

The Polarization of Voters in Kazakhstan:

Why Do Residents of Almaty and Astana Vote Differently from Residents of Oblasts?

ABSTRACT: *The issue of polarization between rural and urban voters has been the subject of many studies. However, the factors that impact voting polarization may differ from country to country. The goal of this paper is to determine and analyze factors that might have influenced both turnout and voting results of the 2007 parliamentary election in Kazakhstan. This election has demonstrated differences in voting behavior between the residents of oblasts and those of two major cities (Almaty and Astana). My research suggests that these differences are caused by historical aspects of Kazakhstani political culture, the use of administrative leverage by Kazakh authorities, geographical residence of voters, and many other factors. The analysis of these factors allows us to make predictions about possible political changes that Kazakhstan may face in the near future.*

I. Introduction

Few people were surprised by the outcome of the parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan in 2007, when the pro-presidential party “Nur-Otan” won all the seats in the legislature (Table 1). The “Nur-Otan” was an obvious leader in that race. In addition to great administrative and media resources that the party supporters possessed, the “Nur-Otan” was officially headed by the country’s president – Nursultan Nazarbayev. All of these factors had put the “Nur-Otan” in a very advantageous position in comparison to other political parties during the election. Therefore, it was not surprising that the party was widely supported by voters of all Kazakhstani regions. What in fact surprised many people was that ‘Nur-Otan” did not gain large support in two major cities of Kazakhstan – Almaty and Astana. In order to understand all the political importance of this fact, one should know more about the status of these two cities, as well as about their political, economic, and social roles in Kazakhstan.

The administrative regions of Kazakhstan consist of 14 regions, called *oblasts*, and two major cities – Almaty and Astana (Figure 1). In 1998, the Kazakhstani government passed a law that has placed these two cities on the same level with the other 14 *oblasts*.¹ In other words, the law has provided Almaty and Astana with the same political privileges that the *oblasts* have, such as voting representation in both houses of the national parliament. The law also states that neither Almaty nor Astana must have any administrative dependence on any of the 14 *oblasts*, unlike other cities in Kazakhstan. One of the major reasons for such a decision was that Almaty used to be Kazakhstan’s capital until 1997, whereas Astana became the new capital in 1997.² Furthermore, the population of each of these cities exceeds populations of many Kazakhstani *oblasts*. The total registered population in these two cities is estimated to be about 2.2 million

¹ The Official Site of Almaty City. Accessed: September 12, 2007. http://www.almaty.kz/page.php?page_id=384&lang=2.

² The Embassy of Kazakhstan to the USA and Canada. Accessed: January 5, 2008. <http://www.kazakhembus.com/Astana.html>

people³, while the total population of Kazakhstan is about 15.5 million people.⁴ In addition, there are hundreds of thousands of people from different *oblasts* who live and work unregistered both in Almaty and Astana.

Figure 1: Administrative Map of the Republic of Kazakhstan



The aforementioned facts demonstrate that Almaty and Astana not only enjoy enormous administrative independence, but also concentrate a large part of Kazakhstan's electorate. These two cities also have great economic influence in Kazakhstan. Furthermore, the fact that both Almaty and Astana have been the capitals of Kazakhstan in different periods of time makes each of them even more politically powerful than any other *oblast* in the country. These factors allow us to suggest that elections in Almaty and Astana are more transparent and independent than elections in all other Kazakhstani cities, which economically and politically depend on the administrations of their *oblasts*. As a result, we can suggest that the way how residents of these

³ The Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Accessed: September 12, 2007. <http://www.stat.kz/index.php?lang=rus&uin=1171952772>.

⁴ The Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Accessed: April 17, 2008. http://www.stat.kz/RU/news/Pages/n1_16_04_08.aspx.

two cities voted during the last parliamentary elections more accurately reflects the attitude of Kazakhstan's urban population toward the current regime. Therefore, this paper primarily explores the voting behavior issue in Kazakhstan by comparing residents of Almaty and Astana to voters who live in *oblasts*.

The goal of this paper is to explain the difference in election turnout and voting preferences between *oblasts* and Almaty and Astana. It is necessary to find specific factors that have an impact on election turnouts and voting behavior of Kazakhstani people in order to achieve this goal. In this paper, I ask what makes the majority of voters in Almaty and Astana choose to abstain from elections. If absenteeism is a form of a protest for them, what are they protesting against? At the same time, I ask why so many people in *oblasts* participate in elections. Does the Kazakhstani government use its administrative leverage to influence voters in *oblasts*? I also want to find out what causes the majority of voters who live in *oblasts* to support the current regime in Kazakhstan, whereas many residents of Almaty and Astana tend to support opposition parties.

This research has great scientific significance because the voting behavior issue in Kazakhstan is not deeply explored. The country has only recently obtained its independence from the U.S.S.R. Therefore, many political and democratic institutions in Kazakhstan are still in the process of development. It is also important to note that voting behavior of Kazakhstani people reflects many historical and cultural aspects of this nation. For example, the Soviet past has had enormous influence on how people vote in Kazakhstan. There are also many other historical factors that have left a negative imprint on the current political system in Kazakhstan. These factors include the absence of freedom of speech, restrictions that the Soviet government

used to put on demonstrations, and the center-periphery type of relations that was developed during the communist period.

The research will allow us to create the model of voting behavior that can be applied to almost any of the post-Soviet countries, since many of them have “inherited” similar autocratic political systems after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Zimmer 2005; Sahakyan and Atanesyan 2006). The model will also be able to provide profound scientific explanation of many political processes that take place in Kazakhstan, as well as to determine future political changes that may take place in this country. The voting behavior model may also reflect the political situation in Kazakhstan in terms of the attitude of Kazakhstani people toward their government. It can also explain to us which part of Kazakhstani society is more dissatisfied with the current regime and why. Finally, the results obtained in this research are essential for understanding the democratization process in Kazakhstan.

To sum up, this paper examines why residents of Almaty and Astana vote differently from residents of Kazakhstan’s *oblasts*. In the next section, I will present a literature review that investigates different aspects of voting behavior. Besides the studies on Kazakhstan, the review will analyze many scientific works of American and European researchers that can provide a very profound analytical background on factors that determine voting behavior. Then, I will discuss the methods and hypotheses that I will use in my paper. The analysis of data and practical application of my methods and hypotheses will be presented in the next section of this paper. The final part of the paper will contain the conclusion, which summarizes all findings of this research and provides predictions about political changes that Kazakhstan may face in the near future.

