on those attributes which support the consolidation of authoritarian regimes (personalism, elite cohesion, and legitimisation of personal leadership). Therefore, the findings in this work go some way to assisting scholars and other interested parties in explaining the poverty of democracy in the former Soviet region. By relying on informal methods to develop formal institutional rules which mitigate against the dynamics and uncertainty of transition the president of Kazakhstan has established the rules of the game where his dominant pro-presidential party is effective in backing up his rule by bringing elite stability and social legitimacy. Other parties are marginalised and also focus on personality and elite politics in order to battle the hegemony of the president's party and are used as units to promote or extend interests in elite competition. The linkages between parties and citizens are weak resulting in parties not being able to fulfil the function as arbitrators of democratic development.



There is no guarantee in the Soviet space formal institutions will grow to become the rules by which political actors adhere to, in a rational, impersonalised and non-particularistic manner. However, neither is the kind of neopatrimonial authoritarianism present in Kazakhstan and to varying degrees other post-Soviet states, destined to last forever. While informal politics continues to shape the democratic features of formal political institutions in Kazakhstan and many of the other former Soviet states it is likely in time such features will become diluted and the rationalisation of the political system will take place. Currently while the signs are not encouraging, as many post-Soviet states continue to display levels of personalism and patronage that undermine formal political commitment to the separation of power and democracy in their constitutions, there remains the opportunity for greater democratic development and transparency of government.

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**Alikhan Baimenov** (Chairmen of *AK Zhol*), March 6, 2007, Astana.

**Kuanysh Zhalakov** (Head of the Astana Branch of *Adilet*), March 6, 2007, Astana.

**Kazbek M Kazkenov** (Assistant to Vice-President of *Nur Otan*) March 7, 2007, Astana.

**Altynshash Dzhaganova** (Leader of the Party *Rukhaniyat*), March 7, 2007, Astana.

**Mamashev Sadykovich** (Chairmen of *Zhambyl Oblast* Branch of *KNPK*), March 13, 2007, Taraz.

**Yelevov Abdurashid** (Chairmen of *Zhambyl Oblast* Branch of *Alga*), March 13, 2007, Taraz.

**Makhmedun Kossybayev** (Chairmen of *Zhambyl Oblast* Branch of *Nagiz AK Zhol*), March 15, 2007, Taraz

**Anatolii Volkov** (Deputy Chairman of *Rukhaniyat*), March 27, 2007, Almaty.

**Amirbek Togussov** (Chair of the Almaty City Branch of *OSDP*), April 24, 2007, Almaty.

**Adisha Amanovna** (Chief Coordinator of the Almaty City Branch of *Auyl*), April 25, 2007, Almaty.

**Marzhan Aspiniadrova** (Chair of the Almaty City Branch of *Azat*), May 16, 2007, Almaty.

**Khafez Makulbaev** (Chair of the Almaty City Branch of *KPK*), May 17, 2007, Almaty.

**Tamara Khamitovna** (Chair of the Almaty City branch *Rukhaniyat*) May 21, 2007, Almaty.

**Yerzhan Dosmukhamedov** (Chairman of the *Atameken* Party), June 30, 2007, London.

**Marina Sabitova** (*OSDP* Parliamentary Candidate), August 18, 2007, Almaty.

**Kenzhegali Sagadiev** (*Nur Otan* Deputy of the *Mazhilis*), August 22, 2007, Almaty.

**Galiaskar Dunaev** (*Nur Otan's* Political Council's Representative in Almaty), August 22, 2007, Almaty.

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**Alga**, *Ustav narodnoi partii Alga*, September 2006.

**Alga**, *Programma narodnoi partii Alga*, September 2006.

**APK**, *Programma Agrarnoi partii Kazakhstana*, 6 January 1999.

**Asar**, *Programma respublikanskoi partii Asar*, 25 October 2003.

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**Auyl**, *Programma Kazakhstanskoi sotsial-demokraticheskoi partii 'Auyl'*, 16 March 2000.

**Azat**, *Programma demokratichekoi partii Kazakhstana Azat*, 29 February 2008.

**DVK**, *Programma Narodnoi partii demokraticheskii vybor Kazakhstana*, 21 February 2004.

**GPK**, *Programa respublikanskogo obshchestvennogo obedineniia Grazhdanskaia partiia Kazakhstana*, 17 November 1998.

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**KNPK**, *Ustav kommunisticheskoi narodnoi partii Kazakhstan*, 6 June 2004.

