Neo-Soviet Patterns of Women's Political Participation: A Case of Kazakhstan (1995 – 2018)

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Declaration of Work

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Acknowledgements

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List of Abbreviations

BPfA	The Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DR	Descriptive representation
EU	European Union
GE	Gender Equality
GII	Gender Inequality Index
Kazakh SSR	The Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NWM	National Women Machinery
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PR	Proportional Representation
SMD	Single Member District
SR	Substantive representation
TSM	Temporary Special Measure (quota)
UNDP	The United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	The United Nations Population Fund
UN Women	UN Agency on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
USSR	The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WB	World Bank
WPP	Women's Political Participation

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Abstract

Neo-Soviet Patterns of Women's Political Participation:

A Case of Kazakhstan (1995 – 2018)

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This research examines the pattern of women's participation in formal political institutions in post-Soviet Kazakhstan since 1996, focusing on how women's political agency and representation is exercised within the restrictive context of the country's authoritarian regime. The thesis employs the frameworks of authoritarian institutions and women's political representation, using scholarship on Sovietisation as an overarching concept. The research examines women's political participation from three main angles: women's personal ambitions and motivations towards political office and the related representative functions; descriptive and substantive representation; and the impact of serving in parliament on political careers in Kazakhstan. This qualitative exploratory research is based on descriptive statistics data and interviews with current and former female politicians at the national and local levels, and other actors involved in women's political recruitment and participation.

Women's representation in Kazakhstan's parliament began to increase in 2007, coinciding with the final stage of constitutional reforms aimed at concentrating power around the presidency. This thesis argues that the pattern of women's political representation increasingly resembles that of the Soviet period, and is not emerging naturally from women's activism or motivation. This analysis demonstrates that the socio-demographic characteristics of female members of parliament in Kazakhstan today resemble those of female delegates during the Soviet period, when the country was the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic. Substantive representation further supports this argument by demonstrating that the role of female parliamentarians is largely concentrated on relaying the regime's messaging to the population in a manner similar to the propaganda of the Soviet period. For women, the value of serving in parliament is decreasing and does not advance their political careers. This research contributes to the scant literature on women's participation in institutional politics in post-Soviet authoritarian regimes, providing a gender perspective on the scholarship of representation in autocracies.

Chapter I. Introduction, Research Question, Contributions and Outline

There is a wealth of literature exploring the factors that contribute to higher levels of women's representation in legislatures in liberal democracies. These include institutional arrangements, such as quotas and electoral systems,[1] and political features, such as political party orientation, size, nomination strategies,[2] political culture,[3] ideology,[4] and historical[5] and cultural[6] determinants. Western scholarship on gender and politics largely attributes women's under-representation in politics to a supply–demand interaction, in which the supply aspect refers to the factors that prevent women from seeking nomination (most frequently a result of lack of aspiration and confidence, as well as qualifications), and the demand aspect which focuses on the role of political institutions, arguing that they do not actively encourage women to run for office.[7] Modernisation theory assumes that more economically developed societies, mostly Western liberal democracies, are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of women's political representation. The reasoning behind this assumption is that developed societies are well-positioned to promote gender-friendly policies, including in terms of political empowerment. Therefore, there are fewer institutional, social, and structural barriers for women to overcome in order to run for political office ('demand-side'). Moreover, it is assumed that forward-thinking societies

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[1] Studlar, D.T. and McAllister, I., 2002. 'Does a critical mass exist? A comparative analysis of women's legislative representation since 1950', *European Journal of Political Research*, 41(2), 233–253; Tremblay, M., 2006. 'The substantive representation of women and PR: some reflections on the role of surrogate representation and critical mass', *Politics and Gender*, 2(4), 502–511; Childs, S. and Krook, M.L., 2006. 'Gender and politics: the state of the art', *Politics*, 26(1), 18–28; Celis, K., Childs, S., Kantola, J. and Krook, M.L., 2008. 'Rethinking women's substantive representation', *Representation*, 44(2), 99–110; Dahlerup, D., 2006. 'The story of the theory of critical mass', *Politics and Gender*, 2(4), 511–522; Dahlerup, D., 2013. *Women, Quotas and Politics*. London: Routledge.

[2] Matland, R.E., 2005. 'Enhancing women's political participation: legislative recruitment and electoral systems', in *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers* 2, pp. 93–111; Shvedova, N., 2005. 'Obstacles to women's participation in parliament', *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, 33, pp. 22–45; Franceschet, S., Krook, M.L., and Piscopo, J.M., 2012. 'Conceptualizing the impact of gender quotas', *The Impact of Gender Quotas*, pp. 3–26.

[3] Lawless, J.L., and Fox, R.L., 2005. *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Fox, R.L., and Lawless, J.L., 2005. 'To run or not to run for office: explaining nascent political ambition', *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(3), 642–659.

[4] Paxton, P. and Kunovich, S., 2003. 'Women's political representation: the importance of ideology', *Social Forces*, 82(1), 87–113.

[5] Paxton, P, 1997. 'Women in national legislatures: a cross-national analysis', *Social Science Research*, 26, 442–464; Tripp, A.M. and Kang, A., 2008. 'The global impact of quotas: on the fast track to increased female legislative representation', *Comparative Political Studies*, 41(3), 338–361.

[6] Norris, P. and Inglehart, R., 2001. 'Cultural obstacles to equal representation', *Journal of Democracy*, 12(3), 126–140.

[7] Norris, P. and Lovenduski, J., 1993. 'If only more candidates came forward': Supply-side explanations of candidate selection in Britain', *British Journal of Political Science*, 23(3), pp. 373–408.

treat women politicians more favourably than patriarchal societies and that this contributes to the plethora of women candidates ('supply side').[8]

The correlation between a political regime and women's political advancement, however, is spurious.[9] According to large-N case studies, democratic and authoritarian regimes have similar rates with regard to the number of women in political office. The ambivalence of this relationship is clearly supported by statistical evidence. According to the data on women in political institutions worldwide, which is provided annually by the Interparliamentary Union, the group of states with the highest number of women in parliament contains countries with different levels of social and economic development. This is assessed based on human development, type of political regime, corruption rates, and inequality (Gini coefficient). For instance, alongside traditionally stable democracies such as Sweden, Iceland, and Finland, which have progressive histories of relatively gender-friendly policies, high indexes of human development, and political freedom, as well as low rates of corruption, [10] Rwanda and Cuba feature among the top twelve countries with more than 40% of women in parliament. These countries are classified as 'non-free' by Freedom House. Nicaragua, Mexico, and Ecuador are also found within the same group, despite having very high corruption rates, as reported by Transparency International.[11] The human development index of the abovementioned countries also varies, from traditionally 'very high' (Nordic countries) to 'medium' (Nicaragua) and 'low' (Rwanda).[12] In addition, countries that are ranked as non-free and less developed in terms of human development have higher rates of inequality in terms of income distribution across the population.[13]

Following modernisation theory, it can be hypothesised that more women would participate in the political sphere in post-Soviet societies owing to their advanced positions

[8] Paxton, P. 1997. 'Women in national legislatures: a cross-national analysis', *Social Science Research*, 26, 442–464.

[9]Kenworthy, L. and Malami, M., 1999. 'Gender inequality in political representation: a worldwide comparative analysis', *Social Forces*, 78(1), 235–268; Thames, F.C., 2017. 'Women's legislative representation in authoritarian regimes (12 July). Available at: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3001247 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3001247 (Accessed: 23 September 2017).

[10] Freedom House, 2016. *Freedom in the World*. An interactive map is available at: https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2016 (accessed: 5 October 2017).

[11] Transparency International, 2016. *Corruption Perceptions Index 2016*. An interactive map is available at: https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016 (accessed: 5 October 2017).

[12] UNDP, 2016. Human Development Report – Human Development for Everyone, Human Development Indices, pp. 22–25. Also available at: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/HDR2016_EN_Overview_Web.pdf (accessed: 5 October 2017).

[13] World Bank, 2017. Gini coefficient data Available at: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=CU-BO-EC-KZ (accessed: 10 October 2017).

in the economy and their experience in public participation during the Soviet era.[14] Although countries of the post-Soviet bloc share a common history of social, economic, and political evolution, they vary in terms of the level of women's political participation (WPP) and the dynamics at play after the dissolution of the USSR. In relatively free post-Soviet regimes (Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia), women are better represented in governmental positions but less so in parliament, with the exception of Moldova and Kyrgyzstan, both of which have introduced quotas. An opposite situation is found in authoritarian ('not free') regimes, including Kazakhstan. Women's representation in politics depends on the openness of institutions, which are ready to 'recognise women as a political constituency'.[15] This raises main central questions guiding this thesis: what is the purpose of increased levels of female political participation in centralised regimes (notably post-Soviet) and how and why do women become involved in politics in these contexts?

There is relatively little research on women's experiences as politicians in authoritarian regimes in post-Soviet states, in terms of the selection process or women's terms as parliamentarians. The issue of representation, including women's representation, is problematic in non-democratic regimes owing to the concentration of power in the hands of elites, which regulates both the representational dynamics and recruitment. Post-Soviet authoritarian regimes are influenced by a long history of women's emancipation and are characterised by higher levels of women's formal participation in political representative institutions.

A discussion of the issue of women's participation in authoritarian post-Soviet regimes is impossible without attempting to understand the myriad interconnected notions informing such a multidimensional political environment, within which the political participation of citizens is framed. A discussion would include the nature of the regime, its development over time, the functioning of key political institutions, and recruitment policies. It is important to note that common democratic notions such as representation and participation cannot invariably be used when studying authoritarian regimes, since they are implemented in a different way within them. In these circumstances, women's increased political representation does not necessarily translate into an impact on policy- and decision-

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[14] Kittilson, M.C. and Schwindt-Bayer, L.A., 2012. *The Gendered Effects of Electoral Institutions: Political Engagement and Participation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Inglehart, R. and Norris, P., 2000. 'The developmental theory of the gender gap: Women's and men's voting behavior in global perspective', *International Political Science Review*, 21(4), 441–463.

[15] Viterna, J. and Fallon, K.M., 2008. 'Democratization, women's movements, and gender-equitable states: a framework for comparison', *American Sociological Review*, 73(4), 668–689.

making. In this respect, therefore, the literature lacks evidence to connect the type of regime with the level of participation of women in politics, including their motivations and experiences.

This thesis attempts to illuminate these issues drawing on the specific case of Kazakhstan. It addresses the core research question of why the authoritarian regime brings more women to political office by examining the way women compete for political office in post-Soviet authoritarian regimes; how they are represented in parliaments and their substantive participation in parliaments, including as gender advocates; and finally, how the political office impacts women's political career compared to their male counterparts. Its core argument is that the pattern of women's political representation increasingly resembles that of the Soviet period, and is not emerging naturally from women's activism or motivation of women to pursuit their political career in parliament. The thesis argues that by bringing more women to politics the regime in Kazakhstan, in fact, pursues its own goals by employing women as channels contributing to the regime's stability. The analysis demonstrates that the socio-demographic characteristics of female members of parliament in Kazakhstan today resemble those of female delegates during the Soviet period, characterised by younger age of women parliamentarians, being recruited from non-strategic areas which limited their access and interest in getting spoils of office. The lower retention rate for female members of parliament, as well as the growing number of female parliamentarians with prior experience in the ruling party, supports the suggestion that the regime prioritises the propagandist function of female politicians. Substantive representation further supports this argument by demonstrating that the role of female parliamentarians is largely concentrated on relaying the regime's messaging to the population in a manner similar to the propaganda of the Soviet period. Analysing women's performance in the parliamentarians' functions, it argues that women are more limited in their representative capacities than their male counterparts. For women, the value of serving in parliament is decreasing and does not advance their political careers.

The Case of Kazakhstan

This thesis uses Kazakhstan as a case study because it is well-suited given the purpose of this research. Being one of the stable post-Soviet authoritarian regime with a socialist legacy of women's emancipation, formally manifested in the high number of women in representative political institutions, Kazakhstan represents an excellent case to trace the dynamic of women's political participation in the restricted political conditions in neo-

Soviet period. Kazakhstan's post-Soviet regime quickly transitioned into an authoritarian one-party rule with a strong form of presidentialism based on the cult of the individual. President Nazarbayev, who had been in power since independence in 1991, resigned in March 2019. He remains, however, a key figure in decision-making, and his extensive power and the comprehensive immunity fixed in the Constitution grants him the status of the Leader of Nation ('El Basy')[16]. According to the Freedom House rankings, Kazakhstan is a country that is considered 'not free', as rights (political, civil, collective, and individual) are restricted.[17] The party system is weak and concentrated on a ruling party, Nur Otan, which has been headed by Nazarbayev since 2007. Opposition is not well institutionalised, and existing movements and initiatives are non-systematic and have no clear goals or programmes. Two parties that have been represented in parliament since 2007, the Communist Party and 'AkZhol', are pro-presidential and loyal supporters of the regime; hence, they cannot be counted as opposition parties.[18]

The above being said, however, Kazakhstan is also a country with one of the best indicators for women in parliament, alongside Belarus and Turkmenistan, both of which are highly authoritarian regimes. Kazakhstan has a good track record of achievements in public gender representation. Kazakhstan's legal framework for gender equality consists of a gender equality strategy, legislation on equal rights and opportunities, and a law on the prevention of domestic violence. These are considered positive developments by the international community and regarded as best practice on gender mainstreaming in the post-Soviet era. Gender courses are institutionalised and included in training curricula for civil servants. The National Commission for Women Affairs and Family–Demographic Policy is a separate institution within the presidential office and is headed by the State Secretary. As such, it is a government body highly positioned within the hierarchy of the Kazakhstani political system.

Women's representation in parliament began to increase in 2007, during a period that coincided with the final stage of constitutional reforms that aimed at consolidating the concentration of power around the president. These reforms were introduced between 1998 and 2007, and included a shift towards a proportional representation electoral system to select parliamentarians, the introduction of a threshold of 7% for political parties to be

[16] Isaacs, R., 2010. 'Papa' – Nursultan Nazarbayev and the discourse of charismatic leadership and nation-building in post-Soviet Kazakhstan', *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 10(3), 435–452; Pistan, C., 2019. 'Smart authoritarianism: Nazarbayev's resignation as a move to consolidate Kazakhstan's 2017 constitutional reform', DPCE Online, 39(2), pp.1037-1054
[17] Freedom House, 2016. *Freedom in the World 2016*, Kazakhstan country report.
[18] Isaacs, R., 2011. *Party System Formation in Kazakhstan: Between Formal and Informal Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

represented in the Majilis[19] (the lower house of the Parliament of Kazakhstan), no term and age limits for the first president, and an exclusive right to appoint 15 representatives to the Senate and the representatives of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan chaired by the president to the Majilis (reserved seats). Thus, as the control over the process of political recruitment was tightened, the regime brought more women into parliament.[20] The rising number of women in the Majilis is, therefore, recognised as an achievement of the regime, and of the president in particular. Since 2007, throughout the fourth, fifth, and sixth parliaments, the number of female MPs reached 27%, which is higher than the average of 25% worldwide according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).[21] Nur Otan, the ruling party, had no fewer than 80% of seats in parliament. It is responsible for bringing in the bulk of female MPs since the fourth parliament (20 female MPs out of 29 in total). Does this, however, mean that the state and the party are genuinely interested in promoting women as political actors? And, if so, for what purposes? This thesis tries to respond these questions by analysing women's motivation to run for elections, their experience as parliamentarians and the way how their political career is built up after Parliament.

In a speech at the 4th Women's Forum in Astana in September 2004, on the eve of the parliamentary elections, Nazarbayev asked people to vote for female politicians. Some years later, in June 2016, CNN's Fareed Zakaria, who was moderating the International Economic Forum held in St Petersburg, Russia, asked President Nursultan Nazarbayev whether Kazakhstan would ever be ready for a female president. Nazarbayev responded: 'Why not?'. His answer sounded almost like Lenin's historical statement suggesting that even a milkmaid could be given the opportunity to run the country. The question was asked in light of the 2016 US presidential elections and Hillary Clinton's candidacy to become the first American female president, which made the question of women's political participation almost trendy again, even if only for the duration of that campaign. At the same time, in November 2015, during the 4th Eurasian Summit of Women in Kazakhstan, one of the main official speakers, Dariga Nazarbayeva, daughter of President Nazarbayev, reflected on the role of women in politics in her speech:

> What is the difference among a woman in business, in a family, and in politics? In
> business, there is at least some kind of output: you pay off credit; you see income;

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[19] In this thesis, I shall use the terms 'Majilis', 'parliament', and 'legislature' interchangeably.
[20] Morell, I.A., Barandova, T., D'Hooghe, V., Huang, C.L., Kahlert, H., Kurvinen, H., Lindberg, M., Shakirova, S., Tornhill, S. and van Raemdonck, A., 2015. *Institutionalizing Gender Equality: Historical and Global Perspectives*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, p. 215.
[21] IPU, 2016. Women in National Parliaments: Situation as per 1st of December – 23%. Available at: http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm (accessed: 15 December 2018).

you enhance the family's level [living conditions] and the one of your children; and you have the opportunity to pay for their education. [In a family] a woman brings up her husband, she encourages him, she facilitates his career promotion, she brings up her children. Moreover, she takes care of both her husband's relatives and hers and this is also an appreciated work. Maybe, somebody will say to her 'thank you' for this. But being a woman in politics is the most non-rewarding job. What is the job of a woman in politics? 24 hours a day of endless criticism towards us whatever we do and we are always wrong; nobody says, 'thank you'. Think well before choosing this way.

These two ambiguous messages from official channels can hardly prove the state's commitment to women's political empowerment. This raises the question of the regime's motivation in bringing more women into Parliament which is coincided with the consolidation of the regime.

In this thesis, I argue that the increased political representation of women resembles the quota system that was in force during the Soviet period to boost the number of female delegates, assigning them specific roles in the regime's mouthpiece. It seems that women's political participation (WPP) is neither a consequence of increased activism on the part of women's political mobilisation, nor a result of bringing gender equality policies forward. I find that by comparing the level of women's political activism in the present day with the first decade of the early independence period between 1991 and 2001, a difference becomes quite apparent. In the late 1990s, inspired by the global gender mainstreaming movement launched at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), women slowly began to attempt to enter the political arena as independent political actors. Women's organisations such as the Women's Electoral Block, the Political Alliance of Women's Organizations of Kazakhstan, the Democratic Women's Party of Kazakhstan, and the Revival of Kazakhstan, which were founded and led by women activists, were the most conspicuous of these attempts. Although some of the movements were far removed from the ideas of feminism, focusing mainly on the social aspects of women's role in society, they can be understood as attempts to materialise women's civil activism. Evening out competition in the political arena, the regime succeeded in removing an entry barrier to the meaningful political empowerment of women, which presents similarities with the

early Soviet policies of elimination of emerging feminist ideas from the work of Zhenotdel ('women's unit' of the Communist Party) in Kazakhstan.[22]

The figures representing women's political involvement reported by the contemporary state in order to demonstrate women-friendly conditions for political participation, paint, in fact, a different picture. The number of women in the Senate amounts to three, two of whom are appointed by the president[23]. The share of female ministers is also low. Only two out of 22 ministers in the Kazakh Cabinet are women with a gendered portfolio (in the Ministry of Information and Social Development and the Ministry of Culture and Sport.[24] The level of women's participation in the civil service is 56%,[25] with roles mostly being found in what is referred to as the 'B' corps and which includes public officers at the level of specialists and assistants. Compared with this, the 'A' corps, which includes officials at the decision-making level in both central and regional institutions, has 15% of women representatives. Instead, the 'political positions' list, with high-ranking government roles, comprises only 9% of women. This situation clearly demonstrates an unequal distribution of power and the absence of women from decision-making roles within the political system of Kazakhstan.[26] Therefore, high levels of WPP as reflected in the broad statistics does not mean greater political power or decision-making opportunity for women. This thesis brings the issue of the meaning of women's participation in political office in Kazakhstan and offers the perspective of the regime's purpose of increasing growth of women in parliament.

Women's political participation in Kazakhstan is a complex social issue, which involves hidden discourses, official policies, and opposing agendas. The official discourse of the state is that its primary aim is to establish a just society, which would be egalitarian. This is mentioned in strategies and policies that specifically include a gender quota for the number of women at the decision-making level as a specific goal. State officials, however, deliver somewhat controversial messages about the role of women in society, where politics is not

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[22] Instructions of the Communist Party on the creation of Zhenotdel, 23 July 1921, cited in Kundakbaeva, Zh., 2017. *Modernisation of the Early Soviet Period in the Lives of Women of Kazakhstan, 1920–1930*. Location: Almaty, KazGU publishing house

[23] A situation as of 2018

[24] Prime Minister Office, 2021. 'Composition of the Cabinet of Ministers'. Available at: https://www.primeminister.kz/ru/government/composition (accessed: 15 August 2021).

[25] Tengrinews.kz, 2017. 'The number of women in civil service has increased', 24 February. Available at: https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/jenschin-gosslujaschih-v-kazahstane-stalo-bolshe-312973/ (accessed: 5 November 2018).

[26] Government of Kazakhstan, 2016. 'Official speech of the vice minister on civil service', International conference on preliminary findings of the 2006–2016 Gender Equality Strategy implementation, 22 April. Available at: http://government.kz/ru/gosupravlenie/1000726-na-gossluzhbe-kazahstana-bolshe-zhenshchin-chem-muzhchin-vitse-ministr.html (accessed: 3 March 2019).

the priority. As aptly expressed by the journalist Ilya Yun, the 'patriarchy did not disappear, it just adjusted to new realities and mimicked them'.[27]

The international community plays a special role in the process of increasing female representation in politics. The gender agenda and the approach to women's political participation (WPP) has not changed since the late 1990s and the implementation of the first gender-related programmes in Kazakhstan. Training for potential female candidates was designed based on perceptions of the democratic institutions of Western democracies. Twenty years later, the content is the same (e.g. the 2016 training run by OSCE). If this content made sense at the time owing to the uncertainty of the transition period, the emergence of political pluralism, the free expression of dissenting opinions, and the form of the electoral system, it has lost its relevance today. Gradually, the number of programmes initiated by international organisations on WPP promotion decreased, instead being replaced with a growing state monopoly with regard to gender-related policies. During my time in UN Women, I was responsible for WPP activities in Kazakhstan. I noticed at the time how difficult it had become to argue with MPs and state officials regarding women's under-representation in politics, especially after the 2012 elections, when female representation in the Majilis jumped to 27%. This was one of the characteristic indicators of the post-Soviet space, except in the cases of Belarus and Turkmenistan. At that time, UN Women's approach to WPP focused on the promotion of quotas. Every proposition regarding quota introduction as a temporary measure faced reasonable counterarguments from both the government and Parliament. I deliberately call these counterarguments reasonable because the number of women in the Kazakh parliament increased without the help of quotas like those in force in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan.

Women's political participation in institutional politics in post-Soviet non-democracies has received scant attention in academic literature, despite the truth of the fact that the political settings (i.e. regime, system of governance, culture) affect women's political participation in different ways.[28] One must take into account the specificity of the decision-making process, the distribution of power among political institutions, their purpose and functioning, and political recruitment and ambition. For these reasons, the factors considered by Western scholarship as prerequisites to the greater political participation of

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[27] Yun, I., 2018. '27 years of democracy: women's role in Kazakh society', *Buro247*, May 17. Available at: https://www.buro247.kz/buro-choise/opinion/infografika-buro-24-7-rol-zhenshciny-v-kazakhstanskom-obshcestve.html (accessed: 25 August 2021).

[28] Matland, R.E., 1998. 'Women's representation in national legislatures: developed and developing countries', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 23(1), 109–125.

women, such as legal guarantees of gender equality, a high number of women in the labour market, and high levels of education, do not contribute to a meaningful involvement of women in formal politics in post-communist countries.[29]

This research evolved from the intention to examine the reasons behind the sudden surge in women's representation in the parliament of Kazakhstan, especially after 2007. The thesis examines the value of women as political actors through an analysis of their motivations and expectations when standing for politics. It also evaluates the descriptive and substantive representation of women and men in the authoritarian parliament of Kazakhstan. The main idea behind the research is to understand how women politicians assert themselves in politics, how/if substantive representation is exercised in relation to women parliamentarians, and how legislature affects the political careers of women.

Research Question

This research examines the changing pattern of women's political participation in formal political institutions in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, focusing on how women's political agency and representation is exercised in the restrictive context of the country's authoritarian regime and to what end the regime engages women in politics In order to answer this question, I focus on the following aspects of political participation: the political recruitment of candidates, the capacity of individual politicians to influence policy and political outcomes, and the benefits for office holders. The overarching research question is: Why is the regime in Kazakhstan bringing more women into politics? A potential response is approached from the following three angles:

- How do women compete for political office in post-Soviet regimes?
- How does descriptive and substantive representation occur in an authoritarian parliament? This includes an investigation of the actions women politicians take as advocates for gender equality and women's issues; and
- How does political office affect the political and/or professional career of women following their term in office?

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[29] Norris, P. and Inglehart, R., 2001. 'Cultural obstacles to equal representation', *Journal of Democracy*, 12(3), 126–140; LaFont, S., 2001. 'One step forward, two steps back: women in the post-communist states', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 34(2), 203–220.

Thus, the research aims to examine women's pathways and participation in institutional politics at the level of representation. It examines the personal ambitions and motivations of women candidates, the specificities of political recruitment, the patterns of descriptive and substantive representation from 1996 to 2020, and the ways in which parliament has had an impact on women's political careers. These aspects are discussed in the context of authoritarian politics and institutions. The uniqueness of this research lies in the fact that it investigates the abovementioned issues from the perspective of women politicians, as well as on the basis of descriptive statistics data.

The political ambitions and motivations of women are discussed through their perspectives on what it means to run for politics, the selection process, inclusion in the political party lists, and election campaigning. The aim is to evaluate whether women compete for elected positions and the extent to which they can navigate this process. Descriptive representation examines representation patterns and traces changes in six successive parliaments in Kazakhstan since 1996. It is based on MP profiling, which utilises the main socio-demographic characteristics, including age, level of education, occupation, and previous local representative experience. Substantive representation is examined by drawing on the three main functions of MPs in the Kazakh parliament, i.e. legislative activity, parliamentary requests, and meeting with constituents in the regions. The thesis explores distribution patterns of leadership positions in parliament among men and women, highlighting the significance of women's membership in parliamentary committees, as well as the roles that women take in these groups. It also investigates the political and policy issues raised by women and men, and their stance towards key gender-related legislation acts and policies, such as the law on domestic violence and that on equalising retirement age. The overarching argument of the thesis is that WPP in post-Soviet Kazakhstan has assumed the form of Neo-Sovietisation. By discussing the agency of women as political actors in Kazakhstan through their unique paths to political office, this thesis argues that despite an increase in the participation of women in institutional politics, their substantive representation and activity as political actors remains weak and insufficient to foment any meaningful change. The post-Soviet pattern of women's political participation in Kazakhstan has followed the Soviet experience. As in the Soviet era, the role of women in politics today is concentrated on propaganda, channelling communist party messages, and creating the impression of a caring state. Along with the expansion of elite control over political recruitment, the Kazakh regime has reproduced a pattern of artificial participation in terms of WPP, by assigning female politicians the role of communicating convenient and inspirational messages to society. At the same time,

however, female politicians have limited capacity in legislative and representation functions.

Contribution of the Research

The research bridges insights from scholarship on authoritarian institutionalism and gender and politics in an attempt to explain why the authoritarian post-Soviet regime brings more women into politics. It contributes to the literature on soft authoritarianism by specifying the effect of democratic-like political institutions in autocracies on WPP and representation. By discussing the impact of recruitment, political party, and legislature on the political career and capacity of women as political actors, the research contributes a gender perspective that has been lacking in scholarship on authoritarianism. By examining women's pathways to politics, their activity as parliamentarians, the way they perceive their role as political representatives, and the role of the political party, alongside the patterns observed in the typical profile of women parliamentarians and their career following their term in office, this thesis argues that the post-Soviet pattern of WPP in Kazakhstan is a consistent extension of the Soviet experience. At the same time, women politicians have limited capacity in legislative and representation functions. The research provides a gender perspective to the literature on autocracies and the institutions in place in non-democratic settings, by examining women's experience in politics. In the case of WPP, these functions of the legislature are reduced owing to the lack of 'bargaining power', which could provide women with an added motivation to participate in policy decisions, as well as to vie for further spoils of office. A finding that merits special attention in light of the limited agency and capacity of women in authoritarian regimes is that the political party advances the recruitment of women in legislature not only as a matter of process but with the intent of nurturing women's political careers. Women parliamentarians are limited to acting as 'agents of the party', contributing to the regime's legitimacy, and garnering support from the population.

The existing literature on WPP in post-Soviet countries mainly targets non-institutional forms of participation, exploring women's activism in the form of civil society organisations[30] and political parties,[31] the relationship between women's representation and

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[30] Hrycak, A., 2010. 'Orange harvest: women's activism and civil society in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia since 2004', *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 44(1–2), 151–177; Salmenniemi, S., 2005. 'Civic activity – feminine activity? Gender, civil society and citizenship in post-Soviet Russia', *Sociology*, 39(4), 735–753; Richter, J., 2002. 'Promoting civil society? Democracy assistance and Russian women's organizations', *Problems of Post-Communism*, 49(1), 30–41.

[31] Ishiyama, J.T., 2003. 'Women's parties in post-communist politics', *East European Politics and Societies*, 17(2), 266–304.

the electoral system,[32] as well as women's participation at critical junctures after independence.[33] In the literature on gender studies, Central Asia appears mainly in the field of ethnographic studies.[34] These explore, among other things, Kazakh women's agency from the point of view of the household, economic participation, the informal economy, and historical and sociological perspectives. WPP is missing from on-topic studies and requires more attention. Women's involvement in institutional politics is mainly focused on executive institutions, which can be explained by the greater power they have in comparison with representative bodies in all post-Soviet political systems.[35] This study contributes to the discussion of the 'thick representation'[36] of gender and politics scholarship, which argues that the political context within which substantive representation is operationalised matters, as it shapes representation patterns. Another lacuna in the literature is geographic focus: most existing studies examine Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus as case studies. Kazakhstan does not feature in the relevant literature. By examining the issue of WPP, the research contributes to the understanding of women as political actors operating in non-democratic contexts on an overall restricted playing field for political activity. In addition, the research widens the case studies on WPP in post-communist/post-Soviet states by shedding light on institutional politics at the central and local levels, a topic that has been neglected in scholarship thus far.

This research makes a number of practical contributions to policy-makers in relation to the advancement of WPP in Kazakhstan. The state bases its approach on the low numbers of women candidates running for office, whereas women leadership programmes funded by international organisations focus on institutional impediments. The first-hand experience of women running for office and the analysis of their substantive representation provides an opportunity to reassess current approaches to women's political leadership in the country.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter II provides the theoretical basis for the research. Drawing from literature on authoritarian institutionalism, neo-sovietisation, and women's political representation, I

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[32] Moser, R.G., 2001. 'The effects of electoral systems on women's representation in post-communist states', *Electoral Studies*, 20(3), pp. 353–369.

[33] Hrycak, A., 2007. 'Seeing orange: women's activism and Ukraine's Orange Revolution', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 35(3/4), 208–225.

[34] Gender and nation in post-Soviet Central Asia: From national narratives to women's practices, *Nationalities Papers* 44(2), 2016.

[35] Nechemias, C., 2000. 'Politics in post-Soviet Russia: where are the Women?', *Demokratizatsiya*, 8(2), 199–218.

[36] Mackay, F., 2008. '"Thick" conceptions of substantive representation: women, gender and political institutions', *Representation*, 44(2), 125–139.

outline the key framework of analysis, which I use to develop my sub-questions and analyse my findings. The way women are represented and the way they participate in institutional politics in Kazakhstan is correlated with the type of regime in power, as well as the role and functions of political institutions. To this end, the chapter uses scholarship on post-Soviet authoritarian regimes and parliaments, namely how political parties inherited from the one-party communist regime are positioned within neo- or post-Soviet political systems. It identifies the key principles and mechanisms of political recruitment and how these developments are related to Kazakh realities on WPP, compared with the typical features and patterns of the Soviet period. The chapter also discusses issues of representation under autocracies and how these two frameworks are helpful in understanding motivations for WPP.

Chapter III sets out the qualitative research design of the project in light of the research objectives. This includes the justification for the selection of an exploratory study and a case study as methods, and also discusses the limitations of both. It reveals why Kazakhstan was chosen as the field of study and how it offers valuable lessons for our understanding of WPP in authoritarian settings. It contains a detailed discussion of the methods of data collection – desk research and interviewing – which are particularly interesting in the restrictive political context of Kazakhstan. The chapter provides a discussion on data analysis to highlight the methods of data verification through triangulation. It concludes with a discussion on the positionality of the author, as well as some important ethics considerations.

Chapters IV and V provide the background of the study. **Chapter IV** describes the political context of post-Soviet Kazakhstan since 1991. It gives a brief overview of Kazakh statehood and its close historical, political, and social connections with the Russian empire and then communist Russia. The chapter then discusses the post-Soviet evolution of the regime and, more specifically, how the regime strengthened its position and control over political institutions and recruitment. Special focus is cast on the parliament (Majilis) and its structure, and the committees and their level of prestige. The chapter covers local government, the ambiguity of local institutions, and their interactions with the government, the *maslikhats* and public councils. The evolution of the regime is discussed alongside the formal progress of women's representation in the Majilis and key developments in women's movements and activism. It specifically highlights how the political regime, women's formal representation, and women's activism interrelate and produce their specific outcomes. The second part of the chapter is organised around a discussion of WPP

in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, uncovering the reasons behind women's emancipation as promoted by the communist regime during each successive period of development.

Chapter V discusses gender equality issues in Kazakhstan and existing policies in the area of WPP. Apart from international gender equality ratings, the chapter provides a discussion of women's economic situation, the normative basis of issues relating to gender equality, such as the Law on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, and the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence. It also introduces and critically assesses the main policy document designed by the state women's machinery to promote gender equality in the political, economic, and social sphere. The chapter illustrates the situation of women in Kazakhstan, based on international rankings and women's position in the social and economic spheres.

Chapters VI, VII, and VIII present the empirical findings based on interviews with women former and current politicians at the national and local levels, as well as other key actors who participate in WPP, such as heads of regional political party offices, women who participated in the state programmes on WPP, members of regional women's networks, independent women candidates, gender activists, and many others. In **Chapter VI**, I share the experiences of women who decided to run for office. In particular, this chapter foregrounds women's voices and considers what motivated them to run for elections, what made them decide to actually run, and what factors affected their decisions. It also sheds light on the political recruitment of women; in other words, this section provides a woman's perspective on why they were successful in getting elected. Finally, the chapter discusses women's unique experiences of participating in election campaigns at the local and national levels, and their interaction with political parties during campaigning. **Chapter VII** further develops the discussion on women's participation by introducing the findings on parliamentarians' activity. To begin with, it presents the thoughts of female politicians on themselves as political actors, as well as on the political office and their role within it. These are unique data retrieved from personal and confidential interviews with women deputies at both the national and local levels. The chapter then discusses the activity of MPs in parliament on the basis of three main functions: making requests to government institutions, carrying out propaganda work in the regions, and legislative activity. The discussion is supplemented by case studies of two women MPs and their involvement in the discussion and endorsement of the main legal

acts relating to gender equality, i.e. the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence, and the Law on Equal Retirement Age for Men and Women.

In **Chapter VIII**, I address the question of how elected political office has an impact on the political and professional careers of women. To this end, the chapter presents a discussion of the occupational background of MPs, monitoring changing trends over six parliaments. This overview is juxtaposed with an analysis of the post-MP activities of parliamentarians, including the capacity of both men and women to hold on to their political office.

Chapter IX discusses my empirical findings in light of the main research questions. It highlights the theoretical implications of the findings with regard to the key assumptions found in the literature on authoritarian institutions with a focus on gender. By elucidating the patterns of WPP in post-Soviet legislatures and the role they ascribe to political representatives, this thesis directly addresses a gap in the literature on women's institutional participation, and gender and politics in Central Asia. It also includes deliberations on how the practical solutions currently adopted by the main actors involved in WPP correspond to the situation on the ground regarding the ways in which women can participate in elected political offices. The chapter concludes by outlining avenues for further research, especially given the introduction of recent political reforms that directly affect women's political participation and promotion.

Chapter II. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In the literature on Central Asian political regimes, Kazakhstan is described as a regime that is 'electoral authoritarianism' or 'competitive authoritarianism', terms developed by Schedler,[37] Levitsky, Way,[38] and Brooker.[39] These regimes are considered polities where 'formal democratic institutions are widely viewed as the principal means of obtaining and exercising political authority'.[40] Researchers have highlighted that the ruling elites prefer non-coercive measures, such as 'bribery, co-optation, and more subtle forms of persecution, such as the use of tax authorities, compliant judiciaries, and other state agencies'.[41] Institutions help dictators create public goods and distribute wealth among loyal elites.[42] The main characteristics of competitive authoritarianism include: regular elections, 'free from massive fraud'; obstruction of equal and 'adequate media coverage' of the opposition, as well as harassment of the opposition; and 'manipulation of electoral results'. Despite the political regime typology, Kazakhstan has preserved 'residual patterns of the Soviet system' in the functioning of its political institutions.[43]

This chapter discusses existing theoretical concepts on authoritarian institutions and their functions to provide a framework for exploring and understanding women's political participation and representation in Kazakhstan. In particular, the concept of neo-Sovietisation, based on the framework of authoritarian institutionalism, is used to explore the nature and functionality of the main political institutions involved in the political participation processes. The chapter also draws on the concept of representation, focusing on representation under autocracies and women's political representation and participation, including political ambition and descriptive and substantive representation. The chapter begins with a discussion of Soviet institutional continuity in post-Soviet authoritarian regimes. The discussion then moves to the main features of political institutions in authoritarian conditions that are similar to those seen in Soviet regimes, with a focus on the legislature, political parties, and elections, which are analysed in terms of their purpose and function aimed at maintaining the regime. This outlines the implementation context of

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[37]Schedler, A., 2006. *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Elections*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
[38]Levitsky, S. and Way, L.A., 2002. 'The rise of competitive authoritarianism', *Journal of Democracy*, 13 (2), 51–65.
[39]Brooker, P., 2000. *Non-Democratic Regimes. Theory, Government and Politics*. Basingstoke: Macmillan and New York: St. Martin's Press.
[40]Levitsky and Way, 2002. 'Competitive authoritarianism', 52.
[41]Ibid, 53.
[42]Gandhi, J., 2008. *Political Institutions Under Dictatorship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[43]Mommsen, M., 2012. 'Russia's political regime: Neo-Soviet authoritarianism and patronal presidentialism'. *Presidents, Oligarchs and Bureaucrats: Forms of Rule in the Post-Soviet Space*, 63–87, 63.

women's political participation, including the political recruitment mechanism, the meaning of political office, the functions of the political institutions involved in political recruitment, and the activity of political representatives. An examination of women's political participation and representation in scholarship delineates the main developments discussed in the two bodies of literature, leading to the main research focus of assessing the meaningfulness of women's political representation in autocracies. In conclusion, I will present the table of how the discussed concepts of authoritarian institutions functioning in post-Soviet conditions are linked to my research questions and the way these concepts are operationalized to respond the research questions.

Neo-Sovietisation of political institutions of post-Soviet Kazakhstan

Despite the establishment of new, democratic-like institutions and the formal separation of powers, the post-Soviet political space is strongly influenced by 'specific institutional features' and 'patterns of elite interaction'[44] from Soviet times. This suggests that the nature of post-Soviet regimes is just a 'swing in a fairly regular cyclical process' with little change.[45] Post-Soviet regimes inherited a system of dominant executive power, subordinate representative institutions, and a weak party system,[46] as well as the rulers who rose to power through leadership positions in the Communist Party 'by applying Soviet techniques to independent statehood'.[47] Luong analysed the consolidation of power in Central Asian authoritarian regimes through an institutional framework, as opposed to scholars[48] who considered Central Asia's tribal and clan politics the key organising principle of post-Soviet regimes. Although Luong does not reject the clan structure as a basis for the formation of elite groups, her main argument is that 'Soviet policies and institutions in Central Asia created, transformed and institutionalized regional political identities, while at the same time eliminating tribal, religious, and national identities, weakening them, or confining them to the social and cultural spheres'.[49]

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[44] Hale, H.E., 2005. 'Regime cycles: Democracy, autocracy, and revolution in post-Soviet Eurasia', *World Politics*, 58(1), 133–165, 134.

[45] See n(108), Hale 2005, 135.

[46] Chaisty, P., 2008. 'The legislative effects of presidential partisan powers in Post-Communist Russia', *Government and Opposition*, 43(3), 424–453, 432.

[47] Merry, E.W., 2004. 'Governance in Central Asia: National in form, Soviet in content', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 17(2), 285–300, 286.

[48] Schatz, E., 2009. 'The soft authoritarian tool kit: Agenda-setting power in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan', *Comparative Politics*, 41(2), 203–222, 206–207; Cummings, S., 2012. *Understanding Central Asia: Politics and Contested Transformations*, Routledge; Olcott, M.B., 2010. *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*. Carnegie Endowment.

[49] Luong, P., 2000. *Sources of Institutional Continuity: The Soviet Legacy in Central Asia*. Paper prepared for presentation at the *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association*, Washington, DC, 31 August to 2 September 2000.

Literature on the Sovietisation or neo-Soviet nature of political institutions in Central Asia has been cited widely in scholarly literature on post-Soviet politics. Although it has not been applied to the context of women's parliamentary representation, this research draws on the existing scholarship to flesh out conceptually what is meant by neo-Sovietisation of women's political participation in post-Soviet Kazakhstan within the period of 1995 - 2018. The key argument is that neo-Soviet forms of governance can be traced to how political institutions function, including the legislature, political parties, elections in the form of organisational structures,[50] political norms, political recruitment and decision-making, media outlets,[51] and degree of social acceptance.[52] The scholars demonstrated how a variety of post-Soviet structures are incorporating Soviet elements, in order to maintain power and control.

Post-Soviet regimes adjusted the Soviet institutional power structure with performative role of the legislature.[53] The scholarship on post-Soviet authoritarian regimes and their institutions discusses the functions of democratic institutions such as legislatures,[54] political parties,[55] judicial bodies,[56] the executive (to a certain extent),[57] and elections[58],

[50]Birch, S., 2011. 'Post-Soviet electoral practices in comparative perspective', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 63(4), 703–725.

[51]Oates, S., 2007. 'The neo-Soviet model of the media', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 59(8), 1279–1297.

[52]Beacháin, D.Ó. and Kevlihan, R., 2017. 'Menus of Manipulation: Authoritarian Continuities in Central Asian Elections', *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, 25(4), 407–434.

[53]Kryshtanovskaya, O.G. and White, S., 2009. 'The Sovietization of Russian politics', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 25(4), 283–309.

[54]Gandhi, J. and Przeworski, A., 2007. 'Authoritarian institutions and the survival of autocrats', *Comparative Political Studies*, 40(11), 1279–1301; Wright, J., 2008. 'Do authoritarian institutions constrain? How legislatures affect economic growth and investment', *American Journal of Political Science*, 52(2), 322–343; Malesky, E.J. and Schuler, P.J., 2009. *Measuring Accountability in Authoritarian Legislatures: The Representativeness of Vietnamese National Assembly Delegates*.

[55]Brownlee, J., 2007. *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization*. Cambridge University Press; Gehlbach, S. and Keefer, P., 2012. 'Private investment and the institutionalization of collective action in autocracies: Ruling parties and legislatures', *The Journal of Politics*, 74(2), 621–635; Greene, K.F., 2009. 'The political economy of authoritarian single-party dominance', *Comparative Political Studies,* 3, 807–834; Keefer, P., 2008. 'Insurgency and credible commitment in autocracies and democracies', *The World Bank Economic Review*, 22(1), 33–61; Magaloni, B., 2006. *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Smith, B., 2005. 'Life of the party: The origins of regime breakdown and persistence under single-party rule', *World Politics*, 57(03), 421–451.

[56]Ginsburg, T. and Moustafa, T., 2008. *Rule by Law: The Politics of Courts in Authoritarian Regimes*; Solomon, P.H., 2007. 'Courts and judges in authoritarian regimes', *World Politics*, 60(01), 122–145; Ginsburg, T., 2008. *Administrative Law and the Judicial Control of Agents in Authoritarian Regimes*; Cheesman, N., 2011. 'How an authoritarian regime in Burma used special courts to defeat judicial independence', *Law & Society Review*, 45(4), 801–830.

[57]Levitsky, S. and Way, L., 2002. 'The rise of competitive authoritarianism', *Journal of Democracy*, 13(2), 51–65; Svolik, M.W., 2009. 'Power sharing and leadership dynamics in authoritarian regimes', *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(2), 477–494.

[58]Gandhi, J. and Lust-Okar, E., 2009. 'Elections under authoritarianism', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12, 403–422; Gandhi, J. and Przeworski, A., 2006. 'Cooperation, cooptation, and rebellion under dictatorships', *Economics & Politics*, 18(1), 1–26; Gandhi, J. and Przeworski, A., 2001, August. 'Dictatorial institutions and the survival of dictators'. In *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association,*

within the restricted political settings to serve the interests of elite circles and power maintaining. The literature broadly deals with two main issues: the purpose of political institutions in authoritarian regimes,[59] and the impact of those institutions on political and economic outcomes.[60] Two main bodies of literature – *co-optation* and *power-sharing* – address the purpose of the legislature. Co-optation theory states that a dictator needs cooperation from the elites to increase productivity, and the legislature is the best mechanism for negotiations and policy concessions with that key group.[61] This means that dictators establish assemblies to distribute the benefits of political office and negotiate policy concessions when they require cooperation. The justification behind the co-optation theory for the regime is that debates can be conducted in a controlled, unthreatening manner that avoids the risk of large social protests.[62] Therefore, a controlled – or co-opted – legislature contributes to regime longevity by maintaining regime legitimacy, suppressing potential opposition, rewarding loyal supporters, and disseminating information about the strength of the regime.

To validate this assumption, two conditions should be present. First, leaders should confer minimal decision-making power to the legislature, or at least limit the number of policy issues it can take up, in order to encourage the opposition to engage.[63] Second, any potential opposition must pose a serious threat to the ruling regime, pressuring the regime to seek an agreement. As Boix and Svolik argue, the power-sharing agreement should be 'sustained by the ability of each side to punish the other party if it decides to deviate from the joint-governance arrangement and, in particular, in the presence of a credible threat of rebellion by the ruler's allies'.[64] In addition, in order for effective policy concessions to be

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San Francisco; Geddes, B., 1999. 'What do we know about democratization after twenty years?', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2(1), 115−144; Przeworski, A., 2000. *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950−1990* (Vol. 3). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[59]Gandhi, J. and Przeworski, A., 2006. 'Cooperation, cooptation, and rebellion under dictatorships', *Economics & Politics*, 18(1), 1−26; Magaloni, B., 2006. *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[60]Boix, C. and Svolik, M.W., 2013. 'The foundations of limited authoritarian government: Institutions, commitment, and power-sharing in dictatorships', *The Journal of Politics*, 75(2), 300−316; Brownlee, J., 2005. *Ruling Parties and Regime Persistence: Explaining Durable Authoritarianism in the Third Wave Era*. University of Texas. Typescript; Gandhi, J. and Przeworski, A., 2007. 'Authoritarian institutions and the survival of autocrats', *Comparative Political Studies*, 40(11), 1279−1301.

[61]Gandhi, J., 2008. *Political Institutions Under Dictatorship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[62]Gandhi, J. and Przeworski, A., 2007. 'Authoritarian institutions and the survival of autocrats', *Comparative Political Studies*, 40(11), 1279−1301.

[63]Gandhi, J. and Przeworski, A. (2006). 'Cooperation, cooptation, and rebellion under dictatorships', *Economics & Politics*, 18(1), 1−26, 14.

[64]Boix, C. and Svolik, M.W., 2013. 'The foundations of limited authoritarian government: Institutions, commitment, and power-sharing in dictatorships', *The Journal of Politics*, 75(2), 300−316; Gandhi, J. and Przeworski, A. 2006. 'Cooperation, cooptation, and rebellion under dictatorships', *Economics &*

made for the deal, the legislature should be able to impose constraints on the dictator. In other words, the legislature should be a critical actor within the country's political system. However, whether a dictator uses political institutions according to the previously mentioned theoretical predictions is not clear; if a dictator does use political institutions in those ways, it is also not clear what guides those decisions, since other ways to establish power-sharing agreements also exist. As suggested by Haber, negotiation can occur through social networks and family linkages between the ruling and business elites, a common tactic in personalist regimes.[65]

The power-sharing argument states that the legislature identifies negotiation participants and favours the exchange of information without 'popular mobilization';[66] the legislature provides a mechanism for establishing negotiations with regime supporters. A prerequisite to negotiation is a feasible opportunity for elites to build a coalition against the ruling regime.[67] The level of regime stability depends on the power-sharing balance between the elites and the dictator. Unlike co-optation theory, the power-sharing argument suggests that the legislature is not accessible to opponents, which is instead used by the elites and the regime to reach compromise.[68] Although these two arguments view the role of the legislature differently, they are not mutually exclusive and can offer explanations for the different ways the regime uses the legislature for specific needs.

However, both arguments demonstrate a lack of understanding about how the general mechanisms, and particularly the way political institutions as part of the mechanism, interact to produce desired political outcomes. Moreover, the interaction and intervention of non-political actors, such as civil society, as well as how women's political participation is used or integrated within this mechanism, remains understudied. The main critique of these two arguments is that they are based on functionalist assumptions; they explain the decisions of the regime/dictator to seek an agreement by examining the impact of the legislature[69] and what the literature calls 'the micro-logic of the mechanism', an

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*Politics,*18(1), 1–26; Gandhi J. 2008. *Political Institutions Under Dictatorship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[65]Haber, S. 2006. 'Authoritarian government', in *Handbook of Political Economy*, eds. B.R. Weingast and D. Wittman, 693–707. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

[66]Schuler, P. and Malesky, E.J., 2014. 'Authoritarian legislatures'. In *The Oxford Handbook of Legislative Studies*.