II. Literature Review

There are many research papers that study differences in voting behavior between urban and provincial citizens. Political scientists propose different explanations of why these people usually vote differently from each other. Some of these explanations are very similar; others contain analyses based on completely new theoretical approaches. Therefore, the results that many scientists have obtained during their research may either differ from each other or be almost the same. Though there are no fundamental contradictions between all theoretical approaches, it is important to analyze all of them in order to reflect alternative views in this research paper. Finally, almost all important theoretical approaches that are used in this paper primarily include the analyses of statistical data and other types of information on voting and turnout results.

Many political scientists prefer to develop new theories on voting behavior. They claim that old theories are not sufficient to explain different aspects of the voting behavior issue. (Lau and Redlawsk 2006; Niemi and Weisberg 1993; Oliver and Ha 2007). It is worth noticing that these researchers primarily use statistical and survey data in doing their studies. Such data was either collected by independent institutions or by the scientists themselves. This information provides an opportunity to draw very reliable conclusions, as well as to do an accurate analysis on voting behavior. Using quantitative data, some political scientists (Oliver and Ha 2007) have developed the theory of voting behavior in micro-elections that usually take place in small suburban and rural communities. This theory can be successfully applied to Kazakhstan since about 45% of the country's population lives in rural areas.⁵ In addition, the usage of quantitative information may be helpful in developing some new theories that are similar to the theory of voting behavior in micro-elections, but specifically oriented at Kazakhstan.

⁵ The Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Accessed: September 12, 2007. <http://www.stat.kz/index.php?lang=eng&uin=1171952844&chapter=1171220056>.

Another way to examine voting behavior is to study voting itself. This area of study still has many puzzles that have not been explained yet due to the difficulties that social scientists face. One of these difficulties is to explore human nature. The most popular method that is used to study human nature and behavior is qualitative analysis. Many scientists who adopt this method assume that all people make their choices under the influence of different factors, called vote determinants (Niemi and Weisberg 1992). There is one major difference between vote determinants used in qualitative analyses and variables used in quantitative studies. The majority of vote determinants are developed on the basis of non-numerical information. In other words, vote determinants incorporate factors such as personal views, political preferences, financial interests, human fears, and many others. On the contrary, quantitative research explores the voting behavior issue through the creation of specific numerical and mathematical models, such as an analysis of statistical and survey data on elections.

Though it is essential to reveal vote determinants in order to explain why some people vote differently from each other, it is more essential to take into account that the understanding of determinants may vary from one country to another. For example, many American social scientists, such as Flanigan and Zingale, primarily focus their studies on some specific vote determinants that usually exist in democratic societies (1998). In their book, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, they stress the following major vote determinants of American voters: “party identification, ideology, [and] domestic and foreign policies” (1998: 182). However, it is very debatable whether these vote determinants can be applied to voters who live in authoritarian states. The reason is that the political atmosphere in authoritarian countries is much different than that of democratic ones (Lust-Okar 2006: 457-458). In authoritarian countries, people can be oppressed by local authorities; non-governmental media outlets can be

forcibly closed because of unsustainable tax burdens imposed by the government (Nixey 2005). Under such conditions, voters may have some specific motives to vote that are different from those of the American electorate. Therefore, it is crucial to take into account the nature of authoritarian regimes prior to testing vote determinants that may have an impact on citizens of these countries.

Furthermore, traditions and values of people who live in Asian countries, such as Kazakhstan, may not always be similar to that of American people. For example, Ingvar Svanberg emphasizes the important role of traditions, customs, and other cultural and historical factors in shaping political attitudes of Kazakh people toward their rulers (1999). Paul Sniderman and Richard Brody also stress the significance of these factors in the development of political psychology within a particular community (1991). These two theories suggest that it is necessary to look for specific vote determinants for each society, besides using the general ones. A retrospective analysis of country's political history is one of the ways to define such determinants. As a result, cultural and historical factors may also shape vote determinants of the Kazakhstani people.

In contrast to those social scientists who investigate general aspects of voting behavior, some researchers concentrate their studies specifically on the differences in voting behavior between the residents of cities and provinces. Their major goal is to find an explanation of why people who live in big cities vote differently from those who live in rural and suburban areas (Oliver 2001; Walks 2005; Oliver and Ha 2007). The most popular theory supported by many scientists is that cities and provinces/suburbs are highly polarized in terms of the electoral choices of their residents. This finding is based on the analysis of elections conducted in cities and provinces/suburbs, as well as on the work of non-governmental organizations and local

electoral institutions. However, there is still some level of disagreement regarding the major political significance of the city-provincial polarization. While some researchers support the idea of non-proportional development of democratic institutions caused by this polarization (Oliver 2001: 5), others argue that the city-provincial polarization has the greatest impact on partisan affiliation of local voters (Walks 2005).

In his earlier article, Alan Walks more precisely develops his theory on the impact of city-provincial polarization on political preferences of voters (2004). He argues that political attitudes of voters primarily depend on the place of their residence. Using the example of Canada, Walks claims that “place of residence is important not only for understanding voting behavior, but also attitudinal positions on a select set of political issues” (2004: 290). According to his findings, people who live in big cities have more liberal political views rather than those in provinces. Among all factors that have an impact on this phenomenon, Walks stresses the importance of university education that many urban people usually have (2004: 281). These findings have great scientific importance for my research, since they provide evidence in the support of one of my assumptions about the impact of territorial factor on political preferences of Kazakhstani voters. Furthermore, the findings may also explain why Kazakhstani populations in *oblasts* have largely supported current authorities in the last parliamentary election.

Different political scientists use various approaches in their articles and studies on Kazakhstan’s politics, elections, administrative relations, and other issues (Cummings 2000; Cummings 2005; Nixey 2005; Dave 2005; Kennedy 2006). The reason is that Kazakhstan’s political system has both democratic and authoritarian characteristics (Dave 2005: 4). Despite many pro-democratic political and legislative reforms that the Kazakhstani government had conducted in the middle of the 1990s (Olcott 2002), the Soviet past has significantly influenced

the development of modern political and electoral institutions in Kazakhstan. One of the major evidence of this assumption is that many members of modern political elite in Kazakhstan used to occupy key governmental positions in Kazakhstani government under the Soviet regime (Cummings 2005). Therefore, we may assume that Kazakhstan is still on the transitional phase of its political development.

