

On June 6, president Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev in his Twitter account wrote that the growth of the civil society is a natural process, and that the solid and multiparty parliament is a way for political modernisation. Logical questions arise: will the parliamentary election in Kazakhstan be competitive? And will alternative parties be allowed to run for election?

**Publications in the Opinion section do not reflect the opinions of the editorial staff and are the personal opinions of authors.**

[Русский](#)



*Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev, acting president of the Republic of Kazakhstan, votes at one of polling stations in Nur-Sultan on June 9. Photo: press service of Akorda*

The presidential election held on June 9 in Kazakhstan was ambiguous. The Kazakhstanis didn't see the name of Nazarbayev in ballot papers for the first time. However, Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev, ex-speaker of the Senate of Parliament and former deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, who was handpicked by the first president, was the candidate of the ruling party Nur Otan. During the election campaign, the voters divided into two groups: those who boycott the election considering it de facto illegitimate, and the

boycott was not just to “lie on the sofa”, but to spoil ballots or take out to streets, and those who visit polling stations and do their civic duty.

The voters were not unanimous in their decision: the traditional voters of Nur Otan (public sector employees, teachers, the military, and others) preferred to vote for the programme of succession of the first president’s course announced by experienced politician Tokayev.

However, the voters who disagree with the current political status quo deemed Amirzhan Kossanov, a candidate of the national patriotic movement Ult Tagdyry (People’s Fate), as a candidate “against everyone” and voted not so much for him as against the system.

There’s no need to mention the rest of the candidates: during the election campaign they either discredited themselves by becoming memes (for example, candidate Sadibek Tugel in a social video of his headquarters visited a café in the capital and lectured that it was better to drink kumis than vodka), or didn’t have credibility with Kazakhstan voters (candidates of the Communist Party and Akzhol, which is not deemed an opposition in Kazakhstan for a long time).

Finally, according to preliminary results of the Central Election Commission (CEC), the winner is Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev with 70.76 per cent with 77.4 per cent turnout. However, other events can also be called as the result of the election:

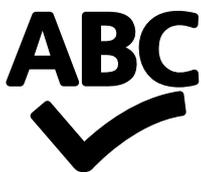
1. Growth in observers’ movement – participation of Kazakhstanis in election observation has been the most active in the election history of the country. On the voting day, many observers took photo and videos of violations committed by election boards and sent vote counting protocols from polling stations where uncertain victory of Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev was reported;
2. Growth in civil society, especially among young people. Kazakhstan’s civil activists had made videos a few days before the election about the problems in Kazakhstan with a vivid slogan “Men oyandym” (I am awake). This slogan is an axis in the rhyme by Mirzhakyp Dulatov “Oyan Kazak” (Wake up, Kazakh) written in the years of fight against the Tsarist regime, which turned into the national liberation revolt of 1916. Creative activists established the homonymous movement “Oyan, Qazaqstan” on June 5, which, according to their statement, didn’t recognise the results of the election.
3. Some protesters moved from Facebook to the streets. According to vice minister of the ministry of interior affairs Marat Kozhayev, nearly 500 people who responded to the call of the movement “Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan” banned in Kazakhstan, whose leader was fugitive oligarch Mukhtar Ablyazov, were detained in Almaty and Nur-Sultan. However, whether these people followed the call of M.Ablyazov or took to

streets voluntarily remains unclear because the leader of the banned movement has monopolised the opposition field and doesn't recognise other opposition forces and their leaders based in Kazakhstan, which he has called the projects of Ak-Orda (this is how M.Abylyazov called the opposition candidate, A.Kossanov). Therefore, it follows that the opposition forces are not going to consolidate as each of them wants to be the leader of protest movements.

The most interesting stage is the post-election time, namely, making pre-election promises made by the main candidate, Kassym-Zhomart Tokayev, true. On June 6, the president in his Twitter account wrote that the growth of the civil society was a natural process, and that the solid and multiparty parliament was a way for political modernisation. Logical questions arise: will the parliamentary election in Kazakhstan be competitive? And will alternative parties be allowed to run for election?

It should also be noted that Amirzhan Kossanov, commenting the exit poll results, which showed that Tokayev won by an overwhelming margin, said he won votes (according to exit poll results, Kossanov won 15.39 per cent) twice as many as needed to pass to the parliament. Will the people of Kazakhstan support Kossanov's party during the parliamentary election the same as during the presidential election? We will have the answers to these questions only after a while.

In summary, we can say that Kazakhstanis wait for political reforms from the authorities. The presidential election, although the OSCE won't recognise its transparency and fairness, has given an impetus to the rethinking of many processes taking place in the country, for the sake of people, above all. Now that the shift of power in Kazakhstan is officially over, the people of Kazakhstan hope for the thaw and rapprochement in relations between the authorities and the people, which require the democratisation of the political system first.



If you have found a spelling error, please, notify us by selecting that text and pressing *Ctrl+Enter*.