[67]Svolik, M.W., 2009. 'Power sharing and leadership dynamics in authoritarian regimes', *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(2), 477–494.

[68]Svolik, M.W., 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[69]Magaloni, B. and Kricheli, R., 2010. 'Political order and one-party rule', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 13, 123–143.

explanation of the practical mechanism of how the legislature performs its functions; however, an explanation of the 'micrologic of cooptation' is lacking.[70]

When assessing Kazakhstan's political environment through the lens of the previously mentioned argument, it can hardly be argued that the Kazakh legislature is used for co-optation purposes, owing to the presence of extensive natural resources and no opposition groups to co-opt. However, another view of the co-optation strategy is that it is a tool to prevent coups and social protests.[71] In this scenario, the regime tries to bring a wider range of voices into the legislature to make it more representative.[72] In their response to criticism of the co-optation function of the legislature in authoritarian regimes, Robinson and Reuter attempted to clarify that the likelihood of social protests decreases when representatives of the opposition are co-opted.[73] The authors explain this dynamic by referring to highly personalised political organisations in Kazakhstan and the ability of opposition elites 'to refrain from mobilising their followers, parties, factions, or social organisations on the streets'.[74] This departs somewhat from the assumption that in order to mitigate the risk of civil protests, the regime needs to include civil society leaders or opinion leaders with influence among certain categories of civil groups. However, considering general societal distrust in political institutions and political representatives, there is no guarantee that influential civil society leaders can maintain the same level of influence from the legislature.[75]

If it is assumed that the legislature is used for co-optation purposes, then a potential candidate should have resources or be an opinion leader in a specific area or region, be able to demonstrate party loyalty, be visible for consideration by local party officials, and be attractive to the regime.[76] The effectiveness of the process is evaluated by the candidate's ability to 'undertake measures to ensure the regime's longevity'.[77] Indicators of

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[70]Malesky, E. and Schuler, P., 2010. 'Nodding or needling: Analyzing delegate responsiveness in an authoritarian parliament', *American Political Science Review*, 104(03), 482−502, 482.

[71]Svolik, M.W., 2012. *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[72]Gandhi, J., 2008. *Political Institutions Under Dictatorship* (xvii). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 164; Malesky, E. and Schuler, P., 2010. 'Nodding or needling: Analyzing delegate responsiveness in an authoritarian parliament'. *American Political Science Review*, 104(03), 482−502.

[73]Robertson, G. and Reuter, O.J., 2013. Legislatures, Cooptation, and Protest in Contemporary Authoritarian Regimes. *In APSA 2013 Annual Meeting Paper, American Political Science Association 2013 Annual Meeting*

[74]Ibid.

[75]Andrey Platonov, a journalist and television showrunner who was critical of authorities prior to receiving a parliamentary mandate (2016); Irina Unzhakova, a gender activist and head of a women's NGO in east Kazakhstan.

[76]Siavelis, P. and Morgenstern, S. (2008). *Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America: A Framework for Analysis. Pathways to Power*. Pennsylvania State University Press

[77]Reuter, O.J. and Robertson, G.B., 2012. 'Subnational appointments in authoritarian regimes: Evidence from Russian gubernatorial appointments', *The Journal of Politics*, 74(4), 1023–1037.

success might vary depending on the political outcomes and expectations of the ruling regime. Previous studies have revealed that the criteria for appointment to political offices in authoritarian regimes include professional competence,[78] length of party membership, usefulness to the regime's purposes[79] – including the minimisation of social dissent – limited chances for the appointee to build a network of supporters,[80] and idiosyncratic reasons, including personal relationships and broader family connections. The ruling regime, through local party offices, should have the same perception of a potential candidate's resources/power. With regard to appointment procedures, the previously defined criteria for appointment to executive positions are also valid for candidates to representative institutions (e.g. professional competence, length of party membership, co-optation strategies).

In the case of a legislature with a power-sharing function, the ruling regime needs elites in the regions to distribute resources. This also implies that a potential candidate must have 'bargaining power' to participate in a power-sharing deal with the regime. Both cases suggest that candidates are eager to get access to the benefits of holding office. In other words, they must associate elected political office with certain benefits and potential rewards, if selected. Therefore, according to the authoritarian institutionalism framework, the ideal candidate for the legislature in an authoritarian regime should be able to ensure the longevity of the regime, while the prospect of political office implies certain attractive privileges for the candidate. The thesis suggests that women politicians are assigned a certain function in the political system of Kazakhstan to contribute to the maintenance and longevity of the regime, like in the Soviet period.

Apart from the general assumption that the legislature is relevant in authoritarian regimes, there is little evidence on how the legislature produces desired outcomes for different actors – the regime, various constituencies, or individual members of parliament – or on the capacity of representatives to influence policy-making in an authoritarian context. The key issue here is how a parliamentary member manages to reconcile their own benefits with the regime's needs and the interests of the population they represent. Malesky *et al.* and Desposato have examined how legislators manage to navigate limited institutional conditions. Bonvecchi and Simison have argued that the capacity of an authoritarian

[78]Laundry, P.F., 2008. *Decentralized Authoritarianism in China: The Communist Party's Control of Local Elites in the Post-Mao Era*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[79]Reuter, O.J., 2010, September. 'The Origins of Dominant Parties', in *American Political Science Association Teaching and Learning Conference*; Reuter, O.J. and Robertson, G.B., 2015. 'Legislatures, cooptation, and social protest in contemporary authoritarian regimes', *The Journal of Politics*, 77(1), 235–248.

[80]Goode, J.P., 2007. 'The puzzle of Putin's gubernatorial appointments', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 59(3), 365–399.

legislature to influence policy-making depends on 'the division of the legislative power between the executive and the legislature; the structure of the executive branch; and the distribution of agenda power within the legislature'.[81]

Considering the legislature as a forum for policy concessions and trade-offs shifts the assumption that the regime must exert control over the discussion agenda and parliamentary regulations with the aim of 'governing the co-optive exchange'.[82] This idea was generalised and 'abstracted' by political scientists. The existing literature assumes that legislators gain personal benefits, primarily by increasing opportunities to lobby for their own business interests, higher salaries, social status, and a variety of protections, as well as easier access to decision-makers.[83] In this context, some scholars suggest exploring the level of participation and origins of the legislators,[84] i.e. the representation account. Malesky *et al.* emphasise the following gaps: Who is being co-opted, especially when an opposition is absent in the representative bodies? Once these parties are identified, how is the delegates' level of accountability to groups outside the ruling elite assessed? How do the ruling elites 'manage the balancing act of providing a forum for potential opposition without threatening stability', i.e. what are the benefits of negotiating within a formal institution, rather than contacting outside groups directly? The role of the parliament in the policy-making process should also be considered. Researchers argue that a careful candidate selection process is vital, because it affects the negotiation process. This thesis attempts to address these gaps by examining the representational patterns of parliamentarians in Kazakhstan since 1995, including age and occupational background before and after serving in parliament. By analysing the parliamentarians backgrounds the thesis brings forward a discussion on the reasons why the authoritarian regime promotes more women in the legislature and whether the assumed functions of the authoritarian legislature brings the similar results to women's political career.

[81]Bonvecchi, A., Simison, E., 2017. 'Legislative institutions and performance in authoritarian regimes', *Comparative Politics*, 49(4), 521–544.
[82]Ibid.
[83]Lust-Okar, E., 2005. *Structuring Conflict in the Arab World: Incumbents, Opponents, and Institutions.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Lust-Okar, E., 2009. 'Reinforcing informal institutions through authoritarian elections: Insights from Jordan'. *Middle East Law and Governance*, 1(1), 3−37; Blaydes, Lisa. 2011. *Elections and Distributive Politics in Mubarak's Egypt.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press; Turovsky, R., 2014. 'Opposition parties in hybrid regimes: Between repression and co-optation: The case of Russia's regions', *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, *15*(1), 68−87; Turovsky, R., 2015. 'The Systemic Opposition in Authoritarian Regimes: A Case Study of Russia's Regions', *Systemic and Non-Systemic Opposition in the Russian Federation: Civil Society Awakens*, 121−140.
[84]Malesky, E. and Schuler, P., 2010. 'Nodding or needling: Analyzing delegate responsiveness in an authoritarian parliament', *American Political Science Review*, 104(03), 482−502.

Political Parties

Hegemonic parties in authoritarian regimes carry on certain functions such as recruitment, mobilisation, and eliminating threats in the form of opposition parties[85] in post-Soviet authoritarian regimes, thus contributing to the longevity, durability, and sustainability of regimes. The scholarship on political parties in authoritarian regimes pinpoints two main functions: *bargaining* and *mobilising*. The bargaining function is aimed at negotiating benefits for the elites, which ensures regime stability. The mobilising function involves motivating support among the masses by disseminating key messages that link prosperity and stability with the regime's policy-making, management, and other tools.[86] Geddes described a number of functions performed by political parties in authoritarian contexts, including elite bargaining, mobilisation of supporters, identification of local leaders, and the education of citizens 'to support the ideology and the economic strategy favoured by the regime'.[87]

Despite the assumption that political parties in authoritarian regimes serve as mechanisms for distributing resources to loyal, elite groups and mobilising the masses in support of the leader, political parties have reduced agency in Kazakhstan, with a limited capacity to allocate resources. Unlike the Communist Party, a predecessor of post-Soviet hegemonic parties, the Nur Otan party was created – and is maintained – for the purposes of the regime. As Sakwa argued, because the party does not provide career advancement, it functions only within 'narrow electoral terms',[88] reproducing Soviet-style mobilisation, such as publicly endorsing legislation and channelling messages that the country's prosperity is linked to the regime. The regime does not hide the purpose of the party; for instance, at the party's extended sessions, former chairman and national president Nursultan Nazarbayev always reiterated the instrumental role of the party in implementing state programmes. During a November 2017 speech, Nazarbayev emphasised that the party's goal is 'to provide political support to the state programmes on the comprehensive modernization of the country'.[89] In addition, he highlighted the necessity of modernising the party itself, and not only for propagating messages about state programmes.[90]

[85]Bader, M., 2011. 'Hegemonic political parties in post-Soviet Eurasia: Towards party-based authoritarianism?', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 44(3), 189−197.
[86]Geddes, 2005; Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007; Brownlee, 2007; Geddes, 1999; Magaloni, 2006; Smith, 2005.
[87]Geddes, 2006: 5.
[88]Sakwa, R., 2012. 'Party and power: Between representation and mobilisation in contemporary Russia', *East European Politics*, 28(3), 310−327, 319.
[89]Nazarbayev, N., 2017. 3 November 2017, Astana, Kazakhstan.
[90]Presidential administration, 2016. 17th Congress of the Nur Otan Party under the chairmanship of President Nursultan Nazarbayev, 29 January 2016. Available at

Citing Riggs and Schraeder, Sakwa argued in his analysis of the dominant party's function on the example of the "United Russia" pro-presidential political party that the sudden dissolution of the Soviet system prevented the development of a stable party system with strong links to society. This led to the establishment of the party system 'from above by the elites', 'reinforced by subsequent elections'.[91] Likewise, the Nur Otan party reflects this process, bolstering the consolidation of power around the leader. On the basis of available resources and agency, Nur Otan promotes the dominant discourse of the centrality of the regime leader Nazarbayev to the country's economic development and stability. Without resources or access to the decision-making process, the Nur Otan cannot contribute to the regime's longevity.[92] In order to bargain effectively, the party must be able to offer a wide range of benefits, such as jobs, financial support, or the ability to influence the policy-making process. The Nur Otan is not able to extend any of these benefits, given that policy-making is a competence retained by the presidential administration, and ministries and resources are controlled by the executive. Sakwa compares Russia's current ruling party, which is similar to the Nur Otan, to the relationship between Frankenstein and its creator, 'allowing "the monster" enough resources to maintain life, but not too much to allow it to threaten its creator'.[93]

Subordinate to the regime, the party plays an important role in the 'constitutional space', especially in the case of elected political office.[94] The party is highly linked to, and dependent on, the personality of the president, with no distinct ideological stance of its own; therefore, the party is considered temporary; it is used for certain purposes that do not extend past the end of the president's time in office. Thus, the major function of Nur Otan, within Kazakhstan's current political environment, is limited to maintaining the discourse on the president's role in enhancing the country's prosperity; ensuring a majority in the legislature; reducing the capacity of powerful opposition groups and/or individuals to challenge the regime; consolidating support among elites; and mobilising the masses, especially during elections to ensure a high turnout.[95] The role of the dominant political party is explained by some scholars through the dual state model of the constitutional state

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http://www.akorda.kz/en/events/astana_kazakhstan/participation_in_events/17th-congress-of-the-nur-otan-party-under-the-chairmanship-of-president-nursultan-nazarbayev.

[91]Sakwa, R., 2012. 'Party and power: between representation and mobilisation in contemporary Russia', *East European Politics*, 28(3), 310–327, 310.

[92]Isaacs, R. and Whitmore, S., 2014. 'The limited agency and life-cycles of personalized dominant parties in the post-Soviet space: The cases of United Russia and Nur Otan', *Democratization*, 21(4), 699–721.

[93]Ibid, 311.

[94]Ibid, 313.

[95]Isaacs, R. and Whitmore, S., 2014. 'The limited agency and life-cycles of personalized dominant parties in the post-Soviet space: The cases of United Russia and Nur Otan', *Democratization*, 21(4), 699–721.

and the administrative regime; the former functions with democratic institutions, but the real decision-making process takes place within the administrative regime.[96] This duality contributes to the tension between the representative and mobilisation features.

Thus, the dominant party in a number of post-Soviet authoritarian regimes can be called 'a party of power, but not a party in power'.[97] Scholars agree that a ruling party is used as a tool for 'the functioning of democratic institutions, including the writing of electoral rules and establishing the foundations of a market democracy'.[98] Owing to the ruling party's limited capacity, it is assumed that its value as a source of benefits and as a route for career advancement is low. In addition, the party has limited influence on the decision-making process and policy outcomes, as some studies have suggested.[99] Literature on the formation of post-communist political parties argues that depoliticisation among citizens fostered parties based on strong personalities and personal characteristics, rather than on ideologies.[100]

The role of the party in political recruitment has been increasing not only in Kazakhstan, but in neighbouring autocracies as well. A high degree of party mobilisation and discipline within authoritarian legislatures prevents unexpected policy outcomes.[101] As argued by Kryshtanovskaya and White in relation to Russia's hegemonic party system, since the mid-2000s, membership in pro-ruling parties has become the main way for state officials to be represented in 'institutions at all levels',[102] and membership in the ruling party has been considered 'a form of behaviour that was approved by the authorities'. The majority of ruling party members are civil servants and employees of state-run institutions,[103] which supports the idea of subordination of all elements of the machinery of the government'.[104]

Elections and Political Recruitment

Elections in post-Soviet authoritarian regimes proclaimed to be based on the democratic principles of free and fair choice and transparency are, in fact, a well-staged 'product of a

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[96]Sakwa, R., 2010. 'The dual state in Russia', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 26(3), 185−206.

[97]Sakwa, R., 2012. 'Party and power: Between representation and mobilisation in contemporary Russia', *East European Politics*, 28(3), 310−327, 318.

[98]Ibid.

[99]Chaisty, P., 2005. 'Party cohesion and policy-making in Russia', *Party Politics*, 11(3), 299−318, 311.

[100]Kopecky, 1995; Kitschelt, 1995.

[101]Chaisty, P., 2008. 'The legislative effects of presidential partisan powers in Post- Communist Russia', *Government and Opposition*, 43(3), 424−453.

[102]Kryshtanovskaya, O.G. and White, S., 2009. 'The Sovietization of Russian politics', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 25(4), 283−309, 291.

[103]See n(86), 319.

[104]Kryshtanovskaya, O.G. and White, S., 2009. 'The Sovietization of Russian politics', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 25(4), 283−309:303.

communist past combined with a communist-trained present'.[105] As in the case of legislature and political parties in authoritarian context, it is argued that elections in authoritarian regimes are used as mechanisms for a two-way information flow. On the one hand, elections collect information on loyal citizens and the hidden dynamics of the opposition in regions throughout the country for further cooptation. On the other hand, the regime uses elections to demonstrate the ruling elite's strength and unlimited access to resources to the potential and/or latent opposition. They highlight the imbalance between the incumbent and the opposition, attracting a high turnout by buying massive numbers of votes to obtain a supermajority. In particular, the ruling elite shows potential rivals how difficult and resource intensive it is to mobilise such extensive support. Finally, elections secure the loyalty of elites in the regions.

Authoritarian regimes expect more far-reaching outcomes from elections. The aim is to present a high level of citizen satisfaction with the regime to prove to the opposition that a satisfied populace would not support them. To achieve this objective, elections need to have a high turnout and they need to award the regime a supermajority. According to Magaloni, in this case, elections play a greater role than any legal impediments the regime creates to deter opponents because dissatisfaction can easily be overcome. As a rule, elections in authoritarian regimes are routine, predictable exercises, with a great deal of attention paid to procedural rules. For instance, O'Beachain *et al.* considered elections in Kazakhstan to be more of a ritual act, rather than a democratic process, demonstrating mass support for, loyalty to, and trust in the president and his actions[106]. The authors argue that elections are designed to be performative, continuing the political practices of the Soviet period that constitute the experience and environment within which the current political leaders of Central Asian states grew up. Drawing on examples of parliamentarian and presidential elections in Central Asia, O'Beachain explored the methods used by rulers to exclude competitors through legal measures, such as increasing the threshold for political party registration, manipulating votes, and the use of blatant negligence to deny the registration of candidates. Similarly in Russia, the reforms that were introduced in the mid-2000s were meant to reduce the level of unpredictability in the outcomes and bring manageability to the process.[107] Notwithstanding the range of diverse views on the purpose of elections in authoritarian regimes, scholars do agree that elections serve as a facade for

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[105]Beacháin, D.Ó., 2011. 'Faking it: Neo-Soviet electoral politics in Central Asia', in *Voting for Hitler and Stalin: Elections Under 20th Century Dictatorships*, 204–227, 224.
[106] Beacháin, D.Ó. and Kevlihan, R., 2015. Imagined democracy? Nation-building and elections in Central Asia. Nationalities Papers, 43(3), pp.495-51
[107]White, S. and Kryshtanovskaya, O.G., 2011. 'Changing the Russian electoral system: Inside the black box', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 63(4), 557–578.

democracy and regime legitimacy. As stated by Schedler, 'the dream is to reap the fruits of electoral legitimacy without running the risks of democratic uncertainty'.[108]

Political recruitment in post-Soviet authoritarian regimes has acquired the character of elite co-optation, resulting in the recruitment of nomenklatura political groups, oligarchs, state corporations, family, and others with personal affiliations.[109] Political parties became an important tool for managing political processes, including recruitment. In most of the cases, the newly created ruling party assumed 'its organizational network, its discipline, its methods of agitation and propaganda, and its overall style' from its predecessor the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.[110] Owing to the limited influence of the legislature on policy outcomes, it can be argued that elected political office is mostly associated with material benefits, such as salary, the opportunity to go abroad with overseas delegations, and access to administrative benefits.[111]

Since political recruitment in post-Soviet authoritarian regimes is based on candidate loyalty, the candidate's effectiveness is measured by the candidate's ability to 'undertake measures to ensure the regime's longevity'.[112] The indicators of success might vary depending on the political outcomes and expectations of the ruling regime. For instance, in a study on the appointment of regional governors in Russia, researchers used the share of votes cast for the ruling party in parliamentary elections. Other criteria for appointment to politically significant positions in authoritarian regimes are professional competence[113] and length of membership in the party. This type of appointment can also be part of a co-optation strategy,[114] which could be potentially risky in the case of a strong candidate or in a move to reduce social dissent by reshuffling, in order to minimise the chances for the appointee to build a network of supporters.[115]

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[108] Schedler, A., 2002. Elections without democracy: The menu of manipulation. Journal of democracy, 13(2), pp.36-50, p.37

[109] Mommsen, M., 2012. 'Russia's political regime: Neo-Soviet authoritarianism and patronal presidentialism', in *Presidents, Oligarchs and Bureaucrats: Forms of Rule in the Post-Soviet Space*, 63–87, 77, Routledge, 2016

[110] Kryshtanovskaya, O.G. and White, S., 2009. 'The Sovietization of Russian politics', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 25(4), 283–309, 292.

[111] Chaisty, P., 2005. 'Party cohesion and policy-making in Russia', *Party Politics*, 11(3), 299–318, 314.

[112] Reuter, O.J. and Robertson, G.B., 2012. 'Subnational appointments in authoritarian regimes: Evidence from Russian gubernatorial appointments', *The Journal of Politics*, 74(4), 1023−1037.

[113] Landry, P.F., 2008. *Decentralized Authoritarianism in China: The Communist Party's Control of Local Elites in the Post-Mao Era*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

[114] Reuter, O.J., 2010. 'The politics of dominant party formation: United Russia and Russia's governors', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 62(2), 293−327.

[115] Goode, P., 2007. 'The puzzle of Putin's gubernatorial appointments', *Europe-Asia Studies*, No(59), 3:365–399.

With the exception of studies of delegates to the Supreme Soviet,[116] China's National People's Congress,[117] and a recent analysis of the Vietnamese Parliament,[118] individual behavioural patterns have not been extensively researched. In the Vietnamese study, the authors linked delegate behaviour with type of nomination, background, and legislature role using extensive data from parliamentary query sessions. In the analysis of the Supreme Soviet and its influence on the policy-making process – relevant for this research – White commented on the 'secured and retained position [of the Supreme Soviet] as an institutional actor' with 'negligible importance'[119] with regard to the patterns of representation, discussion, and budget reallocations. Investigating representation patterns in Soviet representative institutions, Hill highlighted that the retention rate among women was considerably less (fifteen percent) compared with that of men (fifty percent).[120] Previous studies on Soviet patterns and dynamics of representation covered only the descriptive aspect – and even that mainly at the central level of the Supreme Soviet – owing to a lack of data. The existing research also covers the benefits[121]and public goods provision.[122]

This thesis explores important elements based on the literature on the political parties which help to understand the role of the ruling political party and elections in Kazakhstan in the political recruitment process of women and its significance in terms of political career of parliamentarians from gender perspective. First, through analysis of parliamentarian activity and examining their pre- and post-MP career patterns, this thesis argues that the post-Soviet ruling party in Kazakhstan has resumed the practice of employing female parliamentarians as regime mouthpieces and contributors to the dissemination of the regime's ideology. By highlighting women's experience of participating in the elections, the thesis elucidates the way the political party limits the scope of representation at the level of election campaign. Secondly, this study contributes

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[116] White, S., 1980. 'The USSR Supreme Soviet: A developmental perspective', *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 5 (2), 247–274.

[117] O'Brien, K.J., 1994. 'Agents and remonstrators: Role accumulation by Chinese People's Congress Deputies', *The China Quarterly*, 138, 359–380.

[118]Malesky, E. and Schuler, P., 2010. 'Nodding or needling: Analyzing delegate responsiveness in an authoritarian parliament', *American Political Science Review*, 104 (03), 482–502.

[119] White, S., 1980. 'The USSR Supreme Soviet: A Developmental Perspective', *Legislative Studies Quarterly,* 5 (2): 247–74, 272.

[120]Hill, R.J., 1972. 'Continuity and change in USSR Supreme Soviet elections', *British Journal of Political Science*, 2(1), 47–67.

[121] Blaydes, L., 2006. 'Who votes in authoritarian elections and why? Determinants of voter turnout in contemporary Egypt', in *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association.* Philadelphia, PA, August; Lust-Okar, E., 2006. 'Elections under authoritarianism: Preliminary lessons from Jordan', *Democratization*, 13(3), 456–471.

[122] Magaloni, B., 2006. *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico* (Vol. 296). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Pepinsky, T., 2007. 'Autocracy, elections, and fiscal policy: Evidence from Malaysia', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 42(1-2), 136–163.

to the understanding of the extent to which hegemonic political parties are instrumental in political recruitment.

Women's Political Representation

The dominant scholarship theorising women's political representation rests on the seminal work of Hannah Pitkin, who argued that representation happens when actors articulate their constituencies' preferences and interests, and advocate and act to advance them.[123] Pitkin identified four types of parliamentary representation: formalistic, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive. Traditionally, scholars in gender and politics focus on the interrelation between descriptive and substantive forms of representation to understand how women participate in politics.[124] Descriptive representation (DR) considers the socio-demographic characteristics of representatives in the legislature, such as ethnicity, gender, age, regional affiliation, and class.[125] Representation is, therefore, linked to the shared characteristics between representative and represented, i.e. women are better at representing women's interests because of the shared characteristic of sex. Pointing out this simplistic correlation between characteristics and actions, Pitkin contrasted it with substantive representation (SR) as 'acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them'.[126] She stressed the responsiveness of the representatives to the interests and needs of the represented, not the other way around.[127]

Since Pitkin, feminist research has gone further, arguing that DR still matters,[128] especially in cases of 'mistrust or uncrystallized interests'.[129] The conceptualisation of the correlation between DR and SR provided grounds for feminist political scientists to claim that women's presence in elected political office will lead to better representation of women's voices in the political agenda.[130] In fact, many researchers proved this point by demonstrating the advancement of gender policies and women's issues in different

[123]Pitkin, H., 1967. *The Concept of Representation*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 209.

[124]Carroll, S., 2001. 'Representing Women. Women State Legislators as Agents of Policy Related Change', in S. Carroll (ed.) *The Impact of Women in Public Office*. Bloomington-Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 3–21; Phillips, A., 1995. *The Politics of Presence*. Oxford: Clarendon Press; Young, I.M., 2000. *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[125]Mansbridge, J., 1999. 'Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent "Yes"', *The Journal of Politics,* 61(3), 628–657.

[126]Pitkin, H.F., 1972. *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 209.

[127]Pitkin, H.F., 1972. *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 140.

[128]Phillips, A., 1998. 'Democracy and representation: Or, why should it matter who our representatives are?', in A. Phillips (ed) *Feminism and Politics*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 224–240.

[129]Mansbridge, J., 1999. 'Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent "Yes"', *The Journal of Politics*, 61 (3), 628–657.

[130]Lovenduski, J. and Pippa N., 2003. 'Westminster women: The politics of presence', *Political Studies,* 51(1), 84–102; Dovi, S., 2007. 'Theorizing women's representation in the United States', *Politics and Gender*, 3(3), 297–319; Dovi, S., 2008. *The Good Representative*. New York, NY: Blackwell Publishing.

parliaments once the number of women in office increased.[131] Indeed, women legislators are more likely to raise issues of education, child and social care, vulnerable groups, and so on.[132] The argument on critical mass states that once women's presence in parliament reaches thirty percent, they start to make a substantial difference in policy-making.[133] However, some studies question how the political context of women in legislatures was ignored by the DR and SR relationship, arguing that increases in the presence of women in political office did not contribute to gender- or women-friendly policies.[134] For instance, based on a study of thirty-one countries, Schwindt-Bayer and William demonstrated that the critical mass argument did not produce the expected effect in terms of positive transformations related to gender policies.[135] Additional studies even rejected the relationship between the presence of women in parliament and the representation of women's interests based on the fact that women are not a homogenous group.[136] Accordingly, the next developments in this area were aimed at explaining when, or under what conditions, DR is translated into SR. Scholars on gender and politics agreed that substantive representation should be examined as a 'complicated'[137] phenomenon and

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[131]To list a few works: Carroll, J., S., 2001. 'Representing women: Women state legislators as agents of policy-related change', in S.J. Carroll (ed.), *The Impact of Women in Public Office*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press; Dobson, L. D., 2006. *The Impact of Women in Congress*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Reingold, B., 2000. *Representing Women: Sex, Gender, and Legislative Behavior in Arizona and California*. Chapel Hill, NC: Carolina Press; Wolbrecht, C., 2000. *The Politics of Women's Rights: Parties, Positions, and Change*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Tremblay, M., 1998. 'Do female MPs substantively represent women? A study of legislative behaviour in Canada's 35th Parliament', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 31(3), 435–465; Campbell, R., Childs, S., and Lovenduski, J., 2010. 'Do women need women representatives?', *British Journal of Political Science*, 40(1), 171–94.

[132]Childs, S., 2004. *New Labour's Women MPs: Women Representing Women*. New York, NY: Routledge; Childs, S. and Krook, L.M., 2006. 'Gender and politics: The state of the art', *Politics*, 26(1), 18–28; Taylor-Robinson, M. M., and Heath, R. M., 2003. 'Do women legislators have different policy priorities than their male colleagues?', *Women & Politics,* 24(4), 77–101; Tremblay M., 2010. 'Women's representational role in Australia and Canada: The impact of political context', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 38(2), 215–238; Grey, S., 2002. 'Does size matter? Critical mass and New Zealand's women MPs', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 55(1), 19–29.

[133]Dahlerup, D., 2006. 'The story of the theory of critical mass', *Politics & Gender*, 2(4), 511–522.

[134]Franceschet, S., and Piscopo, M.J., 2008. 'Gender quotas and women's substantive representation: Lessons from Argentina', *Politics & Gender*, 4(3), 393–425; Franceschet, S., Krook, L. M., and Piscopo, M.J., 2012. 'Conceptualizing the impact of gender quotas', in S. Franceschet, M.L. Krook and J.M. Piscopo (eds.), *The Impact of Gender Quotas*. New York: Oxford University Press; Lovenduski, J., 2005. *Feminizing Politics*. London: Cambridge Polity Press.

[135] Schwindt-Bayer, L.A. and William, M., 2005. 'An integrated model of women's representation', *Journal of Politics*, 67(2), 407–428.

[136] Wängnerud, L. 2000. 'Testing the politics of presence: Women's representation in the Swedish Riksdag', *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 23(1), 67–91; Wängnerud, L., 2009. 'Women in parliaments: Descriptive and substantive representation', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12(1), 51–69; Celis, K., 2006. 'Substantive Representation of Women: The representation of women's interests and the impact of descriptive representation in the Belgian Parliament' (1900–1979)', *Journal of Women Politics & Policy*, 2, 85–114; Celis, K., and Erzeel, S., 2015. 'Beyond the usual suspects: Non-left, male and non-feminist MPs and the substantive representation of women', *Government and Opposition*, 50(1), 45–64.

[137] Childs, S., 2008. *Women and British Party Politics: Descriptive, Substantive and Symbolic Representation*. London: Routledge.

'thick conception',[138] with many possible outcomes, as well as numerous variations in political institutions, contexts, and sources of representation. This thesis employs the framework on authoritarian institutions to place women's political participation and representation in a specific context. This study maintains that a better understanding of women's performance as political representatives can be achieved by examining their activity as parliamentarians, as well as their roles and attitudes towards advancing women's and gender equality issues.

Both DR and SR depend on the political and institutional aspects of the specific context under analysis. The authoritarian nature of the political regime influences the process of citizen participation in institutional politics, including political recruitment and representation. There is a dearth of research on representation in authoritarian regimes and the responsiveness of representatives. Scholars confirm that authoritarian regimes usually try to ensure fair representation in the legislature, with a special emphasis on DR,[139] thereby conveying a message of equity and that the government is 'responsive to diverse societal interests'.[140] Htun has argued that designated seats to ensure a desired level of representation is a measure that is more typical for authoritarian regimes.[141] Soviet representative institutions reflected the social composition of the population almost perfectly at all levels, something that was achieved through a system of quotas. During the Soviet period, delegates to the Supreme Soviet – the highest representative body at the national level – and to other levels of the administration were elected based on criteria imposed by the central Communist Party office in Moscow. Not all of the criteria carried similar weight, with relevance dependent on the level of representation and country context. For instance, although education was considered an important requirement for candidacies at the national level, it was difficult to stipulate at lower levels, especially for village delegates. Nevertheless, sex, age, and, to a lesser degree, membership in the party or the Komsomol (the youth wing of the Communist Party) were strictly required at all levels of Soviet representative institutions.[142] Occupation, awards, education, and social group (i.e. working class, peasantry, youth, intellectuals) were considered less important in the hierarchy of delegate criteria. This meant that local authorities had some discretion in

[138] Mackay, F., 2008. 'Representation "Thick" conceptions of substantive representation', *Women, Gender and Political Institutions*, 44(2), 125–137.
[139] Htun, M., 2004. 'Is gender like ethnicity? The political representation of identity groups', *Perspectives on Politics*, 2(3), 439–458.
[140] Bird, K., 2014. 'Ethnic quotas and ethnic representation worldwide', *International Political Science Review*, 35(1), 12–26.
[141] Htun, M., 2004. 'Is gender like ethnicity? The political representation of identity groups', *Perspectives on Politics*, 2(3), 439–458.
[142] Hill, R.J., 1973. 'Patterns of Deputy Selection to Local Soviets', *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Oct., 1973), 196–212.

deciding the extent to which the less important requirements were applied when determining the composition of the representative institution. However, the unwritten rule was to make the institutions almost perfectly representative, 'replicating ethnic, sex and other demographic differences'.[143]

Patterns of Women's Political Participation in Soviet period

Elected office in post-Soviet Kazakhstan inherited a certain pattern of representation, particularly among women who were recruited in that context. This pattern is reflected in the appointment criteria for potential female political office-holders, the way in which women are represented at the political level, and in the issues women are expected to raise. This continuity of Soviet practices and processes inevitably shapes political participation. The gender profile of elected officials during the Soviet period was always impressive, with the presence of nominal equality in numbers. In a study on women's political participation during the Soviet period, Lapidus identified certain differences in the career and recruitment patterns of male and female representatives to the Supreme Soviet in 1970. The primary differences included party affiliation (fewer party members among women); occupational background (women came from farming, healthcare, and education backgrounds); and higher turnover rates for female deputies (only fifteen percent of women were re-elected compared with more than half of male deputies).[144] Compared with men, who had the opportunity to acquire experience and skills in a variety of positions in other regions, a female *obkom* (party office at the regional level) member's career typically developed within one region and started 'from a lower position'.[145] This career pattern is still evident today. Generally, women parliamentarians have experience in one region, with more years spent in one position within the local government system or party. Compared with women, the typical pre-political career of men includes more diversified experience in terms of duty station and positions held, as well as fewer years spent in one institution and/or position owing to faster promotion at the local level. During the Soviet period, women's educational and professional background affected their patterns of career development in politics. Because women overwhelmingly received degrees in medicine

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[143]Ibid.
[144]Lapidus, G.W., 1978. *Women in Soviet Society: Equality, Development and Social Change*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 207.
[145]Ibid., 223.

and education, they held offices related to those areas of expertise, even at higher political levels. In short, the entire system limited opportunities for women as political actors.[146]

In the Kazakh SSR, female deputies held inferior positions as a result of their younger age, lack of higher levels of education degree, lower professional status, and lack of membership in the Communist Party. The typical profile of a female deputy looked like Khatys Kairbekova, who was a peasant in a collective community (Appendice B). Although Kairbekova had a secondary degree, many with her background were often illiterate. Kairbekova writes that before the October Revolution, she was illiterate; she still did not attend school after 1917 but in 1939, she attended the school to eliminate illiteracy, as part of a Bolshevik pro-literacy propaganda effort among women. From 1929, Kairbekova worked in the collective (*kolkhoz*) picking tobacco; in 1934, she was given a pair of shoes, in 1936, a piece of fabric, and a year later, the *kolkhoz* provided her with a blanket and some money. In 1939, the Presidium of the Supreme Council awarded Kairbekova with the Order of Lenin, one of the highest Soviet awards, for the largest tobacco harvest and in the same year, she became a member of the party.

The age distribution within the Supreme Council is one of its most striking features (Appendices D-F). By and large, women deputies were always younger than their male counterparts and, as a result, less experienced, less influential, and less assertive as political actors. These discrepancies were particularly explicit in the early councils. For instance, in the 2nd Council, the proportion of female deputies aged 20–29 and 30–39 years was almost equal, but in the case of male deputies, the largest age groups were 30–39 and 40–49 years. This trend was maintained in later councils but with a slight change; during the 6th Council (1963–1966), although seventy-one percent of women were younger than 40 years of age, the council brought in twenty-four percent of female deputies aged over 40. However, ten years later in the late 1970s, the share of women aged under 40 had increased by ten percent at the expense of the older group.

Age is an important indicator because it is directly related to an individual's social status, including occupation, party membership, and education, especially in a hierarchical authoritarian society with limited opportunities for professional growth. It is less likely that a young person has party membership and, accordingly, is less likely that they have a position within the political system, either in the government or in the party. In all of the councils since 1938, the majority of male deputies were party members: ninety percent in the 2nd council, an eighty-five percent in the 6th and 9th councils. For men, the party

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[146]Ibid., 228.

membership criterion has never dropped below eighty-five percent. A different dynamic is observed for women. In the early councils, only thirty percent of women deputies were party members, which at later councils dropped slightly (twenty-five to twenty-eight percent). Meanwhile, the share of non-party members among women did not fluctuate much, remaining at sixty percent, with a drop to forty-eight percent in the 1970s. However, the number of Komsomol affiliates (a youth wing of the Communist Party for members under 28 years of age) grew. This trend explains the increase in the number of young females in later councils – male Komsomol members did not exceed four percent. Even in cases where there was equal age representation, a man would either be a party member or, in rare cases, not belong to the party.

Age and party membership influenced occupation status. In the early councils, almost half of the male deputies came from the party (forty-three percent) and government (twenty percent); the next largest group comprised workers and peasants, amounting to around fifteen percent each. It is important to note that the positions of men and women peasants varied. In the majority of cases, men held managing positions in the *kolkhoz* or were senior specialists, whereas women were mostly low- or middle-level workers. In the late 1960s, the number of party functionaries and central government office-holders among male deputies was halved, while local government officers, peasants, and factory workers increased their representation in the council. A decade later, in the 1970s, during a period of economic stagnation, the most represented occupations were the party, the government, and the agricultural sector. By linking this trend to the important role played by political institutions within authoritarian and communist political systems in the Soviet context, it can be argued that the Supreme Council was transformed into a window-dressing institution with diminishing real power, a fiction of people's control over the political domain. The retention rate could be assessed from archival data obtained on the deputies of the Supreme Council, which confirmed the inferior position of women in politics. For instance, thirty percent of men in the 6th council (1963–1966) had served in previous councils; in the 9th council, this indicator increased tremendously to seventy-six percent. For women, the retention rate remained consistently low: eight percent in the 6th council and twelve percent in the 9th council. This further proves the low position of women, even in an institution with no real power.

Operationalising concepts to explore women's political participation and representation within authoritarian regimes

To sum up, this thesis employs the main concepts of neo-sovietisation features of political institutions and processes in the post-Soviet Kazakhstan to explore how the Kazakh regime shapes women's participation in politics for the purposes of regime's sustain by assigning the role of dissemination of the messages on the country's stability and development with the regime's policies. The table below summarises the relevant concepts of the broad literature of authoritarian regimes and the functions of institutions within these regimes, discussed in the chapter. It explains how these concepts are linked with the main research questions and the way the concepts are operationalised to respond these questions (Table 1).

The concept of mobilisation and opponents' identification as a key function of the elections in authoritarian regimes and the relevant literature provides the hypothesis explaining the purpose of political recruitment of candidates. The thesis provides gender perspective by posing the question of women's experience in elections and elucidating their personal motivation and reasons influencing their decision to stand for elections. Since this area is under researched and not well covered by secondary sources, in-depth interviews with women candidates, including who did not succeed, were one of the main sources of data to respond this research question.

In discussing descriptive representation, the research looks at the changing patterns and dynamics of representation based on the profiles of MPs. For this purpose, such characteristics as age, level of education, occupation and past experience serving as local representatives in Maslikhat are traced and compared to Soviet-era patterns. Descriptive representation answers the question of who the members of parliament are. Examining the profile of the parliamentarians and the way it changed throughout six parliaments since 1995, the thesis contributes to the discussion on the functions of the legislature as co-optation and power-sharing as well as theoretical assumptions on the representation in authoritarian regimes. Descriptive statistics available from few open sources such as Majilis website provided a wealth of interesting data on who are the MPs and female parliamentarians in particular. Triangulated by other sources including in-depth interviews and secondary sources, this type of data is unique in the way it is presented from gender perspective and discussed in the light of the assumptions of the existing studies on authoritarian legislature.

In terms of the substantive representation of women, it is important to note the ambiguity

of the notion, as well as the parameters adopted to measure the quality of substantive representation. For example, Thomas considered legislative activity to be based on procedures and products.[147] Procedures include participation in discussions, making official statements, and 'bargaining with lobbyists', whereas products imply outcomes of the legislative process, such as 'voting records, issue attitudes, and policy priorities'.[148] The gap between men and women can vary at the procedure and product levels. The thesis considers the key functions of political representatives in Kazakhstan including participation in the legislative process through parliamentary committees, working groups and parliamentary hearings; making personal or collective requests to the government and meeting with constituencies.[149] An MP can request information directly from the executives at the national and local levels through official requests. In the majority of cases, the requests are made collectively. MPs' questions to the government in written ("queries") or oral ("government hour") forms can serve as an effective tool of substantive representation. In developed democracies, the questions are used by MPs for a wide range of public and personal purposes. For example, an MP can influence the implementation of policies and increase his/her popularity in their constituency.[150] It is not relevant to compare the impact of MP questions in authoritarian conditions due to the limited agency of the legislature as a political institution, as well as the concomitant legislative proceedings, which are limited and controlled. This particular form of substantive representation, however, provides MPs with a certain degree of freedom to act as representatives, compared to their legislative and off-sessions to the regions ("meetings with constituencies"), where they record the needs of the population and explain state policies. Then, women's understanding of and motivations for representative activity and political office are located by discussing the attitudes of women political representatives to the political office at the national and local levels. This personal aspect provides a deeper understanding of their actual role in parliament.

Finally, to uncover the question of the impact of political office on women's political career, the thesis uses descriptive statistics from the Majilis website and other open sources confirmed by the interview results with women politicians and other secondary sources. This question helps to understand the role of legislature in authoritarian regimes

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[147] Thomas S., 1994. *How women legislate*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

[148] Wängnerud, L. 2009. 'Women in parliaments: descriptive and substantive representation', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12, pp. 51–69, 61–62

[149] The Statute of Majilis, Rep. of Kazakhstan, endorsed on 8 February 1996, with amendments on 12 October 2005, 17 October 2007, 9 November 2011 and 7 September 2016, p. 138

[150] Saalfeld, T., 2011. 'Parliamentary questions as instruments of substantive representation: visible minorities in the UK House of Commons, 2005–10', *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, 17(3), pp. 271–289

contributing to the existing discussion which assumes more significant role to the authoritarian parliaments. Although there are no previous studies on neo-Sovietisation of women's political participation to derive assumptions from, the concept of Neo-Sovietisation guides each research question.

Discussion and conclusion

Research on women's political involvement in authoritarian regimes focuses on how these regimes approach the issue of gender equality, as well as on the tactics that are used to exert control over women's movements, converting them into supporters of the regime's policy. The regime's main purpose in promoting gender-friendly policies is not to advance gender equality per se, but 'to realise other political objectives, such as maintaining power'.[151]

Based on key discussions of the functions of authoritarian institutions and representation patterns in restricted settings, several questions emerge. When considering political recruitment in authoritarian settings, women do not control sufficient resources to interest the regime in buying their loyalty. Owing to their disadvantageous position in society, which prevents them from gaining influential roles and restricts their access to resources, women have less bargaining power, with the exception of those women who are connected to elite circles through familial relationships. Therefore, it is presumed that the pattern of representation for women in autocracies stands apart from that for men, because the regime is not interested in co-opting women. Similarly, because women are absent from larger businesses, which are important for the national economy, it is suggested that women are less interested in elected office and the associated policy concessions. This indicates that the regime is less interested in recruiting women into politics, unless it is for a specific purpose. As mentioned above, the regime often uses gender equality policies to enhance internal and external legitimacy, to reinforce 'existing social divisions' through the 'establishment and maintenance of a duality between the status of women in the public and the private spheres',[152] and to use women's movements as a mechanism for co-optation. The emergence of women's political ambition is influenced not only by private issues, but also by the Soviet legacy of distrust in political institutions, the existing state policy on women's leadership, and the perceptions of political office and representative politics in today's Kazakhstan.

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[151]Tripp, A.M., 2013. 'Political systems and gender', in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*.
[152]Lorch, J. and Bunk, B., 2016. *Gender Politics, Authoritarian Regime Resilience, and the Role of Civil Society in Algeria and Mozambique*, 11.

Table 1: Framework of analysis: concepts of neo-sovietisation and authoritarian institutions, links to the research questions, and operationalisation

Concepts	Research questions	Type of data required to respond the research questions (operationalisation)
Mobilisation and identification of the potential actors for cooptation as the function of elections Hegemonic political parties as recruitment mechanism and propaganda in post-Soviet regimes	Q1: How do women compete for political office in post-Soviet regimes? Why do they compete? What are their electoral experiences?	• Constitution • Law on Political Parties • Law on Elections • Interview with party management (local offices) • Political parties' charters and recruitment guidelines • On-the-record interviews with public officials in the media • Semi-structured interviews with women current and former parliamentarians (Majilis and senators), candidates, party members and independent candidates, local business women, participants of the trainings on Women Leadership, members of the Association of Business Women of Kazakhstan etc
Representation in authoritarian regimes: descriptive and substantive representation of women Co-optation and power-sharing functions of the legislature Hegemonic political parties as recruitment mechanism and propaganda in post-Soviet regimes	Q2: How does descriptive and substantive representation occur in an authoritarian parliament? This includes investigating the actions women politicians take as advocates for gender equality and women's issues. (How does descriptive and substantive representation change in an authoritarian parliament? More specifically, how can women politicians act as political representatives in legislature, as well as in their capacity as representatives of gender equality issues and women's interests?) What is the role of female parliamentarians?	• Parliament's website • Descriptive statistical data (Men and Women in Kazakhstan, Gender Statistics provided by the Ministry of the National Economy) • Parliamentary members' requests to the government • Official media interviews • Parliament session activity reports and individual member of parliament reports • Transcriptions of the hearings • Questions in plenary sessions • Semi-structured interviews with women current and former parliamentarians (Majilis and senators) • Analytical notes by political activists and scientists
Co-optation and power-sharing functions of the legislature	Q3: How does political office affect the political and/or professional careers of women after their term in office? (Does holding political office [elected positions] affect women's political and/or professional careers?)	• Constitution • Parliament website • Paragraph.kz and zakon.kz websites containing member of parliament biographies • Speeches • Semi-structured interviews with women current and former parliamentarians (Majilis and senators), party members and independent candidates, local business women, etc • Official media interviews
Neo-Sovietisation of women's political participation by assigning channelling functions	All three research questions	• Parliament website • Paragraph.kz and zakon.kz websites containing member of parliament biographies • Speeches • Semi-structured interviews with women current and former parliamentarians (Majilis and senators), candidates, party members and independent candidates, local business women, participants of the trainings on Women Leadership, members of the Association of Business Women of Kazakhstan etc • Official media interviews

The positions of women in parliament and the issues they represent also depend on the legislature's role and place within Kazakhstan's political system. Women's political participation is discussed in conjunction with the framework on authoritarian institutionalism and the neo-Sovietisation of the way women participate in politics, which affects the way women's political participation is implemented at every stage. This study attempts to elucidate the gaps in these theoretical frameworks by analysing women's motivations to become politicians at the local and central levels; the patterns of descriptive and substantive representation in Kazakhstan's parliament from 1996 to 2018; and how holding parliamentary office in Kazakhstan affects women in terms of their political and professional careers.

On the basis of the diverse typologies described, Kazakhstan's political regime can be attributed to the category of personalised authoritarian regimes with strong presidential power and neopatrimonialism, which defines the purpose of institutions. As was the case during the Soviet period, the power of political institutions is consolidated within the presidential administration. It has been argued that an authoritarian legislature primarily serves the purposes of the regime, striking a balance between co-optation and power-sharing. There is a subtle difference between the co-optation and power-sharing functions, which can be considered two diverse stages of a single process that maintains regime stability, rather than two separate dynamics. Nevertheless, as highlighted in this chapter, it is assumed that power-sharing deals require autonomous candidates with sufficient material resources; in order to be co-opted, a candidate should possess skills that are useful for the regime's purposes. Both arguments suggest that a potential candidate should have some form of bargaining power in order to be co-opted or invited to take part in a power-sharing deal. Neither power-sharing nor co-optation can be considered with regard to women's political involvement, because only a few women possess such extensive resources, mostly through family networks. This suggests that women's political representation may also primarily serve to bolster the regime, although the actual experiences and interests of women in this regard remain to be examined. Thus, the regime reintroduces the Soviet pattern of women's involvement in politics for propaganda purposes.

This chapter framed the main research question by highlighting research on Soviet-period patterns of political participation and representation in authoritarian institutions, and, in particular, women's political representation and participation. Given that there is little literature relevant to the specific topic, a framework was used to facilitate the

formulation of specific sub-questions and the analysis of the findings in the following chapters.

Chapter III. Methodological issues

This research examines the patterns of women's political participation (WPP) in formal political institutions in post-Soviet Kazakhstan focusing on the changing relationship between the political regime and women's political participation. The overarching aim of this dissertation is to uncover the reasons behind the Kazakhstan regime's decision to include more women in politics. Based on the theoretical framework set out in the previous chapter, the research targets the following aspects of political participation in non-democratic regimes: the political recruitment of candidates, the capacity of individual politicians to influence policy and political outcomes, and the benefits accrued for office holders. In order to achieve its overarching aim, the research focuses on three key questions:

- How do women compete for political office in post-Soviet regimes?
- How does descriptive and substantive representation occur in an authoritarian parliament? This includes an investigation of the actions women politicians take as advocates for gender equality and women's issues; and
- How does political office affect the political and/or professional career of women following their term in office?

The overall research question draws on literature on representation in authoritarian regimes and authoritarian institutions in general, as well as on theoretical assumptions of gender, politics and women's political representation that are employed in the analytical framework. All of the above, are approached through the particular case of Kazakhstan, where focus is placed on women legislators in the Kazakh parliament. As a case study, this offers important insights and frames our understanding within an authoritarian context set against a post-Soviet historical background and all that this means for the experience of women's emancipation in the country, as well as for the legacy of formalistic participation in politics. Thus, another important contribution of this dissertation is that is fills a gap in our understanding of perspectives from developing countries.