For example, Sally Cummings stresses two major phases that contributed to the pro-democratic political change in Kazakhstan: “liberalization between 1992 and 1994 [and] heightened institutional competition in 1994-1995” (2005:23). Many modern democratic elements of political and electoral institutions were built during these two phases. However, Sally Cummings also emphasizes two other important phases: “centralization and concentration of presidential power in 1995-1998 [due to the amendments in Kazakhstan’s Constitution] and the onset of repression in 2001” (2005:23). The revival of the Soviet-type methods of strengthening the executive branch is primarily related to the fact that many current Kazakhstani officials used to occupy high ranking positions in the Soviet bureaucratic apparatus. As a result, the modern model of political and electorate institutions in Kazakhstan combines many democratic Western elements with its non-democratic Soviet analogues. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account all these aspects of Kazakhstan’s political system in investigating the issue of voting behavior in this country.

The theory of comparative analysis can also be successfully used in exploring the issue of voting and political behavior in Kazakhstan. This theory proposes to study voting behavior in one country through the prism of identity of political processes within a specific group of countries, such as the former Soviet Union states. The hypothesis that we can derive from this theory suggests that Kazakhstan may have a lot of similarities with other post-Soviet countries in

terms of the influence of authorities on local elections. For example, many post-Soviet countries have traditionally used their administrative tools to influence voters (Zimmer 2005), especially in provinces that usually enjoy very restricted political freedom. According to Kerstin Zimmer, “political machines and administrative manipulations in post Soviet states are immediate leftovers from the Soviet period” (2005: 370). At the same time, Zimmer proposes another explanation for this phenomenon. As he also argues, “political machines are to some extent the result of power and resource concentrations, which have their origin in the Soviet era” (2005: 370). As a result, the entire idea of Zimmer’s argument is that it is the Soviet past that has had a great impact on the development of authoritarian political systems in modern post-Soviet republics.

There is a lot of evidence of how post-Soviet states use their administrative power to manipulate elections. For example, during parliamentary elections that took place in Russia on December 2, 2007, “students in Siberia, doctors on the Volga River, and office workers in Moscow [said] they [were] being threatened with disciplinary action if they [did] not vote in [the] election” (Lowe 2007). The above-discussed theory of comparative analysis suggests that the same illegal mechanisms of influencing voters may also be used by the Kazakhstani authorities to make people vote for a specific party. As a result, the theory of comparative analysis has many advantages in terms of facilitating the research process. It allows scientists to analyze voting behavior issues on the basis of already-existing studies on this issue in other countries.

A similar scientific approach was used in the work of two Armenian researchers, Vahe Sahakyan and Arthur Atanesyan, who also stress common trends in political culture and behavior of people who used to live in the Soviet Union (Sahakyan and Atanesyan 2006). However, they

link these trends with authoritarian regimes that exist in these countries, as well as with the decision of these countries to build “their own kind of democracy” (2006: 347). In their journal article on political behavior of Armenian citizens, they emphasize some illegal mechanisms that the Armenian government uses to influence voters during elections. Both scientists argue that these “mechanisms often do not work in big cities, such as Yerevan⁶” (2006: 350), due to high publicity that exists in these cities. On the contrary, “the strong community network in provinces prevents any unpleasant political incidents from being known by outsiders,” as Sahakyan and Atanesyan argue (2006: 350).

Many of these aspects of Armenian political culture are similar to that of Kazakhstan. Therefore, it would be very useful to analyze the studies on voting behavior in some post-Soviet countries, such as Armenia and Russia, and then to apply the findings to Kazakhstan. If applied to Kazakhstan, these findings may provide good evidence of what mechanisms were used by local authorities in Kazakhstani *oblasts* to achieve such great turnouts in the last parliamentary elections. Furthermore, the findings can explain why these mechanisms did not work in big cities – Almaty and Astana. Supposedly, the results should demonstrate an ineffectiveness of administrative leverage in influencing election results in big cities with high concentration of media and greater levels of publicity.

Lust-Okar, a professor from Yale University, stresses another important theory regarding elections in authoritarian countries that is different to that of Sahakyan and Atanesyan. Lust-Okar suggests that many “studies [do] not challenge the widespread assumption that elections in authoritarian regimes are largely orchestrated events, in which candidates are strictly vetted and closely monitored, and outcomes are determined through ballot-box stuffing and manipulation” (2006: 457). As he claims, the crucial mistake of many political scientists is their biased

⁶ Yerevan is a capital of Armenia.

approach toward authoritarian regimes. It is wrong to assume that authoritarian governments retain their power primarily through voting frauds during elections. In contrast, Lust-Okar claims that “authoritarian rulers can generally rely on institutions – not ballot-box stuffing – to manage elections, using districting and electoral laws to favor supporters” (2006: 456). In other words, this theory stresses the importance of governmental institutions as major tools of influencing elections in authoritarian countries. If we apply this theory to Kazakhstan, we may determine administrative leverage that Kazakhstani government supposedly uses to influence its voters during elections.

Other scientists, who have also investigated the voting behavior issue in Kazakhstan, stress the importance of the theory of centre-periphery relations (Cummings 2000). The major objective of this theory is to explain the relations that exist between Kazakhstan’s capital, Astana, and the fourteen *oblasts* through the prism of relations between the Soviet central apparatus and its regional subordinates. According to Sally N. Cummings, “the central powers [in Kazakhstan] have the right to abolish provinces, as provincial rights are only statutory” (2000: 11). In fact, the same type of relations existed in the Soviet Union that controlled its subordinates through the center-periphery system of relations. As a result, we may conclude that Kazakhstan might also adopt this system to influence voting behavior of its citizens.

Such a comparison with the Soviet Union also provides a good explanation of why many electoral and political institutions in Kazakhstan do not play a substantial role in forming active and independent electorates in the country. In the Soviet Union, all such institutions used to serve as decorations of pluralism and democracy, whereas the real political power to choose the country’s leaders belonged to a small group of bureaucratic officials in the Communist Party. In Kazakhstan, the government enjoys absolute power to “register NGOs, [as well as] has

enforcement powers against those that do things not permitted by their charters” (Kennedy 2006: 56). In addition, the Kazakhstani government tends to provide financial support to many NGOs in order to have a control over them (Sharipzhan 2005).

It is also possible to develop the aforementioned analysis by transferring the theory of centre-periphery relations to the micro level. For example, some studies that do not relate to the issue of voting behavior (Gray 2000) provide a very descriptive analysis of economic and social relations between local authorities in *oblasts* and individuals who live in these *oblasts*, as well as private enterprises that operate there. Such an analysis can explain how economic and social dependence of ordinary people and businesses on local authorities may shape electoral preferences of voters in *oblasts*. These relations between authorities and citizens can also be referred to vote determinants since many voters in authoritarian states usually make their decisions under the fear of being fired or denied business licenses.