**KPK**, *Ustav kommunisticheskoi partii Kazakhstana*, 11 January 1997.

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*Zakon Respubliki Kazakhstan o politicheskikh partiakh ot 2 Iulia 1996*

*Konstitutsiia Respubliki Kazakhstan ot 28 Yanvaria 1993 Goda.*

### **Party, Politician and Government websites:<sup>1</sup>**

<i>Adilet</i>	<a href="http://www.dp-adilet.kz">www.dp-adilet.kz</a>
Akezhan Kazhegeldin	<a href="http://www.kazhegeldin.org">www.kazhegeldin.org</a>
<i>Ak Zhol</i>	<a href="http://www.akzhol.kz/">www.akzhol.kz/</a>
<i>Alga</i>	<a href="http://www.npdvk.kz">www.npdvk.kz</a>
<i>Asar</i>	<a href="http://www.asar.kz">www.asar.kz</a>
<i>Atameken</i>	<a href="http://www.atamenken.info">www.atamenken.info</a>
<i>Auyl</i>	<a href="http://www.ksdp-auyl.kz">www.ksdp-auyl.kz</a>
<i>Azat</i>	<a href="http://www.azat-party.info/">www.azat-party.info/</a>
Central Election Commission	<a href="http://www.election.kz">www.election.kz</a>
<i>Edinaia Rossia</i>	<a href="http://www.edinros.er.ru">www.edinros.er.ru</a>
Galymzhan Zhakianov	<a href="http://www.zhakiyanov.info">www.zhakiyanov.info</a>
KNPK	<a href="http://www.knpk.kz/">www.knpk.kz/</a>
KPK	<a href="http://www.comparty.kz">www.comparty.kz</a>
<i>Nur Otan</i>	<a href="http://www.ndp-nurotan.kz/">www.ndp-nurotan.kz/</a>
<i>Nagiz Ak Zhol</i>	<a href="http://www.akzhol-party.info">www.akzhol-party.info</a>
OSDP	<a href="http://www.osdp.kz">www.osdp.kz</a>
Party of Patriots	<a href="http://www.ppk.gl.kz">www.ppk.gl.kz</a>
Parliament	<a href="http://www.parliament.kz">www.parliament.kz</a>
The President	<a href="http://www.akorda.kz">www.akorda.kz</a>
<i>Rukhaniyat</i>	<a href="http://www.rukhaniat.kz">www.rukhaniat.kz</a>

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*APR*  
*Central Asia Monitor*  
*Ekspress-K*  
*Epocha*  
Guardian  
Independent  
*Internews.kz*  
*Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*

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<sup>1</sup> Many of the websites run by smaller parties now no longer exist and only seem to appear during election periods. This includes *Atameken*, *Rukhaniyat*, Party of Patriots, *Auyl* and the Communist Party.



Kazakhstan Today  
*Kazinform*  
*Khabar*  
*Komsomol'skaia Pravda*  
*Liter*  
Moscow Times  
*Nezavisimaia Gazeta*  
*Novoye Vremia*  
*Panorama*  
*Politika.kz*  
*Pravila Igry*  
*Press-sluzhboi Mazhilis*  
*Press-sluzhba NP 'Alga' (DVK)*  
*Press-sluzhba RNPK*  
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty  
*Respublika*  
*Respublika Assandi Times*  
*RIA Novosti*  
*Rossiiskiye Vesti*  
*Strana i mir*  
*Svoboda Slova*  
*Taszhargan*  
*Vremia*  
*Vzgliad*

**Other Websites:**

[www.asip.kz/](http://www.asip.kz/)

[www.club.kz](http://www.club.kz)

[www.dialog.kz](http://www.dialog.kz)

[www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org)

[www.ferghana.ru](http://www.ferghana.ru)

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[www.kub-info](http://www.kub-info)

[www.ksilon.kz](http://www.ksilon.kz)

[www.nomad.su](http://www.nomad.su)

[www.posit.kz](http://www.posit.kz)

[www.procuror.kz](http://www.procuror.kz)

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