Research design

The dissertation examines the process of the enactment of substantive representation and its link to women's descriptive representation in an authoritarian context. Given the

thematic area under analysis, the study employs heuristic approaches for the development of the topic. It also includes a constant self-reflective process, and engagement with the research question and methodology throughout the whole process of research and writing.[153] This means that the researcher is flexible in the choice of the methods which will allow him/her to examine every aspect of the research theme.

The study uses descriptive statistics and qualitative approaches in a complementary way to explore women's participation in political institutions under non-democratic conditions, and more specifically in Kazakhstan. Due to the variety of facets of the phenomenon in question, both methods are applied depending on the specificity of each aspect. Descriptive and partially substantive representations are assessed through statistical data and numerical measurements. In particular, the situation and characteristics of women's involvement in institutional politics, including their status and positions, are analysed via an examination of the Majilis session and annual reports, reports of the Committees of the Majilis, MP activity reports published on their personal web pages, interviews they have given to others, as well other types of information found on the Majilis website. Qualitative research is appropriate when the research targets attitudes and practices, rather than 'the frequency of predetermined attitudes and practices'.[154] For instance, in this research, qualitative methods are useful in revealing the perceptions of political office by women, as well as their political ambitions to run for that office. They are also able to uncover the details of a candidate's recruitment from a woman's perspective and illuminate her view on the different stages of political participation and the meanings attached to each. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted. A qualitative methodology requires depth and richness of data and is typically associated with ethnographies, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenology and narrative research.[155] Qualitative research is often conducted in order to empower participants by letting them share their experience in a particular area.[156] Last but not least, this study aims to contribute to feminist research and, in particular, to the area of gender and politics, which also justifies the choice of a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research methods are closely associated with feminist research because they allow one to examine issues from a woman's point of view in order to

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[153] Moustakas, C., 1990. *Heuristic research: design, methodology, and applications*. London: Sage

[154] Fielding, N., 1993. 'Qualitative interviewing', in N. Gilbert (ed), *Researching social life* (London: Sage), pp. 135–153, 137; Manheim, J.B. and Rich, R.C., 1995. *Empirical political analysis*. London: Longman, p. 162

[155] Creswell, J.W., 2003. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, p. 15

[156] Creswell, J.W. and Clark, V.L.P., 2007. *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Location: House

understand their experience.[157] The combination of these methods allows to compare the status quo of WPP with the perspective of women themselves.

Substantive representation of women MPs in terms of how women parliamentarians represent the interests of women and gender issues was highlighted by two legislative acts related to gender equality, i.e. the Law on Equal Retirement Age, and the Domestic Violence Act. Both acts were endorsed in 2009 during the 4th Parliament, when the number of women MPs had sharply increased compared to previous parliaments. Various types of information were collected, including parliamentary reports, standing committee meeting reports, and interviews of legislators, experts working in the field of gender and politics, as well as gender activists. The personal reports of legislators, as well as the profiles of women legislators were also examined. The methods of collection included documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews depending on the type of source. The thesis used different tools of data analysis including the qualitative content analysis of documents (parliamentary proceedings), semi-structured interview analysis, and process tracing of documents (standing committee meeting reports and interviews). Such a combination of different data sources and analytical tools is often employed in empirical studies of women's substantive representation. The findings were validated through triangulation.[158]

This research deals with political institutions in authoritarian regimes, which raises certain methodological challenges. Due to the restrictive political conditions, the interplay between the formal and informal dimensions of institutions, processes and the actions of actors is complex and dynamic. Informal institutions define the political behaviour of individuals and institutional outcomes, as well as affecting the impact of electoral rules.[159] Understanding the general rules and norms related to the process of political recruitment in such regimes helps to locate women's experience. The challenge of this task is further increased because in a context where informal institutions are infused into everyday practices to a greater extent, actors can find it difficult to isolate them. This holds particularly true for the gendered dimension of institutions.[160]

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[157] Punch, K.F., 1998. *Introduction to social research* (London: Sage), pp. 178–180; Sarantakos, S., 1998. *Social research* (Location: Macmillan), pp. 62–71

[158] Flick, U., Garms-Homolová, V., Herrmann, W., Kuck, J. and Röhnsch, G., 2012. 'I can't prescribe something just because someone asks for it . . .: using mixed methods in the framework of triangulation', *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 6, pp. 97–110; Flick, U., 2007. *Sampling, selecting and access*, in U. Flick (ed.), *Designing qualitative research* (London: Sage), Chapter 4

[159] Helmke, G. and Levitsky, S., 2004. 'Informal institutions and comparative politics: a research agenda', *Perspectives on politics*, 2(4), pp. 725–740

[160] Chappell, L. and Waylen, G., 2013. 'Gender and the hidden life of institutions', *Public Administration*, 91(3), pp. 599–615

The research falls under the category of exploratory studies, whose major goal is to understand and explain the phenomenon under study;[161] in this case, this is the value of women's political representation and participation in non-democratic settings. Exploratory studies generally address the "what" question. They are particularly useful when little is known in the area of research, which is also frequently complex, and there is lack of detailed preliminary studies. The issue of women's political engagement in post-Soviet authoritarian regimes, where gender norms and political context are different than those in the West, falls well within this category.[162] In addition, this type of study is especially useful in the case of complex research which weaves attitudes and behaviours into the research structure. This means that the choice of methodology has to consider the main area of research, i.e. women's participation in institutional politics in non-democratic post-Soviet institutions. Therefore, exploratory studies are not designed to test already framed theoretical propositions, but rather to elucidate previously understudied areas of a particular topic. An exploratory study usually aims to obtain a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon. In this sense, the given strategy draws on the interplay among existing theories, such as women's political participation in communist regimes, and authoritarian institutionalism, in order to locate the research topic firmly. It can also be argued that the present research has features typical of descriptive case studies, which are focused on describing the peculiar 'characteristics of a phenomenon in its context'[163] as part of theory building. The descriptive aspect is an inalienable part of an exploratory study because it provides a strong factual background useful for grounding the research.

In-depth case study analysis can establish empirical generalisations by using variations within the system, which can contribute to a deeper explanation of the phenomenon of women's parliamentary representation.[164] Therefore, this thesis seeks to answer the research question by employing an explanatory 'embedded case study'[165] approach, in this case Kazakhstan, in order to understand the complex phenomenon of substantive representation of women in authoritarian, restrictive and highly controlled political settings. The aim is to provide a "thick description" of the internal process of enactment of substantive representation by exploring the nature and scope of the contribution of women legislators on gender equality and women's issues.

[161] Rohlfing, I., 2012. *Case studies and causal inference: an integrative framework*. Location: Palgrave Macmillan
[162] Yin, R.K., 2017. *Case study research and applications: design and methods*. London: Sage
[163] Baskarada, S., 2014. *Qualitative case study guidelines*. Location: House, p. 4
[164] Yin, K.R., 2004. *The case study anthology*. London: Sage
[165] Ibid.

This thesis uses descriptive statistics and qualitative methods to collect and analyse its empirical data. The aim is to provide depth of understanding through a single case study.[166] A limitation of the chosen methodology is that the "within case" study approach cannot provide uncontested generalisability of the outcomes. Indeed, the findings can be extrapolated to similar cases in a similar historical context and political regime and, as such, women's emancipation can be evaluated as part of a shared legacy of post-Soviet development. Nevertheless, this should be done with caution, as there are other factors at play. One obvious example of a similar case is Belarus. Nevertheless, the higher level of women's activism there should be taken into consideration since it affects the potential for social changes, as observed in August 2020. Some of the findings also allow the reader to deliberate on the role of political actors in authoritarian contexts.

Case selection

This research is based on a single case study of Kazakhstan because this country constitutes a representative case of a typical post-Soviet authoritarian personalist regime with a strong socialist legacy of women's participation in politics. As discussed in Chapters IV and V, Kazakhstan has a strong historical and political Soviet legacy in terms of recruitment to political institutions, and especially women's increased level of participation in them, which is typical of other authoritarian regimes in the region. Kazakhstan was 'catapult[ed] to independence',[167] without any preceding freedom movement, in 1991. The country had no alternative political ideologies, and leaders continued 'to cling to the conceptualization of power and power relations inherited from the Soviet policies and institutions'[168] in order to maintain their influence. In this sense, the authoritarian nature of the political regime was inherited from the Soviet era, and was subsequently transformed 'through administrative means'.[169] Some scholars argue that, owing to the absence of real changes, the regimes of Central Asian states, including Kazakhstan, are in essence more neo-Soviet than post-Soviet.[170] The authoritarian regime

[166] Gerring, J., 2004. 'What is a case study and what is it good for?', *American Political Science Review*, 98(2), pp. 341–354

[167] Olcott, M.B., 1992. 'Central Asia's catapult to independence', *Foreign Affairs*, 71(3) [Online]. Available at: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/kazakhstan/1992-06-01/central-asias-catapult-independence8 (Accessed: 5 January 2022)

[168] Luong, P.L., 2002. *Institutional change and political continuity in post-Soviet Central Asia: power, perceptions, and pacts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 105.

[169] Sinnott, P., 2003. 'Population politics in Kazakhstan', *Journal of International Affairs*, 56(2), pp. 103–115

[170] Merry, E.W., YEAR. 'Governance in Central Asia: national in form, Soviet in content', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17(2), pp. 285–300

in Kazakhstan is one of the most firmly established in the post-Soviet world,[171] and is certainly the most effectively consolidated.[172] From 1991 to 2019, Kazakhstan was ruled by Nursultan Nazarbayev. He was installed 'by the people in conditions of absence of any alternative' and enjoyed almost limitless powers, which were guaranteed by the Constitution.[173] Despite Nazarbayev's official "resignation" in March 2019, he has maintained a dominant role in politics by presiding over the Security Council and the political party Nur Otan.[174] The party's prominence in controlling recruitment for the country's representative institutions demonstrates that the President's resignation has not led to any meaningful change.

Kazakhstan ranked 51st (out of 189) in the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap Report of 2020 and also had the same ranking on the UNDP's Gender Inequality Index in 2019.[175] These indices measure gender-based gaps in economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. The WEF reports a higher level of women's participation in the labour market, education and the legislature (27% in the lower house of Parliament),[176] which is a feature of Soviet heritage in terms of its egalitarian policies and representation patterns. The 2020 report of the Interparliamentary Union listed Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, as the countries in the Asian region with the highest number of women senators (in the upper chamber).[177] According to the IPU ranking, Kazakhstan ranked 62nd out of 193 countries on the cumulative ranking on women in national parliaments. This ranking includes the number of women in both chambers of parliament, as well as female presidents, ministers and women speakers of parliament. Indeed, since 1995 the ruling regime has been largely successful in promoting gender politics in Kazakhstan compared to other ex-Soviet states. Among its achievements are the increase of the status of the national women's commission within the institutional hierarchy, the adoption of the equality act and the law on domestic

[171] Hale, H.E. 2005. 'Regime cycles: democracy, autocracy, and revolution in post-Soviet Eurasia', *World Politics*, 58, p. 159.

[172] Bader, M., 2011. 'Hegemonic political parties in post-Soviet Eurasia: towards party-based authoritarianism?', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 44, pp. 189–197.

[173] Kurtov, A., 2000. 'Democracy of elections in Kazakhstan: authoritarian revolution, Constitutional Law: *East European Review*, 2 (31), pp. 2–10. Link is broken. Reference could not be traced.

[174] Toguzbaev, K. 2019. 'Expert view: Nazarbaev will be aware of what Tokaev will be thinking', *Azzatyk Radio*, 21 March
 [Online]. Available at: https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-tokayev-as-a-second-president-of-kazakhstan-opinions/29832872.html (Accessed: 5 January 2022)

[175] UNDP, 2019. Database on Human Development Index, Section 'Gender Inequality Index'. Available at: https://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/68606 (Accessed: DATE)

[176] World Economic Forum, 2014. *The Global Gender Gap Report*. Available at: http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/economies/#economy=KAZ (Accessed: DATE)

[177] Interparliamentary Union, 2021. *Women in Parliament in 2020. The Year in Review*. Available at: https://www.ipu.org/women-in-parliament-2020 (Accessed: DATE), p. 13

violence, the introduction of a special unit in the police addressing cases of domestic violence, the intensification of awareness-raising campaigns on different aspects of gender issues, the voluntary assessments of the state's progress in achieving SDG (including SDG 5 Gender Equality), the inauguration of state-funded crisis centres for the victims of domestic violence, the development of a special programme to promote women's entrepreneurship and, in general, the promotion of open discussion in the media and political circles of certain gender equality issues (such as domestic violence and sexual harassment). All of these steps demonstrate the willingness of the ruling regime to include gender in the agenda.

The case of Kazakhstan deviates from the overall trend characterising post-Soviet states in terms of women's representation in politics, which has witnessed a sharp drop in the number of women in parliaments. There are only three post-Soviet countries which have increased this indicator and their common feature is a highly personalised authoritarian regime. These are Belarus, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. This suggests a return to the Soviet practice of promoting a high number of women in representative institutions. Similar regimes, such as Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Russia, however, do not follow this pattern, while other post-Soviet states which have undergone regime change and transformations towards more democratic political settings (Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan) demonstrate less progress in terms of women's political participation. Thus, Kazakhstan is well-suited given the purpose of this research. Being one of the stable post-Soviet authoritarian regime with a socialist legacy of women's emancipation, formally manifested in the high number of women in representative political institutions, Kazakhstan represents an excellent case to trace the dynamic of women's political participation in the restricted political conditions in neo-Soviet period.

A unit of analysis in this study is a group of women who have been involved in representative political offices in Kazakhstan since the establishment of the current parliament. The focus is on the lower house due to the greater representation of women at this level and because international indexes, such as the Gender Inequality Gap and the Gender Equality Index, commonly use the lower chamber to measure women's political participation. The thesis also provides views on the regional representation of women and compares women's political participation at the local and national levels, in an effort to examine women's pathways into politics.

It is also worth mentioning that the selection of Kazakhstan as a case study is guided by several practical reasons or, as Seawright and Gerring calls them, 'pragmatic considerations':[178] time, funding, expertise and access. Availability and access to information is a critical requirement for research, especially in somewhat sensitive areas. In Kazakhstan, I can easily operate and access the necessary data due to my previous experience working in the country in the area of women's political participation and leadership. As I also discuss in this chapter, however, my past experience did not guarantee access to information and elites. Nonetheless, it has helped me to identify key organisations and personalities in this field.

Limitations of the chosen research strategy

The primary concern of research based on a single case study relates to issues of internal and external validity, as well as reliability. These aspects require special attention when it comes to qualitative research due its less structured approach. Overall, external validity is generally not the primary purpose of a single case study because the case was not selected randomly, and because the aim of the research is to identify particular patterns and characteristics of women's political participation in Kazakhstan. In addition, research which deals with human beings as primary objects is not easily generalisable due to the non-static nature of human interactions and relations.[179]

Nevertheless, there are certain strategies that are recommended in order to strengthen the external validity of social research, including thick description and modal comparison.[180] In addition to providing a detailed description of the context and methodological issues involved, the concluding chapter of the thesis discusses how representative the case findings are and identifies aspects (e.g. the "sampling within" tactic) which can be applied as a framework for studying similar phenomena. As cited by Merriam, the goal of social scientists is not to ensure that results confirm the findings recorded in other studies, but to assess 'whether the results of a study are consistent with the data collected'.[181] The findings of the research can be replicated in other cases of authoritarian or post-Soviet regimes with some caveats. By providing detailed information on methodology, researchers can assess the methodological approach used and the political context of the

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[178] Seawright, J. and Gerring, J., 2008. Case selection techniques in case study research: A menu of qualitative and quantitative options. *Political research quarterly*, 61(2), pp.294-308, p. 295
[179] Merriam, S.B. and Tisdell, E.J., 2015. *Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation*. Location: John Wiley & Sons
[180] Ibid., pp. 58–59
[181] Ibid., p. 56

selected case in order to decide whether the findings can be replicated in similar cases. The strategies recommended to increase the validity of the research include data/method/theory triangulation, extended fieldwork, low inference descriptors, peer review and reflexivity.[182] In the following sub-sections, I discuss how reflexivity and extended fieldwork have been used, as well as how my personal experience and background (nationality) have had an impact at every stage of the data collection process. The multiplicity of sources of information – i.e. archives, mass media, internet sources, interviews with primary target and related groups – used in the research allowed the establishment of a good level of reliability of the findings.

There are specific parts of the research which highlight topics that have been previously under-researched, for instance, the political ambition of former and current female politicians in post-Soviet settings with a historical record of high numbers of women in representative political offices. Due to the nature of the topic, the findings of this section are mostly based on the answers of women politicians and, for this reason, the nature of the data collected might cause concerns about reliability. This is a significant challenge in the specific context of Kazakhstan since its restrictive political settings influence the responses of the participants. In order to increase the validity of the findings, low reference descriptions are used, i.e. providing participants' answers as close to the original text as possible in order to avoid misinterpretation and fallacies in the analysis. Furthermore, as the research was ongoing, different parts of the study were presented and discussed at project meetings and to wider audiences in conferences and workshops. This peer-review process adds to the validity of the results.

Data collection methods

In this research, I applied the method of intense gathering of descriptive data and qualitative evidence to enhance understanding of how women participate in political processes in Kazakhstan and how they interact with a variety of actors in the political system. The primary data collection method includes documents and in-depth interviews. As each tool brings different types of data for analysis, integration of methods leads to greater reliability of the findings. It is important that the research used an open-ended strategy during data collection, as material was also obtained through more flexible

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[182] Johnson, R.B., 1997. 'Examining the validity structure of qualitative research', *Education*, 118(2), pp. 282–283

approaches, adjusted to the issue at hand and informed by the researcher's experience and capacities.

Documentary analysis as a data collection method is used to explore descriptive and substantive representation patterns in the Kazakh parliament and, in certain cases (e.g. personal motivation to run for office), to verify information obtained through the interviews. As emphasised by Creswell, 'the context and setting of the case'[183] are important elements which shape the social phenomenon under study. The classification of the documents used in the research was dictated by the needs of the study (Table 1). In order to understand the political system and gender equality framework within which women political actors in Kazakhstan have to operate, primary sources, such as national legislation and the political system of Kazakhstan, the key functions of political institutions with a focus on Parliament, the responsibilities of parliamentarians, the high status of the National Commission on Women and Family Demographic Affairs under the President Office (national women machinery), and legislation on elections and political parties, have been examined. A significant amount of gender-related data is drawn from a set of materials titled 'Men and women of Kazakhstan' provided by the Agency of Statistics, Ministry of the National Economy, published annually since 1999 (some data has been available since 1995). This contains gender statistics, mostly related to social indicators, including demography, healthcare, education, the public sector, criminal rates, as well as some economic indicators, such as employment and entrepreneurship.[184] These data constitute a good basis for tracing the evolution of women's status in Kazakhstan at the local level since early independence. Legislative acts on selected issues are used in the chapters on gender regime and substantive representation, i.e. the Law on State Guarantee of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities (2009), the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2006–2016, and the Concept on Family and Gender Policy 2017–2030.

The official websites of political institutions were used to gather biographical information about parliamentarians from all sessions since independence (www.parlam.kz, www.online.zakon.kz) and political party programmes (www.nurotan.kz). Online resources of state institutions, previously not accessible to the public, have become valuable sources of information. With the implementation of the law on access to information, political institutions and officials now communicate through social media and other online platforms. The official website of the parliament contains, among others,

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[183] Creswell, J., 1998. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among 5 traditions*. CITY: Sage
[184] Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Bureau of National Statistics. Available at: https://gender.stat.gov.kz/en (Accessed: DATE)

biographical information of most MPs from six successive parliaments, their position within the parliamentary structure, their requests to the government and reports on field visits, their regular activity, and accounts of legislative acts at different stages of the law-making process. Online sources are useful in exploring the type and character of the issues parliamentarians have initiated, as well as their level of engagement in subsequent discussions and their contribution to specific issues. They also allow the identification of women's roles within the parliament in the form of their membership of committees and activity within these bodies.

In order to examine the dynamics of women's representation in parliament during the Soviet period (i.e. the Supreme Council of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic), data from the state archives were collected. More specifically, it was possible to obtain information on key socio-demographic characteristics of the delegates to the highest representative institution of Kazakhstan at the time. Despite my local origins, the archive's staff were suspicious and prior to granting me access to the necessary files, I was asked to complete a form, in which one of the questions was whether access to archives was one of the prerequisites/key characteristics of a democratic regime. In addition, they requested that I shared my notes on the information acquired from the archives, in order to check whether my findings could undermine the achievements of the regime or whether I would be presenting the country in a negative light. At my first meeting with the archive's deputy head, I was engaged in conversation about different notions of democracy leading to the suggestion that the current regime in Kazakhstan can also be considered democratic, according to her.

Furthermore, secondary sources, such as the reports of international organisations on gender equality in general, and more specifically, UN Women, UNDP, ADB, the World Bank and OSCE, were examined. The state periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee provided valuable information with regard to the state's view on the development of gender equality in the country and its perception of the related problems. Moreover, the analytical reports of civil society, research think tanks, political parties, individual political scientists and advocates, as well as gender experts were used to determine the political regime within which the political power of individuals is exercised. In regards to the selection process, records of the Central Elections Committee as well as political party reports were analysed. Special attention was paid to internet platforms and analytical fora, whose importance has increased, especially in light of the growing restrictions on freedom of speech and the ban on printing media. This project takes into consideration previous

studies in this area of research, including PhD theses. It has been confirmed that there is limited research on women's political participation in Kazakhstan. One important source worth mentioning is the research conducted by Khassanova, the former head of the Gender and Development Bureau, a UNDP project implemented in the 1990s. She examined women's participation in Kazakh political institutions between 1995–2002. Her research offers an interesting comparison between women's activism in the early period of independence and currently. To the best of my knowledge, there is no other research specifically on women's political representation in Kazakhstan.

Interviews

Interviews were one of the main sources of data collection for this research. As argued by Seidman, 'at the root of in-depth interviewing there is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience'.[185] The interviews I used here were structured, but allowed for a degree of flexibility.[186] This means that there was a structured list of questions asked but, at the same time, respondents were free to elaborate on their perspectives and contribute anything they thought was important. This technique encouraged respondents to reflect on their professional trajectory without skewing the objectives of the research.[187]

The main criterion for participant selection was their position within the political institutions. More specifically, the sampling of the respondents includes: (1) current and former female parliamentarians and local-level representatives; (2) party officials at the local level; (3) civil activists promoting WPP; (4) participants in political leadership training (School of Political Leadership); (5) heads of regional offices of the national women machinery; (6) local businesswomen; (7) unsuccessful independent candidates at the local level. The meaning of elites has been broadened to include not only state officials and political office holders, but also those who 'hold important social networks, social capital and strategic positions within social structures because they are better able to exert

[185] Seidman, I., 2006. *Interviewing as qualitative research: a guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*, (3rd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press

[186] Legard, R., Keegan, J. and Ward, K., 2003. 'In-depth interviews', *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers,* 6(1), pp. 138–169; Is this a CHAPTER? Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C.M. and Ormston, R. (eds), 2013. *Qualitative research practice: a guide for social science students and researchers.* London: Sage, p. 456

[187] Silverman, D. (ed.), 2016. *Qualitative research.* London: Sage; Denzin, N.K., 2001. 'The reflexive interview and a performative social science', *Qualitative Research*, 1(1), pp. 23-46.

influence'.[188] Based on this perspective, I too consider these categories of respondents to belong to the elite. Overall, during the space of the fieldwork I interviewed 55 respondents.

Fieldwork was conducted in selected regions of Kazakhstan, more specifically, Atyrau, Western Kazakhstan (west), Eastern Kazakhstan, Kostanai (north), Southern Kazakhstan, Karaganda (central part), Almaty and Astana. The selection criteria were based on a number of indicators, including women's local representation, the economic specialisation of the regions, patterns of female employment, unemployment ratio, the salary level of women and the wage gap per region. The selected regions have ties to important economic sectors: oil (west), agriculture (south), heavy industry (east and centre) and financial services (Almaty). They also exhibit specific patterns of women's representation at the local level. The highest number of female local representatives, at all local levels and at the regional level, was observed in Kostanai, whereas the lowest indicators were documented in the region of South Kazakhstan. The region of East Kazakhstan also ranks high in terms of women's representation, and it is the only region in the country with female governors at all levels of the local government system. Its economic development and specialisation were considered as key factors in defining the specificity of the labour market and women's employment patterns. The Atyrau and West Kazakhstan regions were included in the research due to the concentration of extractive industries and the high rates of foreign investment observed, especially in the case of Atyrau. It is also worth comparing the levels of women's political representation with certain gendered economic indicators. For example, the Atyrau region has the lowest level of female unemployment in the country, as well as the highest rate of wages among female employees in large and mid-sized enterprises. The wage gap in Atyrau, however, is also the highest in the country, with women earning less than 50% than men in similar positions. Further, South Kazakhstan, specialising in agricultural production, has the highest unemployment rate together with Karaganda and East Kazakhstan, whose economy is based on metallurgy and heavy industries. In addition to this, all three regions have the highest number of female entrepreneurs. These patterns of women's political and economic activities constitute valuable data for the analysis of the phenomenon under study.

When interviewing women politicians, I did not mention the restrictive nature of the regime and no comments were made in this regard. This gave me the opportunity to avoid predetermined answers and perceptions of women as puppets with little agency. It also allowed me to circumvent the suspicions of the respondents. Therefore, in one of my

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[188] Harvey, W.S., 2011. 'Strategies for conducting elite interviews', *Qualitative Research*, 11(4), pp. 431–441, 433

questions I asked them to provide an example of women's contribution to the decision-making process, which has given me insights into their stance on political institutions and actors, their perception of the decision-making process, as well as how they understood it at large.

Design of interview questions

The interviews were semi-structured with predetermined topics and questions covering women's political participation in institutional politics. The interview guide contains open-ended questions linked to the thematic areas of the research. Table 2 traces the way in which interview questions were developed. My research purpose involves three guiding questions, as already mentioned above. In regard to the first (How do women compete for political office in post-Soviet authoritarian regimes?), I examine the selection process of women politicians, including their individual ambition to run for office, pre-selection actions, and their experience in an election campaign. In order to explore the issue of the pre-selection and selection stages further, the interview questions of the first section were based on the following assumptions, which inform previous studies on the topic: (1) women are less politically active and have less experience in political work;[189] (2) women do not consider themselves as qualified candidates for political office;[190] (3) women are deeply affected by socialised norms, which do not encourage the development of political ambition, i.e. 'the embryonic or potential interest in office seeking that precedes the actual decision to enter a specific political contest'.[191] The second group of questions relates to the second research question concerning the substantive representation of women, the pattern of women's representation and the capacity of women to act as political representatives. This set of questions takes into consideration co-optation dynamics in authoritarian regimes with special focus on the legislature as a site where co-optation occurs.[192] The theoretical underpinning for this set of queries originates in the concept of women's descriptive and substantive representation, as well as overall political representation in autocracies. It also explores the patterns of women's political representation at the central level in conjunction with the evolution of the political system since the early period of independence. In addition, it addresses in broad strokes the issue

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[189]Lawless, J.L. and Fox, R.L., 2010. *It still takes a candidate: why women don't run for office*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

[190] Fox, R.L. and Lawless, J.L., 2010. 'If only they'd ask: gender, recruitment, and political ambition', *The Journal of Politics*, 72(2), pp.310–326

[191] Fox, R.L. and Lawless, J.L., 2005. 'To run or not to run for office: explaining nascent political ambition', *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(3), pp. 642–659

[192] See n. 14

of responsiveness of female political representatives in authoritarian contexts.[193] This specific section is developed in order to investigate the issue of substantive representation of women politicians. The assumptions are the following: (1) political representatives are not responsive to the needs of their constituencies due to the type of the electoral system which distances the voters from the delegates; (2) since political representatives are selected informally on the basis of their demonstrated loyalty and usefulness for the regime, they pursue their own interests or vote according to the directives of the party; (3) female politicians are more likely to promote women and gender-related issues. Finally, the third set of interview questions is constructed in response to the third research question concerning the perceived advantages of political office.

The guiding research question is marked in bold alongside its supporting questions, which allow respondents to develop their own opinions, express their views and share experiences (Table 2). Nevertheless, despite this structured interview guide, during the interviews, I have made allowance for the directions provided by the participants rather than rely solely on the interview guide, which mainly served the purpose of an overall outline on which to base the interviews. Most questions were formulated in such a way as to avoid any controversial topics, such as gender equality, political institutions or power. In the pilot interviews, there was a question on evaluating the situation of women's rights and gender equality in society. The respondents, however, gave exclusively positive answers which associated women's status with the policies of the president and the ruling party. In certain cases, these responses repeated verbatim relevant official statements of the party or of presidential speeches delivered on International Women's Day (March 8). In the final version of the interview guide, I removed this question since it did not elicit any personal reflections on the subject, even in those cases where I attempted to point out contradictions between the rhetoric and practice.

In order to capture the variety of categories of the interviewees, interview guides were designed for each group of respondents, including women politicians at central and local levels. The different status of participants within the political system affects their experience. For example, MPs focused on their role in the party, whereas local representatives stressed their work with the constituencies; the heads of the local party offices were mostly asked to talk about women's participation as party members, while women participants in the trainings shared their experience in applying and receiving

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[193] Malesky, E. and Schuler, P., 2010. 'Nodding or needling: analyzing delegate responsiveness in an authoritarian parliament', *American Political Science Review*, 104(3), pp. 482–502

Table 2. A sample interview guide for women MPs

Main research question	Concepts	Research questions	Interview questions
Why does the regime in Kazakhstan engage more women in politics?	Mobilisation and identification of the potential actors for cooptation as the function of elections Hegemonic political parties as recruitment mechanism and propaganda in post-Soviet regimes	How do women compete for political office in post-Soviet authoritarian regimes?	- What was your motivation/reason to run for office? - Did you get support from your family? What was their reaction? - What was the process of selection? - Did you have to promote yourself or was it an arbitrary decision of the party management? - Why do you think you were contacted by the party to run for election? - What was the programme/action plan you presented within the party during primaries? What issues do you focus on? Did you have to go through open debates to secure a place in the candidates' party lists? - How did you conduct the election campaign? - What kind of audience do you target? How do you approach them? - Did you receive funding from the party to conduct the election campaign? - Prior to starting your political career, did you have experience in political work?
	Representation in authoritarian regimes: descriptive and substantive representation of women Co-optation and power-sharing functions of the legislature Hegemonic political parties as recruitment mechanism and propaganda in post-Soviet regimes	In what ways does descriptive and substantive representation change in an authoritarian parliament? More specifically, how can women politicians act as political representatives in legislature and in their capacity as representatives of gender equality issues and women's interests?	- Do you see any benefit in being an elected official for your professional activity? - A question about salary in terms of your previous or current professional position (office representatives are unpaid, so local deputies keep their professional jobs). - Any immunities? Privileges? Working conditions?
	Co-optation and power-sharing functions of the legislature	Does the tenure of political office (elected positions) have an impact on their political and/or professional career following their elected term?	- What kind of issues are you advocating for as a representative? - What position do you have within the *maslikhat* – chairperson, secretary, member of which committee etc? What is your schedule as deputy? What are your everyday activities/obligations as deputy? How many sessions were conducted during certain convocations? - What category of population do you represent? Do you consider yourself successful in representing and advocating the issues you are in charge of? - How many requests did you make last year / this year? To what did they relate – any gender-related issues? - How many of the requests you made achieved positive outcomes? Was there any feedback? - How do you trace them? - How do you raise/advocate the interests of those you represent? - How many deputies are there in your district-level local representative body? How many of them are from the ruling party, self-nominators, or from other parties? How many are men/women? - How do you interact with the central-level representatives – MPs?

practical knowledge. Purposeful sampling was used, which means that the selection of the categories of respondents ensures that the topics of the research question are covered.[194] These two categories of representatives were asked to talk about the interaction between the central and local level deputies by providing concrete examples. For instance, if a respondent replied positively to this question, I asked them to elaborate further on their response in order to explain what positive cooperation meant to them. Thus, I tried to avoid predetermined responses as a way of understanding the respondent's position.

Selection of participants and technical details of interviewing

Interviewees were contacted directly through contact information available on websites, as well as through my former professional contacts with MPs, predominantly established through the heads of the local national women machinery and focal points in the regions. The latter seemed to be a better strategy to secure interviews. It also helped mitigate a major pitfall of elite interviews, namely the power imbalance between the interviewee and the researcher, which allows the former to control the interview process. Previous cooperation with some of the respondents helped me to establish trust with them. In this way, I navigated another main drawback of elite interviews, which is gaining access.[195]

Due to the political context of the country, most of the respondents represented the ruling party, with a small number being members of other parties, mostly AkZhol and the Communist party. The highest rejection rate was recorded in Kostanai – the northern region of Kazakhstan with the highest level of women's representation – and in the region of Aktobe. These rejections might be linked to local social tensions manifested in recent protests and the arrests of civil activists. Due to the fragile situation in the region, I initially contacted the focal point in the local government, who also used to work there, in order to ensure access to current specialists. Interviews were documented through note-taking because the practice of recording in face-to-face meetings is not welcomed in Kazakhstan, especially regionally. Elites, as well as ordinary interviewees, are usually apprehensive, regardless of the knowledge that the recordings would be treated confidentially and not be used for any other purpose other than research.[196] Scholars argue that note-taking while interviewing leads to loss of data, whereas the disadvantage of recording, especially in the

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[194] Creswell, J.W., 1998. *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks: Sage

[195] Goldstein, K., 2002. 'Getting in the door: sampling and completing elite interviews', *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 35(4), pp. 669–672

[196] Peabody, R.L., Hammond, S.W., Torcom, J., Brown, L.P., Thompson, C. and Kolodny, R., 1990. 'Interviewing political elites', *PS: Political Science & Politics,* 23, pp. 451–455

case of sensitive topics, is gaining access to off-the-record information.[197] In my case, in order to mitigate the risks of losing information while note-taking, I structured the questions around three sections, with the main and supporting questions organised in the form of a table. During the interview, this helped me write down the responses to each question quickly. Furthermore, I noticed that responses to the main questions tended to be repetitive and the more I interviewed participants, the easier it became to take notes. Interestingly, despite the fact that some participants initially opposed the idea of being recorded during the interviews, they did not object to having their names mentioned in the research. This might be explained by the fact that, over time, they felt more relaxed and realised that making their responses publicly available posed no threat to them.

Most interviews were conducted in Russian, except for a small number of respondents, more specifically local level representatives in the southern region of Kazakhstan, who preferred to speak Kazakh. Other than cases in which respondents did not have a good command of Russian to express themselves, it is important to highlight that speaking in Kazakh is also a form of assertion of the Kazakh identity, which is now actively promoted by the state. The interviews lasted between 10 and 150 minutes. In general, participants felt comfortable sharing their experience and attitudes, as well as providing evidence from their day-to-day work. No phone interviews were conducted, for reasons of confidentiality and because, initially, the research targeted in-depth face-to-face interaction with the participants.[198] Most participants scheduled appointments in their offices. In the case of deputies at the village level, interviews were conducted in the office of the local executive official, who is usually in close contact with the female deputies in the districts. I used the structured table, which I had divided into sections for each type of question, to develop the descriptive part of note-taking, which I later complemented with reflections, comprising my own observations recorded during the interviews.

Reflexivity notes

Reflexivity is considered to be one of the main strategies to mitigate the risks of research bias. According to this, it is possible to identify that in the context of this research, I am not a foreigner in terms of both origins and professional area of expertise. This is an important aspect to take into consideration, as it can influence the outcomes of the interviews. In

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[197] Harvey, W.S., 2011. 'Strategies for conducting elite interviews', *Qualitative Research*, 11(4), pp. 431–441, p. 437

[198] Sturges, J.E. and Hanrahan, K.J., 2004. 'Comparing telephone and face-to-face qualitative interviewing: a research note', *Qualitative Research*, 4(1), pp. 107–118

certain cases, when participants were contacted through the heads of the regional offices of the National Commission on Women and Family Demographic Policy and I was introduced as a researcher from a Western university, interviewees were reluctant to talk. One of the peculiarities of the preparation stage of the fieldwork for this research is that very few participants confirmed their availability by email, as they preferred to discuss arrangements over the phone. This might be a barrier for external researchers, who might contact participants through official email channels, which are rarely responded to. I tried to circumvent the non-responsiveness problem by combining written and verbal requests, i.e. making calls and referring to previously sent requests. Therefore, I assume that my professional contacts significantly helped me to reach the elites. The problem of 'non-commitment', as called by Roberts, is a common aspect of interviewing post-Soviet elites. In his research, it took him six months to make an appointment with high officials from the ruling party in Russia.[199]

In some cases, local representatives received false information about me and the purpose of my research by the head of the local offices of the National Commission on Women and Family Demographic Policy. Initially, some of them considered me a representative sent by the central authorities for "inspection and evaluation". Later, however, when I met with them personally and introduced myself, they felt more relaxed. In some cases, when they learnt about my professional background and connections, their level of comfort in the interviews increased. In the beginning of each interview, I provided a short introduction to myself: i.e. who I am (my academic and professional background), what my research involves, the general project within which my research is conducted, a brief outline of my fieldwork and some technical information about the interviews (e.g. approximate length, type of questions, principles of confidentiality). The outline of the interview helped participants to maintain concentration and avoid getting tired by the end of it, which is quite common in the case of in-depth interviewing. One of the tactics used to build credibility among the representatives at the local level was to mention the regions, and sometimes the names of previous respondents and/or well-known individuals who had already participated in the interviews. This was particularly helpful when I contacted representatives directly, especially when they did not know me. I noticed that local-level representatives are not eager to participate in interviews and share their personal experience in politics compared to MPs, who are more accessible and open.

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[199] Roberts, S.P., 2012. 'Research in challenging environments: the case of Russia's 'managed democracy', *Qualitative Research*, 13(3), pp. 337–351, p.342

My personal stance on feminism is also worth mentioning, especially my ideas on gender equality in Kazakhstan. During my fieldwork, I was frequently in disagreement with the perceptions and attitudes expressed by the participants in the study, as well as individuals I met. Every individual I interacted with as part of my fieldwork considered it their duty to express his/her opinion on feminism, usually comparing the so-called "Western" feminism with the one operationalised in Kazakhstan. For instance, following my introduction of the research topic, the deputy head of the state archives commented on the uselessness of women in leadership positions and supported her argument by mentioning women's biological function as their primary duty. At the same time, she recognised that women have leadership skills and the necessary qualifications for being appointed to management positions. In her opinion, however, women should comply with societal needs. Overall, these unexpected conversations with multiple individuals contributed to the assessment of the dominant social attitudes towards "women in power" in Kazakhstan.

Data analysis

I employed a thematic analysis (TA) approach which is defined by Braun and Clarke as a 'method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic'.[200] This method provided more flexibility to an array of theoretical and epistemological methodologies compared to other methods of qualitative data analysis.[201] At the same time, flexibility creates limitations as it mixes self-positioning in relation to epistemological and ontological views. It is, therefore, important to ensure that the data analysis process is well structured and concise.

Structuring my interview guide beforehand and developing it based on the diverse categories of participants helped me to combine information about each area of research at the stage of coding. For example, the first group of questions is related to one's personal motivation, political ambitions, professional competence for a political career; the issues on which the candidate focused, and how the personal interests of the candidate were negotiated with the party officials in case of divergence. This structure, developed at the initial stages of the research by identifying key headings and themes, helped me to organise the data already at the interview stage. For my fieldwork, I conducted a

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[200] Braun V. and Clarke, V., 2008. 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77–101
[201] Ibid., p. 78

manageable number of interviews. This allowed for manual coding rather than using a software package.

The descriptive representation of female parliamentarians was analysed on the basis of numerical data about the key socio-demographic characteristics (i.e. age, education level, background, incumbency rate, prior experience in local level representative offices, experience in working in central government and/or presidential office) of all MPs, male and female, who served both during the Soviet era and after independence (i.e. age, region, background, education). This data, summarised in a series of tables, allows to trace patterns of change in the typical profile of a member of parliament from legislature to legislature, and to correlate these transformations with changes in the political regime of the country. It also provides an understanding of women's political representation in the Soviet period. What is important for this research is a comparison between MPs of both genders to examine how women's patterns of representation are different from the general trend and what their relation is to the political context. Moreover, in this research, the issue of descriptive representation is also dealt with in terms of patterns of MP positions held in parliaments, which is an important measurement of MP capacity to act as political actors. In the context of Kazakhstan's parliament, it is not only the MP position itself that matters, but also the ones held in committees.

The analysis of the substantive representation of female parliamentarians was based on descriptive statistics. These data, however, were supported by and triangulated with findings which emerged through interviews with women politicians. Although information about the issues raised by MPs is available through open sources, sometimes it is useful to study how MPs themselves prioritise the issues that interest them the most. In the majority of cases, parliamentarians make a collective request to the government, and it is difficult to identify what role and contribution each have in making a particular request. Even though requests are ascribed to each signatory MP, during the interviews, they mentioned only those who were of greater importance to them.

Triangulation helps to combine different perspectives on the substantive representation of women by comparing different blocks of information collected from different sources. Different forms of triangulation were used to validate existing knowledge on the substantive representation of women, such as triangulation of data and methods triangulation. Different sources of data were used in this study,[202] and the interviews were

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[202] Flick, U., 2004. 'Triangulation in qualitative research', *A companion to qualitative research*, Chapter 4, pp. 178–183

triangulated with data from parliamentary proceedings. In addition, the biographical information of legislators was used as a complementary and independent source of information. Data is further triangulated by including different observers or interviewees in the analysis, such as both women and men legislators, experts and academics, a process which balances out subjectivity.[203] With regards to methods of triangulation, this dissertation used different methods of data collection.

Ethical issues

The research does not involve any vulnerable groups or humans with diminished intellectual capacity and/or intellectual disabilities. Participants are politicians, gender activists, representatives of political parties, executives and political scientists, thus, people with a high capacity to understand the research aims and its consequences. The research examines political activity undertaken in public spaces, which means that participants did not have to share any confidential or potentially sensitive information. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the questions were designed in such a way as to let the respondents share their personal experience in politics. They were not asked to comment on the political regime or to express their opinion about the political institutions of the country and the process of political recruitment. No interviewee was paid or offered any type of inducement in order to participate. Furthermore, in most cases and to a certain extent, information was already publicly available in the mass media.

In addition to this, the research topic, i.e. women's political participation in non-democratic settings, does not impose any kind of physical, emotional, economic or social risks on the participants since the focus of the research is not to criticise the existing type of political regime, but rather to understand women's path to decision-making and how this is operationalised in the context of the existing political institutions. The topic under research is widely discussed in the country and it is not categorised as sensitive or unwelcome by the government. In fact, quite the opposite is true, as the advancement of women in politics at the decision-making level is one of the key priorities of the national strategy on gender equality (i.e. reaching a target of 30% of female political representatives), as well as a topic regularly included in presidential speeches and other high-level official proclamations in discussion platforms for women. Therefore, I can confirm that the research involves minimum risk for both the participants and the researcher.

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[203] Ibid.

Nevertheless, fieldwork activities were conducted in strict compliance with the ethical principles envisaged in the guidelines for research ethics in the social sciences and humanities formulated by the EU: respect for persons, no harm to participants, and impact of the research findings.[204] This was accomplished through informed consent, data protection/privacy, and the availability and dissemination of research findings. Prior to their interviews, participants were informed in plain language about the aims of the research, its purpose and expected findings, its possible risks and benefits, and my expectations from each category of participants. As far as elite interviews are concerned, the email/letter sent to request an interview set out clearly the purpose of the study and the topics covered. In the case of elites, a positive response to such a request was, in most cases, considered informed consent. All participants' responses and information were treated confidentially, without disclosing any direct or indirect identifiers. This is important in a research which involves elite participants who occupy exclusive positions within a state structure. Any information provided by a participant as a result of their involvement in the given research was not released unless the participant gave their explicit consent. All data collection procedures comply with the EU data protection legislation and with the national legislation of Kazakhstan. Once collected, data was securely stored and made available only to authorised personnel. All direct identifiers were coded, and, within the analysis, references were made according to a coded system, which prevents breaches of confidentiality.

Conclusion

An exploratory study based on a mixed-methods approach is instrumental in approaching the essence of a problem. Since very little research has been conducted on the changing patterns of women's involvement in institutional politics in Kazakhstan, as well as on the personal perspectives of female politicians, an exploratory type of research was selected to investigate this topic. The combination of descriptive statistics with interviews captures the perceptions, meanings and attitudes of women towards political office. On the one hand, descriptive data determined the factual situation of women's representation and participation in politics, whereas on the other, interviews shed light on the unique experiences of female politicians as well as highlighting the external views of those involved in the political recruitment process. Collection of data through multiple sources

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[204] EU Research and Innovation, Participant Portal H2020 Online Manual. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/ethics_en.htm (Accessed: 28 May 2016)

allowed me to address the main research question in a more comprehensive way. This kind of exploration aimed at setting the background for future studies in WPP in post-Soviet authoritarian regimes, principally in Belarus and Turkmenistan, as these countries have a political and WPP context similar to Kazakhstan's. During the research, mitigation strategies were applied, such as thick description, low reference, reflexivity and triangulation, as data and analysis verification methods in order to increase the internal and external validity of the research.

Chapter IV. The Evolution of the Political Regime, Political System, and Women's Political Participation in Kazakhstan (1995–2020)

This chapter discusses the development of the regime in Kazakhstan since its independence. In particular, it highlights the dynamic that defines the distribution of power among key political institutions, with a special focus on the legislature. The chapter also traces the ways in which the regime gradually strengthened its control over the legislature and consolidated the power of the president, as well as how the regime limited participation in elected offices. It examines the channels of formal political recruitment in elected offices, and the role of political parties in this process. The chapter analyses how women's institutional representation (in both parliament and government) changed along with the development of the regime, as well as how this dynamic is related to women's political activism and engagement with institutional politics. The goal of the chapter is to provide an overview of the political conditions and the history of women's political participation in Kazakhstan.

What is Kazakhstan?

Kazakhstan is a landlocked post-Soviet country surrounded by Russia, China, and other Central Asian states. In terms of size, it is the second-largest country of the former Soviet Union following Russia, and the ninth-largest country in the world.[205] The processes of globalisation, along with the influence of the rapidly emerging markets of China and South Asia on one side, and Russia and the EU on the other, have combined to invest the geographical location of Kazakhstan with significant strategic importance—an aspect which is exploited by the regime.[206] Kazakhstan possesses a vast territory and is known for its extensive mineral resources, which have largely determined the economic profile of the country.[207] It is the second-largest crude oil producer in the post-Soviet area, after Russia, and the twelfth-largest in the world, with a production of about 30 billion barrels.[208] The

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[205] David R. Smith et al., "Kazakhstan," accessed 5 January 2022, https://www.britannica.com/place/Kazakhstan

[206] World Bank, "Kazakhstan: Overview," accessed 5 January 2022, https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kazakhstan/overview

[207] Anja Franke, Andrea Gawrich, and Gurban Alakbarov, "Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan as Post-Soviet Rentier States: Resource Incomes and Autocracy as a Double 'Curse' in Post-Soviet Regimes," *Europe-Asia Studies* 61/1 (2009): 190–40.

[208] U.S. Energy Information Administration, "Country Analysis Brief: Kazakhstan," 10 May 2017, accessed 5 January 2022, http://www.ieee.es/en/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2017/EIA_Country_Aanlysis_Kazakhstan_10may2017.pdf

oil regions are concentrated in the north-western part of the country. During the Soviet period, Kazakhstan's economy developed around the agricultural sector, principally in the area of crop production. This was the outcome of a massive campaign announced by Khrushchev in the 1960s, but which led to the deterioration of the land. After independence, the state began to develop its extractive industries, and, by capitalising on them, it significantly increased the revenue of the state by the turn of the twenty-first century.

The exportation of natural resources allowed Kazakhstan to join the World Bank's category of "upper middle-income states" in 2006. The Bank predicted that fluctuating global oil prices, the dependency of the Kazakh economy on oil, and the demands of its main trading partners—Russia and China—would affect the further development of Kazakhstan.[209] Amongst the obstacles to economic growth, experts have pinpointed the concentration of assets in the hands of state actors, which restricts dynamism; a "fragile financial sector"; a poor implementation of policies; and a well-entrenched culture of corruption.[210] Owing to the vast territory encompassed by Kazakhstan, the economic specialisation of its regions is diverse and, thus, the demographic profile varies.

Historically, Kazakhstan had close ties with Russia, and these intensified during the nineteenth century. Before joining the Russian empire, Kazakh tribes followed a nomadic way of life with certain social, economic, and political structures.[211] The economic life of the tribes was based on "agricultural communities that maintained a limited number of domesticated animals."[212] Kazakh society was structured around a kinship system, which is still present in modern society, even though its importance in social and political life has diminished. Historically, there were three clans, known as the Great, the Middle, and the Younger, which occupied certain areas within the borders of modern Kazakhstan. The political structure of the tribes was very "fluid"; leadership was exercised by the eldest in each village, along with a judge who administered justice.[213] Russian colonisation of Central Asia evolved over several phases between the first half of the eighteenth century and the 1880s, and afterwards the Russians maintained this social system to facilitate

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[209] World Bank, "Kazakhstan: Overview."

[210] Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, *Multi-Dimensional Review of Kazakhstan, Volume 1. Initial Assessment*, 14 January 2016, accessed 5 January 2022, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/multi-dimensional-review-of-kazakhstan_9789264246768-en. DOI:10.1787/9789264246768-en

[211] Steven Sabol, *Russian Colonization and the Genesis of Kazak National Consciousness* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003). DOI: 10.1057/9780230599420

[212] Ibid, 11.

[213] Ibid, 18.

governance. The Bolshevik Revolution, however, eliminated local cleavages and eventually imposed Soviet social, political, and economic structures.