Elitism is another important factor that has a great impact on people’s voting behavior in Kazakhstan. Several studies on the role of elitism in Kazakhstan’s politics argue that the existence of tribal elites in Kazakhstan influences electoral choices of people depending on which part of Kazakhstan they live in (Cummings 2005; Olcott 2002). Historically, ethnic Kazakhs have been divided in three territorial-based tribal groups called *zhuz*: *Uly* (Senior), *Orta* (Middle), and *Kishi* (Junior) *Zhuz*. Today, people from the *Uly Zhuz* are largely represented in Kazakhstan’s government since the current president of Kazakhstan belongs to this particular tribe (Cummings 2005: 66). It is obvious that members of other tribes may be dissatisfied with such a situation. Furthermore, the elitism factor can also be observed within each of the three *zhuz*. The reason is that “tribes have a definite hierarchy within a *zhuz* and that competition for positions occurs also at this level” (Cummings 2005: 66). Therefore, it is necessary to analyze

the turnout data gathered from different parts of Kazakhstan that are populated by members of any of the three tribes, in order to understand how these people vote.

Finally, recent studies on the issue of voting behavior in Kazakhstan are predominantly based on the investigation of political, economic, and other leverage used by the Kazakhstani government to influence the outcome of elections. Some political scientists argue that it is the nature of any authoritarian state to retain its power through the usage of such leverage (Dave 2004; Kennedy 2005). This may include frauds in counting voters' bulletins, as well as threats to dismiss public service employees from their workplaces, if they do not vote for a specific party. Other political scientists believe that Kazakhstani authorities resort to using their administrative tools during elections in an attempt to stop the spread of "color revolutions"⁷ that have already taken place in three former Soviet countries (Nixey 2005). All aforementioned facts stress the demand for democratization that many Kazakhstani voters demonstrate through the way they vote.

III. Data, Hypotheses, and Methods of Analysis

The turnout results of the 2007 parliamentary election in Kazakhstan have revealed many differences in voting behavior between voters who live in Kazakhstan's *oblasts* and those who live in Almaty and Astana. One of these differences is that the turnout in Almaty and Astana has been lower than that of in *oblasts* (Table 2). As we can see in Table 2, the average voting turnout in Almaty and Astana was about 30% in the 2007 parliamentary election. In contrast, voting turnouts in *oblasts* varied between 53% and 90%. These numbers demonstrate high political activeness of rural populations in Kazakhstan. However, this assumption contradicts to the

⁷ Note: there is no consensus between political scientists in defining the term "color revolutions". In general, this term characterizes revolutions that take place in post-communist societies. The word "color" is used to stress a specific color that symbolizes each of these revolutions. For example, Ukrainian demonstrators were wearing orange scarves during the "Orange revolution", while Georgians chose the rose color to signify their revolution in 2003.

findings of many political scientists. For example, many studies on voting behavior have found that rural people are, in general, indifferent to politics (Walks 2005; Lau and Redlawsk 2006). Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the data from Table 2 in order to find the reasons that can explain such a high election participation rate among residents of *oblasts* in Kazakhstan. Furthermore, the voting absenteeism among residents of Almaty and Astana should also be analyzed. It may symbolize the demand for political changes, as well as social protest against the current regime in Kazakhstan.

The second major aspect in voting behavior of Kazakhstani people is that political preferences of many voters in Almaty and Astana are different from that of voters in *oblasts*. According to the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan, many residents of Almaty and Astana gave their votes to opposition parties⁸, while the majority of voters in *oblasts* supported the pro-presidential party in the last parliamentary election (Table 3). These facts reveal the tendency of voting polarization between *oblasts* and the two major cities in Kazakhstan. The idea of voting polarization is that voters in *oblasts* are usually more conservative in their political preferences, while urban people are more liberal. This idea is supported by many political scientists (Lau and Redlawsk 2006; McLean and Urken 1995; Niemi and Weisberg 1993). Therefore, it is very important to explore the tendency of voting polarization in order to predict possible political changes that Kazakhstan may face in the near future.

The data presented in Table 2 and Table 3 suggests several hypotheses. The most obvious hypothesis is that vote determinants in *oblasts* are different from that in Almaty and Astana. The idea of differences in vote determinants between rural and urban people has been developed in

⁸ Note: There are two major political parties in Kazakhstan. The “Nur-Otan” is a pro-presidential party. The United Social Democratic Party (OSDP) is an opposition party. The OSDP was created as a coalition of several democratic opposition parties, which decided to consolidate their efforts before the 2007 parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan (<http://www.osdp.kz/>).

many studies on voting behavior (Niemi and Weisberg 1993; Flanigan and Zingale 2002). Some of these studies provide a profound overview on the reasons that cause these differences. For example, individual political preferences of voters in cities and *oblasts* might be one of such reasons. It is necessary to use specific methods of analysis, like qualitative analysis, in order to test the aforementioned hypothesis. This analysis might propose to study motivations that guide rural and urban voters, as well as to analyze factors that cause public distrust of the Kazakhstani government by residents of Almaty and Astana.

A quantitative approach is another method of testing these hypotheses. The idea of this approach is to analyze survey and statistical data on voters who live in *oblasts* and Almaty and Astana. This analysis will allow us to get accurate information about political preferences of Kazakhstani citizens. The data for analysis is usually collected prior to or during elections by asking randomly chosen voters about their party affiliation or about their intentions to vote. This research paper primarily uses the data that has already been collected either by governmental statistic agencies or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It is necessary to say that there is a small difference in the data provided by these two sources, since many NGOs in Kazakhstan are financed by Kazakhstani government rather than by independent sponsors (Sharipzhan 2005). Therefore, there is a probability that the information provided by such NGOs can be biased.

Finally, very high turnout results in *oblasts*, as well as surprisingly high percentages of voters who supported the pro-presidential party, suggest that Kazakhstani authorities have used administrative resources to influence voters during the 2007 parliamentary election. The method of comparative analysis can be very effective to test this hypothesis. Its idea is based on finding analogies to other countries. For example, many authoritarian regimes, especially among the post-Soviet countries, very often use administrative tools to influence their voters. These tools

may include media propaganda and criminal prosecution of political dissidents. Furthermore, such tools were extensively used in the Soviet Union. As a result, the analysis of similarities with other post-Soviet states may allow us to understand the impact of administrative power on voting behavior of Kazakhstani people.