The population of modern Kazakhstan amounts to 19 million people, of whom 60% reside in cities.[214] The birth rate index has been growing steadily since the late 1990s, reaching 14–15 live births per 1,000 people.[215] As Kazakhstan only counts 6.72 people per square km, the country is ranked 184th in population density. The population of contemporary Kazakhstan is ethnically diverse, as a result of historical internal migration within the USSR. As of the present day, the titular ethnic group, the Kazakhs, comprises 67% of the total population. Russians constitute the second-largest community in the country at 21%, followed by Uzbeks, Ukrainians, Uyghurs, Tatars, and Germans.[216]

Historically, even a decade after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russians amounted to 40% of the total population, whereas the number of Kazakhs was slightly higher than 50% of the population.[217] The crop campaign of the 1960s contributed to large-scale migration towards Kazakhstan's northern and central regions from other Soviet republics, and this was sufficient to change the ethnic composition of the country. The forced relocation of certain ethnic groups from the Caucasus, and of the Germans from the rest of Russia, between the 1940s and the 1950s also altered the composition of the population. Today, the state policy of integrating ethnic groups has come under criticism. The constitution did not, however, envisage a clear division of power and property rights, and it was originally based on ethnocentric grounds. Together, these constitutional aspects "fostered a process of societal disintegration and widened the estrangement between ethnic Kazakhs and Russians."[218] After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kazakh society has undergone a process of nation rebuilding that has appealed to those ancient roots that were removed by the Soviet system.[219] This process is reflected, for instance, in the attempts of the regime to

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[214] Agency of Statistics, Ministry of National Economy, "Key Socio-Demographic and Economic Indicators," accessed 14 January 2022,
http://stat.gov.kz/faces/wcnav_externalId/homeNumbersPopulation;jsessionid=N9F8EiPE-bVCc-W9V3qvFrTTIasWXuoFukYgc7PKn0yEQclo11yk!1944226179!819271923?lang=ru&_afrLoop=37911822 01307822#%40%3F_afrLoop%3D3791182201307822%26lang%3Dru%26_adf.ctrl-state%3Dfncfot2is_4
[215] Ibid.
[216] Ibid.
[217] *Agency on Statistics*, 2000. Ethnical composition of the population of Kazakhstan, Vol 2., Population table based on ethnicity and fluency in Russian and Kazakh, based on the 1999 census, p.6
[218] Andreas Heinrich, "The Formal Political System in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan: A Background Study," March 31 2010, accessed 5 January 2022, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1825810 DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.1825810
[219] Marlene Laruelle, "The Three Discursive Paradigms of State Identity in Kazakhstan: Kazakhness, Kazakhstannes, and Transnationalism," in *Nationalism and Identity Construction in Central Asia. Dimensions, Dynamics, and Directions*, ed. Mariya Omelicheva (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014), 1–20; Sally N. Cummings, "Inscapes, Landscapes, and Greyscapes: The Politics of Significance in Central Asia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 61/7 (2009): 1083–93. DOI: 10.1080/09668130903068616

revive discourse on Kazakh statehood during the pre-Soviet period, and in the use of this discourse as a foundation that affected the role of women in society and in the public domain.[220]

According to the rating provided by Freedom House, Kazakhstan's regime has been ranked as "not free" since 1998, owing to its restricted civil and political rights.[221] In the period that immediately followed independence (1991–94), however, attempts were made to establish a certain form of political freedom.[222] The early parliaments of independent Kazakhstan were inherited from the Soviet system, and possessed more authority as a matter of necessity, owing to the political vacuum at the time. They had access to the management of strategic resources as well as the budget-making process, and they also retained "some authority to draft and discuss legislation."[223] Despite the general impression that parliamentary debates and those between the government and the president were characterised by a certain degree of freedom,[224] the early parliaments enacted constitutional amendments that shaped and formed the present regime and its distribution of authority, thus contributing to the concentration of power in the hands of the president. In June 2000, for example, parliament granted the president life-long powers to influence the decision-making process. It also allowed for extended presidential authority to appoint the prime-minister, the heads of the central election committee, the ministers, the chief justice, and the heads of the regions. Each successive parliament from 1995 until 2018 has been characterised by a higher level of dependency on, and management by, the president. Consequently, presidential power has consistently expanded. Formally, the 2007 Constitution allowed for the transition towards a fully-fledged proportional representational system. It strengthened the role of parliament by introducing a mechanism by which a majority of parliamentarians could register their approval of the prime minister, as well as enacting consultation procedures between the president and the parliamentary party fractions. For example, the lower house of parliament, the Majilis, could call a vote of no confidence in the government based on a simple majority, instead of a qualified

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[220] Anna Matveeva, "Legitimising Central Asian Authoritarianism: Political Manipulation and Symbolic Power," *Europe-Asia Studies* 61/7 (2009): 1095–1121. DOI: 10.1080/09668130903068624
[221] Freedom House, "Freedom in the World, 2017. Kazakhstan," accessed 5 January 2022, https://freedomhouse.org/country/kazakhstan/freedom-world/2017. From 1998 to 2016 the level of political rights was scored at the same level (6 out of 7 possible); in 2017 the lowest scoring was assigned due to the worsening situation, including arrests of political activists and journalists, and reduced press freedom.
[222] Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity*, 6.
[223] Ibid., 6.
[224] Vyacheslav Polovinko and Pyotr Trotsenko, "When everything depends on a dictator, it is impossible to have a good society: interview with Serikbolsyn Abdildin," Azzatyk Radio, 7 November 2016, accessed 5 January 2022, https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-nezavisimye-lydi-abdildin/28084704.html

majority of two-thirds of the votes as previously required.[225] The implementation of these powers seems unrealistic, however: 87% of the current composition of the Majilis consists of those loyal to the ruling regime, while the remainder consists of pro-presidential parties. This shift towards a parliamentary form of government was of a purely formal nature, because these changes were made in order to remove all potential opposition forces from the political arena. Furthermore, despite this apparent delegation of powers between the executive and the legislative branches, the areas of presidential competency have been extended. Even though the 2017 amendments to the Constitution were announced as ways to redistribute power and democratise the political system, they actually only made cosmetic changes to the nature of the regime. Supreme power remained concentrated in the hands of the president, who assumed the role of the "supreme arbitrator as a power broker between different branches."[226] The cabinet, for instance, is now formed by the winning party – the presidential party, under current political conditions.

As a result of a multi-stage process of constitutional amendments (1998, 2007, and 2011), the regime was strengthened: the potential for opposition forces to challenge it was removed, and the political institutions of the state were controlled through the recruitment process. The provision of formal authority to the representative institutions does not have any real effect, because political recruitment is completely under the control of the pro-regime political party, Nur Otan. Power is concentrated in the hands of the president, and this power is further exercised through extensive administrative resources in the various regions throughout the country. Furthermore, control over political recruitment to elected offices was strengthened. The early period of multipartyism was gradually reduced to a manageable level by the ruling regime – with no institutional opposition.[227]

The legislature has little power to influence the state decision-making process within the political system of the country, and legislative activity is severely limited. Formally, legislative activity belongs to the president, the government, and the MPs. In practice, however, it falls mostly within the purview of the government and the president. If parliament does not review a draft law requested by the president within a month's time,

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[225] *Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan*, Article 56, accessed 5 January 2022, https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/8207/file/Kazakhstan_Constitution_1995_am_2017_en.pdf#:~:text=The%20Republic%20of%20Kazakhstan%20proclaims,life%2C%20rights%2C%20and%20freedoms.&text=Footnote%3A%20See%20resolution%20of%20the,2%20dated%20December%2021%2C%202001.
[226] Abdujalil Abdurasulov, "Kazakhstan Constitution: Will changes bring democracy?" *BBC News*, 6 March 2017, accessed 5 January 2022, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-39177708
[227] OSCE EOM mission report, 2016.Early Parliamentary Elections, 27 June 2016. OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission, Final Report, Warsaw, p.4

the president can issue a decree.[228] According to interviews with MPs in Kazakhstan, the current legislature initiates only 20% of the total amount of bills.[229] By way of comparison, a study of the legislative activity of the Russian Duma revealed that it generates only 30% of economic-related bills.[230] These low percentages are reflected not only in the number of bills initiated by all political actors, but also in the greater authority of the president in the legislative process. If parliament rejects the draft law requested by the government, the latter can call a vote of no confidence, which can lead to the dissolution of parliament itself.[231] Such conditions undermine the role of the legislature in the political system, as well as in the decision-making process.

The Structure of the Majilis

The structure of the Kazakh parliament is important for understanding the internal hierarchy, and the substantive representation and benefits of political office. The activity of the Majilis is managed by the chairperson, who is elected by a secret ballot of the majority of parliamentarians for each parliamentary session.[232] The most crucial functions of the chairperson are setting the agenda and regulating the activity of the Bureau (below).[233] During the entire parliamentary history of Kazakhstan, no woman has been elected to the position of chairperson. Furthermore, with the exception of the first two parliaments, the Majilis has, since 2004, been chaired by politicians belonging to circles that are very close to the president. Indeed, with the exception of one politician, who served as chairperson for a short term,[234] all of the chairpersons have previously held decision-making positions in the presidential office.[235] Together with the chairperson, two deputies elected by open voting lead the work of the Majilis. Among other functions, the deputies are responsible for the work of the Permanent Committees.

Since 1996, women were appointed twice as deputies, in the fifth and sixth parliaments, respectively. In the fifth parliament, the president's daughter, Dariga Nazarbayeva, was

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elected as a deputy; this, however, does not provide a representative example of the political promotion of women in a neopatrimonial setting. According to the organisational structure of the sixth Majilis, the female deputy was nominally responsible for the Permanent Committees on social and cultural issues, the environment, and finance. The traditional division of the portfolio of the Committees assumes that women are considered more professional in areas of concern to women, such as maternity, childhood, social welfare, and the support of vulnerable groups.

The coordination agency in the Majilis is the Bureau. This body consists of eleven parliamentarians, including the leadership team, the heads of the Permanent Committees, and the party fractions. Apart from the heads of the other two political parties represented in the sixth parliament − Ak Zhol and the Communist party − all other members of the Bureau are members of the ruling party. The Bureau has extensive authority to set the agenda of parliament, as well as to improve proposed legislative initiatives and define the order of their priority. Moreover, the Bureau decides on the composition of working groups; the foreign business trips of MPs; the budget of the Majilis session; and regulating the activity of the Majilis's administration.[236] In the context of Kazakhstan's hegemonic party politics, there is little room for independent political activity in the Majilis and party affiliation is of less importance. Any possible influence of parties other than that in power is further reduced by their minimal representation in parliament. Considering this fact, and also the fact that key management positions in the Majilis are occupied by the members of the ruling regime, it is evident that the ruling regime is able to maintain formal rules and procedures, and exercise complete control over the legislative process.

The Majilis has seven Standing Committees covering the following areas: legislature and legal issues; agriculture; economic reform and regional development; finance and budget; social and cultural issues; international relations, defence and security issues; and the environment. The committees hold sessions at least twice per month,[237] and decisions are taken by the majority of its permanent members.[238] Apart from the Standing Committees, the Majilis can create ad hoc additional groups − an extra way to supplement the salaries of

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[236]Para 112, Chapter 7 "The Bureau of Majilis and its Competencies", Section 3 "Establishment of Majilis Units and Organisational Issues", The Statute of Majilis, Rep. of Kazakhstan, endorsed on 8 February 1996, with amendments of 12 October 2005, 17 October 2007, 9 November 2011 and 7 September 2016

[237]Art.42, Law on Committees and Commissions of the Parliament of the Rep.of Kazakhstan, 7 May 1997, N 101-I 3PK; Para 130, Chapter 8 "The Working Bodies of Majilis", Section 3 "Establishment of Majilis Units and Organisational Issues", The Statute of Majilis, Rep.of Kazakhstan, endorsed on 8 February 1996, with amendments of 12 October 2005, 17 October 2007, 9 November 2011 and 7 September 2016

[238]Art.49, Law on Committees and Commissions of the Parliament of the Rep.of Kazakhstan, 7 May 1997, N 101-I 3PK

its members. For example, in 2016 a consultative advisory body on deputies' ethics was formed in the Majilis. The function of the body is to prevent corruption amongst MPs, and, together with the Central Election Commission (CEC), to enact disciplinary measures in cases where deputies have violated their ethical responsibilities. [239]

The electoral system, political parties, and the gender dimension

The development of the electoral system in Kazakhstan involved three stages: early majoritarianism (1993–98); mixed-member majoritarianism (1999–2007); and proportional representation (2007–). Politically, these stages, together with the legislative barriers, reflect the attempts of the regime to tighten its control over the process of political recruitment in the face of emergent opposition forces.[240] In the early post-independence years, the majoritarian electoral system was established to elect 135 out of 175 delegates. In the absence of a strong party, however, the president reserved the right to appoint 40 delegates in order to secure support in the legislature.[241] At that time, the experience of politicians was principally derived from the communist period, and was characterised by "a blend of informal clan and tribal identities and communist bureaucratic tendencies."[242] The mixed-member majoritarian system was mainly introduced as a response to western critiques, and to provide legitimacy for external observers. Proportional representation (PR) did not, however, lead to any qualitative changes in the representation system, owing to simultaneous legal restrictions on elections and political parties, which prevented other parties from participating in elections. Even though it is typically associated with more democratic countries,[243] the PR system in Kazakhstan reduced opportunities for other parties to enter legislative offices by increasing the minimum threshold to 7%. The proportional system allows the ruling regime to select the legislature members with care and, thus, to exert control over them. As a result, starting with the fourth parliament (2007–

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[239] Art 33 "Disciplinary Measures to MP", Ch.5 "MP Status", Constitutional Law "About Parliament and the Status of MP", 16 October 1995, N2529

[240] Rico Isaacs, *Party System Formation in Kazakhstan: Between Formal and Informal Politics* (London: Routledge, 2011), 87.

[241] Ibid.

[242] Rico Isaacs, "Informal politics and the uncertain context of transition: Revisiting early stage non-democratic development in Kazakhstan," *Democratization* 17/1 (2010): 9. DOI: 10.1080/13510340903453773

[243] André Blais and Louis Massicotte, "Electoral formulas: A macroscopic perspective," *European Journal of Political Research* 32/1 (1997): 116.DOI: 10.1111/1475-6765.003346

12), the Nur Otan party dominated.[244] As shown in Table 3, the number of parties represented in parliament has been sufficiently reduced since 2007. The introduction of the proportional electoral system contributed to the enhancement of the authoritarian regime, as it removed competition and controlled ways of entering the political arena.

Table 3. The party representation of the Parliaments in Kazakhstan, 1994–2020

Political party/public organisation	1994–1995	1995–1999	1999–2004	2004–2007	2007–2012	2012–2016	2016–2020
Independent candidates	57	41	35	18	-		
Peoples' Unity Party of Kazakhstan	32	12	-	-	-		
People's Congress Party of Kazakhstan	22	-	-	-	-		
Socialist Party	12	-	-	-	-		
Federation of Trade Unions	12	-	-	-	-		
Democratic Party	-	12	-	1	-		
Communist Party	-	2	3		-		
Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan						7	7
Otan/Nur Otan	-	-	24	42	98	83	84
Civic Party	-	-	11	AIST	-		
Agrarian Party	-	-	3	AIST	-		
Republican People's Party of Kazakhstan	-	-	1	-	-		
AIST (Civic and Agrarian Parties)				11	-		
ASAR				4	-		
Ak Zhol				1	-	8	7

Source: Table 3.4: Parliamentary Election Results (Majilis); Anthony C. Bowyer, "Parliament and Political Parties in Kazakhstan," Silk Road Paper (2008), accessed 14 January 2022, https://isdp.eu/content/uploads/publications/2008_bowyer_parliament-and-political-parties-in-kazakhstan.pdf; Results of the 2012 and 2016 parliamentary elections added by the author.

It has been argued that this type of electoral system impacts opportunities for the participation of women in formal politics.[245] Parties diversify their slates, depending on individual constituencies, in order to increase the chances of winning. Furthermore, the greater the number of seats won by a party in a certain constituency, the lesser the "costs of

[244] Maral Khanarstanova and Timur Kanapyanov, "Development of post-communist parliamentarism in Kazakhstan and Romania: a comparative analysis," *Cinq Continents*, 1/3 (2011): 198–217.

[245] Richard E. Matland and Donley T. Studlar, "The Contagion of Women Candidates in Single-Member District and Proportional Representation Electoral Systems: Canada and Norway," *The Journal of Politics* 58/3 (1996): 707–33. DOI: 10.2307/2960439; Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511550362; Leslie A. Schwindt-Bayer and William Mishler, "An Integrated Model of Women's Representation," *Journal of Politics* 67/2 (2005): 407–28. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2508.2005.00323.x

slating women."[246] Proportional electoral systems are considered to be the best option to ensure that the underrepresented are afforded opportunities, in contrast to the single-member plurality system.[247] It has been suggested that higher district magnitudes, and replacement of the candidates from the elected, leads to greater chances for women to be elected to the representative body. Some researchers, however, found no direct evidence of the link between the PR system and female representation, since the "highest values of effective M (magnitude) are considerably lower in female representation than some of the more moderate values."[248]

Against this background, Richard Matland has specified that while electoral systems might influence women's representation in industrialised democracies, they have no effect in developing countries.[249] Robert Moser explains that in the case of women's political recruitment and the impact of the electoral system in post-communist countries, a paradoxical situation occurs when women "do marginally better in single-member district elections than their counterparts in the West", but, nevertheless, their performance is "significantly worse in PR elections."[250] Moser explains this paradox by arguing that party fragmentation causes party management to make strategic choices in favour of male candidates. Moreover, Moser highlights the fact that a high level of education and involvement in economic activities created a pool of experienced and confident women who prove to be competitive candidates in elections. Last but not least, patriarchal attitudes and the Soviet legacy of political parties' management limit the possibility of giving way to women.[251] In Kazakhstan, the single-member district (SMD) electoral system is used in the elections for representatives of the local government. Candidates can be nominated by public organisations, or be self-nominated.[252]

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[246] Daniel Stockemer, "Women's parliamentary representation: are women more highly represented in (consolidated) democracies than in non-democracies?" *Contemporary Politics* 15/4 (2009): 435. DOI: 10.1080/13569770903416471

[247] Wilma Rule, "Electoral systems, contextual factors and women's opportunity for election to parliament in twenty-three democracies," *Western Political Quarterly* 40/3: 1987: 477–498. DOI: 10.1177/106591298704000307; Francis G Castles, "Female legislative representation and the electoral system," *Politics*, 1/2 (1981): 21–27; Susan Welch and Donley T. Studlar, "Multi-member districts and the representation of women: evidence from Britain and the United States," *The Journal of Politics* 52/2 (1990): 391–412.

[248] Rein Taagepera and Matthew S. Shugart, "Designing Electoral Systems," *Electoral Studies* 8/1 (1989): 49–58.

[249] Richard E. Matland, "Women's representation in national legislatures: Developed and developing countries," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 23/1 (1998): 109–25.

[250] Robert G. Moser, "The effects of electoral systems on women's representation in post-communist states," *Electoral Studies* 20/3 (2001): 365.

[251] See Ch. V, n. 75.

[252] Law on Elections, September 28, 1995, №2464, Art.103

The formation of the party system in Kazakhstan has been deeply influenced by the Soviet legacy. In fact, political parties in Kazakhstan do not provide a sufficient alternative to the party of the ruling regime, as they are deployed merely as a decorative political element. The programmes of the parties are vague, and are mainly developed on the basis of existing state policies and presidential programmes. Created in 1999, the Otan party enjoyed extensive authority, owing to the enormous support by the president. It won the elections of 1999 and 2004, increasing its majority and "transforming the legislature into a loyal, flexible and reliable law-making machine that ensured the efficient implementation of the presidential policy agenda."[253] In 2006, Nur Otan was established in a merger of two other pro-presidential parties, the Civic Party and Asar, the Agrarian Party, with the Otan party led by the president. Nur Otan ("Light of the Fatherland") mobilises party members in order to produce desired legislative outcomes, and "to bind state elites and citizens employed within the public sector into the personalist regime of Nazarbayev."[254] Possessing no real influence or resources, the party is mainly used to maintain the balance between informal politics and the elites.[255] Nur Otan has secured a minimum of 80% of seats in the legislature since the 2007 elections. Although women actively participate in the party, until 2020 there was no formal policy regarding the party's commitment to gender equality and no caucus to serve as a prerequisite for the greater representation of women. Only in 2020 was a 30% gender and youth quota in the party lists introduced.

Along with Nur Otan, the third party represented in the parliament, Ak Zhol ("Bright Path"), has a traditional perspective on the role of women in parliament and lacks any specific policy, objectives, or practices aimed at enhancing the political participation of women within the party.[256] The party was formed after the most radical members left the Nur Otan party and created the Democratic Party of Kazakhstan Nagyz Ak Zhol. The party positions itself as a "constructive opposition" and as the party which represents the interests of entrepreneurs. Among sixteen heads of the regional party offices, only one is a woman.[257] Formally, only one party the Nationwide Social Democratic Party, has committed itself to gender equality. The Social Democrats conducted a gender audit of

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[253] Adele Del Sordi, "Legitimation and the Party of Power in Kazakhstan," in *Politics and Legitimacy in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, eds. Joachim Ahrens, Martin Brusis, and Martin Schulze Wessel (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 72–96.
[254] Rico Isaacs, "*Nur Otan*, Informal Networks and the Countering of Elite Instability in Kazakhstan: Bringing the 'Formal' Back In," *Europe-Asia Studies* 65/6 (2013): 1055–1079.
[255] Ibid.
[256]Election Agenda of Daniya Espaeva, candidate for presidential elections, May 12, 2019, available at http://akzhol.kz/ru/listarticle/index/22/151
[257] AzKhol party website, 2021. Information on the heads of the regional offices is available here https://akzhol.kz/ru/partija/rukovodstvo/rukoviditeli-filialov-partii/

their party as a pre-condition for membership in the Socialist International, and it is the only Kazakh political party to have an organised women's wing. The Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan (KNPK), the leftist party which was created in 2004 as a result of a split of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, has no gender policy or action plan to promote women. The party programme mentions women in connection with children and other categories of vulnerable groups needed of social protection. Another context where women are mentioned in the KNPK programme is typical for the communist approach to "women's question" with the essentialist approach. It states protection of working mothers promising to "secure working mothers from job cut-off before her child comes of age"[258]. The party's board does not include women.

The gender-related element of the programme of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan is reflected in the Council of Mothers, which aims at promoting moral and spiritual values; the role of the family as the ultimate basis for stability and prosperity; the experiences of successful families; a high level of women's literacy; and support for children without families.[259] Perceptions of gender issues are limited to the reproductive function of women, motherhood, and activities aimed at providing support to mothers and families. In the programme of the Ayul party, entitled "Let's bring traditions back to villages (auyl)!", the key points of intervention are maintaining stability, interethnic agreement and cooperation, as well as national identity without any gender component. The Communist Party, which is expected to be more committed to gender equality than other parties owing to its socialist ideology, declared its support for the current regime's policy and integration within the framework of the Eurasian Union, but it did not mention any gender-related issues in its programme.[260] The programme of the Birlik party, called "Clean ideas. Clean deeds. Clean environment" aims at achieving social justice, care for people, equality for all, access to natural resources, and avoiding social, religious, or ethnic discrimination. The party's leaders declared their full support for the presidential programme – the Nation's Plan.[261]

After researching party programmes in terms of their attention to (and presence of) a gender dimension, Dunenkulova argued that gender is understood solely in terms of social issues. In general, she drew parallels between the status of the gender issues today, and the

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[258] KNPK/People's Party of Kazakhstan, Party programme available here https://qhp.kz/Docs/PartyProgramRU.pdf
[259] Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan, Council of Mothers, available at http://assembly.kz/ru/sovety-materey-pri-assamblee-naroda-kazahstana
[260] Communist Party of Kazakhstan was dissolved in 2015, available at http://knpk.kz/
[261] Vaal, T., Spotless intentions of Birlik party, February 5, 2016, Vlast, available at https://parliament2016.vlast.kz/article/chistye-pomysly-partii-birlik

"woman question" formulated by the Bolsheviks. Despite the difference in the title, the state approaches the issue of gender equality as a "women's problem." Another general characteristic mentioned by Dunenkulova is the declarative nature of the gender issue, without the development of concrete mechanisms and steps to tackle it[262]. The party which pays the greatest attention to the under-representation of women is Nur Otan. The question, however, is whether the inclusion of more women in the list of the party candidates, and in the list of MPs, is the result of a conscious commitment to the principle of gender equality, or simply another measure adopted to improve the international image of Kazakhstan as a democratic country. The super-majority of seats held by Nur Otan in the Majilis might also influence the decision to include more women: when the party is given only seven or eight seats to be distributed among candidates, the choice is restricted.

The electoral system gives full discretion to the parties in selecting which of their candidates will occupy the seats they have won; they have complete control over the level of women's representation in elected offices. Given the closed nature of the selection process, candidates have limited space for self-promotion, and the issue of stronger links within the constituency and the represented groups holds less importance. It is presumed that candidates should either demonstrate greater loyalty to be included in the candidate's list and thus obtain a seat, or be visible enough in order to be considered informally by the party local officials and recommended for elections.[263] Unlike the open list system, according to which the success of the candidate depends on the voters and, thus, a greater number of constituencies should be targeted, the closed party system allows informal selection processes to prevail over formal procedures. If informal selection is based on criteria different from formal requirements, such as professional background and partisanship, then we might ask whether the qualities of the candidate matter in a selection procedure? In patronage systems such as that in Kazakhstan, formal rules are of secondary importance, compared to the relationship between the patron and each individual client. In those cases where the candidate is selected by the party officials and is approved by the president as the head of the party, other requirements, such as partisanship, possess a lesser value.

Although closed-list proportional representation systems are often identified as the most favourable to female candidates, the Kazakh framework is such that the system primarily

[262] Dunenkulova, GA (2010) The formation and evolution of the gender policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the conditions of democratic development. PhD Dissertation, Al Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan, p. 280

[263] Peter M. Siavelis and Scott Morgenstern, eds., *Pathways to Power. Political Recruitment and Candidate Selection in Latin America* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2008).

contributes to sustaining the power of the ruling party. The system emphasises the drawbacks of decreased geographic bonds and direct accountability between candidates and voters (a common aspect in PR systems), making it more difficult for women to run for office on the basis of accomplishments and voter-recognition at the grassroots level. Because there is no direct link between the voter and the individual candidate, the visibility of women candidates is reduced which, in turn, weakens the social norms of viewing women in the public sphere. This effect is amplified by the Election Law, which does not require candidate lists to be displayed at polling stations, thus significantly limiting voters' knowledge of whom they are electing.

Women's representation in institutional politics: the Soviet period and post-independence

The political representation of women in the Kazakh legislature has changed, along with the development of the political system; both have been impacted by the Soviet legacy. It is interesting to note that during the early period of the Soviet regime, the party paid particular (if descriptive) attention to the issue of gender balance in political office. The woman's issue was a priority at the time of the first elections in Kazakhstan, and this explains the greater attention paid to sex-disaggregated data collected during preparation for the elections. The purpose of representation during the Soviet period was to create a perfect picture of society. The Kazakh SSR supreme council requested data on women in decision-making positions, in order to trace gender policies. Each region provided general data with a detailed breakdown of the social and demographic characteristics of these women, such as ethnicity, party affiliation, age, education, and background. For example, the composition of election committees at the district level in Pavlodar region (in the north of Kazakhstan) consisted of 96 individuals, among whom women constituted 25, Kazakhs 41, Russians 35, Communists 52, Komsomol members 15, and farmers 40 individuals.[264] The party office recorded 79 women in decision-making positions.[265] Age was a key criterion that was followed to appoint female deputies during this period. The majority of the deputies (44) consisted of individuals under the age of 29, born in the decade of the

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[264] Pavlodar office of the Central election Committee, 1938. Report on the Supreme Council Elections on Pavlodar region, Information on Elections to the Supreme Council of the Kazakh SSR. Women's participation, 1938. Case #33, F1109/5 The Kazakhstan State Archive

[265] Executive committee of the north Kazakhstan council of delegates, 27 Aug 1940.Report at the request of the information and analytical department of the supreme council of the Kazakh SSR #6-66, dated 26 July 1940. According to the classification, decision-making positions included the chairperson, the deputy, and the secretaries of the local level councils.

October Revolution. A significantly lower number of women were in their 30s (16), very young (four), over 40 (four), or over 50 (three). Almost all of the women were illiterate and previously served as ordinary farmworkers. In terms of ethnic characteristics, Kazakh women amounted to only 11 individuals, which can be linked to the fact that by using the Latin alphabet up to 1940, the Kazakh population faced barriers in terms of political promotion. Propaganda materials were not translated into Kazakh: this impediment was reported by the election committee offices in remoted villages, where it hampered the conduct of information campaigns among the locals.

A similar pattern of women's representation was maintained during the Soviet period. Women achieved higher representation at the district and village levels. This fact is supported by the findings of the study on women in politics in the USSR conducted by Gail Lapidus, who confirmed that the higher the status of the political office, the lower the number of women present.[266] In addition, women were well represented as heads of the permanent commissions created in each institution of education and healthcare, as well as in factories, to disseminate the messages of the Communist Party.

After independence, the number of women in the legislature dropped sharply. This was a phenomenon common to all post-Soviet legislatures. In the later parliaments, the number of female parliamentarians became even lower (Figure 1). The main factors which contributed to the sharp drop in the number of women in political institutions were dramatic economic conditions, which forced women to abandon their political ambitions, as well as new political rules, which required time and resources to run for office.

Beginning with the 2007 parliamentary elections, the number of women in representative authorities has been increasing. In the 2012 elections, women's representation reached 27%.[267] Technically, the increase in women's representation in parliament coincided with the introduction of the PR system, which is used in a number of post-Soviet, non-democratic regimes as a tool of control over the political process.[268] Simultaneously, the number of women in the Kazakh Senate has decreased twice in recent years. In 2018, in the present Senate, there are only three women out of forty-seven senators. Out of three

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[266] Gail W. Lapidus, "Political mobilization, participation, and leadership: Women in Soviet politics," *Comparative Politics* 8/1 (1975): 90–118.

[267] Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments: Situation as of 1 October 2019," accessed 5 January 2022, http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm

[268] Thomas C. Lundberg, "Post-Communism and the Abandonment of Mixed-Member Electoral Systems," *Representation* 45/1 (2009): 22–23. DOI: 10.1080/00344890802709831

female senators, two of them were appointed directly by the president[269], whereas only one woman was elected by the local government body from the region of Northern Kazakhstan.
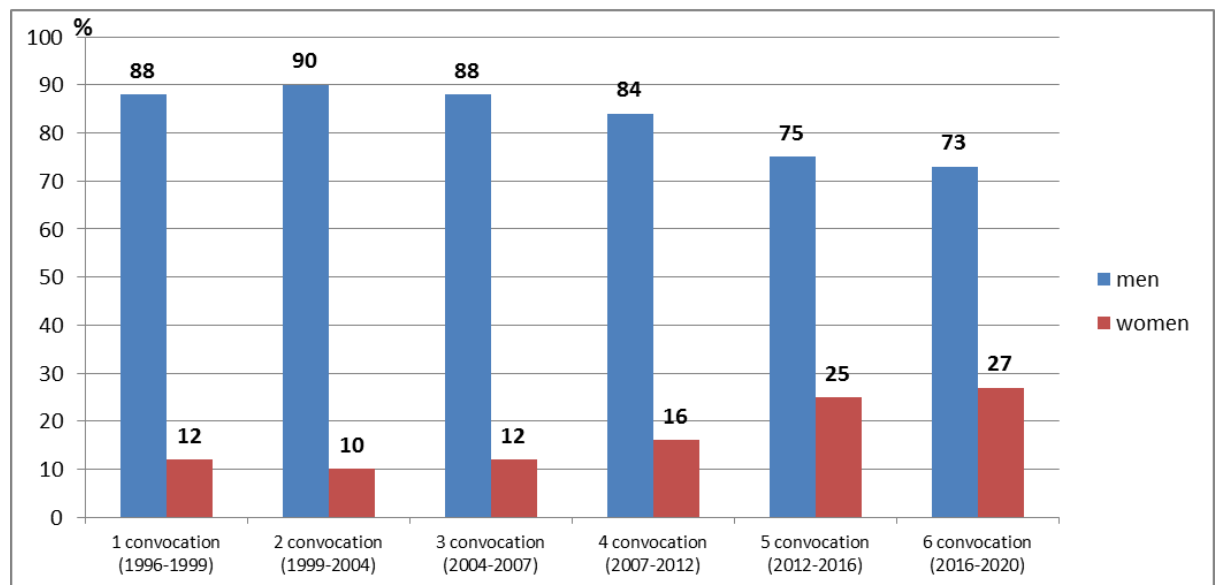
Figure 1. The proportion of women in the Majilis (lower house of Parliament) in Kazakhstan, 1996–2020
Source: Based on information available on the Majilis website, www.parlam.kz

Such a low number of women in the Senate is explained by the selection mechanism: a low representation of women at the level of local governance might logically lead to a lower proportion of female senators. The political representation of women remains well below the 30% target in other areas of government, including the local governance system, known as the maslikhat. Only two regions in the northern part of Kazakhstan have almost 30% of women in maslikhats. The average percentage of women in local politics is, however, lower than the national one, i.e., 22% (Figure 2). A typical feature related to women's representation at the local level is a high difference among regions, with a rate above 35% in the northern regions, and almost zero in the southern ones. In addition to this, there is a difference among the diverse levels of local representation, with fewer women in the regional maslikhats. This phenomenon contributes to the evidence for the under-representation of women in politics.

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[269] 15 senators are appointed by president, 32 are elected by the maslikhats (local bodies) at the regional level, with two senators from each region for an even representation.
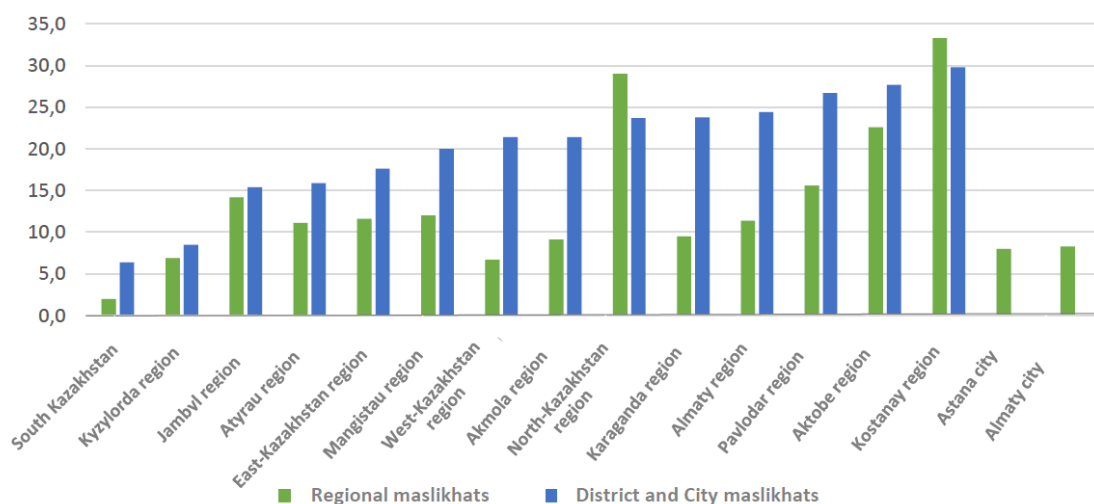
Figure 2. Proportion of women in the maslikhat, by region, in percent
Source: The Central Election Committee, 2016

In the current government, two out of seventeen ministers are female ministers of information and social development, as well as culture and sport, reflecting a gendered division of thematic areas. One of the daughters of the president was appointed to the position of deputy prime minister in 2015; previously, she was a member of parliament. Another high position in the political system of Kazakhstan is a position of the State Secretary, who is, at the same time, a chairperson of the national women machinery. The current pattern of the distribution of women in the power structures confirms that women are concentrated in institutions which are not considered to be critical decision-making bodies, within the authoritarian political system of Kazakhstan.

Women's representation at the local level

The history of self-government or the local system of government in Kazakhstan is vague regarding the representative and executive functions at local levels. This lack of clarity has resulted in an unclear separation of powers between these two branches. The country is divided into fourteen administrative regions and two cities of republican significance, Almaty and Astana.[270] The local government system is regulated by the law *On Local State Government and Local Self-Government in Kazakhstan* (2001).[271] The law was endorsed

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[270] John Wilson, David Gardner, Gulmira Kurganbaeva, and Elena Sakharchuk, "The Changing Role of Local Government Managers in a Transitional Economy: Evidence from the Republic of Kazakhstan," *International Journal of Public Sector Management* 15/5 (2002); 399–411.
[271] https://adilet.zan.kz/eng/docs/Z010000148_

after several years of ambiguity, with regard to the separation of the areas of competence between the local government and the self-governance bodies, as well as their interaction.[272] The main competences of the maslikhats are limited to a range of areas, such as approving decisions concerning the economic and social development programmes of the local territories; local budgets; environmental and architectural programmes; the endorsement of the candidacies of the heads of the local system of law enforcement; and the local government authorities and monitoring functions.[273] The scope of influence of decisions made by the maslikhat is insignificant, and the power distribution between the representatives and the executive is uneven, leaving less room for citizen participation in local government. For example, the decision to increase or decrease the local budget can be considered only upon the approval of the head of the local government.[274] A vote of no confidence in the head of the local executive government can be initiated by one-fifth of the members of the maslikhat, and enforced by a majority.[275]. Considering that at all levels the maslikhats are composed of at least 90% of representatives of the ruling party, the chances of a vote of no confidence are rather infeasible.

As a response to the protests against land reforms in 2016, as well as the growing criticism on social networks, the regime established public councils. These were designed as a mechanism for both public participation in local politics, and to monitor the implementation of policies at the local level. However, their composition, and the absence of a clear integration of these bodies in the decision-making process at the local level, made public councils ineffective.[276] Participants in these councils reported that their membership was mostly drawn from the local executives, maslikhats,[277] and loyal NGOs— for example, former and current civil servants. At the same time, healthcare, mass media and trade unions remained under-represented domains.[278] This situation created conflicts of interest. According to an evaluation of the public councils' activity made by the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Research in 2017, experts mentioned that the members of the public councils understood the role of these bodies as a controlling organ, rather than

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[272] Makhmutova, M., 2001. Local government in Kazakhstan. In Igor Munteanu and Popa Victor (Eds.). *Developing new rules in the old environment: Local government in Eastern Europe, in the Caucasus and in the Central Asia*. Available at: http://lgi.osi.hu/publication/2001/842ch8-kz.pdf
[273] *Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan*, Article. 6.
[274] Art 7, Law "On Local Government and Self-government in the Republic of Kazakhstan", dated 23 January, 2001 No 148
[275] Art 24, Law "On Local Government and Self-government in the Republic of Kazakhstan", dated 23 January, 2001 No 148
[276] Colin Knox and Saltanat Janenova, "Public Councils in Kazakhstan: A Case of Emergent Participative Democracy?" *Central Asian Survey* 37(2) (2018): 305–21
[277] Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Research, 2017. Public Councils in Kazakhstan: main development tendencies, e-version of the report is available here http://kisi.kz/uploads/33/files/4IKv9NEx.pdf, p.56
[278] Ibid, p.55-57

a monitoring one, thus leading to an overlap of functions with the maslikhats.[279] The report highlighted the fact that instead of making requests to state institutions as a form of monitoring tool, public councils gave preference to discussion meetings and public expertise.[280] This means that there is a lack of communication and cooperation between the institutions. The experts pointed out the under-representation of youth and women in public councils – whose composition of women was only 22% – also hampered their effectiveness.[281]

The political representation of women at the local level in Kazakhstan is ambiguous, both within the regions and also at the level of local representation. In all regional groups, there are fewer women at the highest levels of local representation. Though this tendency has no connection with the economic specificity and women's economic performance indicators in any particular region, it causes volatility in the pattern of women's political representation between the different regions.

Despite certain common characteristics and patterns across the regions, there are some differences. By analysing the broader pattern of women's local representation in the oil regions, including local government institutions and political parties, it can be observed that the level of women's representation does not depend on the economic conditions and socio-demographic profile of any particular region. In other words, this evidence supports the idea of a formal participation in and creation of a positive image of women's political participation. The regions which perform better in terms of women's participation in the economic activity of the region or party work do not have better records of women's political representation. Among the oil regions, Mangistau and Aktobe stand apart from the rest by having a record of opposite findings. Mangistau is the least developed, in terms of infrastructure and the human dimension.

The participation of women in the economic life of the regions is limited owing to a focus on oil production. Despite the invisibility of women in the labour market, however, women are represented in local political institutions, at levels that are aligned with several aspects of the national average. For example, at the district level, the representation of women in Mangistau is at the same level as in Karaganda and East Kazakhstan, both of which are regions with women active in political party leadership. By looking at the broader pattern of women's involvement in the civil service and in political positions, however, the picture

[279] Ibid
[280] Ibid, p.47-48
[281] Ibid, p.49, 54

is surprisingly inconsistent. In 2015, there were two women in Mangistau who held political positions, which were also the highest positions in the hierarchy of the officials appointed by the president and/or parliament. This is one of the highest numbers in the country. There is a strikingly low number of women who work in executive administrative positions compared to other regions, where female civil servants outnumber male employees (i.e., 696 females vs. 332 males).[282] Along with Kzylorda region, Mangistau is a recipient of state funding implemented by UN agencies. This is a programme funded by the government of Kazakhstan targeting social issues, including domestic violence. Mangistau is one of those regions which demonstrates inconsistency in terms of women's political participation (WPP) patterns, as well as economic and political factors contributing to women's involvement in politics.

In the southern regions, patterns of political representation are more consistent with the view that low levels of women's economic participation lead to low levels of political participation. Patriarchal norms and lifestyles are more present in these regions, owing to their proximity to the neighbouring state of Uzbekistan. However, the local government does not attempt to hide this gap. There is a large proportion of Uzbeks amongst the population, and the influence of this ethnic group is visible in the lifestyle of the southern regions, especially in South Kazakhstan (SK). At the same time, the South is on the verge of filling the gender wage gap in large and medium businesses. The exception in this group of regions is South Kazakhstan, with a more imbalanced situation in terms of gender-related economic and political indicators.

In the case of SK, however, there are also certain discrepancies. Despite a strong patriarchal influence in the region, women are active private entrepreneurs. This indicator influences their professional background and, potentially, the capacity of women deputies to act as political representatives. There is an insignificant number of women in political representative institutions; most of them come from the business sector, as well as areas of interest usually considered to be non-traditional for women. On the contrary, the regions which have more women in maslikhats have recruited them from "feminine" areas, such as hospitals, schools, and the social sector. The region of SK has the largest difference between the numbers of women and men working in the civil service (i.e., 1,096 vs. 426). This is one of the most significant differences recorded in the country, given that in other southern regions, administrative positions are mostly occupied by men.

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[282] Statistics Agency, 2016. Men and Women of Kazakhstan, 2012-2016. Ministry of National Economy, Rep.of Kazakhstan, table 10.6 Information about civil servants by regions, p.125

In terms of their economic profile, the industrial regions can be compared to the oil regions. Here, women have limited opportunities to be employed in extraction companies related to natural resources. The lack of women in national companies, however, is counterbalanced by a high level of women's involvement in small businesses, where they enjoy greater equality in terms of income. Both local government support for women entrepreneurship, and the presence of friendly conditions for start-ups, have a positive impact on women's economic activity. This different situation does not influence women's political representation, however, despite the highest share of women in the ruling party's leadership in all three regions and the active approach of the local government and party office to WPP promotion. A better support for women's economic activity can be related to the presence of an effective and extensive network of WPP schools supported by the party office in Karaganda, which should lead to a higher number of women in political representative institutions.

The northern regions have the best record of women's political representation, especially the region of Kostanai. In addition to this, women's representation in Kostanai differs from the national pattern of having fewer women in the regional maslikhats. Women are involved in the economic production of the regions owing to the diversified economic character of these territories, which includes traditional areas for women such as livestock and wheat production. The wage gap in these regions is above average, at around 80%. The support of the local government for women's economic activity is increasing. However, there are no women in party leadership positions. In general, the correlation between women's economic activity and political representation in the northern regions appears to be stronger.

The lowest indicator of women's representation is found in Almaty and Astana, the two largest cities in Kazakhstan and those that possess the status of "cities of state importance". The socio-demographic and economic profile of these cities suggests that they have all the prerequisites for higher women's representation and participation. Women in both cities have greater access to information, are less affected by the patriarchal norms of society, and are better educated and less financially dependent on men. They are more involved in public life through civil society organisations, and are in a better position to influence public opinion through social media and other resources. All of these factors would seem to favour more women at the level of representation, as in western democratic systems. However, findings demonstrate the opposite situation. One of the possible explanations for this phenomenon can be in the strategic importance of the cities, Astana as a capital with

the political elites and Almaty as the main financial and economic centre. Together with Mangistau region, Almaty has also been a starting point of manifestations of social disagreement in the past like in 2011 during the land protests which rapidly transformed into political riots. This is not to argue that women play important role in social mobilisation or being considered as a potential threat, but rather the intention of the elites to exert more careful control over the representation at local level.

Women's political activism in Kazakhstan

The end of the 1990s recorded a boom in women's movements. During the early period, women's representation in parliament was low, despite a high level of female candidates. After the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 (Beijing) the women's movement made several attempts to enter institutional politics by trying to mobilise potential female candidates. These attempts, however, were not supported by the state. In 1999, a group of women initiated a Women's Electoral Block "to increase female representation in all bodies of power, facilitate women's participation in the country's social life, democratize the promotion process, and develop an open society in Kazakhstan."[283] The Block developed a Kazakhstani Tomiris List, similar to Emily's List in the US, which included politically active and promising women able to speak out on behalf of women and to represent them effectively on public platforms.[284] Members of the Women's Electoral Block addressed a letter to the candidates for presidential elections, requiring a 30% quota for women in all structures of power. During the local elections, the Block conducted information campaigns that explained the need for female representation among the candidates. In 1999, the "Women Electoral Initiative", which included Kozyreva, Zaitsev, Bakeneeva, and Tlegenova[285], formulated a series of key activities to bring more women into the decision-making process. These activities included cascade training, more intensive training for women leaders and potential candidates, improving the image of female politicians, and disseminating information on the need for gender-equal authorities. The main problem at that time was identified as a lack of capacity, qualification, and aspiration among the women themselves. No action was conducted to challenge the existing institutions and the legislative framework. Before the elections in 1999, the Women Electoral Initiative disseminated a request among all participating parties to

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[283] Khassanova, G., 2002. *Women in Democratic Institutions in Kazakhstan*, Chapter "Women's movement in Kazakhstan as a subject of political processes", available online http://www.policy.hu/khassanova/
[284] Ibid
[285] All of them are early gender activists emerged in the mid-1990s in Kazakhstan

observe gender equality within the party lists of candidates by including 50% of women. This appeal, however, did not make a noticeable difference.

Another party which should be mentioned when discussing women's political participation is Vozrozhdenie Kazakhstana ("Revival of Kazakhstan"), which responded to the request made by several NGOs to take the principle of gender equality into consideration when forming the party lists. Founded in 1995, "Revival of Kazakhstan" responded to the appeal of several NGOs to include 60% of women on the party lists. It focused on social issues, such as the protection of vulnerable groups—women, disabled persons, children, and the elderly. However, like many other political parties that were deemed to be without use to the authoritarian regime, the party's registration was rejected on the basis of formalities in 2003. Later, in 2005, the party was renamed the Rukhaniyat Party.

The Political Alliance of Women's Organisations of Kazakhstan constituted another attempt by women to enter the political sphere through the women's movement. Owing to a lack of support in the regions, the Alliance could not participate in the 1999 elections. The party was subsequently renamed the Democratic Women's Party of Kazakhstan. In order to increase party membership, the head of the party used the network of the members of the Association of Business Women of Kazakhstan. In 2002, after endorsing the law on political parties, which prohibited political formations based on sex, the Democratic Women's Party of Kazakhstan was renamed the Republican Democratic Party "El Dana", and positioned itself as a supporter of the ruling regime. The re-branded party did not have clear political goals and programmes to attract supporters. The key tasks of the party were to represent women at all levels of power; to contribute towards sustainable economic opportunities to increase the living standards of people; to promote a strong system that would protect motherhood and childhood, as well as an adequate level of education, health, and welfare; and to support the poor. The low level of political education and qualification for political activity was reflected in the contradiction between the mission of the party— which aimed to promote human rights and freedoms—and its tasks, which were formulated in terms of supporting women, families, and children. The party tried to engage civil servants, who, according to the constitution, cannot be openly affiliated with any political party.[286] This manifest display of loyalty to the regime did not, however, yield any positive results for the head of the party in terms of personal promotion or institutional outcomes. Firstly, the regime clearly demonstrated that even the political ambitions of the inner circle of relatives, such as the president's daughter and son-in-law, would not be tolerated

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[286]Ibid

without the regime's approval. Secondly, the regime demonstrated that it neither considered women as autonomous political actors, nor as capable politicians.

Despite these constraints, there were certain attempts to organise movements for gender equality and to raise the issue of equal representation of women in power structures. Most of these policies could not survive within the restrictive political settings of the country, owing to inadequate programmes which failed to involve the electorate, weakened membership, and increased internal discontent between the networking organisations. In 2000, a new political movement called Women of Kazakhstan was registered,[287] which prioritised the consolidation of women's organisations. As Bekturganova, the leader of the movement Women of Kazakhstan, stated, the task was:

> not influencing politics from the top downwards by putting pressure on the central institutions of power (this is the task of the later stage), but rather from the bottom upwards, i.e., through the involvement of the female population considered as the social basis for the promotion of democratic rights. This is very important because the 'bottom-upwards' activity of women in the field of the protection of their political rights protection has decreased.[288]

The early women's movement of independent Kazakhstan could be divided into the following groups, depending on the depth of their focus:

1) gender equality, women's status, fair representation

2) socio-economic problems related to family, children, employment, social support, and so on.