IV. Political Culture in Kazakhstan

The modern political culture in Kazakhstan contains elements of both democratic and authoritarian regimes. Many political scientists usually say that such countries are in their transitional condition (Sahakyan and Atanesyan 2006; Everett-Heath 2003). As a transitional country, Kazakhstan has two important characteristics. On the one hand, it is experiencing a political transformation toward the democracy. On the other hand, Kazakhstan is still preserving many aspects of the Soviet political culture. Therefore, the study on voting behavior in Kazakhstan requires a multilateral approach that should consider Kazakhstan from different points of view. It is important to follow this rule when analyzing the data on the last parliamentary election⁹ in Kazakhstan that took place in August 2007. If made correctly, the analysis will help us explain the turnout gap in the 2007 parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan, as well as do important prognoses regarding the further development of the democratization process in this country.

⁹ Note: Kazakhstan's model of elections is typical to that of many other countries. However, recent changes in the country's Constitution have put great barriers for opposition parties to be elected into the parliament. The official web-site (http://election.kz/portal/page?_pageid=153,77330&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL) of the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan provides a text version of the election law that regulates national elections in Kazakhstan. According to this law, "the sum of voters' voices given for political parties and reaching over seven percent shall be replaced with the number of allocated deputy mandates." As a result of this amendment, only one (pro-presidential) party called "Nur-Otan" is currently represented in both houses of Kazakhstan's parliament, since other parties could not overcome the seven-percent barrier in the last parliamentary elections in 2007.

There is another important social aspect that may characterize political culture of many Kazakhstani people: the majority of citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan are reluctant to protest and demonstrate. One of the reasons of this reluctance is that many Kazakhstani citizens are afraid of being arrested and prosecuted for their civil activities. This fear before the authorities is the legacy of the Soviet past. In the Soviet Union, the communists violently suppressed any forms of civil disobedience. To justify its repressive actions, the Soviet government had even introduced legislative provisions in its Constitution that deliberately restricted demonstrations. The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan contains similar legislative restrictions. For example, Article 32 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan states that:

Citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan shall have the right to peacefully and without arms assemble, hold meetings, rallies and demonstrations, street processions and pickets. [However,] the use of this right may be restricted by law in the interests of state security, public order, protection of health, rights and freedoms of other persons.¹⁰

In other words, citizens in Kazakhstan must get official permission from local authorities prior to going to demonstrations. Otherwise, ‘unsanctioned’ demonstrations are considered illegal and the government may even order to arrest demonstrators. Furthermore, demonstrators can be fined and sentenced in jail because of their civil activities. According to the report prepared by the United Nations Online Network, “leaders of ‘unsanctioned’ meetings and demonstrations [in Kazakhstan] have repeatedly been beaten, detained, fined, and imprisoned”¹¹.

¹⁰ Official website of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, http://www.akorda.kz/www/www_akorda_kz.nsf/sections?OpenForm&id_doc=DB26C3FF70789C84462572340019E60A&lang=en&L1=L1&L2=L1-9 (Accessed: October 15, 2007).

¹¹ United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance. Accessed October 15, 2007, <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/NISPAcee/UNPAN008462.pdf>.

In addition, this report has continuously been ranking the country of Kazakhstan as ‘not free’ since 1995. Besides international organizations that monitor political situation in Kazakhstan, foreign governments also stress that the practice of restricting demonstrations in Kazakhstan violates democratic standards that the country has promised to abide by. For example, the 2006 Report on Human Rights Practices prepared by the U.S. State Department says that until December 2006 Kazakhstan had a law “banning election-related demonstrations from the period following the end of the voting until the results are published.”¹² All of these facts provide a good insight into the political atmosphere in Kazakhstan that has shaped both political mentality and attitude of Kazakhstani people toward demonstrations.

It is important to take into account another major aspect of political culture in Kazakhstan: there has been no change of political regime in this country since the collapse of the Soviet Union.¹³ The absence of political changes has had a dual impact on political views of many Kazakhstani citizens. On the one hand, it has stimulated the demand on political reforms among the progressive part of Kazakhstani population. On the other hand, many people have got used to the same political regime, thus rejecting any changes that might destabilize political situation in the country. This observation gives answers on several important questions of this research paper. First of all, it explains that there are two major issues during every election in Kazakhstan: changes and stability. The pro-presidential party proposes stability to people, while the opposition party proposes changes. Secondly, this observation shows that many residents of Almaty and Astana have voted for changes in the last parliamentary election in Kazakhstan, while the majority of *oblast* residents have chosen political stability.

¹² Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Kazakhstan, 2006. March 6, 2007. The U.S. State Department. Accessed: March 30, 2008. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78820.htm>.

¹³ Note: President Nursultan Nazarbayev has been in power for 16 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. In 2005, he was reelected for another 7-year term.

The voting results of the 2007 parliamentary election show that a large number of Kazakhstani citizens still support the existing political system. Furthermore, Kazakhstani people did not even protest against the recent amendment to the Constitution that strengthened political power of the current regime. “In May 2007, the Parliament approved a constitutional amendment that would allow [President] Nazarbayev to seek re-election as many times as he wishes” (Leitner 2007). This amendment has caused a lot of criticism from different international organizations, many of which have accused Kazakhstan of being an authoritarian country. However, the Kazakhstani society was almost indifferent to this event. This fact implies that many Kazakhs are either satisfied with the existing political situation in the country, or they are afraid of political repressions from the government.

V. Findings

A. Place of Residence and Voting Behavior

The analysis of the data from the 2007 parliamentary election in Kazakhstan shows that voting preferences of the majority of Kazakhstani voters are substantially based on their places of residence. For example, the theory of city-province polarization suggests that people who live in economically and politically developed areas, such as big cities, very often oppose the government (Walks 2005). In contrast, rural and provincial populations are more conservative in their political preferences. Table 2 provides empirical evidence in favor of this hypothesis. It shows that many voters from Almaty and Astana did not support the pro-presidential party “Nur-Otan” in the last parliamentary election, while residents of *oblasts* gave their votes to this political party. This fact suggests that residents of Almaty and Astana, by some reasons, were not

satisfied with the existing political system in Kazakhstan. On the contrary, the majority of *oblast* residents showed credence to this system by supporting the ruling party.

Since voting polarization in Kazakhstan heavily depends on the place of residence of voters, we should analyze specific location factors that make these voters view political situation in Kazakhstan from different perspectives. One of these location factors is that voters in *oblasts* have fewer opportunities in getting free access to information than voters in Almaty and Astana. As a result of the lack of information about Kazakhstani politics, many residents of *oblasts* do not have a clear idea of actual political situation in Kazakhstan. One of the major methods that the Kazakhstani government uses to restrict information supply in *oblasts* is the administrative power. In Kazakhstan, *oblast* authorities have great power over local press: they may use administrative leverage to close newspapers and media outlets that criticize the existing regime, and thus may prevent people from getting information.

However, the Kazakhstani government does not have the same level of power over media and opposition press in Almaty and Astana. In contrast to economically less developed *oblasts*, Almaty and Astana are important financial and political centers of Kazakhstan that host offices of many international organizations and embassies of foreign countries. In other words, there is an extensive oversight over government's activities in Almaty and Astana by the international community. Therefore, an apparent prosecution and closure of opposition press in Almaty and Astana can attract attention of many international organizations that are located in these two cities. In addition, restriction of media can hurt the country's reputation, and endanger membership of Kazakhstan in many prestigious world institutions, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Kazakhstan has recently taken many obligations to

conduct democratic reforms in order to get a chairmanship¹⁴ in the OSCE. Thus, limited governmental control over media and opposition press in Almaty and Astana allows residents of these two cities to get much more information, than residents of *oblasts* usually get. This location factor explains higher political awareness of voters in Almaty and Astana, as well as their critical attitude toward the existing regime in Kazakhstan.

The absence of access to internet in many Kazakhstani *oblasts* is another location factor that impacts polarization of voters between *oblasts* and the two cities. According to the OSCE report on internet governance in the OSCE region, only 4 percent of Kazakhstani population was using internet in 2006.¹⁵ For comparison, there are 165 million internet users¹⁶ in the United States who constitute 55 percent of the country's population. It is clear that the majority of Kazakhstani internet users primarily live in Almaty and Astana – the largest financial, economic, and political centers of Kazakhstan. There are two major reasons that explain why residents of *oblasts* have either very limited or no access to internet. First of all, it is inexpedient to provide internet in *oblasts*, many of which have small populations that are dispersed along the vast territories. Secondly, not many people in *oblasts* can afford internet. According to the aforementioned report on internet governance, monthly unlimited internet plan in Kazakhstan costs more than \$100;¹⁷ while the average monthly salary in this country was about \$434 in 2007.¹⁸ The majority of Kazakhstani people, whose salaries are below this average, live in *oblasts* that are economically less developed than Almaty and Astana. Thus, people from *oblasts*

¹⁴ In November 2007, the Ministerial Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe elected Kazakhstan to be a Chairman-in-Office of the Organization in 2010.

¹⁵ Nougmanov, Rachid. "Internet Governance in Kazakhstan." *Governing the Internet*. 2007, pp. 119-131. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Accessed: March 21, 2008. Available at: http://www.osce.org/publications/rfm/2007/07/25667_918_en.pdf.

¹⁶ Reimer, Jeremy. "China to Overtake U.S. in Number of Internet Users in 2009." July 15, 2007. Ars Technica. Accessed: March 21, 2008. Available at: <http://arstechnica.com/news.ars/post/20070715-china-set-to-overtake-the-us-in-number-of-internet-users.html>.

¹⁷ Nougmanov, p. 120.

¹⁸ "Belarus Ranks Third in CIS in Terms of Average Monthly Salary." March 12, 2008. Belarus Telegraph Agency. Accessed: 21 March, 2008. Available at: <http://www.belta.by/en/news/econom?id=205015>.

are much more restricted in getting information from internet than residents of Almaty and Astana. This location factor also explains why these two groups of Kazakhstani citizens view the existing political system in Kazakhstan from different perspectives and, therefore, why they vote differently from each other.

Another important location factor is that there are no or few politically active interest groups and unions in *oblasts*, primarily because of low population density. According to the U.S. State Department, Kazakhstan is “the ninth-largest nation in the world.”¹⁹ For comparison, Kazakhstan is “slightly less than four times the size of Texas.”²⁰ However, the population of this country is only 15.5 million people. Taking into account that more than one eights of Kazakhstani population lives in Almaty and Astana, it becomes clear that the rest of the people are dispersed along the vast territories of fourteen Kazakhstani *oblasts*. According to the Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan, there are 7305 villages in *oblasts* against 86 cities²¹, many of which are, in fact, small towns with the populations of less than one hundred thousand people. In other words, the majority of *oblast* residents live in small rural communities and townships, where the concentration of people is very low. As a result, interest groups and professional unions in *oblasts* will always lack strong membership and, therefore, will be ineffective. Furthermore, if created, such unions will be unable to coordinate and communicate with their members who live in distant towns and villages, some of which do not even have clean water or electricity.

In contrast to *oblasts*, there are many unions and interest groups in Almaty and Astana, due to high concentration of people in these two cities. The opportunity to attract a lot of

¹⁹ Background Note: Kazakhstan. February 2007. U.S. State Department. Accessed: March 14, 2008. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5487.htm>.

²⁰ The World Factbook. April 15, 2008. Central Intelligence Agency. Accessed: April 18, 2008. Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2023.html>.

²¹ The Agency of Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Accessed: April 12, 2008. Available at: <http://www.stat.kz/RU/digital/Pages/default.aspx>.

members makes these unions very effective in lobbying Kazakhstani authorities. For example, when the government banned the import of cars with right-hand steering wheels, many Kazakhstani drivers participated in demonstrations against that ban.²² It is important to stress that these demonstrations have only taken place in Almaty and Astana, but not in *oblasts*. As a result, the existence of numerous interest groups and unions in Almaty and Astana makes residents of these two cities politically more active, as well as more critical with respect to Kazakhstani authorities. On the contrary, residents of *oblasts* are more conservative in their political preferences, due to the absence or lack of interest groups and unions that would educate these people to defend their political rights.

Finally, greater access to education that residents of Almaty and Astana have is also one of the location factors. In general, people from the *oblasts* are less educated than people from Almaty and Astana. The reason is in different opportunities to get higher education. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), about one third of all Kazakhstani universities are located only in Almaty and Astana.²³ In addition, almost all of these universities are in the list of the 60 top ranking institutions that provide higher education in Kazakhstan.²⁴ Both these facts imply that residents of Almaty and Astana do not have to leave their cities in order to get good higher education within Kazakhstan. In contrast, people from the *oblasts* who want to get better education in Almaty and Astana cannot afford the cost of living in these cities, in addition to tuition. As a result, greater opportunities to get higher education also impact political awareness of people from Almaty and Astana. This factor

²² Sidorov, Oleg. "Who will profit from a ban on right hand steering wheel cars?" November 21, 2006. [Gazeta.kz](http://eng.gazeta.kz/art.asp?aid=83623). Accessed: March 1, 2008. Available at: <http://eng.gazeta.kz/art.asp?aid=83623>.