3) the development of female middle-class members by bringing more women into business

4) cultural aspects, including religious and professional ones

5) the gender dimension of charity

6) analytical centres which are used as information centres

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[287] Bakhytzhamal Bekturganova.
[288] Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in Kazakhstan: Issues of Implementing and Reporting. Report on Working Seminar conducting in Almaty. November 7 – 8, 2000, p.31

7) health issues and reproductive health, including family planning

8) crisis centres for survivors of domestic violence.

This represents a general categorisation, defined on the basis of findings produced through the work of NGOs. According to researchers, even though women's movements in the first decade after Kazakhstan's independence did not lead to any viable political outcomes—such as an increase in the number of women in legislative or executive branches—they contributed towards fostering the political consciousness of women and provided entry points to the political arena.[289] As Evelyn Zellerer and Dmitriy Vyortkin have argued in their study on local women's NGOs in Kazakhstan, these women's organisations of the post-Beijing period were mainly movements composed of followers of liberal feminism—namely, professionals who aimed to help women as individuals without "critically analyzing or threatening state structures."[290]

One of the gender analysts, Gulsara Tlenchieva, mentioned that "the influence of old structures and leaders upon the political activity of new women leaders; the lack of financial support in promoting women into bodies of power; the immaturity of the public opinion as well as women as potential politicians contribute to the difficulty in overcoming gender balance" all influence the quality of women's political participation in Kazakhstan. In a study on women's political activism in Kazakhstan during the first decade after independence, Khassanova argued that since power was re-distributed between the legislative and the executive in favour of the latter, the meaning of women's participation in the legislature has been on the wane. Even a sharp increase in the numbers of women's representatives would "never yield equal authority and power."[291]

Conclusion

The principal argument of this chapter is that the Kazakh regime did not consider women in formal political institutions as actors, even at the time of critical junctures—which are usually viewed by feminist scholars as opportunities for previously marginalised women to advance their positions in the public sphere. In Kazakhstan, the pattern of women's

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[289] Union of Women of Intellectual Work, 2001. Implementing Women's Rights in Kazakhstan, Almaty, Fund «XXI century», p.3

[290] Evelyn Zellerer and Dmitriy Vyortkin, "Women's Grassroots Struggles for Empowerment in the Republic of Kazakhstan," *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State, and Society* 11/3 (2004): 439–64. DOI: 10.1093/sp/jxh044

[291] Khassanova, G., 2002. *Women in Democratic Institutions in Kazakhstan*, Chapter "Women's movement in Kazakhstan as a subject of political processes", available online http://www.policy.hu/khassanova/

political representation fluctuated during the first decade of the post-independence period. With the consolidation of the authoritarian regime, the WPP pattern is gradually resembling the form of women's political representation of the Soviet period, characterised by a higher number of women in elected offices.

In relation to the correlation between the evolution of the authoritarian regime, women's formal representation, and women's activism in Kazakhstan in the post-Soviet period, it is argued that that along with the consolidation of the regime, women's representation grew while women's activism was suppressed. The women's movement in Kazakhstan was on the rise after the breakthrough in the international gender- mainstreaming movement, which resulted in attempts by women to organise themselves into political forces between the 1990s and early 2000s. These attempts, however, as with many other alternative movements that have posed a potential threat to the stability of the ruling order, were not supported by the regime – even though women's political parties were the least threatening of potential opponents. This means that a growing level of representation of women in formal politics does not reflect an increase in the meaningful political participation of women, nor does it provide improvements in the role of women in society. On the contrary, this trend can be interpreted as a type of artificial advancement of women's political participation. In the evidence-based chapters below (VI, VII, VIII), the personal experiences of female politicians provide further evidence for this argument.

Chapter V. The historical context of women's political participation and the gender regime in Kazakhstan

Political participation in post-communist societies is, in general, a problematic issue. Owing to the Soviet legacy of repression, post-communist citizens have little "experience in teasing out the personal implications of particular policy choices."[292] The literature on the formation of post-communist political parties argues that the depoliticisation of post-communist citizens favoured the organisation of parties based on strong personalities and personal characteristics, rather than on ideologies.[293] In addition to this, political actors in an authoritarian setting have little choice but to behave within a restricted environment, which reduces the opportunities for political action. Women's political participation in post-communist states is determined by a number of factors, such as the Soviet legacy; the growth of a civil society as an alternative informal political space; the absence of strong feminist movements; the revival of traditionalist ideologies as part of the nation-building processes, which defined a certain place and specific functions for women in society; a general hostility towards feminist ideas; and, to a lesser degree, the electoral and party system. It is assumed that authoritarian regimes are more likely to rest on patriarchal norms and gendered grounds, strictly dividing the roles of women and men in society.[294]

Socialism declared the achievement of complete gender equality and a solution to the "woman's issue" by the beginning of World War Two (1939–45). Social guarantees for women in the form of access to education, the expansion of property and inheritance rights, and maternity care, were granted to women during the Soviet period.[295] The economic advancement of women was not, however, designed to achieve gender equality. There was labour segregation, in that less or unqualified positions were mainly occupied by women, and the gender-wage gap was around 65–75 percent.[296] The Communist regime could not reconcile the multiple roles of a woman—as reproducers, as producers, and as political activists. This caused a double burden, and created the conditions in which women were

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[292] Samuel H. Barnes, "The Changing Political Participation of Postcommunist Citizens," *International Journal of Sociology* 36/2 (2006): 77; Jack Bielasiak and David Blunck, "Past and Present in Transitional Voting: Electoral Choices in Post-Communist Poland," *Party Politics* 8/5 (2002): 563–85. DOI: 10.1177/1354068802008005004

[293] Petr Kopecký, "Developing Party Organizations in East-Central Europe: What Type of Party is Likely to Emerge?" *Party Politics* 1/4 (1995): 515–34. DOI: 10.1177/1354068895001004005; Herbert Kitschelt, *Party Systems in East Central Europe: Consolidation or Fluidity?* (Glasgow: Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde, 1995).

[294] Georgina Waylen, *Gender in Third World Politics* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1996).

[295] Vera B. Dakova, *Bulgaria 1995: Situation of Women* (Sofia: UNDP, 1995).

[296] Suzanne Lafont, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: Women in the Post-Communist States," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 34/2 (2001): 206. DOI: 10.1016/S0967-067X(01)00006-X

forced to make a choice at the expense of their political activity. In addition to this, the emancipation of women was pursued without the active involvement of women themselves, as the state acted "as their protector and liberator" and women became simply "the recipients of the state's welfare policies and programmes."[297]

Two main questions are addressed in the scholarship on gender and socialism: how gender difference was handled by state socialism, and how public and private spheres were redefined and revalued in socialist regimes. Socialism transformed the idea of paid work, including reproductive work, that had previously been taken for granted. This meant that the state entered the private sphere of family relationships and household activities. As a result of this intervention, women became dependent on the state, rather than on men. While they were included in the labour force, women were allocated to specific jobs. This caused a gendered segregation of the labour market, which has persisted up to the present day.

This chapter discusses the regime of gender equality in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. The analysis includes the historical context that explains the current situation through a discussion of the prerequisites for the gender regime; the dynamics that influenced the country's international ratings on gender equality indicators; the legal framework on gender equality; gender policies and institutions responsible for the advancement of gender issues in the country; and general statistical data on women's participation in the economy. Although all ex-Soviet states share a common experience of gender policies, each country has its own specifics with regard to the way in which these policies were implemented and perceived by local societies. Therefore, the experience of women in Soviet republics with a majority of Muslim population, such as those in Central Asia, is highlighted. The idea is to provide the reader with the general context of the situation of women, and their position in the social and economic areas of the state.

The Soviet period

During the Soviet period, the descriptive representation of women in legislatures was high throughout the republics, including in the Supreme Soviet.[298] In the Kazakh SSR, for example, female delegates amounted to 47.4% in 1975. This level was achieved through a

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legal quota mechanism. However, these high numbers were not converted into meaningful representation, either in terms of women's capacity as politicians, or as representatives of women's interests.[299] Notwithstanding their high levels of education, their access to the employment market, and a range of economic and social rights that were granted to Soviet women, their political participation and organisation were hampered owing to the restrictive nature of the regime.[300] The Bolshevik policy on the equality of rights between men and women did not advocate gender equality in political participation, but instead served the purposes of disseminating the decisions of the Communist Party and mobilising women for the tasks that the Party imposed. Having eliminated all of the independent feminist movements that existed before 1917, the women's question was integrated into the Communist Party structure.[301] This marginalisation of the role of women in politics was accompanied by a lowering of the status of women in society in general, while publicly proclaiming the achievement of gender equality and the solution of the women's question.

The pattern of female political representation in post-communist countries continues the trends set in the Soviet period. These trends were characterised by an imbalance between, on the one hand, certain gender advancements in the social and economic spheres that led to greater women's representation, and, on the other, a lack of influence in the political arena.[302] According to state socialism, the key measures of female emancipation socialism were the state's guarantee of gender equality, the elimination of private property, and the increase in the number of employed women.[303] The purpose of these measures, however, was not to achieve gender equality itself. Instead, it was to exploit women for the purposes of the regime, depending on the requirements of any given time period. By declaring that women had been liberated and emancipated from oppressive capitalist labour, the communist regime in fact put women into a similar situation, "doubly exploit[ing] women in their roles as producers and reproducers."[304]

The Bolsheviks linked the key problem of depoliticising women with economic alienation. They believed that changes in the economic organisation of women would result in

[299] Carol Nechemias, "Democratization and Women's Access to Legislative Seats: The Soviet Case: 1989–1991," *Women & Politics* 14/3 (1994): 1–18.

[300] Moser, "The effects of electoral systems on women's representation," 354.

[301] Svetlana Aivazova, "The Soviet Style of State Feminism," *Gender Equality in the Context of Human Rights*, accessed 7 January 2022, http://www.owl.ru/win/books/gender/11.htm

[302] Lafont, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back"; Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, "Cultural Obstacles to Equal Representation," *Journal of Democracy* 12/3 (2001): 126–40. DOI: 10.1353/jod.2001.0054

[303] Barbara Havelková, "The Legal Notion of Gender Equality in the Czech Republic," *Women's Studies International Forum* 33/1 (2010): 23.

[304] Lafont, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," 205.

political transformation. As Lenin stated, "our task is to make politics available to every working woman."[305] In conversation with Clara Zetkin in 1920, Lenin also noted that "the specific purpose" of the Women's Department was to "bring women into contact with the Party, and [keep] them under its influence."[306] Initially, the idea had nothing in common with feminism, since it was dictated by "practical revolutionary expediency."[307] The Bolsheviks declared feminist ideas as bourgeois and threatening. After eliminating all of the independent feminist movements which existed before 1917, the women's question was integrated into the Communist Party structure.[308] Thus, the entire system limited the opportunities of women as political actors. Soviet women lost any alternative sources of political participation, except for that derived from the Communist Party.[309] The initial intentions of the party were to politicise women by transforming the traditional division of gender roles, and to gain support within new social groups during the first years of the Soviet regime. These activities, however, were reduced by 1932. Owing to the new politics of forced industrialisation and consolidation of power, which required new qualities from politicians, women were relegated to the periphery of political life. Stalin declared that the woman's question was solved in the USSR. Lenin's idea of women as workers was replaced by Stalin's image of women as workers and mothers—superwomen, who would be able to fit into the socialist state by providing it with an "ever-increasing productivity at work and reproductivity at home."[310] World War Two brought new opportunities and threats for women, because of massive army recruitment and the loss of much of the male population. Women were actively promoted in the public sphere, and also found opportunities through leadership positions at the local level and in the army. There were special women's units in the army, for instance, which specialised in effective air bombardment. Ideas about women's roles were supplemented by the image of fighters, which shaped perceptions about femininity and masculinity. These opportunities, however, were not pursued after the war. At that time, women who had held high managerial positions in the party structure were replaced by men who had returned from the front. Family laws were amended by abolishing allowances for women with children from unregistered marriages. In this post-conflict period, the double burden of a Soviet woman

[305] Vladimir I. Lenin, "Speech at the Working Women's Congress", *Pravda* 213 (September 25 1919).
[306] Ibid.
[307] Ibid.
[308] Aivazova, "The Soviet Style of State Feminism."
[309] Jurate Motiejunaite, ed., *Women's Rights: The Public/Private Dichotomy* (New York: International Debate Education Association, 2005), 35.
Motiejunaite, J. ed., 2005. Controversies of public & private division for Soviet and Post-Soviet Women, Paper at the seminar of the International Debate Education Association
[310] Linda Racioppi and K.O.S. See, "Organizing Women Before and After the Fall: Women's Politics in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia," *Signs* 20/4 (1995): 823.

was engendered by the image of a woman as a superwoman, combining the roles of a socialist worker, a mother, and a housewife.

In Khrushchev's period, the critique of Stalinism led to a reconsideration of the status of women. It was officially announced that the woman's question was still under consideration, and it was duly re-institutionalised again once more in the form of women's councils under the Communist Party. By the 1970s and 1980s, however, there was a shortage of labour and a decline in birth-rates, which were among the lowest in Europe. In the meantime, top-level political positions remained male-dominated despite rhetoric to the contrary. Women's councils did not provide space to create women's movements, and women's activity was solely limited to educational purposes aimed at raising the political consciousness of women. Gorbachev's period is known for its duality in terms of gender equality and the status of women in society. At that time, the state promoted the image of women as wives, mothers, and homemakers, highlighting the contribution of women to childbearing and children's education.[311] Allowances for female workers with children were reduced, since women were not considered to be a contributory force for the economy. In one of his statements, Gorbachev said:

> We have discovered that many of our problems in children's and young people's behaviour, in our morals, culture, and in production are partially caused by the weakening of family ties and a slack attitude towards family responsibilities. This is a paradoxical result of our sincere and politically justified desire to make women equal to men in everything. Now, in the course of Perestroika, we have begun to overcome this shortcoming. That is why were are now holding heated debates in the press, in public organisations, at work and at home about the question of what we should do to make it possible for women to return to their purely womanly mission.[312]

As K.B. Usha has argued, the agency of women in Soviet emancipation policies was considered from the perspective of the state, and not from the point of view of women themselves. The main idea of these coercive policies implemented by the Communist Party

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[311] Ibid.

[312] Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking For Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 177.

was to make the population of all republics blind to ethnicity and gender, in order "to absorb the same ideology and identify with the Soviet state as a whole."[313] In this process, women were not agents, but were, instead, "recipients of the state's welfare policies and programmes."[314] Therefore, by the time of the dissolution of the Soviet system, women were not considered as civic and political actors. During the period of transition, their participation was negligible since they did not have "political bargaining power" to participate in co-option or power sharing deals.[315] The only means of participation for women that was permitted was when they were acting "on the basis of gendered social roles, as mothers and wives."[316] The socialist state created all of the conditions for women to make them more competitive as public actors, but, at the same time, the state generated barriers to the achievement of their rights, and to their aspirations to act as political figures. In its attempts to benefit from women's involvement in the economy, the state tried to help women balance private and public spheres. One of the positive initiatives was the establishment of infrastructure, such as nurseries, kindergartens, and a gradual process of the institutionalisation of childhood, to alleviate the caring burden of women and allow them to devote more time to public life. Again, Lenin was specifically critical towards the failure of the Party to sustain this initiative, insisting that it "can really emancipate women, [and] really lessen and abolish their inequality with men as regards their role in social production and public life."[317]

The Communist Party addressed the political participation of women in the Soviet period through *zhensovety*—women's councils established in almost all enterprises and state institutions, in the form of units embedded within the organisational structure. Beginning in 1919, *zhensovety* conducted major literacy campaigns amongst women, in an attempt to develop their civic consciousness and participation in economic development and political life.[318] The Party's act stated that the role of the women's unit was "to involve female workers and farmers in the party and Soviet work with an eye to bringing up active fighters

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[313] Adrienne Edgar, "Bolshevism, Patriarchy, and the Nation: The Soviet 'Emancipation' of Muslim Women in Pan-Islamic Perspective," *Slavic Review* 65/2: 264.

[314] Massell, Gregory J. 1974. The Surrogate Proletariat. Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919-1929. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, p.159

[315] Frank C. Thames, "Women's Legislative Representation in Authoritarian Regimes," (12 July 2017), accessed 7 January 2022, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3001247. DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.3001247

[316] Alexandra Hrycak, "Gender and the Orange Revolution," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 23/1(2007): 153.

[317] Vladimir I. Lenin, "A Great Beginning: Heroism of the Workers in the Rear 'Communist Subbotniks'," in *idem, Collected Works, Vol. 29* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 408–34.

[318] Genia K. Browning, *Women and Politics in the USSR: Consciousness Raising and Soviet Women's Groups* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1987).

for the ideals of their classes."[319] The Communist Party launched these activities under the slogan of liberating women from the capitalist burden. The key outcomes of this propaganda among women were limited to increasing the number of female voters during elections, and fostering participation in local and rural legislative authorities. The latter was still a relevant issue in the 1970s, when Lapidus recorded 48.1% of women in local Soviets, 44.9% at the *oblast* and regional levels, and 35.4% at the level of the republics.[320] Lapidus linked this phenomenon to the division of areas of competence between the central and local Soviets. Local Soviets were responsible for healthcare, as well as cultural, educational, and family issues, whereas the central authorities dealt with defence, international relations, and financial issues. Nevertheless, scholars highlight the commitment of the Women's Department to expand the perception of the role of women in society. The number of female party members increased sharply, especially in Muslim populated countries, and during World War Two.

In Kazakhstan, as well in other non-Slavic republics and regions, this burden doubled owing to the aspect of religion.[321] *Zhensovety* or *zhenotdel* assumed different forms to mobilise women. These included, for example, delegates' meetings, women's clubs, red yurts,[322] or village women's councils in Kazakhstan, that were fully operational until 1931. According to the Kazakh national archives, by 1943, in Kazakhstan, there were 4,300 *zhensovety* at all levels.[323] These gatherings provided a variety of classes and services, beginning with literacy lessons, libraries, medical services, courses on personal hygiene, and knitting and drama classes; the latter were transformed into enterprises, such as elements of women's entrepreneurship.[324] Rural women's councils consisted of 5–9 persons, and were aimed at building the capacity of female farmers to run households and raise children, as well as encouraging young women to continue their studies in case of difficulties in their families. The idea was to take women out of the private space, and engage them in social and political life through explaining ideas of social transformation that were endorsed by the Communist Party. Researchers of early Soviet policies note that gender emancipatory policies in Kazakhstan were implemented based on regional

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[319] Communist Party Decree on Party's Activity among women workers, farmers of the East, January 1925, see https://e-history.kz/ru/contents/view/1402

[320] Gail W. Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society: Equality, Development and Social Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 207.

[321] Elmuratova, B., 2013. History of women's movement in Kazakhstan, end of XIX century – 1920s, History of Kazakhstan, September 11, available at https://e-history.kz/ru/contents/view/1402

[322] Mobile tent houses typical of Central Asian ethnicities.

[323] Institute of History and ethnography after Valikhanov, Ministry of Science, 2013. Beginning of the war. Mobilization, August 1, available at https://e-history.kz/ru/contents/view/297

[324] Tatyana Schurko, "Khudzhum: Women's Emancipation During Early Soviet Experiments in the Soviet Kyrgyziya (1918–1930)," *Gefter*, 5 May 2015, accessed 7 January 2022, http://gefter.ru/archive/15305.

specificities – namely, the ethnic composition of the regional population. For example, in the southern regions, the population was ethnically diverse and manifested a greater attachment to a traditional Islamic lifestyle. Describing the activity of a *zhensovet* in the Chukotka region (Russia), Dorzheeva noted that action plans were disseminated to all units by the Party.[325] The plans contained a strict list of events to be conducted during the year, such as exhibitions of women's crafts, a number of meetings, the nomination of female delegates, and the creation of female hunting squads.[326] According to the Bolsheviks, the promotion of women's political participation (WPP) would become a logical consequence of the increased literacy of women. As Zemziulina has stated, "it was assumed that having learnt to read words written in the Bolsheviks' political declarations, working women would start acting for the class interests as per the party's vision."[327]

Although gender policies designed by the central Party board were mandatory in all of the Soviet republics, the character and means of their operationalisation differed on the basis of prevailing conditions in each republic.[328] The Bolsheviks' task of bringing women into public life acquired special importance, but it faced resistance in the local societies of those Central Asian states with deep-rooted Muslim traditions. Besides implementing soft measures, such as disseminating information and raising the literacy rate among women, the Soviet administration undertook aggressive actions to liberate the Muslim women of Central Asia from traditional practices. The unveiling movement known as *hujum* began in 1926, and aimed at bringing women out of the private space through redistributing part of the housework and caring functions or responsibilities traditionally assigned to women. As Tartakovskaya has argued, "when equality of rights is achieved not as the result of a struggle of women's movements, but is given as a supplement to social changes that are not focused on it [equality], this does not lead to partner relations, but to the overlap of a few gender roles."[329] In Kazakhstan, Bolshevik gender policies in the private sphere were related to the abolishment of the bride price, known as *kalym*.[330]

The Socialist modernisation of traditional Kazakh society and patriarchal gender relations

[325] V. Dorzheeva, "Forms and methods of inclusion into politics of women representing ethnic minorities in Far East (1920s–1950s)," *Leningrad Law Journal*, (3), pp.147-156

[326] This is traditional activity of ethnic groups in the Far East.

[327] Zemziulina, N, 2013. Gender aspect of recruitment in the USSR in 1920s-1930s, *Historical and social and educational thinking*, (6), pp.14-18

[328] Gregory J. Massell, *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919–1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

[329] Tartakovskaya, I., 1997. *Sociology of Sex and Family*, Samara, p.104

[330] Kundakbaeva, Zh., 2017. *Modernisation of the early Soviet period in the lives of women of Kazakhstan, 1920-1930.* Directive of the Communist Party 1920), marriage right (17 January 1921) and the Law on punishment for polygamy (1921), criminal liability for forced marriages 1922, polygamy (1924) and child marriages and bride kidnapping (1925).

during the early Soviet period was less aggressive in Kazakhstan, owing to the relatively free position of women and their role in the social structure.[331] For example, women did not wear veils and could communicate with community members without a male guardian, in contrast to the norms of traditional Islamic culture prevalent in the neighbouring territories of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. In the period before the October Revolution, Kazakh women could, in the absence of their husbands, take charge of the household and participate in the decision-making clan gatherings, even if such leadership was usually informal and took place with the permission of the leading male representative of the extended family. This right fit within informal Islamic custom, known as *adat*. The custom of veiling was part of a larger process that aimed both at returning to pre-Soviet statehood, and the discovery of an original identity in Kazakhstan; veiling is not politicised, and is considered to be a personal choice.[332] As Shirin Akiner has noted, there are processes that return to traditional roots, while also continuing the exercise of independence and freedom of choice.[333] Paula Michaels has pointed out the difference in the status of women in Central Asian states and in Kazakhstan, stating that:

> economically, socially, and politically, Kazakh women's lives lie at a crossroads. Pre-Soviet and Soviet influences have given rise to the multifaceted roles women play in present-day Kazakh society. For now, the renewed interest in Islam seems to play only a modest role and other factors, such as the rise of the market economy, show signs of exerting a more dominant influence on the position of women.[334]

Coercive gender policies increased the number of women able to occupy public positions before 1941.[335] One of the first attempts to analyse the level and the quality of female

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[331] Kundakbaeva, Zh., 2017. *Modernisation of the early Soviet period in the lives of women of Kazakhstan, 1920-1930*

[332] Armine Ishkanian, "VI. Gendered Transitions: The Impact of the Post-Soviet Transition on Women in Central Asia and the Caucasus," *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology*, 2/3–4 (2003): 486. DOI: 10.1163/156915003322986361

[333] Shirin Akiner, "Between tradition and modernity–the dilemma facing contemporary Central Asian women," in *Post-Soviet Women: From the Baltic to Central Asia*, ed. Mary Buckley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 263.DOI: 10.1017/CBO9780511585197.017

[334] Paula A. Michaels, "Kazak Women: Living the Heritage of a Unique Past," in *Women in Muslim Societies: Diversity Within Unity*, eds. Herbert L. Bodman and Nayereh E. Tohidi (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Press, 1998), 187–202.

[335] Kundakbaeva, Zh., 2017. *Modernisation of the early Soviet period in the lives of women of Kazakhstan, 1920-1930*

participation in the political sphere in a variety of forms – party membership, elected and appointed positions, voting and political discussion – was made by Lapidus in 1975. She identified clear patterns of the participation of women in politics, and the recruitment pathways of male and female representatives to the Supreme Soviet in 1970. In terms of party affiliation, there were fewer party members among women; for occupational backgrounds, women tended to come from the spheres of farming, healthcare and education; and in terms of the turnover rate, this was significantly higher for female deputies, as only 15% of women were re-elected in contrast to over 50% of male deputies.[336] Compared to men, who had the opportunity to acquire experience and skills in a variety of positions in other regions, a female *obkom (region-level communist party office)* member's career typically developed within one region and appointees were "recruited from a lower position."[337] This tendency informs the careers of women today. Generally, women parliamentarians have experience in one region, with more years spent in one position within the system of the local government or party. Compared to women's career patterns, a typical man's pre-political career includes a more diversified experience in terms of station of duty and fewer years spent in one position, leading to faster promotion at the local level. In the Soviet period, women's educational and professional backgrounds had an impact on the pattern of their political career, because women overwhelmingly received a degree in medicine and education. The entire system, therefore, limited political opportunities for women.[338]

As a rule, women hold the positions of secretaries of the primary party branches, and of first or second secretaries of regional party offices. According to some observations on the typical recruitment path of male and female party office members, male colleagues received positions outside their region of origin, since they had the opportunity to change positions and functional responsibilities, which provided them with a variety of skills and experience. On the contrary, the previous positions of female party members were of a lower level, and were located within their regions of origin. Women tended to be employed in a single position without promotion, and for a longer period of time.[339] One of the limitations of the Soviet policy of transformation in relation to women's political participation is considered to be the purely materialistic approach to the problem, which gave too much emphasis to economic emancipation. Little attention was paid to the

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[336] Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society*, p. 207.
[337]See Lapidus, p. 223
[338]See Lapidus, p. 228
[339] Lapidus, "Political mobilization, participation, and leadership," 106.

questions of stereotyping and "the influence of role models in political socialization."[340] Another limitation of the Soviet policy in relation to the achievement of gender equality is that it focused on women only, instead of working on gender roles in a more expansive fashion. In fact, as Usha has pointed out, the Soviet state had no idea of what "the responsibilities and roles of a man in the family" were.[341] No attention was paid to social changes, which are much more difficult to achieve than political ones, since the transformation is only visible over the longer term.

The post-Soviet period

The collapse of the Soviet Union had a devastating effect on the economies of newly emerged states. The legacies of the purely formalistic participation of women in political life, together with policies that privileged men in the most powerful decision-making positions, resulted in the "redeployment of notions of cultural authenticity in the service of new ideological goals."[342] The literature on the political participation of women in post-communist countries compares and contrasts the descriptive representation of women between the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Although the literature looked most favourably on the former, it recognises that the presence of a critical mass of women did not actually result in meaningful participation.[343] In the post-communist period, in those countries which followed democratisation – mainly those in Central and Eastern Europe – women failed to gain sufficient representation "through democratic political institutions" despite "the existence of opportunities for genuine political influence."[344] Moser explains this dynamic in relation to the removal of quotas in legislatures – the centres of democratic decision-making – which were present in the communist era.

The symbolic representation of women in politics during the Soviet period was achieved through the quota system. The frequent implementation of quotas meant that women from remote rural areas, often with low qualifications and no political experience, were selected to serve in representative bodies. This phenomenon was called "a milkmaid syndrome", and referred to Lenin's slogan about making "kitchen maids as stateswomen."[345] In modern Kazakhstan, the introduction of quotas as a temporary mechanism for bringing

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[340] Ibid., 115.
[341] See n(127), p.161
[342] Deniz Kandiyoti, "The Politics of Gender and the Soviet Paradox: Neither Colonized, nor Modern?" *Central Asian Survey* 26/4 (2007); 607. DOI: 10.1080/02634930802018521
[343] Nechemias, "Democratization and Women's Access to Legislative Seats."
[344] Moser, "The effects of electoral systems on women's representation," 356.
[345] See n(127)

more women into representative bodies faced resistance from political officials and decision-makers. With the discussion about quotas in mind, opponents of female political participation have triggered debates on meritocracy as the key element of political recruitment in liberal democracies. The qualities of the politicians as candidates, professional politicians, and representatives represent the key counterargument used against the adoption of the quota system. The main concern about the rhetoric on quality, in relation to gender equality in representation, is that it proceeds from the assumption that "women's quality [as politicians] is lower than men's."[346] The symbolic nature of women's political representation during the Soviet period is not mentioned during these debates. On the contrary, the current level of women's representation in parliament is portrayed as an achievement of the ruling regime. It thus "gender inequalities in the political sphere" and "creates an image of the female politician as a compliant and willing supporter of the regime."[347]

In the post-Soviet period, the backlash of states against socialist views had a number of important consequences. These included a sharp decline in women's political participation; female unemployment, which led to the feminisation of poverty; and the withdrawal of the social benefits that had been previously enjoyed by women.[348] The civil activism of women—an informal platform for political participation – was another important aspect of women's involvement in politics. An acceptance of feminist ideologies, which could politicise women's movements, did not, however, take place.[349] Female movements were unable to embrace feminist ideologies and politicise the issue of gender equality, including WPP. It is important to note that women in post-socialist environments encounter different structural positions from those experienced by western feminists. The political programme of feminists in western democracies, therefore, does not necessarily reflect the needs and aspirations of post-socialist women. The division between the public and private spheres was reconstituted within the public domain itself, by separating formal political institutions associated with political activity, civil society, the market, and the area related to private property.[350] Furthermore, thinkers of different philosophical schools tried to identify the notions of public and private. As Susan Gal and Gail Kligman have observed, the gender

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[346] Louise Edwards, "Strategizing for politics: Chinese women's participation in the one-party state," *Women's Studies International Forum* 30/5 (2007): 387.

[347] Yvonne Galligan and Sara Clavero, "Prospects for Women's Legislative Representation in Postsocialist Europe: The Views of Female Politicians," *Gender and Society* 22/2 (2008): 152. DOI: 10.1177/0891243207312268

[348] Kandiyoti, "The Politics of Gender and the Soviet Paradox," 613.

[349] Usha, "Political Empowerment of Women."

[350] Susan Gal and Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Gender After Socialism: A Comparative-Historical Essay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 39.

regime in socialist countries was "built out of [these] ideological critiques and failed utopias."[351] The final factor shaping women's political participation in the post-communist period is a revival of traditionalist ideologies as part of the nation-building process, which defines specific places and the functions of women in society, and which expresses a general hostility towards feminist ideas and, to a lesser degree, towards the electoral and party system. In sum, the historical legacies of socialism have created substantial barriers for women's leadership and political participation. The new period did not bring about positive changes to the positions of women; rather, it "intensified gender asymmetry and inequalities."[352]

The current gender regime in Kazakhstan is shaped by the interaction of multi-layered processes involving traditionalist social principles, intensive Sovietisation, and nation-building dynamics, as well as a return to patriarchal values. These varying inputs have had an impact on the ambiguity of Kazakhstan's international rating on gender equality: the country has scored highly in terms of women's economic participation and formal political representation. At the same time, it has scored to a lesser degree on the stereotypical roles of men and women in family and society, as well as the weak feminist stance on the same issues. Gender policy has not been among the priorities of the state, whether in the early period or later. There were inconsistencies in the promotion of gender equality, as evaluated by one of the local activists and gender experts, Svetlana Shakirova. Instead of a comprehensive social transformation, the patchy application of gender equality has led to one-to-one cooperation in specific areas.[353] As Shakirova has noted, "gender research [was] developed in Kazakhstan…for the purpose of providing the government with data for annual UN and other international organisations' reports."[354]

The gender ranking of Kazakhstan

The gender equality level is measured by complex indices, of which the Gender Inequality Index (GII, UNDP) and the Global Gender Gap (World Economic Forum) are the most comprehensive in terms of geographical coverage, analysis, and recognition. The former is part of the Human Development Report (HDR), and it was introduced in 2010 as a

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[351] Ibid., 47.
[352] Ishkanian, "VI. Gendered Transitions," 484–85.
[353] Svetlana Shakirova, "Gender Equality Policy in Kazakhstan and the Role of International Actors in its Institutionalization," in *Institutionalizing Gender Equality: Historical and Global Perspectives*, eds. Yulia Gradskova and Sara Sanders (Lanham: Lexington, 2015), 218.
[354] Svetlana Shakirova, 2012. "Gender studies as part of the research project," Paper presented at "Gender aspects of social modernization," 18 May 2012, Almaty, Kazakh National Women's University.

response to the criticism of previous measurements, which contained a number of conceptual and methodological limitations. It uses development-related computable indicators in order to reveal the difference in the distribution of social and economic parameters among men and women. The basic indicators, such as the maternal mortality ratio, adolescent birth rates, the number of seats occupied by women in parliaments, the proportion of adult females and males with at least a secondary education, and participation in the labour market, are grouped into the following cohorts: reproductive health, education, and political and economic empowerment.

According to the 2020 HDR report, Kazakhstan was ranked 51st among 188 UN-recognised countries. This is five points higher than its position in previous years. Compared to other states of the CIS region, this is the highest position, followed by Russia and Belarus.[355] If we examine the indicators in detail, the differences are clearly visible in the areas of reproductive health, maternal death, and adolescent birth rates. Kazakhstan has a higher representation of women in parliament, and a greater participation of women in the labour market. The Soviet legacy of massive women's employment, the provision of pre-natal care service, and a developed infrastructure for working mothers, had a noticeable impact on the performance of post-Soviet states recorded in the ratings.[356] In addition to this, Soviet education policies also influenced the ratings of countries by showing a higher proportion of girls enrolled in primary schools, which is one of the indicators of gender equality. The Soviet legacy of gender policies has influenced the higher rankings of former Soviet countries in gender-related indicators. More than twenty-five years after the dissolution of the Soviet system, this legacy still manages to downplay the effect of nation-building processes, which emphasise the importance of traditionalist aspects in society.

The other measurement mentioned above is the Global Gender Gap (GGG), which was introduced in 2006 by the World Economic Forum.[357] The GGG places Kazakhstan in 72nd place, a drop of 12 points compared to 2018, and 25 compared to 2015.[358] As well as the GII, this index was designed to capture gaps in four areas—health, education, economy,

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[355] United Nations Development Program, Human Development Reports, "2020 Gender Inequality Index", accessed 12 January 2022, http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII

[356] United Nations Development Program, "MDG in Kazakhstan 2002", 17 June 2013, accessed 12 January 2022, https://www.kz.undp.org/content/kazakhstan/en/home/library/mdg/mdg-report-2002.html. See Target 4.

[357] World Economic Forum, "The Global Gender Gap Index 2020 Rankings," accessed 12 January 2022, http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/the-global-gender-gap-index-2020/results-and-analysis/.

[358] World Economic Forum, "The Global Gender Gap Report 2015," accessed 12 January 2022, http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/

and politics—and track their progress. The index has more component indicators within each area, and this permits the generation of a clearer and more objective picture of the current situation, as well as the dynamics of change over time. For example, political empowerment is measured in terms of the number of women in parliament, in executives, and the years of government with a female head of state. Economic participation not only includes participation in the labour force, but also encompasses other important dimensions of economic empowerment and equality, such as wage equality for similar work, estimated earned income, the number of women among legislators and top managers, and those among professional and technical workers.[359]

The quantitative measurements of the indices mentioned here fail to provide insight into the depth of the problem of gender inequality, or the nature of the phenomenon, as the UNDP itself admits.[360] These measurements thus fail to capture the transformations occurring on the ground, as they offer instead a superficial picture lacking adequate details about the status of gender equality and the empowerment of women. For example, having an almost equal proportion of men and women who have accomplished at least secondary education (95.3% vs. 98.8%) does not lead to a similar participation in the labour market (67.7% vs. 77.9%).[361] Nor does it lead to comparable numbers of women in senior management positions in the corporate sector, where female managers count for only 37%.[362] These figures confirm that notwithstanding the long history of emancipation of Soviet women, access to education has little effect on the barriers women face in their path to holding political or economic decision-making positions in the public sector. Political empowerment is also limited by descriptive representation, i.e., the number of female office holders is provided without a more detailed analysis of their activity. Nevertheless, these numbers give a general idea of the status of gender equality in the country, and serve as markers for policy makers.

Regarding women's development in the country in more general terms, the closed political system has created both opportunities and challenges. Income growth related to the exploitation of the country's natural resources has made a positive impact on poverty and

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[359] Ibid., s.v. "Kazakhstan", accessed 12 January 2022, http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/economies/#economy=KAZ

[360] United Nations Development Program, Human Development Reports, "2020 Gender Inequality Index: Frequently Asked Questions", accessed 12 January 2022, http://hdr.undp.org/en/faq-page/gender-inequality-index-gii#t294n2423

[361] See n(14) http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII

[362] International Labour Organization, "Global Report: Women in Business and Management: Gaining Momentum," 12 January 2015, accessed 12 January 2022, http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/forthcoming-publications/WCMS_316450/lang--en/index.htm, 14.

development indicators. Kazakhstan's development objective is to join the rank of the top-thirty most-developed countries by 2050, and, in furthering this objective, the government was tasked to adopt OECD development indicators, including those on gender equality. However, the economic crisis in the late 2000s, as well as the drop in oil prices, had an impact on Kazakhstan's economic situation and, as a result, it affected the informal economy and the social sector more heavily—that is, the two areas overwhelmingly occupied by women. Progress towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goals targets has nevertheless been significant. By 2004, income poverty and the incidence of food poverty were reduced by half, while in 2003 the state achieved universal primary education and gender balance in school enrolment.[363] Education, in particular, has been a priority: in 2009, Kazakhstan ranked first on UNESCO's "Education for All Development Index", by achieving near-universal levels of primary education, adult literacy, and gender parity.[364] These high levels of performance are owing to the legacy of Soviet policies in social and economic areas.

The national legislative framework on gender equality

Kazakhstan's legal and policy frameworks governing gender equality have evolved significantly since 1991. As mentioned previously, the equality of rights and freedoms irrespective of sex, and a prohibition against all forms of discrimination, are fixed by the Constitution. Kazakhstan ratified *The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination* (CEDAW, 1979), and the CEDAW *Optional Protocol* (2000), as well as the UN *Convention on the Political Rights of Women* and *The Convention on the Nationality of Married Women* (2000). In 2009, Kazakhstan adopted legislation on gender equality (*Act on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities of Men and Women*) and violence against women (the *Domestic Violence Act*). Substantial gaps in both the laws and the implementation of policies designed to promote women's leadership and political participation remain, however. Kazakhstan's legal and institutional framework for protecting and promoting women's participation has a mixed record. The most developed legal instrument in terms of enforcement is the *Law on Domestic Violence*, which was amended several times. According to statistics, 35,000 administrative offences committed

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[363] Asian Development Bank, "Kazakhstan: Country Gender Assessment" (2006), accessed 12 January 2022, https://www.adb.org/documents/kazakhstan-country-gender-assessment
[364] United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, "The Education for All Development Index" (2012), accessed 12 January 2022, http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/gmr2012-report-edi.pdf

in families are registered per year, with 8,000 arrests.[365] Monitoring of the *Law on Equality* reported that the judicial system lacked capacity to deal with cases of discrimination.[366] In 2015, the first case related to gender-based discrimination in Kazakhstan was addressed by the CEDAW Committee, "Anna Beloussova vs. Kazakhstan." The Committee's decision questioned the capacity of the state party's institutions to act "with due diligence when investigating the author's allegations", and the state's violation of the "obligation to effectively protect the author against gender-based violence."[367] It was emphasised that the judicial system of Kazakhstan failed to deal with cases of sexual harassment and, in general, to "apply gender sensitivity to the examination of the complaints" related to gender-based discrimination.[368] Despite these shortcomings, this is the only case in Kazakhstan up to the present day which raised the issue of gender equality in society, and contributed to the idea that discrimination against sexes can be considered before the courts. The decision of the Committee, however, has not yet been enforced by the local judicial system.[369]

The gender policy of Kazakhstan is reflected in the *Strategy on Gender Equality*. The first document was adopted in 2006, for a ten-year period. The *Strategy* was meant to provide executives with guidance to help them develop concrete action plans to implement gender equality in their respective fields. It contained seven sections devoted to the fields of politics, economics, education, healthcare, domestic violence, equality in family, and gender-sensitive perception in society. Each section was supported by a simplified SWOT analysis and baseline data of each respective area of concern. Indicators and measurements of success, however, do not correspond with the targets and, therefore, are difficult to trace. The section on the political participation of women sets the target of 30% female representation at the decision-making level, by nominating women to positions from the reserve lists, introducing non-discrimination in the corporate ethical code, and by using quotas. The Strategy thus admits that there are institutional barriers towards the participation of women in politics. In practice, however, the state targeted the goal of

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[365] Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, "Gender Policy Delivery in Kazakhstan," 23 October 2017, accessed 12 January 2022, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/gender-policy-delivery-in-kazakhstan_9789264280359-en

[366] Institute for Eurasian Integration, 2013. Monitoring of the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities of Men and women, p. 13

[367] United Nations, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, "Communication No. 45/2012," 13 July 2015, UN Doc CEDAW/C/61/D45/2012, accessed 6 January 2022, https://juris.ohchr.org/Search/Details/2053, 13.

[368] Ibid., 14.

[369] Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and Rule of Law, 2016. Kazakhstan's judicial system supersedes the UN, 26 September 2016, available here https://bureau.kz/novosti/sobstvennaya_informaciya/vyshe_oon_tolko_kazakhstanskii_sud/

raising the capacity of women as politicians. Other targets include training of women, partnership with a variety of actors in addressing gender issues, and the development of party lists based on gender balance.

Gender equality is described as "equal access for women and men to resources and benefits irrespective of their sex."[370] The definition reflects a reduced understanding of the issue compared to the internationally recognised understanding of the term, which is:

> equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women, men, girls and boys. Gender equality is achieved when the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favoured and do not give rise to different consequences that reinforce inequalities.[371]

The definition provided in the *Strategy* includes only one dimension of equality – equal access – without mentioning opportunities and responsibilities, or a culture of equal and non-biased attitudes towards men and women. The limited understanding of gender equality necessarily leads to the narrow scope for measures intended to address gender equality. This fact was also mentioned by the CEDAW Committee's view on the abovementioned case of Anna Beloussova, noting that a state commitment was required "to modify and transform gender stereotypes and eliminate wrongful gender stereotyping, a root cause and a consequence of discrimination against women."[372] The evaluation of the 2006–16 strategy mostly targeted the areas of ending violence against women (EVAW), economic empowerment, gender education, gender expertise, maternal health, and stereotyping.[373] The area of WPP was described as progressive, with high indicators. As the issue of women in political office was included amongst other measures of state feminism, as well as within the legislative framework on gender equality and the capacity of the national women machinery, this particular issue was neglected. As a result, in the recommendations, WPP was not mentioned. Since the next gender policy was designed on

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[370] Presidential administration, Gender Equality Strategy 2006-2016, available at
http://www.akorda.kz/upload/nac_komissiya_po_delam_zhenshin/5.2%20%D0%A1%D0%93%D0%A0%20%D1%80%D1%83%D1%81.pdf
[371] United Nations Women, "Gender Mainstreaming: Concepts and Definitions," accessed 12 January 2022, https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsandefinitions.htm
[372] United Nations, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, "Communication No. 45/2012," 14.
[373] Ilyasova, A., 2016. "Report on Evaluation of the Gender Equality Strategy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2006-16"; Gender Equality Strategy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2006-16, p.44-47

the basis of this evaluation, the area of political participation was not included amongst the priority issues.

The present *Concept of Family and Gender Policy*, endorsed until 2030, provides a major focus on promoting support for families and marriages by linking this aim with the modernisation of human resources. The document separates private and public spheres, in contradiction of feminist principles.[374] By creating a distinction between gender issues in the family and in the public domain, and by giving priority to the policy on family, the document reinforces patriarchal norms and diminishes the achievements of previous decades. The goals of the family policy are formulated in a targeted and concrete manner as "support, strengthening and protection of families, creation of necessary conditions to contribute to physical, intellectual, spiritual and moral development of families and their members, [and] protection of parenthood and childhood."[375] The issues of violence against women (VAW) and reproductive health were included in both parts, as VAW was considered in terms of families and other spheres. Even in the family policy, however, the underlying principles are ambiguous. It is admitted that women have a double burden at work and in the family, but the protection of traditionalism and the moral values of patriarchal families are highlighted within the same paragraph.[376]

In contrast, gender policy goals are vaguely expressed in terms of "achievement of equal rights, obligations and opportunities in all spheres of life, elimination of discrimination based on gender."[377] In particular, this goal does not cover the improvement of the conditions for the achievement of these equal rights and opportunities, which are already enshrined in the national legal framework on gender equality. A rate of 30% of female representation in all power branches is repeated as a task and an outcome, although in the section on achievements, this target was described as closely implemented.

While the constitutionally-backed international instruments provide a robust framework for the protection of women's rights, in practice, the application of national laws does not

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[374] Decree of President of the Rep.of Kazakhstan, 2016. On adoption of the Strategy on Family and Gender Policy until 2030, December 6, 2016, #384. Available here (in Russian) http://egov.kz/cms/ru/law/list/U1600000384

[375] Decree of President of the Rep.of Kazakhstan, 2016. On adoption of the Strategy on Family and Gender Policy until 2030, December 6, 2016, #384. Available here (in Russian) http://egov.kz/cms/ru/law/list/U1600000384.

[376] Decree of President of the Rep.of Kazakhstan, 2016. On adoption of the Strategy on Family and Gender Policy until 2030, December 6, 2016, #384. Available here (in Russian) http://egov.kz/cms/ru/law/list/U1600000384.

[377] Decree of President of the Rep.of Kazakhstan, 2016. On adoption of the Strategy on Family and Gender Policy until 2030, December 6, 2016, #384. Available here (in Russian) http://egov.kz/cms/ru/law/list/U1600000384

necessarily reflect the intent of CEDAW or any other forms of constitutional protection. This is especially the case with regard to issues of discrimination[378] and women's access to justice.[379] The recent trend of greater state involvement in the projects of international organisations addressing gender topics and official gender equality policy confirms the priority of the regime to promote its own vision on women's issues, considered to be limited to the areas of family and demographics. Under the slogan of modernisation,[380] Kazakh society is becoming more patriarchal and promotes traditionalist principles in terms of gender equality. This has a negative effect on feminist attitudes, and the position of women in general. Essentially, this trend repeats the Soviet post-war turn in gender policy, which emphasised the reproductive role of women while, at the same time, promoting a high level of women's involvement in the economy. In that time period, the USSR needed to compensate the losses caused by the war – a critical juncture in the history of the country. In the present day, Kazakhstan needs to revive its national identity. This often takes place through a top-down approach, which allocates roles for women in society.

Gender equality state institution: state feminism

Kazakhstan has a separate national women machinery (NWM) integrated within the executive system. The National Commission of Women and Family Demographic Affairs, as it is now called, was created in 1995 as a response to the global commitment for gender equality made by 189 governments that joined the *Beijing Platform for Action*. Upon establishment, the NWM was called the Council for the Issues of Family, Women, and Demographic Policy, under the supervision of the president. Later, in 1998, it was transformed into the Commission on Family and Women Affairs, and granted broader functions. It was also provided with a consultative and advisory status to develop measures aimed at the improvement of the status of women, children, and families, as well as to

[378] Asian Development Bank, "Kazakhstan: Country Gender Assessment" (2006), p.15. [379] International Commission of Jurists, "Women's Access to Justice in Kazakhstan: Identifying the Obstacles and Need for Change" (2013), accessed 12 January 2022, https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/ICJ-kazakhstan-Women-A2J.pdf

[379] International Commission of Jurists, "Women's Access to Justice in Kazakhstan: Identifying the Obstacles and Need for Change" (2013), accessed 12 January 2022, https://www.icj.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/ICJ-kazakhstan-Women-A2J.pdf

[380] Aigerim Seisembayeva, "President Announces Third Modernisation of Kazakhstan," *Astana Times*, 31 January 2017, accessed 12 January 2022, https://astanatimes.com/2017/01/president-announces-third-modernisation-of-kazakhstan/

create conditions for women's political, economic, social and cultural participation.[381] The quantitative and qualitative membership is defined by the president, [382] and the information, analytical, and administrative issues of the Commission are under the control of the prime minister's office. The sessions of the Commission are conducted not less than once per quarter. In 2006, the president issued a decree which, *inter alia*, stated the intention to change the word "women" to "gender policy" in the title of the Commission.[383]

According to the Commission's regulations, the main tasks are stated as the:

> identification of priority areas in the field of family, women and childhood; development of a series of measures to ensure economic, social, psychological and legal support for the family, women, and children, as well as the facilitation of their implementation; situational analysis in the field of mother and child protection, economic and social status of the family, and health of the people; collection of information about the status of women in society and their political, social, economic and cultural level; expansion of the representation of women in the state management bodies of Kazakhstan.[384]

Despite the inclusion of goals that appear to be feminist in nature, the NWM actually promotes a traditionalist concept of gender roles in society. From the beginning, the national machinery promoted two controversial targets, which can be hardly achieved together: comprehensive women's empowerment—which requires women to spend more time in public—and the enhancement of family traditions—which demands that women stay at home.