²³ List of Universities of the World: Kazakhstan. September 2007. [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\)](http://www.unesco.org/iau/onlinebases/list_data/kl-nw.html#Kazakhstan). Accessed: March 21, 2008. Available at: http://www.unesco.org/iau/onlinebases/list_data/kl-nw.html#Kazakhstan.

²⁴ The General Rating of 60 Leading Universities in Kazakhstan (2007). Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Accessed: April 10, 2008. Available at: http://www.edu.gov.kz/fileadmin/user_upload/images/reiting_60_vuz_2007.pdf.

explains why voters from Almaty and Astana are less conservative than people from *oblasts* and are more likely to demand political changes in Kazakhstan.

B. Other Factors that Impact Voting Behavior

Besides factors that determine political preferences of Kazakhstani voters, there are also factors that may explain differences in voting turnouts in the 2007 parliamentary election in Kazakhstan. Let us first analyze the reasons that might push many people from *oblasts* to participate in this election. One of the reasons is that many people from *oblasts* might be forced to cast their ballots by the *oblast* authorities. In fact, the practice of forcing people to participate in election in order to get greater support for a specific political party was often used by the communists in the Soviet Union. In the U.S.S.R., almost all people were working for public institutions, since there were no private businesses in the country. Therefore, the Soviet regime had great economic and administrative leverage to make its citizens vote: people were afraid of losing their jobs, as well as of facing other punishment for disobedience. There is no wonder that many post-Soviet states, such as Kazakhstan and Russia, might adopt the Soviet method of influencing voters to manipulate them during elections. For example, I have already mentioned in this research about students and professors in Russia who were forced to vote for the ruling party during elections, under a threat of being expelled from universities (Lowe 2007).

Now, let us apply the aforementioned analysis to Kazakhstan. In Kazakhstan, there are two major sectors that play a substantial role in the economies of *oblasts*: the public sector and the extractive industry. As a result, many people from *oblasts* work either in the public sector or in companies that extract natural resources. However, companies that extract natural resources are also affiliated with the government, since it provides them with licenses to extract and sell

these resources. In other words, the government has great power over the salaries, pensions, and other public assistance that residents of *oblasts* get. This observation suggests that people from *oblasts* might be forced to participate in elections. Though there is no strong evidence that the Kazakhstani government forces people from *oblasts* to vote, comparisons with other post-Soviet nations, such as Russia, allow us to consider this assumption as well.

Another important issue is why many people from *oblasts* have decided not to participate in the 2007 parliamentary election in Kazakhstan. There are several explanations of this decision. One of the most plausible explanations is that many residents of *oblasts* were living and working in either Almaty or Astana during the election. This might happen due to the fact that many people from *oblasts* could not find work in their regions and, therefore, moved to Almaty and Astana without being registered²⁵ as residents of these cities. Migrants from *oblasts* usually rent apartments in Almaty and Astana, but they do not register there, since it is necessary to have a living place in order to be eligible for registration. However, almost all apartments in the majority of Kazakhstani cities are usually leased illegally in order to avoid taxation. Therefore, residents of *oblasts* who come to Almaty and Astana to find work cannot be officially registered in the apartments they rent. As a result, since the Kazakhstani legislation obliges every citizen to vote at the specific polling station according to her/his registration address,²⁶ residents of *oblasts* cannot cast their ballots in Almaty and Astana, even though they live there. The analysis suggests that if these people were allowed to vote in Almaty and Astana, they would less likely support the ruling party, in contrast to other residents of *oblasts* who have stayed in their regions.

C. Evidence of Social Demand for Political Reforms in Kazakhstan

²⁵ Note: Every Kazakhstani citizen is registered under the address, where she/he permanently lives. If she/he moves to another place, she/he must re-register under her/his new living address in order to be allowed to vote there.

²⁶ The Central Election Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Accessed: October 15, 2007. Available at: http://election.kz/portal/page?_pageid=153,77097&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL.

In contrast to *oblasts*, low turnout results in Almaty and Astana may symbolize the demand for political changes. Therefore, it is necessary to consider what factors have pushed many residents of Almaty and Astana to abstain from voting, and what this may mean for the political future of Kazakhstan. One of the factors that might cause voting absenteeism in these two cities is public distrust of Kazakhstani electoral system. In this research, I have argued that residents of Almaty and Astana are more aware of actual political situation in Kazakhstan than people from *oblasts*, since they have greater access to opposition press and other alternative sources of information. High political awareness makes residents of Almaty and Astana more informed of “dirty” mechanisms used by the government to influence the results of elections. For example, “the OSCE criticized Kazakhstan for failing to ensure sufficient openness during the vote count [in the 2007 parliamentary election]. The organization said its monitors found flaws in the vote count in more than 40 percent of the polling stations they visited, including improper counting procedures” (Troianovski 2007). This evidence explains why many residents of Almaty and Astana do not believe in the fairness of elections in Kazakhstan, knowing that the government controls all administrative and media resources in the country. As a result, these people might deliberately miss the elections, since they believed that the voting results would anyway be falsified by the authorities, regardless of their votes.

On the other hand, residents of Almaty and Astana might also express their protest against the current political system in Kazakhstan by ignoring elections. One of the purposes of this protest is to put legitimacy of the election results under a question. For example, let us consider the “Nur-Otan” party. With the support of less than 15 percent²⁷ of all voters in Almaty, this political party has won all the seats in the national legislature from the city of Almaty. As a result, the low turnout in Almaty has primarily hurt the reputation of the “Nur-Otan.” It has

²⁷ Note: the “Nur-Otan” has received 62.8% of votes in Almaty that constitute less than 15% of all voters in this city.

demonstrated that the party did not get the support of the majority of voters in this city. Thus, the fact that about 80% of all voters in Almaty and Astana have ignored the recent election may be viewed as a direct confrontation between residents of these two cities and the existing political system in Kazakhstan. This fact also demonstrates that voters in Almaty and Astana show greater political activeness than people from *oblasts*. All these observations suggest that the democratization process in Kazakhstan will most likely begin in Almaty and Astana, rather than in *oblasts*.

VI. Conclusion

The study on voting behavior requires a profound analysis of different factors that impact political preferences of voters. The findings of this research paper support this assumption. The paper analyzes voting results of the 2007 parliamentary election in Kazakhstan. It finds that many Kazakhstani voters are polarized depending on their places of residence, as well as on other cultural, historical, and geographical factors. The polarization of voters in Kazakhstan primarily exists between two territorial groups: *oblasts* – mainly rural and economically less developed administrative entities; Almaty and Astana – the former and the current capitals of Kazakhstan that have the same status as that of *oblasts*, including representation in the national parliament. In contrast to *oblasts*, Almaty and Astana are important financial, economic, and political centers of Kazakhstan that together contain more than one eighth of Kazakhstani population.

The research has found that people who live in economically and politically developed communities, such as Almaty and Astana, are less conservative than people who live in rural areas. In other words, the place of residence has a significant impact on people's voting behavior, since it determines political preferences of these people. For example, the research shows that

factors that influence voters in Almaty and Astana include: greater opportunities to get information from opposition press and internet, weak governmental control over local businesses, extensive oversight by non-governmental organizations and the international community, and other. All of these factors develop political awareness of residents of Almaty and Astana, as well as shape their critical attitudes toward the existing regime in Kazakhstan.

On the contrary, voting behavior of people from *oblasts* is influenced by other factors. For example, residents of *oblasts* have either limited or no access to opposition press and internet; therefore, many of these people do not get adequate information regarding the current political situation in Kazakhstan. People from *oblasts* have fewer opportunities to get higher education than residents of Almaty and Astana. In addition, governmental control over extracting industries that the majority of *oblast* residents are involved in makes these people more dependent on the government in terms of getting salaries, pensions, and other social benefits. As a result, factors that impact voting preferences of people from *oblasts* do not in fact develop political awareness of these people. In contrast, these factors make residents of *oblasts* indifferent to politics, as well as allow the government to exercise administrative leverage in order to influence the outcome of elections in *oblasts*.

The analysis of how different factors influence voting behavior of Kazakhstani people explains the results of the 2007 parliamentary election in Kazakhstan. In *oblasts*, the majority of voters have supported the ruling party, thus showing credence to the current political regime in Kazakhstan that exists for almost seventeen years. Furthermore, people from *oblasts* have shown great participation results in that election. The ruling party has also won all the seats in the national parliament from Almaty and Astana. However, the voting support that the party has got in these two cities can be viewed as a failure, since the majority of residents of these two cities –

80% in Almaty and 60% in Astana – have boycotted the election at all. This data supports my analysis on voting behavior of Kazakhstani people. The data demonstrates that political preferences of Kazakhstani voters significantly depend on specific factors that cause voting polarization between people from *oblasts* and residents of Almaty and Astana.

Finally, the major importance of this research is that it allows us to make predictions regarding the political future of Kazakhstan. Based on the analysis of the election results, we can assume that residents of Almaty and Astana strongly oppose the existing political regime in Kazakhstan. Since the Kazakhstani government restricts its citizens in their rights to demonstrate, these people choose to ignore elections as an alternative way to show their protest. In other words, the populations of Almaty and Astana express their demand for democratic reforms through boycotting elections. All these observations allow us to assume that both Almaty and Astana have a favorable political climate for the development of democratic forces in Kazakhstan. As a result, all major political changes in Kazakhstan will most likely begin in these two cities, which populations share common democratic values. Furthermore, the inflow of migrants from *oblasts* may stimulate the spread of these values in other regions of Kazakhstan. If this assumption is true, the next parliamentary election in Kazakhstan will show lower turnout results and less voting support for the ruling party not only in Almaty and Astana, but also in *oblasts*. In this case, we should expect Kazakhstan to face political changes in the near future.

Table 1: Final Election Results as Announced by the Central Election Commission²⁸

Party List	Valid Votes	Percentage of Valid Vote	Mandates Won
<i>Nur Otan</i>	5,247,720	88.41%	98
<i>OSDP</i>	269,310	4.54%	0
<i>Ak Zhol</i>	183,346	3.09%	0
<i>Auyl</i>	89,855	1.51%	0
<i>CPPK</i>	76,799	1.29%	0
<i>PPK</i>	46,436	0.78%	0
<i>Rukhaniyat</i>	22,159	0.37%	0
Total	5,935,625	100%	98

²⁸ Republic of Kazakhstan: Parliamentary Elections. 18 August 2007. OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report. OSCE: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Accessed: 21 March, 2008. Available at: http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2007/10/27638_en.pdf.

Table 2

The Turnout Results of the 2007 Parliamentary Elections in Kazakhstan²⁹		
<i>Oblasts/Cities</i>	<i>Number of voters that participated in elections</i>	<i>Percentage of voters that participated in elections</i>
Akmola oblast	323.482	66.11%
Aktyubinsk oblast	299.219	74.59%
Almaty oblast	769.898	90.12%
Atyrau oblast	202.876	76.83%
Eastern Kazakhstan oblast	534.067	60.3%
Zhambyl oblast	352.259	72.05%
Western Kazakhstan oblast	230.204	60.32%
Kyzylorda oblast	281.441	73.66%
Kostanai oblast	419.798	73.17%
Mangistau oblast	127.101	53.22%
Pavlodar oblast	247.204	53.39%
Northern Kazakhstan oblast	311.036	75.03%

²⁹ The Central Election Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Accessed October 15, 2007, http://election.kz/portal/page?_pageid=153,604861&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL.

Southern Kazakhstan oblast	807.586	72.3%
Karaganda oblast	523.323	66.82%
Almaty city	197.983	22.51%
Astana city	99.067	39.13%

Table 3

The Voting Results of the 2007 Parliamentary Elections in Kazakhstan³⁰		
<i>Oblasts/Cities</i>	<i>Percentage of voters that supported the pro-presidential party “Nur-Otan”</i>	<i>Percentage of voters that supported the opposition party “OSDP”</i>
Akmola oblast	81.34%	4.85%
Aktubinsk oblast	90.48%	2.99%
Almaty oblast	93.62%	2.58%
Atyrau oblast	94.4%	1.24%
Eastern Kazakhstan	84.57%	5.48%
Zhambyl oblast	87.06%	5.86%
Western Kazakhstan oblast	82%	5%
Kyzylorda oblast	86.41%	6.47%
Kostanai oblast	91.87%	1.77%
Mangistau oblast	96.9%	0.88%
Pavlodar oblast	82.61%	6.31%
Northern Kazakhstan oblast	91%	2.07%
Southern Kazakhstan oblast	88.09%	5.25%
Karaganda oblast	94.69%	1.74%

³⁰ The Central Election Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Accessed October 15, 2007, http://election.kz/portal/page?_pageid=153,605104&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL.

Almaty city	62.80%	21.5%
Astana city	82%	10.6%

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