As far as its organisation is concerned, the Commission has a vertical structure and is complemented by regional units. The regional branch commissions are under the control of local executives. As a rule, the role of the chairperson of the local commission is assigned to the deputy head of the region, and all of the routine work is conducted by a specialist responsible for social issues. The number of staff members also varies depending on the

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[381] Decree of President of the Rep.of Kazakhstan, December 22, 1998, #4176, with annex "Statement of the National Commission on Women's Affairs"

[382] Presidential administration, National Commission on Women and Family Demographic Affairs, available at http://www.akorda.kz/ru/o-nacionalnoi-komissii

[383] Decree of President of the Rep.of Kazakhstan, February 1, 2006, #56б, 5.1 and 5.4

[384] Decree of President of the Rep.of Kazakhstan, December 22, 1998, #4176, with annex "Statement of the National Commission on Women's Affairs"

region. On occasion, the size of the staff does not correspond to any particular criteria, such as the size of the region, its population, the situation of gender equality in specific areas, and so on. For example, in Mangistau there are four full-time employees, while in Almaty there is only one.[385] In certain cases, these are unpaid positions, and this results in marginal commitment to the work. For example, in the regions of East and North Kazakhstan, this position constitutes extra work for the middle-level civil servants of the local government. The capacity of the focal points in the regions varies greatly. The local government does not allocate funding for gender training, or for capacity development of staff. The only option for staff training is the exchange of information and experience during the meetings of the members of the Commission, which are held twice per year. Finally, in certain regions, there is a high turnover, which hampers efforts towards consistency and equal gender policy implementation. At the same time, the Commission's central body, which supervises the activity of the local commissions, requires the planned activities to be accomplished and reported in a timely manner. Such conditions and the technocratic approach to gender issues create a limited space for specialists to conduct gender programmes in the various regions. The work on gender programmes are transformed into a "tick-the-box" exercise to be accomplished purely for reporting purposes. This was confirmed by the respondents in different regions, who said that "gender work is not a priority task."[386]

It is also important to consider differences in the understanding of gender equality issues peculiar to each region, and their specific characteristics at the level of their implementation. Despite the meetings of the Commission members, there is no clear picture of what is taking place in gender issues in the country, as members themselves have testified.[387] The plan of activities is designed by the central authority and disseminated to the regions, and then tasked with mandatory implementation. Some participants of the evaluation reported that, on occasion, they receive an action plan which has already been implemented and, consequently, they have "to invent something new."[388] This shows a minimal level of interest in carrying out meaningful actions towards gender equality and, thus, a lack of initiative in this type of work.

The establishment of the national machinery by an authoritarian government also serves certain other purposes, as with any other political institution created by restrictive

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[385] Ilyasova, A., 2016. "Report on Evaluation of the Gender Equality Strategy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2006-16"; Gender Equality Strategy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2006-16, p.9
[386] Interview with respondent S (27), MP.
[387] Interview with respondent G (52), MP.
[388] Interview with respondent V (34).

regimes.[389] In the majority of cases, a national women machinery functions as an additional tool of external legitimation, with the purpose of demonstrating a commitment to gender equality to the international community.[390] NWM, however, is not created solely for the purpose of visibility. Melinda Adams, for example, argues that NWMs as a part of an authoritarian institutional structure are used by the regime "to fuel patronage networks" and "to channel autonomous organisations towards state-delineated projects."[391] In this sense, gender policies described as women-friendly by the regime are actually not designed to challenge existing inequalities in power relations – instead, they are designed to maintain them. It can therefore be argued that gender policies can be developed in a way to use women for the purposes of increasing the sustainability and longevity of the regime.

In an analysis of Cameroon's NWM, for example, it has been observed that the Commission managed to create a network of NGOs, which monopolised gender-related activity in the regions to acquire funds from the government (since the Commission itself does not allocate funding as grants). Given the high status of the Commission in Kazakhstan and its integration within the system of local government, such cooperation is attractive for NGOs. Since the majority of the NGOs are run by women, networking via the Commission is one of the very few ways women have to promote themselves. For example, one of the active leaders of a women's organisation in the region of East Kazakhstan won a parliamentary seat in the 2016 elections.[392] This is, however, an exceptional case, rather than the norm. Cooperation with the Commission nevertheless guarantees state funding and access to the officials of the local government. This situation reflects the prerequisites for the functioning of NGOs since the late 2000s, when funding from donors has been significantly reduced and civil society organisations (CSOs) have been put under state control.

Despite its high position in the hierarchy of political institutions in Kazakhstan, the effectiveness of the Commission's work remains limited owing to staff capacity, especially in areas such as reviewing legislation and policies, monitoring the implementation of programmes, and budget. On the contrary, the Commission's place within the executive system and its direct accountability to the president has determined the limited scope of activity of the NWM. This allows the regime not only to exert a tight control over gender

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[389] Wang Zheng, "'State feminism?' Gender and Socialist State Formation in Maoist China," *Feminist Studies* 31/3 (2005): 521. DOI: 10.2307/20459044
[390] Melinda Adams, "'National Machineries' and Authoritarian Politics: The Case of Cameroon," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 9/2 (2007): 176–97.
[391] Ibid.
[392] Interview with respondent U (28), MP.

issues in the country, but also to manipulate and channel its vision on the role of women in different aspects of public and private lives. Thus, the NWM in Kazakhstan works more as a channel to disseminate the regime's vision on gender issues, rather than an agency for gender equality advocacy. In addition, such integration in the executive system is considered as a career promotion and recruitment channel for local female activists.

Women's participation in the economy

The proportion of women participating in the labour market in Kazakhstan in 2015 was 75%,[393] which is higher than the rate recorded in other Central Asian economies. After the demise of the socialist system, economic changes influenced the position of women in the labour market. The structural adjustment programmes affected social policies and, therefore, women found themselves in difficult situations. Women still face greater economic insecurity, and are more vulnerable than men to the threat posed by poverty. The gap is mostly owing to labour segregation, with women overly represented in public sector jobs such as healthcare and education, which also offer the lowest salaries. Men, meanwhile, dominate the higher-paying technical fields, such as natural resources extraction, construction, and industry. During the economic boom and the period of oil price growth, Kazakhstan's GDP increased at 6.6% annually. This positive trend did not affect women, however, because the state invested in infrastructure, construction, and the financial sectors, which have the lowest levels of female representation.[394]

Unemployment levels among women are high. According to the conclusions of the 2014 CEDAW Committee, there is a list of prohibited occupations for women, totalling 299 professions.[395] In 2018, Kazakhstan reduced this list to 219 jobs.[396] Up until recently, for instance, the job position of "public transport driver" was prohibited for women, but without any reasonable grounds. The occupational segregation between women and men in the labour market and the gender pay gap persist, and women are concentrated in low-paid sectors. Women are less active than men in the formal economy, and opportunities for

[393] World Economic Forum, "The Global Gender Gap Report 2015."

[394] Asian Development Bank, "Kazakhstan: Country Gender Assessment," (2013), accessed 12 January 2022, http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/34051/files/kazakhstan-country-gender-assessment.pdf

[395] United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), "Concluding Observations on the Combined 3rd and 4th Periodic Reports of Kazakhstan: Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women," 10 March 2014, UN Doc CEDAW/C/KAZ/CO/3–4, accessed 12 January 2022, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/768415?ln=en. See "Employment," para 28c.

[396] Order #944 of the Ministry of Health care and social development of the Rep. of Kazakhstan, December 8, 2015 on the list of the professions prohibited for women

them still lie mainly in the informal sector or in self-employment, both of which are characterised by lower wages and a lack of unemployment protection and other benefits. Although women are very active in the private sector, the key industries driving Kazakhstan's growth—minerals and oil—have few women in leadership positions, and there are no identified objectives or commitments to encourage women's integration into this field.

Despite an equal involvement of men and women in the economy, the labour market is gender-segregated in terms of both occupation and hierarchy. According to the data provided by the Statistics Agency of the Ministry of National Economy of Kazakhstan on the gendered segregation of the labour market, agriculture has remained the main occupational domain for men since 1994. Other top areas in which men have been involved include construction, transport and communication, trade, logistics, and manufacture, which usually contain highly paid positions. From the early 2000s, certain gender divisions of occupancy in the labour market can be observed.

Traditionally, women are mostly involved in low-paid areas, such as education and healthcare. The education sector was also mentioned in the top five priority areas of men's occupations. Since 1999, however, this is no longer the case as men have moved to more well-paid sectors. This trend is explained by the period of instability which followed the dissolution of the Soviet system, a time that was characterised by a certain level of inertia in the specialisation of the labour market and a lack of development in other economic sectors. At the same time, the agricultural domain has also become the leading female occupational area since 2002. The trend is a consequence of multiple social and economic processes that emerged in the 2000s. First, internal migration flows led to an increase in the number of households run by women, which had to assume the responsibility of breadwinners. Second, gender mainstreaming in the country resulted in wider economic opportunities for women, especially in the area of small enterprises through microcredit.

Nevertheless, even when the pattern of male and female occupation coincides, it does not imply employment in similar positions and thus, similar incomes. For example, even though trade is in the top priority list of occupational sectors of both men and women, as a rule, men occupy leading positions in enterprises or have larger scale business, sometimes connected with crucial economic areas or supported by the state. Although women are highly active entrepreneurs, they predominantly work in small and medium-size businesses and are significantly under-represented in the burgeoning large-scale industries which are the driving force of Kazakhstan's present-day development. Since 2002, women have been

employed in manufacturing and trade. A peculiarity of the segregation of the labour market in Kazakhstan is the presence of multiple domains with potentially high incomes available for men, and more limited job choices for women. This means that men have more opportunities than women to explore new career directions. The list of the 219 professions forbidden for women contributes to this segregation.[397] In 2017, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection announced a reconsideration process of the list of forbidden professions, to include those jobs in metallurgy, construction, and mining engineering which do not require manual activity.[398]

Women are underrepresented in upper managerial positions. The National Welfare Fund "Samruk-Kazyna" owns almost all major companies and contributes 60% of Kazakhstan's GDP.[399] It also includes the energy giant KazMunayGas, the uranium mining company and nuclear agency KazAtomProm, the Kazakhstan Development Bank, the Kazakhstan Electricity Grid Operating Company (KEGOC), the national rail company Kazakhstan TemirZholy, the national air company Air Astana, the commercial fleet Kazmortransflot, the main thermohydraulic power station AES-Ekibastuz, the pharmaceutical holding SK-Pharmaceuticals, the national post office, and numerous other corporations. The average percentage of women in leadership positions in all these companies, i.e., members of Samruk-Kazyna, is 22%. The companies in which women are represented at greater than 30% are Air Astana, KazPost, the United Chemical Company, Samruk-Kazyna Invest, and Kazakhstan Engineering.[400] In these companies, however, women do not hold top managerial positions. Furthermore, these companies are those that generate the least income, and some of them are related to the field of service provision (e.g., Air Astana and KazPost), a traditional area of occupation for women. In companies such as Samruk Contract, Qazaq Air, Airports Aktobe and Pavlodar, KEGOC, and KazAtomProm, there are no female leaders. In the rest of the industrial giants associated with the extraction of natural resources, one can find fewer than 15% of women in leadership positions.

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[397] United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), "Concluding Observations on the Combined 3rd and 4th Periodic Reports of Kazakhstan." See "Employment," para 28c.

[398] Zakon.kz, "In Kazakhstan the List of Forbidden Professions for Women will be Reconsidered," *Zakon.kz*, 13 June 2017, accessed 14 January 2022, https://www.zakon.kz/4863734-v-kazahstane-peresmotryat-spisok.html

[399] Sebastien Peyrouse, 2012. "The Kazakh Neopatrimonial Regime: Balancing Uncertainties Among the 'Family,' Oligarchs, and Technocrats," *Demokratizatsiya* 20/4 (2012): 345.

[400] Statistics Agency, 2016. Men and Women of Kazakhstan, 2012-2016. Ministry of National Economy, Rep.of Kazakhstan, table 8.9 Sex-segregated data on leadership in the national companies and holdings in 2015, p.112-3

Gender segregation in the labour market has a direct impact on the gender wage gap, which remains at a level similar to that recorded in Soviet times, at around 66–68%.[401] There is no data available for the gender wage gap before 2000. It is possible, however, to trace the dynamic of changes in the percentage of the gender gap and the areas which have experienced the highest and lowest gaps. The general trend shows a steady positive change in closing the gap up to 2012, followed by a regression afterwards. For example, in 2000, the gap was 61%, reaching 70% in 2012, and then growing again to 66% in 2015. Besides the official data, there are similar studies conducted by private research institutions. Interestingly, according to one of these studies, the wage gap in 2016 was 86%, a percentage which differs significantly from the government data.[402] The difference is even more questionable since, as a rule, official data tend to embellish the real situation.

The occupational sectors with the highest difference in salaries between men and women have changed in the course of the 15-year period since 2000. For almost a decade, the highest gap was observed in hotel and catering services, ranging from 49% (2002) to 65% (2014); the financial sector recorded an average of 63%; whereas the community, social, and individual service provision sectors came in at 63%. These three areas, except for hotel and catering services, remained among the top areas with the largest difference in salaries throughout the period between 2000 and 2009. Starting in 2010, the situation changed when academia and science, together with the areas of art and entertainment, became new sectors with a wide wage gap (around 55%). According to recent data, the gap has slightly improved in academic positions, reaching 60%, and has dropped in the area of art and in entertainment (49%). This gap is explained by the high rates of women's employment in educational institutions. In agriculture, where the share of men and women has been equal, women tended to occupy non-mechanised positions, whereas men worked with machines.

Female employees receive a payment more equal to men's salaries in education (92% in average), healthcare (90%), IT companies (91%), and the real estate sector (87%). The difference between the sectors of education and academia is that education is mostly related to positions in the mandatory educational system (i.e., at schools and colleges), whereas academia mostly includes higher-ranked positions in the academy of science or national research institutions. In certain types of organisations, such as international offices (110% on average) and administrative positions (105%), the salaries of women even

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[401] Lafont, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," 206.

[402] Ranking.kz, 2017. Women are less employed and paid. Female's unemployment rate is 5.5% vs 4.4% of male's one; the gender wage gap is up to 42%, published 21 April 2017, available here http://ranking.kz/ru/a/infopovody/zhenshin-huzhe-berut-na-rabotu-i-menshe-platyat-uroven-bezraboticy-zhenshin-55-protiv-44-dlya-muzhchin-raznica-v-zarplatah-dohodit-do-42

exceed those of men. The latter situation is explained by western corporate culture and higher pay transparency, as well as a commitment to gender equality principles. However, the situation of the wage gap in international organisations has been different in the past—for instance, in 2002, the wage gap in this sector amounted to 78%. According to the data of private research institutes, in 2016, the lowest wage gap was observed in the textile, furniture, trailer and track production as well as the meat packaging sectors.[403]

The situation of women in academia in post-Soviet societies is unclear. On the one hand, graduate and post-graduate programme enrolment among girls is higher than among boys. For instance, in the 2015/16 academic year, primary school enrolment was almost equal. At the level of the bachelor's degree, however, the difference became more visible, with 56% of enrolment comprising female students. Doctoral studies were pursued by 61% of females.[404] Within the age range of 20–54, women constitute the highest number of PhD holders.[405] The Soviet system of academic degrees consisted of a PhD and Doctor of Science, and it is still used by most of the post-Soviet universities today. A gradual transition to western academic standards has started, however. At the level of Doctor of Science degrees, men prevail in all regions. There is no clear pattern in the regions which are more likely to have a wider gap between the proportion of male and female holders of Doctor of Science degrees. For instance, the highest gap appears in the Kzylorda (agricultural), Akmola, and Kostanai (northern) regions—17%, 23%, and 24%, respectively. Also, the South Kazakhstan, Almaty regions (agricultural), Aktobe, West Kazakhstan, and Mangistau (oil regions) have only 30% of women in this category. A similar situation is found in the allocation of academic positions, i.e., at the ranks of Professor and Associate Professor. Though the gender difference at the level of Associate Professor is not so wide as at the level of PhD holders, women still prevail. However, in most of the regions men dominate to a greater extent at the level of the Professorship . In certain regions, such as Akmola and Zhambyl, there are only 17% and 8% of women among university professors respectively. Grades and academic degrees influence the salary scale.

[403]Ranking.kz, 2017. Women are less employed and paid. Female's unemployment rate is 5.5% vs 4.4% of male's one; the gender wage gap is up to 42%, published 21 April 2017, available here http://ranking.kz/ru/a/infopovody/zhenshin-huzhe-berut-na-rabotu-i-menshe-platyat-uroven-bezraboticy-zhenshin-55-protiv-44-dlya-muzhchin-raznica-v-zarplatah-dohodit-do-42

[404]Statistics Agency, 2016. Men and Women of Kazakhstan, 2012-2016. Ministry of National Economy, Rep.of Kazakhstan, p.69

[405]Statistics Agency, 2016. Men and Women of Kazakhstan, 2012-2016. Ministry of National Economy, Rep.of Kazakhstan, p.72

Labour segregation starts at the education level. If we examine the gendered aspects related to the selection of the subjects, it can be observed that half of female college students are in medicine and pedagogy. Around 20% of women study economics, customer service, and management. Compared to these findings, 40% of male college students are in the departments of installation, operation and maintenance, telecommunication and IT, and transport. At the university level, the situation is slightly different. The majority of female students choose pedagogy as their primary degree programme (32%), which is in line with traditional women's choices. However, 22% of women study business, management, and law. Surprisingly, almost an equal proportion of female graduate students study medicine, engineering, manufacturing, and construction (11%).[406] Apparently, more men chose engineering as their major (28%) as well as business and law (26%) at university. The education department includes 16% male students.

This situation is also related to performance rates: girls do better in terms of grades at both school and university. In addition, a position in an academic institution was (and in some post-Soviet countries is still) considered to be the most appropriate occupation for women. The reason is the flexibility of working hours and as a result, the opportunity for female staff members to combine household and work responsibilities successfully. Women, however, are not well represented at the decision-making level. A vertical segregation exists: the higher the level of the educational institution, the lower the number of women in leadership positions. Women predominantly occupy leadership roles in primary and secondary schools, and are less represented at the collegiate level. Moreover, there is almost no woman holding the position of university dean. A similar situation is recorded within particular institutions. For instance, in a study of the gendered aspect of academic professions in Tajikistan, Zumrad Kataeva and Alan Deyoung found that even if promoted to leadership positions, these positions are usually related to student life, instead of "administrative and research positions with real power or influence",[407] with a corresponding impact on the salary scale.[408]

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[406] Ibid, p.70

[407] Zumrad Kataeva and Alan J. Deyoung, "Gender and the Academic Profession in Contemporary Tajikistan: Challenges and Opportunities Expressed by Women Who Remain," *Central Asian Survey* 36/5 (2017): 255. DOI: 10.1080/02634937.2017.1287663

[408] Juan Antonio Campos-Soria, Andrés Marchante-Mera, and Miguel Angel Ropero-Garciá, "Patterns of Occupational Segregation by Gender in the Hospitality Industry," *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 30/1 (2011): 91–102. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijhm.2010.07.001

Gender and society

As mentioned earlier, one of the factors which have shaped the position of women in post-Soviet Kazakhstan is the "re-traditionalisation" of society, as part of a nationalist agenda.[409] Despite proclaiming a secular state, Islam is gaining its space in Kazakh culture as part of a national identity.[410] Gender relations are being reconsidered from an Islamic perspective, and national histories and traditions are being revived, with patriarchal authority as the cornerstone of traditional society.[411] Women in Kazakhstan are considered through the lens of their family role and their reproductive function. Such a view has become dominant in recent times—especially since the late Soviet period under Gorbachev's rule—and it is strongly supported and implemented by the national women machinery. The main function of women is considered to be that which is primarily related to the private sphere: raising children, keeping the household and traditions, and caring for those in need. The hegemonic discourse on the role of women in society clearly rejects feminist ideas, which are thought to have a negative and destructive effect on the traditional values of Kazakh society. This discourse prioritises family issues, in which the role of women is emphasised. As mentioned in the journal published by the NWM on the eve of International Women's Day in 2015, "the feminist roots of this holiday have faded away a long time ago and now only spring scents of this holiday remain."[412] Apart from the annual competitions for mothers with many children, which enhance the idea that raising children is the sole responsibility of women, the NWM popularises family values through a nation-wide competition. In 2013, a new competition was announced called Mereyli Otbasy ("Happy Family"), as part of the state's policy on strengthening family values. The aim of the competition is "to revive moral values and cultivate a positive image of family and marriage, to increase the status of family."[413] Each region has its own winners, among which are usually families with many children, sometimes several generations living together; professional dynasties related to key areas of the national economy, including oil and gas, livestock breeding, mining, energy, and engineering; the winners of national awards; interethnic families; and male representatives who have

[409] Gal and Kligman, *The Politics of Gender*; Julietter Cleuziou and Lucia Direnberger, "Gender and Nation in Post-Soviet Central Asia: From National Narratives to Women's Practices," *Nationalities Papers* 44/2 (2018): 195–206. DOI: 10.1080/00905992.2015.1082997

[410] Cynthia Werner, "Bride Abduction in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Marking a Shift Towards Patriarchy Through Local Discourses of Shame and Tradition," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15/2 (2009): 314–31.

[411] Kandiyoti, "The Politics of Gender and the Soviet Paradox."

[412] *Women's Journal*, 2015. Issued by the Commission for Women and Family demographic Affairs

[413] Decision of Government on "Endorsement of Rules of the Mereyli Otbasy Competition", March 5, 2014, #181

contributed to the development of the country.[414] In most cases, women hold the position of housekeepers, especially in the case of multigenerational residences and a high number of children. As a contrast, UN Women tried to introduce a new topic into the discourse on women's role in society by launching a campaign on women who gained success in traditionally male dominated roles, such as engineers of the subway system[415], the first female pilots[416], women in military units, law enforcement, bomb technicians, and scientists.[417] This "other" side of women, however, glorified the capacity of women to perform traditionally male jobs, but it did not question the position of women in society and the double burden they carried that was engendered by Soviet gender policies.

The mass media in Kazakhstan generally follows the official discourse. For example, in 2014, local media produced 2,481 content items on gender-related topics, with a peak in March due to International Women's Day. As a rule, this is the only period of the year when women are portrayed as independent social actors, mostly highlighting the achievements of women in professional areas. In the majority of cases, however, the media cultivates stereotypes about the role of women, presenting them in conjunction with male figures and as dependent on the support of fathers, brothers, and husbands.[418] This conveys the idea that a woman can only achieve results in her professional life if she relies on family support. The magazine published by the NWM, "Family", also promotes this idea in every section. For example, in the foreword of the chief editor of the magazine, it is stated:

> If you ask a woman "What is the formula of your success?", I am sure that ten out of ten women will say—my family. Great actions start within the family, the basis of future victories of all members is in the family, and only families support each

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[414] Strategy2050, Families – winners of Mereyli Otbasy Competition, September 18, 2018. Available at https://strategy2050.kz/ru/news/13177

[415] United Nations Women, "The Beijing Platform for Action Turns 20: Breaking New Ground, She Rides Ahead," 31 August 2014, accessed 12 January 2022, http://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2014/8/woa-kazakhstan-gulzhan-kokbayeva.

[416] United Nations Women, "The Beijing Platform for Action Turns 20: Forging a New Path, She Flies High," 19 May 2014, accessed 12 January 2022, https://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2014/5/woa-kazakhstan-yevgeniya-goncharova.

[417] United Nations Women, "The Beijing Platform for Action Turns 20: Saving Lives Through Scientific Research," 1 April 2015, accessed 12 January 2022, https://beijing20.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2015/4/woa-kyrgyzstan-asel-sartbaeva

[418] Ilyasova, A., 2016. "Report on Evaluation of the Gender Equality Strategy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2006-16", Gender Equality Strategy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2006-16, p.28-29

of us. That is why the formula of a successful woman is not her personal fulfilment as a professional, but as a woman, mother, and wife.[419]

In general, the content of the magazine consists of psychological advice on how to build a happy family and relationship, health issues, historical and cultural topics, the importance of women, and sexist information. The latter includes titbits such as "15 wonderful facts about women": "a woman can keep a secret for an average of about 47 hours and 15 min"; or, "on average a woman spends one year thinking about what to wear."[420]

Certain gender-related issues are recognised and open for discussion and action—for example, domestic violence. The arguments about ending domestic violence against women rest on traditionalist perspectives that women are mothers and have to take care of the family, rather than on principles of equality, i.e., why women should not be beaten. Such an approach is in line with the state gender policy and, therefore, is supported and developed at all levels. One of the arguments in favour of this idea is that more sensitive issues of violence which go beyond the private sphere, for example, sexual harassment (SH), is being silenced—even by international organisations. For example, the UN Women office conducted a study on the prevalence of SH in Kazakhstan, but it has never released it owing to the public accusations of harassment against the minister of culture. The problem is that from the very beginning, when gender mainstreaming was introduced in Kazakhstan, gender equality was not understood through the lens of feminist ideas, but rather in terms of equal opportunities for women. This understanding of gender equality was convenient, because it did not contradict the policies of the Soviet period.

Women's organisations in Kazakhstan

Women's leadership is most prominent in the non-governmental sector. According to some estimates, women account for 85% of the leadership of CSOs.[421]. CSOs have grown exponentially in the last 20 years with more than 4,500 NGOs established since

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[419]Otbasym magazine, Foreword of the chief editor of the Otbasym Magazine, a secretary of the National Commission on Women and Family Demographic Affairs of the Rep.of Kazakhstan, Available at http://otbasym.kz/news/mereili-otbasy/2017-11-13/formula-uspeshnyh-i-schastlivyh-zhenshchin

[420]Otbasym magazine, Fifteen amazing facts about women, November 1, 2017, available at http://otbasym.kz/news/biblioteka/2017-11-01/15-udivitelnyh-faktov-o-zhenshchinah

[421] Asian Development Bank, "Kazakhstan: Country Gender Assessment" (2006).

independence, of which over 150 specifically address women's issues.[422] Popular awareness of the existence of these organisations and of their mission remains very low. Even though the presence of a women's movement is not a prerequisite for an increase in the level of women's political representation (since during the transitional period, power was more likely to be allocated among institutionalised parties rather than among movements),[423] considering these organisations in Kazakhstan as a women's movement constitutes a questionable argument. In this regard, it is worth recalling that, in Kazakh society, women's organisations possess a sporadic and inconsistent character and exert only a small influence on policy-making.[424] To be a social movement, a women's movement needs organised and consolidated civil actions to advocate for gender equality. In Kazakhstan, as in other post-Soviet states, where there is a dearth of experience in civil and political rights advocacy, and with no record of women's movements, women's organisations can hardly be called a movement.

In 2002, Khassanova, one of the few researchers on gender politics in Kazakhstan and then the director of the Gender Bureau,[425] defined three stages of the development of women's organisations in Kazakhstan. The first stage started just after the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991–95), and did not envisage any radical changes in gender policy, as it was characterised by an automatic continuation of the course of action and principles formulated during the Soviet period. The focus was cast on motherhood, childhood, and family values. This was the period during which many women's organisations and movements emerged. These organisations concentrated their actions on reproductive health issues, although they also dealt with new areas of intervention, such as women's economic empowerment and women's participation in private businesses, one of the aspects of the liberal economy.

The second stage (1995–98) was the period of qualitative transformation of the women's movement in Kazakhstan. Khassanova explains this dynamic by linking it to the intensification of the activities of women's organisations around the world, and to the advancement of a gender agenda at a new level, as reflected in the Fourth World

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[422] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2005. *Gender Equality and Status of Women in Kazakhstan*. Almaty.

[423] Kathleen M. Fallon, Liam Swiss, and Jocelyn Viterna, "Resolving the Democracy Paradox: Democratization and Women's Legislative Representation in Developing Nations, 1975 to 2009," *American Sociological Review* 77/3 (2012): 380–408. DOI: 10.1177/0003122412443365

[424] A. Alimzhanova "Feminism and symbolic-mental description of Kazakh women," *Central Asian Journal of Art Studies*, 4/1 (2019: 7–17.

[425] Office for gender programmes, which functioned before the establishment of the UNIFEM office in Kazakhstan.

Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, and in the signing of the *Beijing Platform for Action*, which placed the responsibility for securing women's rights and the promotion of gender equality on national governments. At that time, gender issues started to be recognised by the state, leading to the beginning of their institutionalisation. It can also be added that the political development of the newly established country of Kazakhstan was at its nascent stage, and this permitted a certain degree of liberty. The third stage lasted between 1998 until 2002, and encouraged women to enter the political arena through the formation of political parties and associations, as well as the training of women as political actors. The national women machinery gained more importance when it was transferred to direct control of the president.[426] As discussed in the section on NWM, however, the Commission has been gradually losing its significance as an agency for gender equality issues.

In 1994, six women's NGOs were registered, among which two were positioned as feminist organisations—the Feminist League, and the Union of Women of Kazakhstan. Other organisations included: the Akmola Committee of Mothers of Soldiers, the League of Muslim Women, the Union of Women with Large Families, and the Kazakhstan Association of Women with Disabilities. In three years, the number of women's NGOs amounted to 30, and in 2003 they totalled 200 units. Among the reasons why NGOs were predominantly led by women, scholars identify the exclusion of women from formal politics, women's interest in social issues, their desire to avoid the corruptive political sphere, and better language and networking skills.[427] Most of today's heads of women's organisations have joined CSOs from a variety of occupations, loosely related to the gender or the social sectors. For example, the head of the Feminist League, one of the oldest women's NGOs and the only women's NGO accredited at international discussion platforms on gender equality issues, is led by Evgeniya Kozyreva, who is a painter. While explaining the reasons for creating the Feminist League, she mentioned that by working for "Malvina", a journal for teen girls which she illustrated together with her husband, she had to respond to messages coming from readers. In these letters, young female readers complained about a gender-based division of subjects at schools and stereotyped unequal

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[426] Khassanova, G., 2002., Chapter "Women's movement in Kazakhstan as a subject of political processes". *Women in Democratic Institutions in Kazakhstan*, available online http://www.policy.hu/khassanova/
[427] Ishkanian, "VI. Gendered Transitions,"489.

attitudes towards girls, i.e., math teachers support boys, girls are encouraged or forced to choose subjects on housekeeping, and so on.[428]

Since the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, women intensified their activities. By raising the issue of inequality of access to different spheres of public life, they started to talk about discrimination and exert pressure on the government to take urgent measures. The creation of new women's NGOs, greater training for women, the establishment of the Gender in Development Bureau as well as the stable and large-scale funding of gender-related programmes—all were effective actions in pushing the gender agenda into politics in Kazakhstan. It is important to note that the gender agenda was reflected not only in the area of programme implementation, but also in the field of research. Centres on gender studies and research appeared in Kazakhstan at that time. Gender was discussed in academia, and PhD theses on the subject were defended, even though the attempt to institutionalise gender by introducing it as a relevant topic in the curriculum was unsuccessful. A module on gender in the Almaty State University lasted only one semester in 1999. Academic research on gender issues and feminism, however, was separate from NGO activity. This gap later became rather significant, and it was visible in the approaches to gender issues. Whereas academia tried to analyse the role of women and their position in society from western feminist perspectives, women's NGOs now act as channels for state gender policies.

Another typical feature of post-Soviet women's organisations is their personalised nature, which does not contribute to the formation of an organised movement. Individuals working in these NGOs were perceived as activists and agents in their respective countries, and "as implementers of development policies on behalf of international organisations and donors."[429] When it comes to women's NGOs in Kazakhstan, therefore, personalities matter more than the organisation itself. In this regard, the women's movement was substituted by the people, who called themselves professional feminists or gender experts. For example, when it comes to feminism in Kazakhstan, the first name that is mentioned is Evgeniya Kozyreva (the Feminist League); in the field of domestic violence, it is Nadezhda Gladyr (the Crisis Centre Podrugi) or Zulfiya Baisakova (the Union of Crisis Centres). A similar dynamic is observed in other post-Soviet societies. There was a small number of elite gender experts who worked with the government on particular issues to

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[428] E. Salagdinova, "Women's movement of Kazakhstan: 10 years of history," *Caravan*, 11 November 2003, accessed 14 January 2022, http://articles.caravan.kz/articles/zhenskoe-dvizhenie-kazakhstana-desyat-let-istorii-articleID36590.html

[429] Joanna Pares Hoare, "Doing Gender Activism in a Donor-Organised Framework: Constraints and Opportunities in Kyrgyzstan," *Nationalities Papers* 44/2 (2016): 287.7

develop women-friendly policies and programmes. In fact, owing to the weak post-Soviet levels of civil engagement and citizenship, these experts contributed to the state version of feminism which was inefficient and even "counterproductive to feminism."[430] In addition to this, women's organisations are in competition with each other for donor funding and, with time, certain NGOs have established long-term outsourcing cooperation programmes, becoming "pocket" NGOs. The struggle for funding contributed to the perception of NGOs as businesses, rather than as organisations committed to civic activity.

In 2016, the Ministry of Religious and Civil Society was created in order to control the spread of religious extremism through civil society organisations. Although the purpose seems to be reasonable, control was exerted over all CSOs, and additional limits to their activities were enforced by banning direct funding from external sources. According to the law, all funds coming from international donors have to be transferred to the account of the Ministry, which will then review the project document; if the review reveals that there is no threat to the stability and security of the country, funds will be transferred to the NGO's account. This measure came close to blocking external funding, and ensured that only state gender policies were implemented. By and large, the development of women's organisations in Kazakhstan coincides with the pattern of regime consolidation, and the adoption of a series of measures aimed at reducing alternative voices. These also comprised restrictions imposed on civil society, and on freedom of association. The relative freedom of independent mass media of the early period was suppressed by the introduction of restrictive rules by the end of the 1990s.[431] The gap between the political conditions and advocacy of human rights also contributed to the weakness of civil society in Kazakhstan from its early formation, and to a low level of resistance by civil society activists against the restrictions imposed by the regime, which have proven effective in their purpose.[432] As the famous Kazakh human rights advocate Evgeny Zhovtis notes, the legislature does not give any importance to the issues of personal freedom and rights, and this contributes to the marginalisation of CSOs in the country.

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[430] Alexandra Hrycak and Maria G. Rewakowicz, "Feminism, Intellectuals, and the Formation of Micro-Publics in Postcommunist Ukraine," *Studies in East European Thought* 61/4 (2009): 321.

[431] Evgeny A. Zhovtis, "Freedom of Association and the Question of Its Realization in Kazakhstan," in *Civil Society in Central Asia*, eds. M. Holt Ruffin and David C. Waugh (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999), 60.

[432] Tamara Nezhina and Aigerim R. Ibrayeva, "Explaining the Role of Culture and Traditions in Functioning of Civil Society Organizations in Kazakhstan," *International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 24/2 (2012): 335–58. DOI: 10.1007/s11266-011-9256-7

Conclusion

As described in the contextual section on the gender regime in Kazakhstan, the current framework is still affected by Soviet gender policies, as well as by achievements in the economic and educational areas. These achievements secure higher ratings in international assessments of gender equality. The actual quality of women's participation in the economy is low, however, with clear occupational segregation and wage gaps that present in different ways, depending on the region. Women's organisations in Kazakhstan have failed to organise their efforts into a movement which could influence the government's policy agenda. The majority of women's NGOs deals with traditional women's interests, and are thus focused on reproductive health, the improvement of healthcare services for pregnant women, and the welfare of the family. The latter is gaining a great deal of space in public discourse, and is included in the main development policies. This trend confirms the arguments of the literature on post-socialist ideology and gender relations.[433] Feminist ideas in post-communist states did not achieve recognition in post-communist societies and, to some extent, they even faced hostility.[434] In general, the state gradually monopolised gender policy in the country and prioritised issues, such as domestic violence, that do not undermine its positions.

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[433] Diane M. Duffy, "Social Identity and Its Influence on Women's Roles in East-Central Europe," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 2/2 (2000): 214–43. DOI: 10.1080/14616740050137447; Barbara Einhorn and Charlotte Sever, "Gender and Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 5/2 (2003): 163–90. DOI: 10.1080/1461674032000080558
[434] Lafont, "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back."

Chapter VI. How women come to politics

As discussed in the previous chapters, the social position of women in Kazakhstan is not conducive for the meaningful participation of women in politics. The following three chapters present the findings of the desk review and interviews, responding to the overall research question (which is…) and three sub- questions of the study. These are:

- How women compete for political office in post-Soviet authoritarian regimes?
- How descriptive and substantive representation changes in the authoritarian parliament? Specifically, how women politicians act as political representatives in legislature and in the capacity of representing gender equality issues and women's interests?
- How political office (elected positions) impacts their political and/or professional career after term?

The notion of candidate's political ambition is based on the rational choice paradigm, which implies "a strategic response to a political opportunity structure."[435] It says that a candidate's decision to run for political office depends on a weighted calculation of costs, risks, and benefits related to the office. Furthermore, political context and gender are important factors that influence rational choice. The evolution of political ambition is impacted by political culture, including the legacy and the level of women's political participation, citizenship, and trust in the political regime and its institutions.[436] Owing to the effects of the Soviet legacy of repression, post-communist citizens have little "experience in teasing out the personal implications of particular policy choices."[437] General passivity and a feeling of helplessness in changing policies combine to restrain citizens from pursuing an active role in claiming their rights. Studies which have examined the impact of the gender factor on the development of political ambition found out that women and men consider factors such as family obligations, political opportunity, and

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[435] Joseph A. Schlesinger, *Ambition and Politics: Political careers in the United States* (New York: Rand McNally, 1966).

[436] Sarah A. Fulton, Cherie D. Maestas, L. Sandy Maisel, and Walter J. Stone, "The Sense of a Woman: Gender, Ambition, and the Decision to Run for Congress," *Political Research Quarterly* 59/2 (2006): 235–48. DOI: 10.1177/106591290605900206; Richard L. Fox and Jennifer L. Lawless, "To Run or Not to Run for Office: Explaining Nascent Political Ambition," *American Journal of Political Science* 49/3 (2005): 642–59. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-5907.2005.0014.x; Richard L. Fox and Jennifer L. Lawless, "Entering the Arena? Gender and the Decision to Run for Office," *American Journal of Political Science* 48/2 (2004): 264–80. DOI: 10.1111/j.0092-5853.2004.00069.x

[437] Barnes, "The Changing Political Participation of Postcommunist Citizens"; Bielasiak and Blunck, "Past and Present in Transitional Voting."

career promotion from different perspectives. Carroll and Sanbonmatsu argued that women are more likely to emerge as candidates when they are either encouraged or given an offer by decision-making political actors.[438]

By analysing women's reluctance through the lens of the theory of nascent political ambition, it can be argued that women have no interest in nurturing prior political ambitions and running for elections. This indifference is observed even in those cases where women occupy prominent positions in their respective professional areas, and when an individual's potential decision to run for office is supported by her household members. According to a common assumption, citizens with active civil positions are more likely "to emerge as candidates."[439] In the context of authoritarian regimes, however, the opposite occurs. Under restrictive political conditions, active citizens are less likely to gain support and be elected as political representatives.

This chapter discusses the pathways of women to political office. It is based on the findings of the interviews that I conducted between 2016 and 2017 in the regions of Kazakhstan. These interviews addressed a broad range of female politicians, including former office holders at both national and local levels, and those who stood unsuccessfully for elections either as independent candidates or with an affiliation to a particular political party. The chapter starts by discussing the approach of international organisations and the state to the issue of women's underrepresentation in politics, and the manner in which they are addressing it. The discussion further provides the perspective of women on these measures. In this context, it is important to highlight the motivation and reasoning of women behind decisions to run for office, their experience of participating in election campaigns, and, especially, interaction with political parties. Discussing the first-hand experience of women with state policy on women's political participation allows us to pinpoint the discrepancies in the state's approach, demonstrating that the state is not particularly interested in advancing women as political actors.

International norms and women's political recruitment

The political participation of women, as well as numerous aspects of gender equality and women's empowerment, are certainly influenced by global gender mainstreaming (GM),

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[438] Susan J. Carroll and Kira Sanbonmatsu, *More Women Can Run: Gender and Pathways to the State Legislatures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199322428.001.0001
[439] Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox, *It Still Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 46.

which was announced as a strategy to accelerate the achievement of gender equality at the Beijing World Conference on Women in 1995. GM essentially means that the gender component should be present in all activities of international institutions, such as "policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation and planning, [and] implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects."[440] The criticism raised later by international institutions concerned the technical approach to GM, and its adoption as a goal, rather than as a tool. This was reflected in a focus on a quantitative approach to measure GM success, including the WPP domain. Therefore, while one of the global indicators of the level of WPP is the number of women in decision-making institutions, the quality of the gender-related policies themselves are neglected. The goal of the majority of the international institutions committed to improving WPP levels is thus to bring more women into political offices, in order to achieve a critical mass.

Kazakhstan hosts the offices of a wide range of international donors, even though their number has decreased gradually compared to the situation in the late 1990s and 2000s. Gender programmes are usually part of the agenda of these organisations. Among the most important actors in the field of WPP in Kazakhstan are UN Women, OSCE, and UNDP. Contrary to the approach adopted by the state, international organisations (IOs) emphasise the role played by institutional constraints on the achievement of equality in political participation and representation. The role of IOs in promoting gender equality issues is often unclear. This is owing to the UNDP, which implements gender-related projects under the supervision and/or participation of the state; the state's share in funding development programmes in the country has been rising since early the 2010s, when the country was moved to the list of middle-income countries according to the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC).[441] In a 2009 baseline report, the key barriers to "women and politics" were identified by UNDP as a lack of knowledge about political activity by women, along with social stereotypes, which do not encourage women to run for office.[442] At the same time, in 2013, UNDP launched a two-year programme on the spiritual and moral development of Kazakh society, which promoted the principles of gender equality among younger generations as part of a comprehensive process of national modernisation. Specifically, the project contained two non-complementary priorities: to "advocate for

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[440] United Nations Women, "Gender Mainstreaming."

[441] Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, "DAC List of ODA Recipients," accessed 12 January 2022, https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/daclist.htm

[442] United Nations Development Program, "Baseline Study on Gender Equality in the Republic of Kazakhstan," 13 June 2013, accessed 12 January 2022, https://www.kz.undp.org/content/kazakhstan/en/home/library/democratic_governance/baseline-study-on-gender-equality-in-the-republic-of-kazakhstan.html, 1.

family values and marriage to form a positive image of Kazakhstani family" and "to increase the percentage of women in decision-making by 20%."[443] The reason behind these duelling endpoints of the project might be the result of an attempt to reconcile the state gender agenda with western feminist ideas.

Another key actor in WPP promotion in Kazakhstan, the OSCE Centre in Astana, focuses on institutional barriers, including those within political parties,[444], and is based on the election system typical of most of the OSCE member countries. A six-step action plan released in 2012 by OSCE identified certain areas "which can contribute towards the attainment of gender equality in elected office."[445] This plan includes guaranteed constitutional rights; proportional representation with a large district magnitude electoral system; legal quotas for female members and candidates; a more transparent party nomination and recruitment procedure; capacity development of women candidates by parties, mass media and NGOs; and parliamentary reform to make the parliament more gender-equal as an institution. Although the guide admits that there is no "one-size-fits-all" formula, and the choice of measures should be selected depending on the political conditions of a particular country, it fails to address the specific political context of post-Soviet authoritarian regimes. These regimes have all the prerequisites for greater WPP in place, including legal guarantees, an institutional framework, and political institutions. The OSCE plan does not, however, consider contexts where all of the apparently democratic political institutions are principally designed to maintain the regime. This presents a dynamic that affects political recruitment and the definition of the candidates' requirements.

In practice, the implementation of these principles was reduced to the training of women and, to a lesser extent, of political party officials. The content of the training was purely based on the experience of candidates and parties in western developed democracies, such as the UK and the Scandinavian states—states that largely support the gender agenda within IOs. The training included strategies of self-promotion in the party, advocacy for change and mobilisation of support, electoral campaigning, and financial issues.[446] In the part concerning career development within the party, for instance, it is recommended that

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[443] UNDP Kazakhstan, 2013.

[444] Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, "OSCE/ODIHR Promotes Increased Women's Political Participation in Kazakhstan," 22 November 2012, accessed 12 January 2022, https://www.osce.org/odihr/97408

[445] Pippa Norris and Mona Lena Krook, *Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan* (Vienna: Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, 2012); *idem*, "Beyond Quotas: Strategies to Promote Gender Equality in Elected Office," *Political Studies* 62 (2014): 6.

[446] OSCE, 2012. A round table "Increasing Participation of Women in Political Parties in Kazakhstan, Round table, 22 November 2012, Kazakhstan

women explore the programme or manifesto of the party to identify the area to which they could most contribute. The recorded experiences of female candidates and parliamentarians suggest, however, that these strategies have limited practical value. These women have described highly organised election campaigns, the establishment of talking points for each candidate, the allocation of membership within the parliament in areas quite different from the field of expertise and the professional background of the parliamentarians in question. None of the female politicians who participated in the interview process mentioned this training from a practical point of view, although they did point out that the certificate from a recognisable IO proved favourable to their CVs.[447]

The key player in the area of gender equality, based on its primary mandate, is UN Women, the UN agency for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Kazakhstan hosted a subregional office of UN Women, representing operations in all post-Soviet countries between 1999 and 2011, after which the gradual process of decentralisation began. As a result, since 2016, UN Women in Kazakhstan has functioned as a country office. By acknowledging the existence of "cultural and attitudinal barriers" for WPP, UN Women places a greater focus on institutional and structural constraints as the main cause for the under-representation of women in political institutions.[448] In its flagship programme on WPP, UN Women highlights numerous barriers, such as the election system, political parties, access to financial resources, and the biased coverage of female candidates by mass media. In its programmes on the political leadership of women, UN Women employs a variety of approaches, including capacity-building training for female political candidates, civic awareness campaigns, cooperation with political parties, governments and civil society, as well as advocacy for legislative access for women to the political sphere as "voters, candidates, elected officials and civil service members."[449]

In Kazakhstan, UN Women's actions are based on an analysis which identifies the primary impediments to women's political participation in Kazakhstan in the electoral system, and in the reluctance of political institutions to involve women. The CEDAW Committee Concluding Observations (March 2014) on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Kazakhstan include concerns about women's underrepresentation in legislative bodies, as well as in leadership positions in political parties, in the public service, and in the

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[447] Interview with Aigul Solovieva, Meruert Kazybekova, August 2016.
[448] United Nations Women, "Women's Political Empowerment and Leadership," accessed 12 January 2022, https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2016/FPI%20Brief-Leadership_v4%20interactive.pdf
[449] United Nations Women, "Women's Leadership and Political Participation," accessed 12 January 2022, http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation

diplomatic service, especially at the decision-making level. Given the lack of voluntary or obligatory quotas envisaged by electoral legislation, the Committee urged that the state should "consider using temporary special measures…as a necessary strategy to accelerate the achievement of substantive equality of women and men in all areas of the Convention where women are underrepresented."[450]

According to a brief assessment of WPP in Kazakhstan conducted in 2014, the primary legal impediment to women's political participation relates to the electoral system. Specifically, the UN Women mission expressed concern about its closed-list nature and the system of ranging candidates in alphabetical order, affecting their likelihood of being elected. Winning candidates are selected at the parties' discretion after the vote count is completed, regardless of the order in which their names appeared on the list. Therefore, many of the benefits traditionally associated with the closed-list PR system are lost. Instead of simply reflecting the number of votes received, both women's and men's appointments to office depend entirely on the choice of political parties, which have no gender platform in their programmes. Because of the structure of its closed-list system, Kazakhstan's options for implementing such temporary special measures are limited to imposing a candidate party-list requirement on political parties, rather than at the nomination and selection level. While such a measure could be effective in increasing the percentage of women in office, it would maintain women's dependence on male party leaders to be selected rather than empowering them to compete in order to win votes.

Although in democratic contexts the closed-list proportional electoral system tends to result in higher representation for women, in a non-democratic context it presents a barrier between the voter and individual candidates. According to UN Women, this leads to a reduction of visibility of female candidates, limiting their chances to be elected in significant numbers.[451] This moves from the assumption that the capacity of women to act as political representatives is not questioned. Therefore, UN Women's activity targets the government as the key partner and considers the issue of women's underrepresentation in political institutions at a decision-making level as a lack of governmental commitment towards the implementation of CEDAW, as well as to national legislation related to gender equality. UN Women has been negotiating for several years for the introduction of legal

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[450] United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), "Concluding Observations on the Combined 3rd and 4th Periodic Reports of Kazakhstan."
[451] UN Women, 2014. Women political participation in Kazakhstan: needs assessment and mapping of stakeholders. Report of the mission, April 2014

quotas at all levels of the government system.[452] These recommendations, however, have been facing resistance from the government and female MPs. Both oppose the quota system through a strong counterargument, which emphasises the presence of 27% of women in parliament, and a positive record of women's representation at all levels of government in the country.

In general, the issue of the introduction of the quota system is dubious in Kazakhstan. It is not so popular either among stakeholders, or even among women themselves. The discussion on quota is however regularly raised, even though there is no solid ground for its implementation. Although the government's counterargument highlights the importance of merit, an ethnic quota is used to ensure representation in the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. Given the prevailing political conditions in Kazakhstan, it is also questionable whether the aim of the ethnic quota system is to give voice to ethnic minorities, or rather to serve the purposes of the regime. On the other hand, it is important that the same mechanism of representation has not been challenged in order to ensure representation of ethnic groups. At the same time, during the evaluation of the 2006–16 Gender Equality Strategy, respondents—mainly local government officials and representatives of women's organisations in the regions—expressed the need to introduce quotas for women to ensure their representation.[453] Another contradictory argument made by the government is that the system of gender quotas is already present, in the form of a target to reach 30% of women in decision-making positions. This goal is envisioned by the *Strategy on Gender Equality* 2006–16. Owing to the status of the national women machinery, which is under the direct supervision of the president, and given that the *Strategy* was also signed by the president, the document is legally binding, and its implementation is mandatory. The same evaluation of the *Strategy* noted "an insufficient awareness among the population" on the existing legal framework necessary for women's promotion in political offices.[454] This statement specified that legal acts, together with the *Strategy*, provide enough ground for WPP promotion.

The strategy of UN Women is also based on the idea that, rather than ensuring equal outcomes, gender equality should provide equal opportunities.[455] As a result of this, UN

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[452] Liter newspaper, 2015. Quotas for women are proposed to introduce in Kazakhstan, 27 October 2015, available herehttps://liter.kz/ru/articles/show/13623-v_kazahstane_predlagayut_vvesti_kvoty_dlya_zhenshin_v_vysshih_eshelonah_vlasti

[453] Ilyasova, A., 2016. "Report on Evaluation of the Gender Equality Strategy of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2006-16", p.13

[454] Ibid.

[455] The Russian and Kazakh translation of "women empowerment", which is widely used in conjunction with "gender equality" literally means "extending opportunities for women."

Women's policy on women's political participation has two major limitations. Firstly, it is directed at fostering the advocacy of legislative and institutional measures[456] to introduce gender quotas. In this context, however, the policy fails to consider the meaning of the participation of women. Secondly, the policy's emphasis on legislative measures implies that UN Women focuses on central government actors responsible for initiating legislation. A significant level of political activity in Kazakhstan therefore remains outside the focus of UN Women. For example, the gender activists argue that IOs do not work with local government bodies and local political institutions—the very places where political participation and representation start.

In sum, the existing measures to advance WPP are simultaneously directed towards supply and demand. In particular, the state considers that the problem is the low capacity of women to participate in formal politics, whereas the international community considers that the main barrier is the reluctance of political institutions to involve women in political positions. The strategies on WPP, however, do not match the needs of women: in terms of their goal to improve political participation, they are characterised by significant variance, and thus do not supplement each other. As a result, they fail to contribute to the meaningful participation of women in politics. The problem with the inadequacy of WPP approaches adopted by IOs manifests itself at multiple levels. First, the strategies followed by international organisations fail to consider the character of authoritarian regimes, and the role played by democratic institutions involved in political recruitment: political parties, elections, parliament and local representative institutions. In that sense, they follow a "one-size-fits-all" model. Second, ignorance about the political system leads to an inadequate choice of approaches and measures to tackle the issue of women's underrepresentation. Finally, the ways in which these measures are implemented contributes to the ineffectiveness of WPP promotion policies in Kazakhstan.

In general, the domain of WPP in Kazakhstan receives scant attention from the international community. Moreover, the domain itself has a sporadic and inconsistent character: it lacks any specific focus, a deep understanding of the situation, and it suffers from a "problem identification" strategy. As a result, it lacks targeted actions. In addition to this, the trend of the last decade reveals a pattern of gradual state involvement and monopolisation of the area of WPP, owing to the increase in the financing of activities designed by the state to bring women into politics. Compared to other domains where the

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[456] United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), "Concluding Observations on the Combined 3rd and 4th Periodic Reports of Kazakhstan." See "Temporary Special Measures," para 15.

state and international organisations have developed a more consolidated approach and clear outcomes—for example, the issue of domestic violence or women's economic empowerment in the arena of small entrepreneurship—the area of WPP is not on the priority list for the major stakeholders. Issues of gender equality do not therefore pose any direct threat to the legitimacy and stability of the regime; as a result, they are tolerated by the regime at the expense of silencing other pertinent issues, such as access to politics.

Nevertheless, the positive dynamic of women's representation in the Kazakh Parliament remains one of the stronger arguments used by the ruling political elites. This increases the discrepancy between the diverse components of WPP in Kazakhstan, because there is a lack of convergence and a cause-effect relationship between problem identification strategies, measures formulated, the overall attitude to gender roles in society, and outcomes. The increase in the number of women in political office occurred in conditions of restricted political competition and amidst the suppression of civil activism, including women's movements. As Bakhyt Tumenova, a former female politician, noted, the appointment of women to political office on the basis of gender criteria calls to mind the quota system for social groups that existed during the Soviet period.[457] Such a policy leads to a situation where, while rejecting Soviet-style recruitment and WPP policy based on quotas and tokenism, the government is, in fact, gradually enforcing an informal quota regime. Tartakovskaya explains that "when gender equality is achieved not as a result of a struggle of a women's movement, but rather as value added to social transformations not aimed at gender equality, it leads to the overlap of a few gender roles."[458]

The role of the state and leadership training

The state recognises the problem of uneven women's representation in legislative and executive branches of power,[459] and this is reflected in the 2006–16 *Strategy on Gender Equality* as well as the 2017–30 *Concept on Family and Gender Policy*. According to the solutions formulated in the action plan to promote gender policies, the main reason for women's underrepresentation in politics is a lack of capacity of women to act as

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[457] Asylkhan Mamashuly, "Why there are few women in power?" *Azzatyk Radio*, 18 May 2018, accessed 14 January 2022, https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-zhenschiny-vo-vlasti/29225073.html

[458] Tartakovskaya, I., 1997. *Sociology of Sex and Family*, Samara. P.104

[459]The National Commission on Women and Family Demographic Affairs, 2006. The Gender Equality Strategy 2006-2016, p.13

politicians.[460] Both documents set a target of a 30% level of women's representation in decision-making positions. The measures envisaged to achieve this aim include the nomination of women to different positions in state institutions; non-discrimination against women; possible considerations of quota; and cooperation with civil society.[461] No explicit indication is provided, however, with regard to the obligations of political parties, which are responsible for the political recruitment process. The only exception is the following neutral sentence that pledges "to work on the observation of the principle of gender equality in the creation of the list of political parties."[462] In addition to this, the proposed measures imply that women are passive actors who need to be brought into the political arena instead of considering and recognising their capacity as political representatives and the equals of male politicians. The state therefore justifies its approach to a controlled representation of women without changing institutional barriers, and by focusing its efforts on building women's capacity as politicians.

In the main, the activities proposed by the state focus on political leadership training for women. It is considered that women are not sufficiently present in politics because they "lack strategic vision, leadership skills and determination."[463] Here, however, another critical aspect becomes evident in relation to the definition of political leadership. The programme of leadership training is informed by the state's understanding of leadership, as well as by the purpose of women participating in institutional politics. As recognised by one of the participants, training promoted the idea of general leadership, which can be exercised in every area, including the private domain—that is, in the household.[464] Another principal concept on which political leadership training is based is the construction of a positive image of a female politician that can serve as a role model for other potential female politicians: a woman dressed in a suit, married, and with children.[465] Participants mentioned several bizarre sessions that provided advice on how to behave at receptions, which poses to adopt during photoshoots, and so on. Besides promoting an acceptable

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[460]Government of Kazakhstan, 2011. United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), "Concluding Observations on the Combined 3rd and 4th Periodic Reports of Kazakhstan."

[461]Action Plan on women's promotion at the decision-making level out of the most suitable women involved in the government and other social field positions till 2016, 2011. Signed by the head of the presidential administration.

[462]The National Commission on Women and Family Demographic Affairs, 2006. The Gender Equality Strategy 2006-2016, p.15

[463] Interview with Murat Abenov, September 2017 at the round table on WPP.

[464] Interview with respondent Kh (55). She mentioned that the key message of the training was to re-orient women's focus on leadership in the private domain.

[465] Interview with participants of the women's leadership training and the coaches in Uralsk, Atyrau, October–November 2016. The participants were confident that the main criteria for their success in getting the votes of the local community members was their marital status and the presence of children.

image of female politicians, the programme defined the purpose of women in politics: to bring the specific experience of women and vulnerable groups to a policy-making level limited to social domains, i.e., healthcare, education, and social issues. Finally, the programme outlined how measures have to be implemented in each region according to the specificity and micro-social parameters of each local context (for instance, southern regions are more influenced by traditionalist ideas about social relations than others within the country). Gender policies on women's political participation are, therefore, impacted by three factors before they even reach women.

In almost every region, the local government has established the Club of women politicians to promote WPP. The Club consists of local female executives, businesswomen, leaders of NGOs, representatives of the local governance system, and members of political parties. The goal is "to contribute to the development of women political leadership by dealing with social issues and by training women leaders to develop management and competitiveness skills on the basis of the experience of [the] leading women politicians of Kazakhstan."[466] The Club also aims to create a reserve list of potential female candidates to be included in the party list. Specifically, the Club focuses on developing recommendations on the formulation of solutions to social problems; the creation of a reserve list of women to be promoted in civil service and public activities; the establishment of schools of political leadership; the popularisation of historical female leaders specific to the individual region; and the promotion of information awareness campaigns on the implementation of the 2006–16 *Strategy on Gender Equality*. Between 2011 and 2015, around 12 of these clubs were created in different regions, comprising female executives, businesswomen, the leaders of NGOs, and representatives of the system of local governance and political parties. The goals have been somewhat elusive, since only a weak connection has been established between finding solutions to social problems and female leadership. Even though it can be assumed that Club members regularly brainstorm ideas and solutions to social problems, doubts remain with regard to how the outcomes of these discussions are realistically implemented, and (or) at least expressed at the sessions of local governance authorities or meetings of executives. Despite the presence of female members of local governance bodies in the Club, this organisation has no mechanism for elevating voices at the decision-making level and thus, influencing political outcomes.

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[466] The Association of Businesswomen of Kazakhstan, "Ongoing projects," (2016), accessed 14 January 2022, http://www.businesswomen.kz/home/dejstvuyushchie-proekty/94-klub-zhenshchin-politikov.html

The main activity conducted by the NWM in the area of the political participation of women is the establishment of the School on Women Leadership (the School), which has gained much popularity as well as support from both multiple donors and the state. It is worth mentioning that the School organisers invited trainers from countries with democratic regimes with a long history of party system politics, such as the Scandinavian nations, Israel, the US, and Germany, amongst others. These trainers based their programmes on contexts typical of democracies, and did not adequately consider the specific nature of the political regime in Kazakhstan. In 1998, for example, the Association of Businesswomen, with support from the British Council, UNDP, and other international organisations conducted a seminar entitled "Strategies of Women's Political Leadership in Democratic Societies." The session was attended by 30 participants, all of whom ran during the 1999 elections, even though none of them was successful in their candidacy. Presumably, the discrepancy between the content of the training (and the application of skills designed for democratic contexts) and the political realities of Kazakhstan failed to produce the desired effect. Later, the government took over responsibility for funding these Schools and, therefore, it assumed full control over the training process, including the choice of trainers, the content of the programme, and its focus. Compared to the late 1990s, the political conditions have now changed substantially, and new political actors and institutions dominate the political recruitment processes. The content of the training provided by the international organisations, however, has not changed much; it remains grounded in the role of political parties in democratic regimes.[467]

Since its inception, the content of School programmes changed in response to the changes in the political context. In the present day, the programmes include "personal growth, overview of state programmes of the country's development, domestic violence, [and] gender equality strategy."[468] Among other topics named by the participants were "sessions on how to make presentations, to set up goals and achievements, public speaking and gender stereotypes, how to start one's own business, and micro-crediting."[469] As one of the respondents described the purpose of the School:

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[467] For example, one of the recent training modules, "Increasing women's participation in political parties in Kazakhstan" was conducted by the OSCE Astana Office in 2012. The programme was based on the OSCE vision and political party programmes of the UK, which can hardly be implemented in Kazakhstan despite the nominal existence of a party system.
[468] Interview with respondent Zh (10).
[469] Interview with respondent I (49).

I see the main goals of the School to highlight the reproductive role of women as of primary importance, and to teach women how to combine family and political life without detriment to the family, as well as to teach women to make decisions and choices within the private and public realms. The key purpose of women in politics is to provide a voice to such areas as healthcare, specifically in terms of maternity and child bearing issues, education and social protection. A woman is happy only when she has a family.[470]

Another goal of the School is the creation of a reserve list comprising trained women. The method of selection of potential leaders is unclear, as is the monitoring system. This activity of the School at every stage of its training has been constantly criticised by civil society. According to the aim of the School, one of the clear-cut indicators of success should be an increase in the number of women trained and elected (or appointed) in legislative and executive bodies. There is no official information available, however, and in the course of my fieldwork, none of the respondents passed these training modules, even at the level of lower representative offices. Despite the presence of a common goal, each region chooses its own methods of achieving it. For example, in most of the regions, the Club offices apply an individual coaching mentorship method, which means that each member of the Club has to choose one potential candidate, guide her individually, and then promote her by recommending her to decision-makers. This individualised approach represents a strategy typical of those adopted by women's NGOs. According to some researchers, this is owing to a lack of experience in working in democratic contexts, influencing policy, and using social media and other tools available in developed democracies.[471]

Besides the questionable effectiveness of such activities on WPP promotion, this approach contributes to the enhancement of a patron-client relationship in politics. It also favours political recruitment through informal channels by establishing personal ties between a woman who is currently in power, and a woman who is training to enter a political institution. A more institutionalised approach was attempted in the region of Karaganda, which integrated the official party recruitment system with the system of training on leadership at all levels—region, city, district, and village. The list of trained and selected women is signed by the head of the branch office of the School, the regional head

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[470] Interview with respondent A (15).
[471] Zellerer and Vyortkin, "Women's Grassroots Struggles for Empowerment in the Republic of Kazakhstan."

of the national commission, and the head of the regional party office. This means that the reserve list is mandatory for consideration during general and by-elections at each administrative level.[472] Although the personal character of political recruitment is technically less visible, at the core the selection process is still very much dependent on the system of recommendations and is thus highly personified.

The Karaganda regional office of the Commission introduced a new approach to female political leadership which they now wish to use for composing the reserve list in general, for regional elected and appointed positions. Up until the present day, the School advances women through training and inclusion into the reserve list (the algorithm is described in the appendix). There are 18 schools of political leadership with offices at the different levels of region, city, district, and village. The heads of the offices are responsible for nominating women who have the potential to become politicians and leaders. Those women who are selected undergo training on skills such as public speaking and leadership; at this initial stage, there are some 10 or 12 women enrolled. 20% of these women are then recommended for inclusion on the reserve list, which is signed by the head of the School, the first deputy head of the commission in the respective location, and the head of the local executive body. The names on the reserve list thus become eligible and the list must be taken into consideration for elected and appointed positions. For example, there are 212 women in the whole region of Karaganda, at all levels on the reserve lists. The female heads of the villages and local district administrations were appointed from the reserve lists. All women on the reserve list of the party are those who passed the School's training, and who are on the reserve lists of the school. As she said, there is no other way to enter institutional politics—that is, representative and executive offices—except through the School programme and reserve list.

> There is a party reserve list, the composition of which is made by the party
> members at each level—region, city, district, and village—characterised by
> experience in the party and professional area, and respect gained from the
> population of the district/city/village, or region-wide. The party reserve list of the
> Karaganda region includes all levels and representative and executive positions. In
> addition, one of the sources for candidates is Zhas Otan, the youth wing of the Nur
> Otan party. For example, in Karaganda region there are 18,000 members of Zhas

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[472]Department of Internal Policy, Karaganda Local Government, 2016. Guideline on implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy, Organisation of the Schools of Women's Leadership in Karaganda region.

Otan. When compiling a list, we apply the following criteria: gender, age, professional area (rural area, education, healthcare, social protection, or business). Twice per year (in May and October) there are additional elections to replace representatives who cannot serve as representatives for certain reasons, such as death, relocation, illness, a change of professional activity, family circumstances, and so on.[473]

Given that this initiative is the main tool of the state policy on women's political participation, and it is considered to be the main achievement and, as such, is presented as the working mechanism to bring women into politics, it was of particular importance and interest to explore the opinions and experience of those women who were involved in it. During my field work, I tried to ensure that all perspectives were considered, including those of the women who participated in the training, as well as of the organisers. Most of the interviewees were cautious in their judgement concerning the effectiveness of political leadership training, and did not reflect on the connection between the training and its impact on the representation of women at the local level. This was especially evident when I asked the interviewees to link the content of the training to election campaigns, as well as to the representative functions that they perform. In some of the regions where there were no women among deputies in representative institutions, female deputies could not support these arguments since these women had not participated in the School.

One of the popular messages used in political leadership training is that leadership can be exercised in areas outside the political arena, such as the private sphere. This is one of the messages employed by the state in its discourse on WPP. One of the businesswomen whom I interviewed in Atyrau, in the western oil region of Kazakhstan, argued that, in fact, women can better contribute to the private or business sphere rather than the political arena; this sounded incongruent, given the purpose proclaimed by the School itself.

Leadership is a flexible term. It can be reflected in different ways depending on the region: some regions have more female politicians, women in business, women in civil society, and women in public activism. Therefore, leadership programmes should consider regional specificity.[474]

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[473] Interview with respondent O (41).
[474] Interview with the member of the Club of Women Politicians, Atyrau.

It is worth noting that another frequent discourse observed in these interviews is that of the capacity of women and their level of preparedness. These questions are rarely asked of male candidates. Almost all women reflected on the topic of how a woman should be psychologically and intellectually prepared to run for elections and to take office. These women usually measured this level of maturity with certain achievements in "family education and norms and values within families which breed normal citizens."[475] One of the women interviewed provided a clear explanation of the link between the objectives of women in society, and the way in which the School can play its promotional role:

> Those single women without children, or single mothers, cannot be politicians because they could not manage their own lives; how can they improve the lives of the community? I call them "half-woman". Therefore, personal empowerment of woman is the key goal of our training. Women should be able to make choices in the private sphere. In case of luck or benevolent circumstances, she could be promoted into institutional politics. And at this moment she should be prepared! This is the main purpose of the School.[476]

Women's assessment of their motivation to engage in politics

When I was interviewing women about their path to politics, my initial assumption was that the election process was highly predetermined and organised by the ruling party, with no room for the candidates to deploy their own vision, voices, or issues. In part my assumption was confirmed, especially with regard to the experiences of independent candidates and the candidates from parties other than the ruling party. For example, one of the respondents, an independent candidate for local elections, emphasised the informal way in which the political party lists are formed, and alleged that "the critical actor in this process is the presidential administration which endorsed the party lists of Nur Otan and the loyal satellites."[477]

At the same time, there were several testimonies which went against the general line. A candidate of the opposition party list, who had negligible chances to win seats in parliament, described a different perspective on her nomination to candidacy:

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[475] Interview with respondent A (15).
[476] Interview with respondent T (48).
[477] Interview with respondent K (19).

My candidacy was proposed by the political bureau of the party, passed through voting at the session, and endorsed by the party management. I think that my extensive experience in the party was the main reason for this nomination. I'm one of the founders of the Social Democratic party. I took part in the presidential campaign to support Zharmakhan Tuyakbai in 2004. Also, I have been leading the western Kazakhstan branch of the party for 10 years. I have authority in the region and a proactive position on political issues, I cooperate with the regional executive on the acute issues; I don't fear.[478]

When I asked her what made her act so boldly in the political sphere, she referred to her experience in the Communist Party, and her work as a deputy in the city council in the 1980s, where she was responsible for propaganda work within the party branch offices at the village level. She pointed out her knowledge of regional specificity and networking with the regional elites, many of whom had similar roots in the party. She is positioned as a knowledgeable person who is able to represent and advocate for regional interests in parliament:

At first, I didn't have a clear perception of my personal leadership and capacities. I participated in the 2012 elections [local] as a member of the Ak Zhol party. I acquired a good experience of participation [in the elections]. In 2012 Ak Zhol representatives contacted me and proposed that I should stand for elections. I think that they wanted to demonstrate a socially oriented aspect of business (the Ak Zhol party represents the interests of business and commercial structures). The main party office provided effective organisation for the meetings with the voters, as well as registration, propaganda work, and materials for distribution. But in 2012 I didn't win, because of the massive pressure from the Nur Otan party, including unethical techniques. One billboard of my candidacy, for example, drew three billboards from Nur Otan's candidate in response. Other illegal pressure methods were also used. To be honest, I received a wealth of experience of shadowy electioneering tricks. But what struck me the most is that the Ak Zhol party lost interest in my candidacy at the very moment when the results were known and never contacted her afterwards. Just disappeared.

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[478] Interview with respondent K (19).

A relatively frequent reason for entering into politics which women highlighted was a motivation to change the status quo in a particular area. This was usually their professional workplace.[479] Such intentions could be nurtured for years before achieving realisation:

> My motivation to run for local election was the unsatisfactory work of the previous representative (male). I've been working as a head of the district level hospital for many years, and I am aware of all the problems of my district including those related to healthcare issues…we don't have enough equipment for the hospital, for example.[480]

As one of the women admitted, taking a step towards realising her motivation required courage and audacity despite a successful career in civil service (the prosecutor's office), as well as work in the industrial sector. A rather interesting observation is that "active action" for women meant the acceptance of their "elected" position:

> At a certain point I noticed that the working framework and scale of the decision-making level was limited for me. At that moment I was offered an elected position as representative of the regional-level maslikhat. I didn't contact either party officials or local government myself. I think somebody recommended me to the party management.[481]

Despite such messages of empowerment, the following statement was related to permission received from her husband and from relatives. Although it is not surprising that a potential candidate might discuss his or her decision to aspire to a political career, the women whom I interviewed highlighted this approval as something that was crucial to their decision. They argued that in case of a negative response from their husbands and their extended

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[479] Interview with respondent J (20).
[480] Interview with respondent E (46).
[481] Interview with respondent B (31).

family, they would not dare to run for elections. One of the typical responses to my questions about motivation was the following:

> I first received permission from my husband and my parents-in-law to stand for elections, and then I contacted the head of the local Nur Otan party office. I respect my family and, to be honest, their approval was one of the key stimuli that made me apply for candidacy. In case of self-nomination, my chances of winning would be equal to zero.[482]

In fact, there was disagreement between the various responses that women provided during these interviews. When discussing their motivation and while positioning themselves as influential and knowledgeable politicians, at the same time, they denied that very same motivation. When I heard repeated instances of women's reluctance and the absence of an initial conscious desire to be a political representative, I began to question what the reasons were—to their minds—which made the party offer this role to them. Here, the responses were mostly related to their good performance and professional expertise, their knowledgeable and proactive behaviour, their effective representation of ethnic minorities,[483] or the party's programme "to bring 50 new faces of the party."[484] One of the most unexpected responses came from the youngest local deputy, who explained it through the need to include a variety of groups, including young activists from the youth wing of Nur Otan:

> I am the youngest deputy at the city-level of representative bodies in Kazakhstan. I have been active since I was 18: I sang songs at public events organised by the state authorities at the district level. Later, I was involved in the socially oriented activities organised by the youth wing of the Nur Otan party as a speaker, and as a young and bright representative of youth. I tried not to miss any events. I speak the Kazakh language, being of Russian ethnicity, and this is unique and promoted.[485]

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[482] Interview with respondent E (46).
[483] Interview with respondent B (35).
[484] Interview with respondent B (31).
[485] Interview with respondent M (11).

Unintentionally, this interviewee proved one of the main arguments of the scholarly literature on political representation in Kazakhstan: the perfect representation of society, for the purpose of window-dressing:

> I think that even active women with strong professional skills and a good background, influential women who get used to public speaking, do not go into politics themselves. I don't think that politics is a self-determined choice for women. Rather, they are invited by men at the decision-making level. Women don't have an internal sense of competition. Based on my experience [and I had a vast experience in running for local and national level elections] and of female politicians whom I know personally, I think that if a woman aspires to enter politics, she needs a person who will push her. The reason for this situation is the traditional mentality and perception of society, and also a lack of understanding of the role of women by the leaders. It's important to cultivate leadership skills in girls, starting from school.[486]

In some cases, women came from local executive authorities, and they demonstrated a certain lack of influence and respect compared to that required for representative positions. The first remark they made, when we began to discuss their experience, was to highlight the fact that they did not volunteer to be a deputy of the maslikhat. I especially remember one woman, for whom becoming a local representative was a sufficient loss for her career:

> Before I worked in the local executive administration, I headed the district level department of education, and I also ran the state trade union. In 2012, the head of the local administration approached me suggesting this position. I had to agree. Personally, I don't see the difference of working in the maslikhat, executive or party work, in terms of the type of work. We are given tasks and work on them. I don't think sex or party division matters.[487]

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[486] Interview with respondent B (17).
[487] Interview with respondent M (5).

It is interesting how one of my respondents, and one of the female politicians active in opposition summarised the path of women into the political sphere:

> Women go into politics through their relationships with men. Any kind of relationship: a family, a private, or a business relationship. And, in return, female politicians further invest in these relations—as a rule, the closest one consists of relatives—when they acquire access to resources and opportunities. My political activity and positioning as an oppositional figure in the political system of Kazakhstan can also be accounted as a benefit. Including material gain.[488]

One of my interviewees was a deputy head of the Trade Union of Kazakhstan. Her career path generally represents one of the frequent patterns of women's promotion into decision-making positions. The deputies of the Trade Union are elected by the session, and proposed by the chairperson. There are 3 deputies for socio economic issues, economic issues, and organisational matters. Since 2010, two male deputies were promoted to other positions; one of them became an MP. One of the deputies is now the ex-MP with no experience in trade union activity, while the second one is a 40 year-old male who was hired to expand international cooperation, owing to his knowledge of English. This is interesting in terms of those qualification criteria requested from female candidates; male candidates, in contrast, are hired based on informal reasons, rather than on the basis of their experience and professional expertise. It is worth mentioning the frequent rotation of male deputies who used these positions to advance their careers or, who otherwise perceived them as temporary stepping-stones.[489]

Most of the women whom I interviewed had long-term party affiliations, including some before the establishment of the single party regime. For most of these women, party adherence is comparable to the active public life of the Soviet period. As one of the respondents summarised, "all Soviet people were brought up in such an environment to be politically active and to be a part of the Party."[490] A decade after the dissolution of the communist institutional structures in the early 1990s, the people needed some social mobilisation equivalent. This is typical for elder women, whose professional career and

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[488] Interview with respondent B (17).
[489] Interview with respondent J (20).
[490] Interview with respondent A (15).

civic activism began in the late Soviet period. Most of them were involved in the Komsomol movement or the Communist Party. According to one businesswoman from Uralsk, the background of these women "is rooted deeply in the Soviet period, with activity in Communist Party work, mainly in the propaganda unit."[491] She recalls that when she was a child, her father used to gather all of the children together, read newspapers and discuss the political events of the country; so, by the time she graduated, she didn't hesitate to start political activity[492]. I quote just one of the interviewees in this regard; in fact, this type of message was present in many of the testimonies that I recorded:[493]

> I always wanted to be a party member. In 2003 I became a member of the ASAR party, but in 2007 after ASAR merged with other pro-presidential parties and created the Nur Otan party, I became a member of Nur Otan. To be a Nur Otan party member means to be a part of public life. The party provides a discipline to formal politics, it organises it.[494]

A history of joining the ASAR party in the early 2000s is a recurring feature of the career path of the female politicians of modern Kazakhstan. After merging with the Nur Otan party, it was proposed that the heads of the regional offices of the ASAR party should become deputy heads in Nur Otan's regional party structure, on a part-time basis.[495]

Despite this common response on being proposed or preselected by the party, there were also women who openly expressed their motivation to become deputies and who had to assert themselves in the political arena. As a rule, these women are from a business background, and have support from their male entrepreneur colleagues. Quite often, these women had a past experience of participation in the elections, and serving as representatives. An interesting observation of these experiences is that before 2007, when a single majoritarian electoral system was in place, women tended to be more successful[496] in competition for political office.[497] One of the female MPs who served in four

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[491] Interview with respondent V (23).
[492] Interview with respondent V (23).
[493] Interview with respondents R (44), K (21).
[494] Interview with E (46).
[495] Interview with respondent O (41).
[496] Interview with respondent O (41).
[497] Interview with respondents U (28), B (17).

consecutive parliaments, and who is known for her activity on gender equality topics, commented as follows:

> My candidacy was proposed by the head of the regional administration (Western Kazakhstan) to the party office, which then sent the recommendations to the head office. I did not initiate my own promotion. In 2004, I was elected in a one-mandate district since the election system was mixed, with ten seats allocated for political parties. I was a representative of the Otan party and competed with candidates from the Communist, Agrarian and other parties. At that time, the political environment allowed for a certain portion of democratic competition. All candidates were male, and I considered that it was a tough competition since in the Western Kazakhstan region, the Communist past was still dominant and the Communist Party had stronger positions in the industrial region, and the region that was mostly inhabited by the Russian population. The Otan party positioned itself as a nationalist party promoting the Kazakh population, and I am Russian.[498]

From 2007, women usually failed to achieve election, especially when participating as self-nominees. Among the reasons for their failure, these women named insufficient resources allocated by the election committee, which were enough just to cover "one billboard, one video going on seven to eight times at prime-time during the whole period of the election campaign",[499] and the ruling party's access to enormous administrative resources in the regions.

Women's experience of the election campaign

During electoral campaigns, female candidates at the national and local levels do not raise strategic gender equality issues, whether as the main area of their programme or as an additional element. Usually, their programmes are based on their professional experience, which is understandable, and women are disinterested in including a gender agenda in their programmes. The first thing that all of the women noted in the interviews was a high level of discipline within the party, and unlimited administrative resources that the party deployed during the election campaigns. The party did not provide any additional funding

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[498] Interview with respondent T (36).
[499] Interview with respondents U (28).

for the candidates; however, their in-kind contribution was in the form of extensive opportunities in the various regions provided by the executive bodies. These included conference halls for meetings, the involvement of voters, the printing of materials, party programmes, and leaflets, and transportation to remote villages and towns. One respondent told me that she was literally "given a pre-set schedule with the meetings, dates and times, the categories of voters, and talking points."[500]

The experience of one of the respondents, a gender activist promoting the rights and opportunities of women with disabilities, is remarkable in its demonstration of the pathway to politics for active citizens without any party affiliation. At the time that she decided to run for election, she had had more than 20 years of managerial-level activism with NGOs, and was recognisable in the informal political sphere through her efforts to raise the issues of women with disabilities. It would be wrong to call her an opponent of the regime, but, at the same time, she openly criticised the local government for its poor implementation of inclusive policies and urban planning, which failed to consider the needs of people and women with disabilities. At a certain point, she decided to run for election in order to have the opportunity to elevate these issues to a level where decisions could be made.

During the election campaign, and as a result of her civic activism, she proposed highlighting some pertinent issues related to women with disabilities and, especially, the lack of will on the part of local authorities to address these issues. This proposal, however, was not supported by the party. She did not insist on the matter since, as she admitted, "the only requirement by the party was the full involvement of the candidate. Otherwise, you can be easily replaced by other candidates."[501] This is not to argue that such an attitude is an experience unique to women, since all of my respondents confirmed that their male counterparts faced a similar campaign plan and manifesto of topics to raise. It is, instead, to highlight that even female candidates who are more assertive and have a clear agenda in the scope of interests that they represent, can find themselves in a weaker position when they attempt to gain more autonomy in the election process:

> I saw this mistrust of the voters, some of them openly expressed their attitude at the meetings. I don't think that this was because I'm a woman, other male candidates also had the same perception. This is because of general apathy towards politics.

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[500] Interview with respondent K (19).
[501] Ibid.

The only meeting where I managed to raise interest as a female candidate was among a youth audience.[502]

Her decision to run for election was a conscious result of her activity and her desire to change local policies—or at least to give a voice to one of the most vulnerable groups of women. She stood for elections in 2007 as a candidate for the Ak Zhol party. As she herself testified, the party approached her, proposing her candidacy for the party list. She said that the Ak Zhol party tried to organise the election campaign in accordance with the modality of the ruling party, although though with far less coverage. The respondent compared her experience with a form of multi-pronged attack: "if you place one banner with an Ak Zhol candidate, the next day you will see three banners with Nur Otan's candidates."

This sort of experience is, however, to be expected. What struck this interviewee the most was the Ak Zhol party's attitude after they lost elections. She related that they immediately lost interest in her, and had not contacted her since the election. During the following election campaign, she decided to propose her candidacy to the ruling party itself, focusing on her professional activity as gender activist. In fact, the issue of people with disabilities was already covered in the party list by another woman, the head of the republican association for people with disabilities. As a result, the interviewee was invited to appear in the local candidate's list. According to her experience, the ruling party encouraged independent candidates to stand for elections, thus creating additional competition and minimising the chances for alternative candidates to win. This state of affairs was confirmed, without prompting, by other interviewees. For example, one of the respondents in Atyrau, a candidate in local elections, confessed that she stood as a self-nominated candidate as a Nur Otan party member. She explained her candidacy in terms of gaining experience of "how the elections work", and "to check what kind of barriers a self-nominated candidate can face during elections."[503] One of the young local representatives in her early 20s confessed that "her female competitor was a self-nominator but not active in general, and it seemed that she didn't expend much effort or intent to win; she did not even meet with the voters."[504]. As another interviewee put it:

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[502] Interview with respondent K (19).
[503] Interview with respondent I (49).
[504] Interview with respondent M (11).

> From my personal experience, and it is confirmed by many cases, in Kazakhstan at the moment, there is no way to win elections for women apart from being a member of the ruling party.[505]

No wonder that women use this tactic in order to run for elections and – more importantly – to win them. As a rule, these women intentionally entered politics, with the most common purpose of establishing better connections with local executives. Usually, these women run their own business, and by entering the political realm, they gain more contacts and, sometimes, an improved outlook for their business activities. The activist for the rights of women with disabilities whom I discussed earlier confessed that after her failure and disappointment in the 2012 elections, she decided to run for parliamentary elections under one of the parties—preferably the ruling one, in order to reap the obvious advantages. To attract their attention, she organised a press conference and announced that she would join any party with the intention to stand for elections and represent people with disabilities. The Nur Otan party was the only party that responded to her call. They included a couple of representatives of the associations of people with disabilities, which they later allocated to the different levels of the representative bodies. My respondent was targeting the national political office, but was proposed the local one, which she accepted.[506]. This experience demonstrates how women try to navigate the political conditions and the limited autonomy for women in political life.

It is not rare for women to become party members just prior to elections. For example, one of the MPs in the current parliament acquired her membership just three days before the election. The reason for including her was probably her professional expertise as a judge of the constitutional court with experience in the presidential office. Another example of such abrupt membership is a gender activist from Eastern Kazakhstan, a head of a women's NGO. It is interesting to mention that, in selecting her, the party did not consider her professional expertise. She admitted her surprise that during the election campaign she was given the talking points—but without any gender issues.[507]

At the local level, elections begin with primaries to compete for the candidates' list. As a rule, the candidates choose the topic of their professional area. Since female candidates are contacted by local party offices for participation in the primaries, their areas of focus are

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[505] Interview with respondent K (19).
[506] Interview with respondent K (19).
[507] Interview with respondent U (28).

predetermined. Usually, they include healthcare, social issues, and primary education. Women sometimes raise other non-traditional issues such as the environment, youth, or religion. The latter is usually welcomed by local communities, and is squarely in line with the state policy on the moral and spiritual education of the youth, including strong family values. As a rule, it is also considered that female candidates should compete with each other: "in primaries I participated in open debates with the other candidate, a woman, of course."[508] Some interviewees told me that they competed with male candidates, but in most of the cases, these competitors were in a significantly weaker position. For example, they were too young and inexperienced, or possessed no prior connections with the district that they represented.[509]

One of the specific features observed at the local elections (maslikhat) is that the role model of female candidates is an important factor to be considered when making the party lists. The majority of interviewees who achieved political office confirmed that the electorate voted for them because of their "respectful family status and good image." As one of the respondents noted:

> …in small villages or districts people primarily consider the moral image of the candidate; so, I have a positive image and reputation as a woman with a full family, i.e., a husband and children. For example, I remember when a divorced and single women stood for elections, she gained less than 1% of votes because people consider her to be a "slut". And as for me, I got 98.1% of the votes.[510]

At the local level, however, I observed greater autonomy in the election campaign. In other words, the candidates were given a choice to select the issues on which they would focus during campaigning. When I interviewed women in the different regions, almost all of them responded that they included issues beyond the purely traditional—something that was not expected from them as candidates. To be honest, after listening to so many repetitive responses I was also surprised to learn that one woman in Shymkent region presented the findings of the research she conducted informally about women's rights as employees. This was particularly unexpected, since the southern region is one of the highly

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[508] Interview with respondent E (46).
[509] Interview with respondent A (15).
[510] Interview with respondent E (46).

populated regions of Kazakhstan and is also characterised by deeply rooted patriarchal traditional elements:

> I included the rights of employees, with a focus on gender. I shared the results of the survey which I conducted in the several enterprises of those members of the trade union that I was heading. Women are concerned with the glass ceiling: they possess a background and experience equal to their male colleagues, yet women still rarely take leading positions in enterprise. One of the questions in this survey was "How does gender equality affect society?"—and the respondents answered that it affects their family relationships. I think that this is the main reason why our society opposes real breakthrough. Women are less prone to corruption and money laundering, and, therefore, should be more represented in the official state bodies.[511]

Another striking observation which emerged from the interviews is that women's consideration of boundaries between the political parties' programmes is blurred. This was clear from numerous narratives of female candidates when they defined the differences between the political parties and their programmes. It was strikingly surprising, however, when the head of the regional branch of the Nur Otan articulated it:

> I am a head of the Nur Otan party local branch office. I did not face any challenges on my way to become a deputy. In fact, there are no real differences between the election programmes of the candidates, not even within the Nur Otan party, but also between the other parties.[512]

Female candidates at the national parliamentary level expressed the hidden processes of the elections with greater candour. In either direct or indirect ways, they tried to deliver the message that the selection procedure was predetermined, and therefore it made no difference for the results of the primaries. This statement was present in all responses, irrespective of party affiliation. One of the representatives of the opposition party, an ex-senator and local representative, summarised the political experience of women: "the

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[511] Interview with respondent M (5),
[512] Interview with respondent A (8).

decision-making persons contact a woman candidate and propose her to run for elections; so, the woman's objective is to be at the right place, and at the right time."[513] Another interviewee from Eastern Kazakhstan, who is one of the youngest local representatives in the history of the nation, mentioned that her victory was a foretold conclusion because she was nominated from the district represented by the retired deputy who was going to resign. She was one of the most resourceful and interesting figures in Kazakh politics. After working for many years in a system of elementary schools, she participated in local elections in the 1990s during the time of the single majoritarian system. She competed with the male candidate, and then after being selected as an MP in the early parliaments, she found herself in the opposition party and was dismissed. Nevertheless, she managed to capitalise on her image as an opponent of the he current regime. She did not pose a risk to the regime, but her opposition made her attractive to external donors. Such an image allowed her to attract funding for her foundation, and ensured a source of income:

> When it comes to democratisation, the stronger role of parliament in Kazakhstan, work with political parties, the political participation of women in Kazakhstan—the first name that appears is mine. International organisations like OSCE, the UN, German-funded international NGOs, and USAID contact my foundation for the development of parliamentarism, and provide grants under project schemes. This allows me to secure a certain financial stability and independence.[514]

At the same time, she has never been detained or persecuted, as have other civic activists in Kazakhstan. As she confessed, the criteria of the candidates do not determine the selection of the candidate. Rather the selection process is related to the needs of the party. According to her opinion, the selection of the candidates and allocation of seats in the parliament, with disregard to party affiliation, is regulated by the presidential administration. Most of the women referred to the informal quotas guiding the composition of the party candidates list,[515] which included regional representation (80%), gender, and government.[516]

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[513] Interview with respondent B (17).
[514] Interview with respondent B (17).
[515] The interviews were held before May 2021, when new amendments to the Law on Elections were approved. These amendments introduced gender and youth quotas for the candidates' party lists; the party lists should contain not less than 30% of women and youths under 29 years old, Art 89 Law on Elections as of 24 May 2021.
[516] Interview with respondent S (27).

Conclusion

This chapter is based exclusively on the personal experience of women entering politics in Kazakhstan, and it demonstrates the personal experience of women and their paths into the political sphere. The key finding is that women do not manifest a strong motivation in pursuing a political career. In certain cases, this reluctance is closely related to the type of political office: women consider local executive positions as more influential and potentially promising, in terms of benefits. In this case, the lack of motivation seems to be understandable. The majority of women who came from non-political and civil service areas, however, also expressed a lack of determination to become political representatives.

Since women do not consider themselves to be political representatives, it is unlikely that they will decide to assert themselves as candidates, apart from the very few examples of women with entrepreneurship experience. In the early stages of the recruitment process, key initiatives to promote women's candidacies are undertaken by the political institutions responsible for the composition of the representative authorities, i.e., local offices of the political parties and the local government. When asked to describe their pathway to representative bodies, women emphasised that they did not have to assert themselves as candidates, and that they were contacted by the head of the party office or the head of the local government to run for elections. According to women, being asked to serve in a political office is a result of their hard work and their achievements. They ascribe it to their professional qualities, and they described themselves as leaders in their local environment, and/or professional field. None of the women mentioned training on political leadership as a factor that contributed to their visibility amongst local decision makers. In this regard, the findings that emerged from these interviews prove that women are more likely to fit into an embedded candidacy model, in that their political ambition seems to be a response to external encouragement.[517]

Most of the women confirmed that they saw no difference between the parties. One of the deputies pointed out the similarity with the Soviet-era elections:

> I think nothing has changed since Communist times. I mean in party work. I am the head of the Nur Otan fraction in the maslikhat. During the Soviet period I was a member of the Communist Party, and now it is the same with Nur Otan.[518]

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[517] Carroll and Sanbonmatsu, *More Women Can Run*. s
[518] Interview with respondent M (5).

According to the MPs and local representatives, these women did not contribute their own funds to the campaign, since everything was organised by the party offices and local government, including the programme and schedule of the meetings with the constituencies; the venue; the talking points; and the turnover of the meetings' participants. The diverse experiences of women in politics prove that there is no clear mechanism of promoting women's political participation. Despite its wide expansion and established network in all the regions of Kazakhstan, the School on Women Leadership was not mentioned by any of women whom I interviewed, at any level. It might suggest that, in reality, the state is not interested in encouraging political activity, but, rather, serves as a technical mechanism to recruit people for political office.

Women do not have prior political ambition, which is a necessary step towards a meaningful and conscious participation in institutional politics. They do not see themselves as political actors, even though they have been offered a "secured" office and consider themselves as competent professionals in their occupations. At the local level, women consider their political career to be a double burden, whereas female MPs mention the harmful impact of political involvement on their professional activities. This finding provides an interesting insight into the effect of the state gender policy on women's political leadership, the nature of political recruitment, and citizen participation in an authoritarian context.

Chapter VII. The Kazakh MPs and what they do in parliament: a descriptive and substantive representation

A favourite argument used to bring more women into politics is that women are better skilled than men in dealing with issues traditionally of concern to women.[519] The previous chapter highlighted the view that political office for women is more of a proposition than a rational choice. On the one hand, female politicians in Kazakhstan are prepared to act on the issues related to women discussed in Chapter VI. So, in this sense, their substantive representation is already predetermined. On the other hand, none of the female MPs passed the training given by the School on Women Leadership, nor were any recruited into politics via other state channels and given this kind of training. These facts suggest that female MPs have their own agendas and their own issues of interest. At the same time, most of the female MPs are involved in the activities of the School and the Club of female politicians in their regions, and, therefore, they are part of the channels through which the state implements its gender policy on WPP. In this regard, it is interesting to trace what kinds of issues are raised by women, and how they reconcile the needs of the regime with their own personal interests.

The goal of this chapter is thus two-fold: to examine how the descriptive representation pattern in the Kazakh legislature has changed since 1996, and how substantive representation happens. For these purposes, the chapter examines the main characteristics of MPs throughout six parliaments, as well as the activity of MPS, based on three functions: legislative activity, parliamentary requests, and meetings with constituents.

Descriptive representation: who are MPs?

The general trend in age representation reveals a prevailing number of MPs aged 50–59 (Figure 3). This data remained unvaried in almost all of the parliaments; the only exception was the very first parliament, where the majority of MPs were in their 40s. Given the political dynamism of the post-independence period, this is quite an expected finding. The then-SMD electoral system helped to increase competition, and required the candidates of the first three parliaments to be proactive in order to be elected. In the following three parliaments, this trend of recruiting younger and more ambitious candidates from regional constituencies remained unchanged. The second-largest age group was that including people aged 40–49. By examining this pattern more closely, it is possible to observe that even though the regime consolidated its position in the mid-2000s, there was still space for

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[519] Carol Nechemias, "Politics in Post-Soviet Russia: Where are the Women?" *Demokratizatsiya* 8/2 (2000): 215.

members of the younger generations to obtain elected political positions. Along with an increase in the incumbency rate of parliamentarians, the pattern of age representation changed, by including older generations. Moreover, age representation underwent a significant transformation with the introduction of the PR system, as well as the growing monopolisation of the political space by the ruling elites. In the fourth parliament (2007–12) – completely dominated by Nur Otan party members – the second-largest age group remained 40–49, but the number of MPs aged 60–69 grew sharply. The fifth and sixth parliaments preserved this pattern. In the sixth parliament, the largest group of MPs was aged between 50 and 69, with a few cases of deputies who were over 70. From the fourth parliament, the average age of MPs began to increase.

General age distribution

	1 convocation (1996-1999)	2 convocation (1999-2004)	3 convocation (2004-2007)	4 convocation (2007-2012)	5 convocation (2012-2016)	6 convocation (2016-2020)
70-79	0	1	0	0	2	2
60-69	3	14	17	25	33	22
50-59	35	47	42	40	43	51
40-49	53	24	33	32	19	18
30-39	7	14	6	3	3	6
20-29	2	0	2	0	0	1
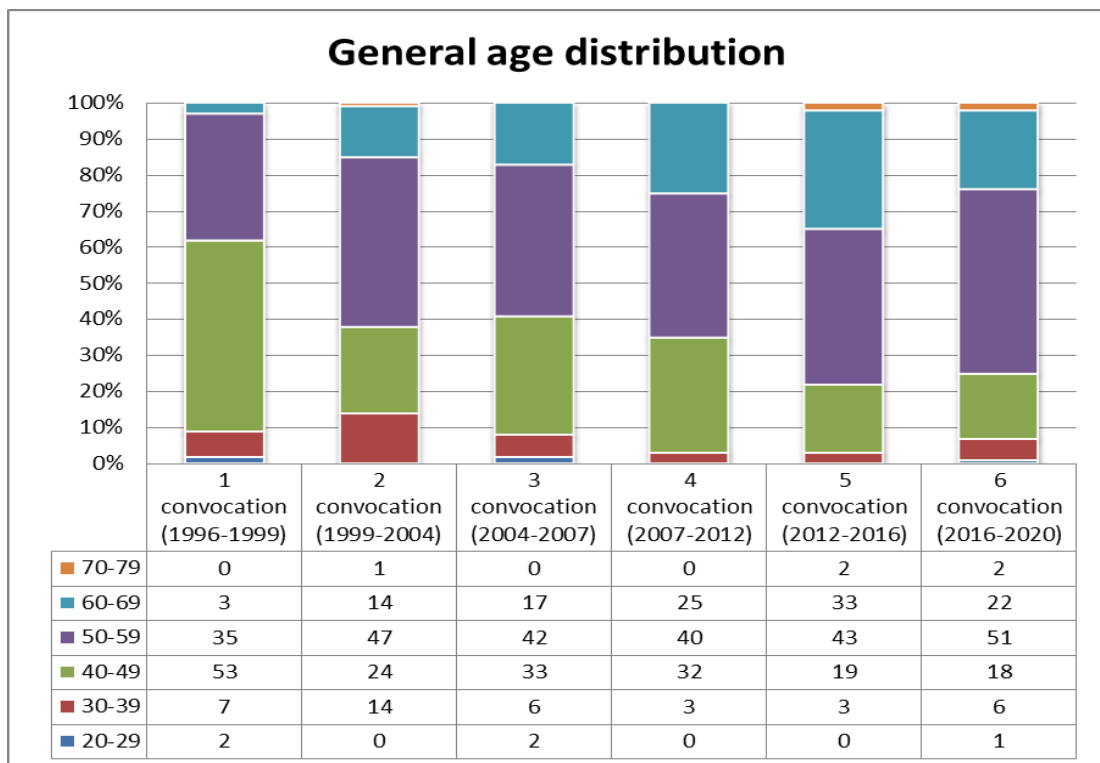
Figure 3. Age distribution of all MPs across six parliaments (convocations)

The age representation of women members differs from the men's pattern, and its transformations do not follow the age changes that took place in conjunction with the evolution of the regime (Figure 4). The main age group (50–59) remained unvaried in almost all six parliaments, with the exception of the third, where more women in their 40s were recruited. Interestingly, in the second parliament, the women's age group was higher than that of the men. With regard to the most recent parliament, there is a tendency for

women parliamentarians to be younger than their male counterparts. The sixth parliament is the youngest of the six in terms of women's representation, with around 14% of women in their 30s and 40s. According to numerous studies on political representation in western democracies, women enter politics at an older age in comparison with men. They explain this phenomenon in terms of the influence that social roles, such as childbirth and childcare, have in defining a woman's political career. Consequently, a woman's political career is considered to be second in priority to the mandatory functions of child-rearing. This trend is almost aligned with the Soviet pattern of female representation in the Supreme Council of Kazakhstan, where women were mostly in their 20s and 30s. A younger age, together with a low educational level, non-partisanship, and lower job qualifications contributed to the insignificant, substantive token representation of women.

women

	1 convocation (1996-1999)	2 convocation (1999-2004)	3 convocation (2004-2007)	4 convocation (2007-2012)	5 convocation (2012-2016)	6 convocation (2016-2020)
70-79	0	0	0	0	0	0
60-69	0	25	12	5	27	14
50-59	43	63	25	63	53	58
40-49	43	12	63	27	20	14
30-39	14	0	0	5	0	14
20-29	0	0	0	0	0	0
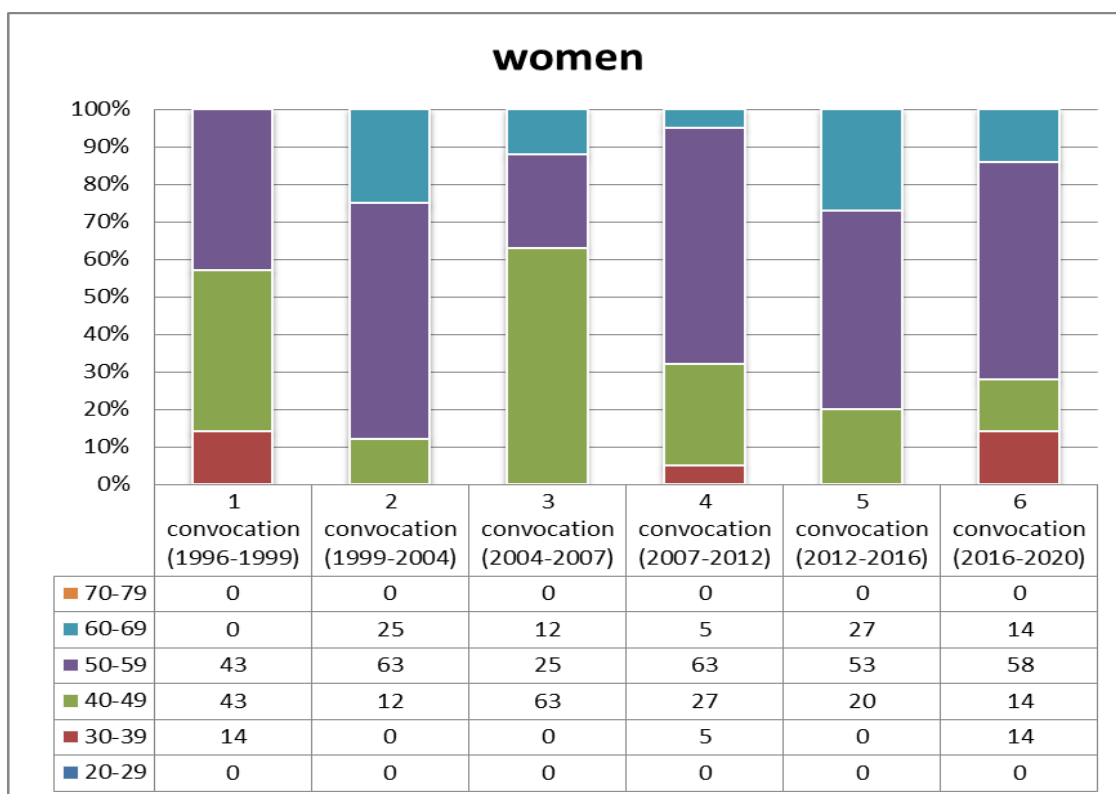
Figure 4. Female MPs by age group across six parliaments (convocations)

Another peculiarity of women's age distribution is that women do not keep their parliamentary seats when they are over 70. This can be attributed to several factors, including, for example, that women do not consider an elected position as a career advancement path. Moreover, female MPs who were in their 70s in the fifth and sixth

parliaments gained their professional experience in the Soviet period, thus, the fact that they were given an elected position 25 years after the dissolution of the USSR means that they either served as professional parliamentarians or were awarded this position before their retirement. In other words, the absence of 70-year old female MPs shows that whether in Soviet times or in the transition period, women did not gain any strategic positions in the political system or in business.

When it comes to education in post-Soviet societies, it is difficult to evaluate the actual level of the degrees obtained. This is for two reasons. The first is the difference between the structure of the Soviet-era education system and that in the western world. The most widespread example is the different notion of doctoral studies or master's degrees. Second, the advancement of social and economic rights pursued during the Soviet period almost eradicated illiteracy, and led to the legacy of achieving, at minimum, a master's degree as a mandatory life goal. As a result, almost 100% of the population in Kazakhstan is literate, both in terms of youth and adult literacy rates.[520] Finally, high corruption rates,[521] especially in the education sector, have reduced the value of degrees and made access easier. Representation patterns in terms of education levels prove these arguments. The number of PhD and MA/MSc holders has increased sharply, starting with the third parliament (Figure 5). The last parliament differs from the previous ones, recording an equal number of degrees at the master's and doctoral levels, with only one particular representative holding a secondary education degree. For example, the 6th parliament had worker in a factory and an orphan, he is also Russian by ethnicity and was adopted by a Kazakh family. He speaks the Kazakh language fluently, and frequently engages in local activities and competitions, which call to mind the representational events of the Soviet period. As discussed later, in the last parliament, such cases show that the ruling regime has changed the representational criteria by recruiting representatives previously considered atypical. To a certain extent, this might suggest an attempt to make the legislature more representative, in conjunction with broadening the areas of parliamentary competence. The quality of representatives and their ability to contribute to the policy-making process, however, even in restricted and authoritarian contexts, is still

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[520] United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, "Effective Literacy and Numeracy Practices Database–LitBase, Community Learning Centres, Kazakhstan," 24 January 2014, accessed 13 January 2022, https://uil.unesco.org/literacy/effective-practices-database-litbase

[521] Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index 2016," accessed 13 January 2022, http://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016#table. Kazakhstan is ranked 131 out of 176 in the corruption rating; on corruption in the education sector, see Azamat Syzdykbaev, "Education Named the Most Corrupt Area in Kazakhstan," *Kazpravda*, 27 February 2016, accessed 13 January 2022, https://www.kazpravda.kz/en/news/society/education-named-the-most-corrupt-area-in-kazakhstan/

questionable. These new trends in the patterns of representation in the Kazakh parliament evoke the representation policies of Soviet times.
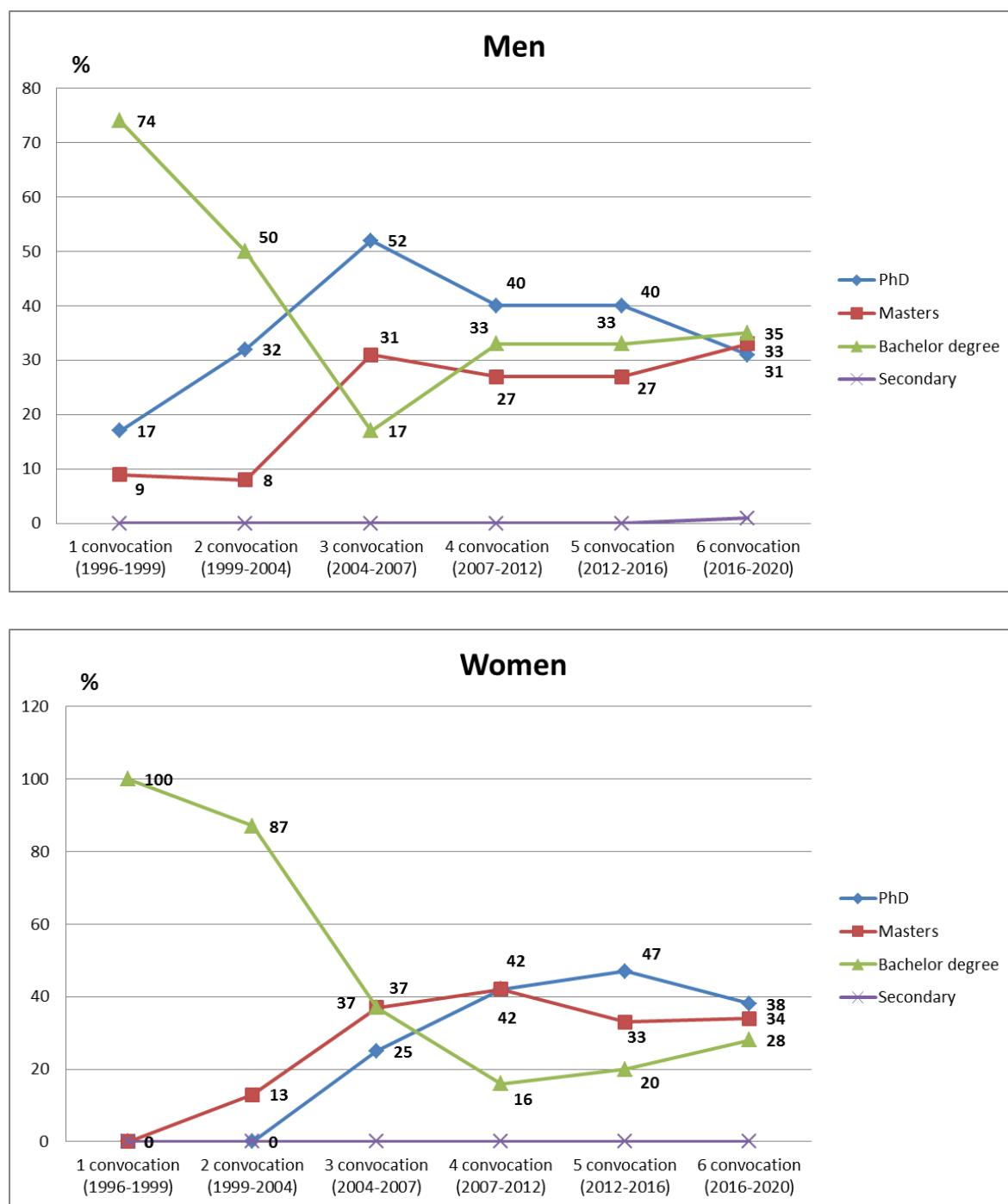
Figure 5. MPs by educational level in Majilis, men and women

The representation of women in terms of education is slightly different. PhD and MA holders among women began to appear with the fourth parliament, amounting to more than

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80%. This difference may also support the argument on women's unequal access to higher degrees in the education system, which was typical of the Soviet period. Despite an overwhelming enrolment rate of girls in primary and secondary schools and an increase in the level of the degrees obtained, the number of women has dropped. Moreover, notwithstanding the balance established in recent parliaments in terms of the educational background of MPs, women are more educated than men. Evidence for this is provided by the presence of a lower proportion of bachelor or secondary degree holders among women since 2007. In part, this indicates that women in post-Soviet societies are generally more educated as a result of Soviet social policies. Achievements in education, however, do not help women to obtain management positions in the state system or in business, since women are not part of informal networking dynamics, which are typical of corporate recruitment processes in large businesses in Kazakhstan. In comparison with the situation in Islamic states, this constitutes another paradox, which is a consequence of the conditions of inequality inherent in post-Soviet gender regimes. A life achievement such as a high level of education does not create opportunities for women in terms of career advancement. The Soviet educational policy promoted non-ideological professional areas, such as engineering and natural sciences. This resulted in a predominant number of party nomenklatura (state bureaucracy) with engineering degrees. No wonder that in the early post-Soviet period, political elites maintained continuity in terms of occupational representation.[522]

Local representative experience

In a study on political representation in the parliament and government of Russia, Semenova observed that a local political career does not provide a path to political advancement at the central level. Specifically, she states that only 25% of MPs have prior local political experience.[523] In Kazakhstan, a similar situation presents itself. The number of both men and women who previously served as local political representatives in the regions is broadly similar (Table 4). It reached its peak in the third parliament, when 23% of men and 25% of women served as representatives in maslikhats. Since the fourth parliament, these rates started to decrease to 15% and 7% for men and women, respectively. Despite a general similarity, the women's trend is characterised by higher

numbers and peaks as well as even sharper declines. There are cases when MPs of both genders were recruited from permanent paid positions in the local government bodies, (i.e., secretaries). This data gains importance in light of women's political recruitment patterns, and has implications for the state and the international community's policies on WPP advancement. First, it proves the low prestige of the local representative office in the political system of Kazakhstan. The peak in the number of MPs with prior local representative experience occurred in the third parliament (2004–2007), which was the last parliament elected through the SMD system. It is reasonable to assume that at the time of elections, there was more established experience in election campaigning and political competition. The voters had the opportunity to express their choices, and the elections were competitive at the individual level. Therefore, the experience as political representatives at the local level was considered to be one of the advantages for the candidate, and which can thus also be considered as an advantage for a future political career. Later, with the change in the electoral system and the regime's increased control over the recruitment process, the experience in local representation lost its value.[524] This finding is supported by those that have emerged from interviews with MPs and local representatives, who confirmed a low level of interaction and cooperation between the national and local levels of representation.

Table 4. Previous experience in serving as political representative at the local level – maslikhat

Parliaments	1st parl (1996–99)		2nd parl (1999–2004)		3rd parl (2004–2007)		4th parl (2007–2012)		5th parl (2012–16)		6th parl (2016–20)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
YES	11%	**14%**	8%	14%	**23%**	**25%**	20%	22%	17%	15%	**15%**	**7%**
NO	89%	**86%**	92%	86%	77%	75%	80%	78%	83%	85%	85%	93%

Second, this sharp drop might indicate a change in the way that political actors perceive the local representative office. Party offices in the regions do not consider local representative experience as a valuable criterion for a candidate's selection. Potential candidates share a similar attitude towards gaining political experience at the local level. Finally, this result has a crucial influence on the current policies and discourse on WPP in Kazakhstan. According to the state, women lack experience as representatives. Therefore, the national women machinery has begun programmes on involving more women into local politics, mostly at the city, district, and village level. At the same time, when women's local

representation started to grow, the number of MPs with prior experience in local political representation dropped. This dynamic contradicts state measures concerned with WPP.

Membership in parliamentary committees

One of the major functions of parliamentarians is participation in policy and law-making processes through parliamentary committees, working groups, parliamentary hearings and "government hour" sessions.[525] The research on parliamentary structures suggests that, depending on the issues at hand, the committees are hierarchical; in turn, this influences the status of their members. Membership in committees is declared to be voluntary, and is based on the expertise and intentions of individual MPs.[526] In practice, however, these principles do not work. In the interviews, all respondents acknowledged that they were assigned to a particular committee by the leadership of the party faction. One of the MPs described it as "going to zero level, stepping into the area where I feel myself a newcomer without expertise"[527]. It is also relevant at the local representation level; for example, one respondent admitted that she had come from healthcare sector but in the maslikhat she became "a member of the committees on the budget, environment and counterterrorism"[528]. Often the professional background and previous expertise of MPs were not taken into consideration in the process. For example, a parliamentarian who has extensive experience in gender equality issues was appointed to the committee on environment and ecology, presumably on the basis of her territorial identity. In addition to this, she was appointed to the area of domestic waste recovery—a field that also does not correspond to her professional activity.[529] As a rule, MPs from the region of East Kazakhstan are well represented in the abovementioned committee owing to the alarming environmental situation caused by the high concentration of metallurgic, extractive, and energy industries in its territory. However, an MP has the right to participate in the work of other committees with an advisory role.[530] For example, the abovementioned MP has

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[525] The Statute of Majilis, Rep.of Kazakhstan, endorsed on 8 February 1996, with amendments of 12 October 2005, 17 October 2007, 9 November 2011 and 7 September 2016, p. 138
[526] Art.15, Law on Committees and Commissions of the Parliament of the Rep.of Kazakhstan, 7 May 1997, N 101-I 3PK; Para 118, Chapter 8 "The Working Bodies of Majilis", Section 3 "Establishment of Majilis Units and Organisational Issues", The Statute of Majilis, Rep.of Kazakhstan, endorsed on 8 February 1996, with amendments of 12 October 2005, 17 October 2007, 9 November 2011 and 7 September 2016
[527] Interview with respondent B (31), MP.
[528] Interview with respondent E (46), a representative of the district level maslikhat, Shymkent (South Kazakhstan).
[529] Interview with respondent U (28), MP, Ust-Kamenogorsk, August 2016
[530] Art.18, Law on Committees and Commissions of the Parliament of the Rep.of Kazakhstan, 7 May 1997, N 101-I 3PK

additional advisory membership in the committee on social and cultural issues, which is responsible for gender issues. The law permits membership of only one committee, but it allows a member to change affiliation during the course of a parliament.[531]

The existence of a gendered pattern of appointments to the parliamentary committees is a widely accepted assumption. Starting with the seminal empirical research of Sue Thomas (1994), there have been numerous studies which demonstrate that women are more likely to have membership in "women's" committees on the basis of common characteristics usually attributed to women, such as compassion and care, rather on the basis of agentic leadership or professional attributes.[532] The general pattern of representation at the leadership level confirms the common assumption of the literature on gender and politics that women have higher chances to take leadership positions (chair and secretary) in the committees on social and cultural issues, as well as the financial committee. Only once was a female parliamentarian appointed to the position of chair of the committee on regional development and economic reform, and of the legislative committee. The representation of women in the leadership positions of the Kazakh parliament follows the general tendency of fewer women in high-prestige committees. In the first three parliaments, however, when women's representation was low, the parliamentary representation of women in committees was more diversified. Under those circumstances, women were also members of committees considered to be non-traditional, such as economic and budget development, environmental issues, law-making and IR, and defence and security. It is also worth mentioning that in that context, the positions held by women were higher than those held by their male counterparts. In some committees, women held leadership positions: for example, in the first parliament, the Standing Committee on legislative and legal issues was chaired by a female MP. According to the general pattern of women's parliamentary representation, however, as the number of female MPs grows, there is a higher concentration of women in the committee on social and cultural issues, which is considered to be a low-prestige appointment.

In the early parliaments, women tended to hold better positions, including in areas not considered traditional for women. Later, as their numbers grew, the quality of their participation changed and the status of their positions decreased. In the present parliament, the situation has started to change, at least at the level of the ordinary membership, by distributing female representatives among other committees. This trend should be analysed

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[531] Art.17, Law on Committees and Commissions of the Parliament of the Rep.of Kazakhstan, 7 May 1997, N 101-I 3PK
[532] Sue Thomas, *How Women Legislate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

not only from the perspective of gender and political institutions, but also though the theoretical prism of authoritarian institutionalism. Even though such a dynamic can be linked to the growing importance of women as political actors, it can also indicate that women are slowly taking part in informal networking, which is a crucial requirement for political recruitment and promotion in authoritarian regimes. Beginning in 2007, with the fourth parliament, a growing number of female members have joined parliamentary committees for areas other than those traditionally associated with women's interests (Table 5). The trend of the present parliament has favoured reallocating female MPs from the committee on social and cultural issues to the committees on legal reform, economic development, environment, and finance. MPs' representative functions have been reduced in favour of other tasks, such as considering individual complaints and transmitting the messages of the regime.

There is a rather different situation in high-prestige committees, such as on agriculture, IR, defence, and security, and on economic reform and regional development. Historically, there are fewer women on these committees both as ordinary members and holding decision-making positions. For women, the most closed committee is the committee on agriculture. With the exception of the fifth parliament, there have been no women among the committee's ordinary members since 1995. In general, the pattern of political representation of the committee on agriculture is more consistent than the one observed in other committees, both in terms of composition and relevant expertise. First, almost all members have prior experience and connections with the agricultural business. For example, in the committee on agriculture of the present parliament, there are a former minister and vice-minister of agriculture, the heads of the state-controlled organisations regulating different aspects of the agricultural business, and the heads of the agricultural and rural departments in the local government. Even though party affiliation does not play a significant role in the case of Kazakhstan's political system, it is worth mentioning that there are only two representatives of the Communist and Ak Zhol parties in the current committee on agriculture; one of these representatives possesses no expertise on the issue. Second, all re-elected members have remained on the same committee. For example, in the present committee, there are four incumbents, out of which only one was a member of other committees.[533] Third, the regional economic specificity of the committee is maintained through representation, i.e., most of the members are from the region of South Kazakhstan, a region that specialises in agriculture. Discussing the pattern of representation of this committee in light of the material benefits gained, it is important to

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[533] Zheksenbai Duysenbayev: http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/person/1284 (accessed 13 January 2022).

Table 5. Membership in Majilis, six parliaments

6th parliament

Committees	Agriculture		Legislation and legal reform		IR, security, and defence		Social cultural development		Finance and budget		Environment		Economic reform and regional development	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Chair	x		x		x			x		x	x		x	
Secretary	x			x		x	x			x		x		x
Members	11		10	5	12	1	10	5	9	3	8	4	12	3
No membership														

5th parliament: C(M) D(M, W)

Committees	Agriculture		Legislation and legal reform		IR, security, and defence		Social cultural development		Finance and budget		Environment		Economic reform and regional development	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Chair	x		x		x			x		x	x		x	
Secretary	x							x		x	x			x
Members	11	1	5	3	11	2	8	8	12	2	9	3	15	3
No membership	1	1												

4th parliament: C(M) D (M/M) 2007 – 2011 vice speaker (M)

Committees	Agriculture		Legislation and legal reform		IR, security, and defence		Social cultural development		Finance and budget		Environment		Economic reform and regional development	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Chair	x		x		X - x		X (2007-8)	X (8-11)		x	x		X - x	
Secretary	x			x	x		x	x	x		x		x	
Members	14		10	3	14	2	6	7	13	1	12	2	13	2

3rd parliament

Committees	Agriculture		Legislation and legal reform		IR, security, and defence		Social cultural development		Finance and budget		Environment		Economic reform and regional development	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Chair	x		x		x			x	x		x			x
Secretary	x			x		x	x		x		x		x	
Members	10		5		12		5	1	12		6	1	6	1
No membership	1	1												

2nd parliament (1999-2004) C-M; DC-M

Committees	Agriculture		Legislation and legal reform		IR, security, and defence		Social cultural development		Finance and budget		Environment		Economic reform and regional development	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Chair	x		x		x		x		x		x		x	
Secretary	x		x		x			x	x		x		x	
Members	9		7		7	1	4	1	5		7	1	4	

1st parliament (C-M; DC-M)

Committees	Agriculture		Legislation and legal reform		IR, security, and defence		Social cultural development		Finance and budget		Environment		Economic reform, finance and budget	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Chair	x			x	x		x		x		x		x	
Secretary	x		x		x			x	x		x		x	
Members	1		1		4	2	6	1	2		4		5	

Source: Majilis website, Section on the composition of the Committees:
http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/persons-of-committee/57

mention that this committee has more influence on securing certain policy concessions and obtaining favourable contracts. This is also proved by the specificity of budget allocation, in that agriculture is mostly a state-sponsored area.

Unlike the Committee on Agriculture, the committee on IR, defence, and security – one of the expanded committees in parliament – has enjoyed a record number of female representatives since 1995. Even after the electoral reforms in 2007, however, their number has not exceeded two; women have also served twice as secretaries. On the present committee, there are two women with no special professional expertise in the issues covered by the committee. One of them used to work with the committee on social and cultural issues in the previous parliament, advocating healthcare, social welfare, and cultural issues.[534] In the present parliament, she holds the position of secretary. All of the nine male incumbents have served earlier on the same committee, and most of them have worked in the Ministry of Defence, the security service, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This is another committee which shows a consistent representation pattern and record of professionals with relevant expertise.

The committee on economic reform and regional development has also traditionally recorded a low level of women's representation. As in the case of other committees, prior to 2007, there were almost no women among its members. However, in the third parliament, this committee was headed by a female MP,[535] but this can be considered as an exception rather than the rule. Prior to being elected, she served in the local government for eight years, and she is still the only woman to hold the post of city governor in Kazakhstan since independence. Even though she had a good opportunity to lead the region, she moved to the business sector after her parliamentary career. This fact proves the argument of this thesis that, for women, a political career in parliament is not a path for further career development. This explains why career-oriented women are reluctant to enter representative institutional politics.

With the 2007 (fourth) parliament, women started to gain representation on the committee on economic reform and regional development and, in the last two parliaments, a woman was appointed to the position of secretary.[536] Given the specificity of the issues covered by the committee, it is suggested that MPs have expertise in economics. Since economic development includes a variety of fields, however, it is difficult to evaluate the actual professional expertise of the members. Nevertheless, out of 16 members, nine have hardly

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[534] MP Irina Aronova: http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/person/1415, (accessed 13 January 2022).
[535] MP Vera Sukhorukova: http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=30104335, (accessed 13 January 2022).
[536] MP Meruert Kazbekova:http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/person/1480, (accessed 13 January 2022).

any experience in any relevant area of the committee's competence; they have previously worked in the fields of cultural and youth policy, human resources and administrative work, public relations, and so on. Three of these nine members with non-relevant experience are women. Six of the present members were re-elected, and four of them remained on the same committee, including one woman. Another female MP, who was re-elected three times and had expertise in cultural and youth policy as well as in the committee on social and cultural issues, was assigned to this committee in the present parliament.[537] Given the hierarchy of the committees, it is possible to argue that this reshuffle was a form of reward and promotion granted to the female MP by the regime.

The committee on ecology and environment is one of the committees which experienced an increase in the number of female members in the recent parliaments. In the present parliament, the committee consists of 13 members, including five women. It is chaired by a male parliamentarian, and a female MP serves as a secretary.[538] Since 1995, the number of women on this committee has slowly increased, which might be a consequence of the general increase in the number of women parliamentarians and changes in the electoral system, rather than the acknowledgement of the weight and expertise of female politicians. The composition of the committee provides further weight to this argument. Out of five female members, only one (i.e., a secretary) has a direct connection with environmental issues through her professional activity. The woman holds a PhD degree in geology, and has a great deal of experience in research on subsoil management, geology, and the extraction of minerals, as well as in the consultancy sector for mining industry companies. The other four female members have rather diverse backgrounds in sport, mass media, healthcare, and gender. Furthermore, some of those who were re-elected were the members of other committees in previous parliaments, which matched the scope their expertise. A similar pattern of representation is observed in male membership. Out of eight male members, only two have relevant education and/or experience in the local government on the issues related to the thematic area of the committee. All other present members of the committee come from a variety of backgrounds, such as journalism, prosecution, engineering, community services, and local government administration. Service in other committees in previous parliaments is also a shared experience among the members of this committee. This finding supports the argument that political representatives at the central

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[537] MP Maira Aisina: http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/person/1194, (accessed 13 January 2022).
[538] Majilis, "The Standing Committee on Ecology and Environment," (2017), accessed 13 January 2022, http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/persons-of-committee/57

level have restricted agency, in that all activities – including choosing which issues to advocate and which constituencies to represent – are imposed by the ruling group.

The committee on finance and budget is, today, the committee experiencing increasing female membership and leadership roles held by women. In the first three parliaments, women on the committee were neither ordinary members nor MPs in leadership positions. Since the fourth parliament, women have presided over the committee. In the present committee, there are five women out of 14 members, almost all of whom have solid expertise in budgeting, financing, and auditing. In terms of consistency in membership, this is the most stable committee, in that all the members retained their membership on the committee. Compared to the expertise of female MPs, seven male members represent fields other than those addressed by the committee, such as entrepreneurship, engineering, community services, transport, and so on.

As mentioned before, the extension of the scope of the political representation of female MPs in the Majilis occurred, *inter alia*, by including women on the committee on legislation and judicial and legal reform. In the first three parliaments, women were not present as ordinary members. There is, however, a record of women holding leadership positions on the committee. Since 2007, the presence of women has also been increasing in leadership positions, although only at the level of secretary. The committee initiated and approved the constitutional amendments and, therefore, is considered to be a useful mechanism in the parliamentary structure for the purposes of the regime. At the same time, the female politicians, who display a gender-sensitive approach and position themselves as gender activists, have rather traditional views on gender issues. As a rule, they refer to the state policies and patriarchal frameworks of gender roles, "even insisting on maintaining seniority relations",[539] according to which men are responsible for foreign affairs, natural resource management, and security issues, whereas women are in charge of social problems.

Substantive representation of women in the Kazakh parliament

Discussing the substantive representation of women in authoritarian regimes, it is necessary to understand the general performance of an authoritarian parliament and the thematic area of each legislature. This section discusses the contribution of women to the

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[539] Ludmila Popkova, "Political Empowerment of Women in Russia: Discourses and Strategies," *Sociologija Mintis ir veiksmas* 15 (2005): 101. DOI: 10.15388/SocMintVei.2005.1.5987.

policy-making process throughout the course of five parliaments and of the two-year period of the present legislature, based on descriptive statistics. For this purpose, the discussion is arranged around the main functions of the legislators, i.e., parliamentary requests, meeting with constituents, and the legislative processes. These sections explore the general patterns of substantive representation of both male and female parliamentarians. Furthermore, the discussion on the functions of female politicians is supplemented by the women's perspective on their role as political representatives, whose interests they represent, and their day-to-day activities in the office.

Furthermore, in order to highlight the role of women and their attitudes in relation to gender issues, I look closely at the adoption of two gender-related legislation acts: the *Domestic Violence Act* (2009), and the *Equal Retirement Age Act* (2013). These cases have been selected because of their relation to more strategic gender equality areas, in contrast to issues of traditional concern to women, such as reproductive health and childcare. Both cases were adopted during a period of increased women's descriptive representation in parliament. Another important reason for this case selection is that despite being equally feminist in their essence, the two acts generated different reactions and, therefore, different attitudes among policymakers and the population. The discussion developed in this chapter is based on the findings drawn from the data available on the parliament's website, and interviews with the MPs in the section on women's perception of representative functions.

Women's perception of their role as MPs

As in other countries of post-Soviet origin, women running for elections prefer to distance themselves from women's issues and to adopt a gender-neutral approach.[540] According to them, addressing common interests provides them with more credibility as candidates and politicians in the eyes of the voters. Often, the responses of female politicians revealed misunderstandings and misinterpretations about the notion of "feminism." For example, one of the respondents literally said: "I am not a feminist, but I stand for gender equality."[541] During electoral campaigns, female candidates at the national and local levels do not raise strategic gender equality issues, whether as the main issue area of their programme, or as an additional one. Usually, their programmes are based on their

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[540] Edita Badasyan, Gunel Movlud, and Nona Shahnazaryan, "From the Cinderella of Soviet Modernization to the Post-Soviet Return to 'National Traditions': Women's Rights in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia," *Caucasus Edition: Journal of Conflict Transformation* (2016): 287.
[541] Interview with respondent A (12), MP, Astana, August 2016.

professional experience, which is quite understandable, and women are not interested in including any gender agenda in their programmes. Once in formal political positions, women prefer not to be identified as female politicians by separating gender and professionalism.[542] As one of the respondents noted, women in Kazakhstan's politics prefer not to be associated with gender issues.[543] Moreover, even if they came to political office with a clear background in gender – for example, being a member of the Association of Business Women – they prefer to advance other issues on their agenda, or when defining their areas of interest.

It is interesting to note that women who adopt a gender-sensitive approach to political participation create the image of a "politician with a woman's face", emphasising a political career as an atypical profession for women.[544] When female MPs were asked whether it was easy to be a female politician, the majority of them responded in an essentialist way by referring to multitasking as a key aspect of women's functions.[545] Women linked the low level of influence they have on policy-making in Central and Eastern European parliaments to the nature of their involvement, which is perceived as "fragmented and confined to specific areas" of women's traditional concern. By comparing the responses provided by women MPs in the interviews, it can be argued that Kazakh female parliamentarians are confident in their capacity to impact the decision-making process and to emphasise that their influence extends outside the arena of women's issues.[546] At the same time, when responding to the questions related to the target groups they represent in parliament, they had difficulties in identifying them, and even in defining the issues of their concern. Usually, they named socially vulnerable groups and employees of state-run institutions (i.e., hospitals and schools), who are predominantly women. In most of the cases, women referred to NurOtan party being "a representative of all categories, men and women, old, young, children, people with disabilities, sick…everybody."[547] Only a few female MPs, who come from the corporate sector, were

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[542] Ekaterina R. Rashkova, Emilia Zankina, Karen Celis, and Sarah Childs, "When Less Means More: Influential Women of the Right—the Case of Bulgaria," *Gender, Conservatism and Political Representation* (2014): 103–20.

[543] Interview with respondent K (21), representative of regional level maslikhat.

[544] Popkova, "Political Empowerment of Women in Russia," 101.

[545] Caravan.kz, "Women's Face of Kazakh Politics," *Caravan*, 6 March 2015, accessed 13 January 2022,https://www.caravan.kz/articles/zhenskoe-lico-kazakhskojj-politiki-zhenshhinampolitikam-nelegko-374507//

[546] Sara Clavero and Yvonne Galligan, "'A Job in Politics is Not for Women': Analysing Barriers to Women's Political Representation in CEE," *Czech Sociological Review* 41/6 (2005): 993. DOI: 10.13060/00380288.2005.41.6.02

[547] Interview with respondent M (5), a representative of the district level maslikhat, Shymkent (South Kazakhstan).

able to articulate their interests and target groups clearly. These groups also corresponded to their legislative activity.

Female parliamentarians sounded more sceptical when pondering their influence on the decision making process. When defining how exactly they are able to exert their influence, they usually referred to a certain narrow area of their expertise, where they managed to achieve some progress or bring changes. Quite often, influence is manifested in opposition to the government's decisions. One of the examples of an MP demonstrating such influence was the creation of the commission dealing with the problems of the Ural river basin, which includes MPs and government officials.[548] Given the low level of public trust in state institutions, and especially in the government, these responses can be interpreted as an attempt to show that the MPs represent and stand for the interests of the public. This especially concerns those MPs who previously served in civil society organisations, such as one of the respondents, who was the founder of the League of the Rights of Consumers:

> I am sure I influence the decision-making process. For example, because of my lobby activity legislation was improved in terms of securing and guaranteeing the rights of consumers, legislation regarding the state orders was changed towards less bureaucracy, mediation as a new sphere was introduced into the legislation codes.[549]

Nevertheless, among female parliamentarians, there were also very different responses, mostly from former politicians. They expressed scepticism regarding the authority of parliament to intervene in the law- and policy-making processes, stating that the primary actors in these domains are the government and the president's office. Some of them were rather categoric, stating that the law-making process is completely under the control and supervision of the executives and the Akorda (presidential administration). According to them, the latter "hand over a draft bill to MPs with the informal order to endorse the initial version. Even if the Majilis dares to change it and submit to the Senate the altered version of the bill, the Senate has the power to re-write it before obtaining the signature of the president.[550]

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[548] Interview with respondent T (36), MP.
[549] Interview with respondent R (44), ex-MP, member of the Political Council of NO party.
[550] Interview with respondent S (27), MP.

The legislative process

As discussed in Chapter IV, the legislature in Kazakhstan shares its legislative function with the president and the government. In fact, most bills are initiated outside parliament, and the Constitution makes MPs dependent on the executive authorities in their legislative functions.[551] For example, out of 536 bills considered by the fifth parliament, only 38 (or 7%) were raised by MPs.[552] Given that only 460 bills were endorsed by parliament, the importance of the legislative function of the legislature is reduced, and limited to approving proposed laws. In certain cases, the legislature serves as a testing ground for the regime to try to pass controversial bills; its function is thus assessing social attitudes towards a particular topic. Despite the lack of a clear difference between the other parties' stances and ideology, and the dominant position of the ruling party, Nur Otan members led 88% of the working groups in the fifth parliament.[553] This implies that the representative activity of an MP is limited not only by the political system, but also by the very institutions themselves.

The activity of MPs is highly organised by the party, which decides on the appointments of MPs to the committees; voting preferences, especially on strategic issues; the organisation of meetings with constituents; and delegations to overseas missions. Such a narrow level of control adds barriers to the representative functions of MPs. One of my respondents shared her honest opinion about the legislative capacity of the parliament:

> In general, 80% of the law making initiative is within the hands of the government because they are in charge of the budget, and have more opportunities to initiate comprehensive and reasonable justification for amending or initiating laws. If the MP initiates the law, it should be agreed and endorsed with the relevant government structures. Therefore, MPs are limited in terms of law making activity.[554]

Despite the restrictive political setting, however representation does happen, even if it assumes different forms. For example, Gerrit Krol found out that Russian MPs play an active role in the legislative process in parliament by influencing policy-making,

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[551] Timur Kanapyanov, "Role and Place of the Parliament of Kazakhstan in the System of Checks and Balances," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 51/1 (2018): 81–87.
[552] Majilis, "Report on activity for the period 20.01.2012–20.01.2016," (2016), accessed 13 January 2022, http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/Files/Pdf?file=%2Fru%2Fmazhilis%2FFiles%2FGetPdf%3Ffid%3D846, 18.
[553] Ibid.
[554] Interview with respondent S (27), MP.

notwithstanding the reduced agency of the parliament in that particular authoritarian context.[555] In dominant party regimes, MPs are strictly limited in their activities by the guiding role of the party and, therefore, they have a limited choice of forms of available representation. Representation can also happen in other ways, such as from the top down. Parliamentarians are used by the regime to promote key messages beneficial to regional elites. This dynamic is similar to the pattern of political representation in the former Soviet Union.[556]

As mentioned earlier, the committee on IR, defence, and security issues as well as the one on finance and legal issues, are among the top committees, with a higher volume of bills under consideration amounting, together, to 75% of all bills (Table 6). As a result, the majority of the issues raised by the fifth parliament covered international relations (44%), far exceeding other topics. The areas of state governance, security, finance, and business were addressed in almost equal measure in the bills (9%).[557] As usual, traditional women's issues such as healthcare, education, culture, and social protection received insignificant attention in bills in comparison with areas of top interest—i.e., less than 1%, except for social protection (3%).

Table 6. Thematic areas of the bills considered by the Majilis and sent to the Senate for approval in the fifth parliament

Thematic area of the bill	Quantity	Percentage of the total amount of the bills
Finance, credit, and customs	40	9
Natural resource management and environment	4	1
Foreign policy	202	44
State building (constitutional order, civil service, etc.)	44	10
Employment and social protection	24	5
Construction and housing and utility infrastructure	3	1
Education	5	1
Agriculture	6	1
Industry, transport and communication	17	4
Science, culture and healthcare	7	3
Defence and security	36	8
Law enforcement, judicial system, and prosecution office	11	3
Civil code	4	1
Economy	40	9
Total	**460**	**100%**

Source: Compilation of the data from the Report of the sixth Majilis:
http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/performance;
http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/Files/Pdf?file=%2Fru%2Fmazhilis%2FFiles%2FGetPdf%3Ffid%3D846

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[555] Gerrit Krol, "Legislative Performance of the Russian State Duma: The Role of Parliament in an Authoritarian Regime," *East European Politics* 33/4 (2017): 450–71. DOI: 10.1080/21599165.2017.1346504
[556] Theodore H. Friedgut, *Political Participation in the USSR* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979).
[557] Majilis, "Report on activity for the period 20.01.2012–20.01.2016."

According to the official data on the sixth parliament's legislative activity, social issues, including those which target either gender equality or women's interests, are not yet on the priority list. The proportion of social issues holds an insignificant rate of 5%, along with bills related to construction (1%), agriculture (2%), culture (1%), the economy (1%), and defence (2%) (Table 7). In other words, if the substantive representation of women is considered to be a process of prioritising social policies, the activity of the current parliament can hardly be defined as gendered in terms of policy making.

Table 7. Thematic areas of the bills considered by the Majilis and sent to the Senate for approval in the sixth parliament

Thematic area of the bill	Quantity	Percentage of the total amount of the bills
Finance, credit, and customs	28	31%
Natural resource management and environment	5	6%
Foreign policy	11	12%
State building (constitutional order, civil service, etc.)	4	5%
Employment and social protection	3	4%
Construction and housing and utility infrastructure	1	1%
Agriculture	2	2%
Industry, transport and communication	5	6%
Science, culture and healthcare	1	1%
Defence	2	2%
Law enforcement, judicial system, and the prosecution office	24	27%
Civil code	2	2%
Economy	1	1%
Total	**89**	**100%**

Source: Compilation of the data from the Report of the sixth Majilis, available here
http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/performance

Accordingly, the most active parliamentary committees of the current parliament – which have together initiated 55% of the bills under consideration – are those on IR, defence, and security, and the committee on legislation and legal reform (Table 8). Given the gendered composition of the committees, this is an ambiguous finding. The former committee has included the lowest number of female parliamentarians as members throughout the history of the parliament, whilst the latter has experienced a gradual increase in female membership since the fourth parliament. Although both committees are equally active in the quantity of the bills that they have considered, the quality of the work varies. The committee on IR, defence, and security performs better in terms of successful bills; 38% of the legal initiatives produced by this committee were signed by the president. In the committee on legal issues, the relevant indicator is only 14%.

The group of committees characterised by a middle-range activity includes the traditional

Table 8. Distribution of the bills and their status among the parliamentary committees in the sixth parliament

Committee	Number of bills					
	Considered	Returned by the Senate	Withdrawn	Waiting for the Senate's approval/president's signature	Signed by the president	Work in progress
Agriculture	13			4	3	6
Legal issues	72	1		11	24	37
IR, defence, and security	77	3	1	16	39	22
Social and cultural issues	40	1	2	2	8	28
Finance and budget	39	9		10	19	10
Ecology and environment	12			3	5	4
Economic reform and regional development	38	3		6	18	14
Total	**291**	**17**	**3**	**52**	**116**	**121**

Source: Compilation of the data from the Report of the sixth Majilis: http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/performance

women-related committee on social and cultural issues (13%), as well as the committees which have increased the number of women in their composition, i.e., finance and budget (14%), and the economy (11%). Given their higher proportion of members with relevant expertise in the specific issues covered, these committees are expected to have equally higher rates of performance. This is only true in the case of the financial committee, as 42% of the bills were signed by president. At the same time, 27% of the proposed bills were returned to the committee by the Senate. No committee except that on legal issues has such a large number of bills under revision. The committee on social and cultural issues has the lowest indicator of success, with only 4% of the considered bills being transformed into legally binding acts. The committee on economic reform and regional development performs better, with 25% of the approved bills. The least active committee in the present parliament is the one on environmental issues, which has only fewer than 3% of the bills in progress, with none of them approved so far. Similarly, the agricultural committee works on 11% of the bills, albeit with better results, i.e., 18% of the bills have already become law. The environmental committee has increased the number of women as members, and in leadership positions in the present parliament.

Those committees which have experienced an increase in the number of women among their members have a weaker legislative performance record in the current parliament

compared to the traditionally male committees. This finding allows us to assume that female parliamentarians have lower performance as legislators, either owing to a lack of expertise, or to the intention of the regime to give more emphasis to the other functions of women as political representatives. The analysis of the MP's questions suggests a lower rate of activity amongst women in raising issues of non-traditional concern to women, with the exception of those concerning special categories, such as the disabled.

The Domestic Violence Act (2009)

The draft legislation of the *Domestic Violence Act* had been discussed for about a decade prior to its adoption in a version "loosely replicating the legal tools and framework of the U.S. and European nations."[558] The Act was signed by the president on 4 December 2009, on the eve of the country's 2010 chairmanship of OSCE; which many activists considered to be a lucky circumstance. The regime needed to demonstrate its commitment to human rights protection, through the adoption of several relevant bills.[559] It received a stimulus, however, when the issue of violence against women was solely located within the family and presented as part of the problems addressed by state policies on demographics, i.e., to protect the family and women as homemakers. The slogan of the anti-violence campaign was "violence against a woman is a weakness of men",[560] appealing to the traditional image of women as guardians of the home, itself perceived as a sacred place. In line with the arguments used by the Muslim community to discourage perpetrators, the anti-violence movement referred to the national identity of the country and Muslim family values.[561] Interestingly enough, the special unit of the Ministry of Interior in charge of addressing cases of domestic violence (DV) had been created in 1999, long before the adoption of the law. The work of this unit was ineffective, however, owing to a lack of special training for the police and the absence of clearly defined functions.[562]

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[558]The Advocates for Human Rights, Stop Violence against Women project, available at http://www.stopvaw.org/kazakhstan

[559]The Advocates for Human Rights, Stop Violence against Women project, available at http://www.stopvaw.org/kazakhstan

[560] Media Centre of Ministry of Interior, Violence against women is weakness of men, February 19, 2014. Available at http://mediaovd.kz/ru/?p=3504

[561] Edward Snajdr, "Gender, Power, and the Performance of Justice: Muslim Women's Responses to Domestic Violence in Kazakhstan," *American Ethnologist* 32/2 (2008): 294–311.DOI:10.1525/ae.2005.32.2.294

[562] Edward Snajdr, "Balancing Acts: Women's NGOs Combating Domestic Violence in Kazakhstan," in *Domestic Violence in Postcommunist States: Local Activism, National Policies, and Global Forces*, ed. Katalin Fábián (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 111–32.

The idea of initiating the bill was indirectly promoted by civil society. In the late 1990s, the first women's shelter was established by the NGO Podrugi, primarily funded by international donors. During the same time period, the hotline became functional and allowed civil society to create the first evidence-driven baseline for the issue. In the decade after these initial achievements, addressing cases of domestic violence together with the police and the judges proved to be challenging work. In fact, at that time, NGOs mainly focused on the development of facilities. Therefore, as the gender activist Svetlana Shakirova has admitted, the adoption of the law was a "complete surprise" for the women's movement in Kazakhstan.[563] The MP who raised the issue in parliament was a man, Zhakip Asanov, who had been involved in the enforcement of the law on DV in his capacity of General Prosecutor. Later, in 2016, the General Prosecutor Office launched the campaign "Kazakhstan Without Violence At Home" in cooperation with the Commission, UN Women and the EU.

The topic of domestic violence was raised in 2016 in relation to the assault on the local media celebrity Bayan Yessentayeva, who was hospitalised after she was stabbed by her husband.[564] After several days, she made an official statement expressing the intention to file suit against her husband and to demand justice. After a few months, however, she publicly forgave him and withdrew the suit by calling for "peaceful solutions" in similar cases. Other cases of violence against women that resonated included the following: an Air Astana ticket officer, punched in the face by the banker Darkhan Botabayev; a woman kicked several times by the rural governor in northern Kazakhstan; the double rape on the Astana-Aktobe train. These are just a few of the numerous cases that have occurred in recent years.[565] In 2016, following a similar movement launched in Russia and Ukraine called "Speak Out", the Kazakh activist Dina Smagulova established a network called #NeMolchi (the analogue of the #MeToo campaign) to expose cases of domestic violence. Later started as a media campaign, this initiative was transformed into an organisation which provides legal and psychological assistance to victims of violence.[566]

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[563] Botagoz Seydakhmetova, "Fighting Patriarchy in Kazakhstan: Problems and Perspectives," *OpenDemocracy*, 19 June 2018, accessed 13 January 2022, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/fighting-patriarchy-in-kazakhstan/

[564] Aktan Rysaliev, "Kazakhstan: Celebrity Beating Puts Spotlight on Issue of Domestic Violence," *Eurasianet*, 29 June 2016, accessed 13 January 2022, https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-celebrity-beating-puts-spotlight-issue-domestic-violence

[565] Joanna Lillis, "Kazakhstan: Domestic Violence Rising on Political Agenda," *Eurasianet*, 10 December 2013, accessed 13 January 2022, https://eurasianet.org/kazakhstan-domestic-violence-rising-on-political-agenda

[566] Ainur Koskina, "Speak Out: Women in Kazakhstan Started to Discuss Violence Publicly," *Current Time*, 26 August 2016, accessed 13 January 2022, https://www.currenttime.tv/a/27947669.html

In 2017, the Minister of the Interior reported a decrease in DV-related cases.[567] Whether the decrease was caused by effective enforcement of the law or by the reluctance of women to report DV was not questioned. In 2017, the Agency on Statistics conducted a nation-wide study on the prevalence and forms of sexual, psychological, economic, and physical violence. It revealed that northern Kazakhstan has the highest numbers of reported cases of psychical (31%) and economic (45%) violence,[568] whereas the lowest cases of violence were recorded in the region of Kzylorda, one of the southern regions where patriarchal family relations are maintained and promoted. As in the case of other sensitive issues, these findings can be interpreted in another way, namely, that women in the northern regions are more willing to share painful experiences instead of silencing them, as occurs in the country's traditional southern regions. The importance of this study is that, for the first time, the government uncovered the issue of violence against women and established an evidence-driven baseline for further policy design.

At the same time, however, the state demonstrated that it tolerates violence, when the law was decriminalised following a similar measure adopted in Russia.[569] The representatives of women's organisations in Kazakhstan do not consider this move to be a retrograde step, because enforcement of the law was ineffective even when it was part of the criminal code. Women rarely agreed to file suit against their husbands because of the high fine of 262,000 KZT (600EUR), which had to be paid from the family budget. In addition to this, the 60-day detention period—the highest punishment for this type of crime—was suspended until 2020. It was, therefore, never applied. The appeal cases on rape brought in the court received very moderate judgements. For example, two rapists, trainmen, by abusing their position, locked the couchette of a train and raped a young woman travelling overnight from Astana to Aktobe in 2018. The case was protracted for months; eventually, the court sentenced each of them to two and a half years of imprisonment, actually qualifying the incident as two independent cases, instead of a collective rape.

MPs have demonstrated a lack of real interest in this issue. The bill was developed and advocated by civil society organisations and women's movements. Female MPs expressed their opinion on violence in families by condemning it. However, these women did not take a proactive position in promoting this bill, limiting their involvement to a passive

[567] Zhazira Dyussembekova, "Kazakh Domestic Violence Rate Decreases," *Astana Times*, 22 February 2017, accessed 13 January 2022, https://astanatimes.com/2017/02/kazakh-domestic-violence-rate-decreases/
[568] United Nations Population Fund, "Study of Violence Against Women," (2017), accessed 13 January 2022, https://kazakhstan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Report%20on%20Nat%20VAW%20survey%20RUS.pdf
[569] On July 3 President signed a law decriminalizing domestic violence – the article 108 and 109 of Criminal Code ("Infliction of harm to health" and "Beating")

agreement in its favour. They participated in discussion platforms dedicated to the issue,[570] and sometimes in campaigns on ending violence against women, but none of them made this issue a priority in their agenda or a top question in parliament. In addition to this, women MPs' involvement in the issue of DV focused on the perspective of women's health rather than from principles of gender equality. One of their favourite arguments was the calculation of the costs related to the medical and psychological recovery of DV survivors. For example, during the debates on the decriminalisation of domestic violence, the MP Bakhytgul Khamenova argued that the increase in divorce rates was as a consequence of domestic violence.[571]

Equal Retirement Age (2013)

This bill was initiated by the government as a part of a long-term pension reform that was started in the mid-1990s. In 2013, the government introduced changes in the *Law on Retirement Insurance* by equalising the retirement age of men and women. According to Art.11, the retirement age of women will be gradually increased by six months each year until it reaches 63, i.e., men's retirement age. This means that by 2027, the retirement age of men and women it will be equalised.[572] Given that women's life expectancy is longer than that of men, this measure provides women with the chance of higher pensions, because it is partially based on individual contribution accounts equal to 10% of the monthly salary accumulated by an employee during his/her active employment. This legislative measure was positively assessed by the CEDAW Committee, as it was considered to be a measure to minimise gender-based discrimination,[573] even though the idea behind it was far from being premised on gender equality principles. The main reasons were, rather, linked to the growing proportion of the elderly population and the forecast budget deficit by 2023. The reform announcement burst into public discussion and, then, into discontent.

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[570] Gulnara Bizhanova's (MP) official profile page:
http://www.parlam.kz/ru/blogs/bizhanovag/Details/2/30275 (accessed 13 January 2022).
[571] Zakon.kz, "Clause on Domestic Violence is Proposed to Decriminalize," *Zakon.kz*, 15 February 2017, accessed 13 January 2022, https://www.zakon.kz/4844371-statju-o-bytovom-nasilii-iz-ugolovnogo.html
[572] On *Retirement Insurance in the Republic of Kazakhstan*. Chapter 2. Procedure of exercising the retirement insurance from the centre, Art 11(1) Award of pension payments from the Center
[573] United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), "Concluding Observations on the Combined 3rd and 4th Periodic Reports of Kazakhstan." See Section B, "Positive Aspects." s

In this situation, MPs tried to distance themselves from the unpopular reform.[574] They publicly asked the National Bank management to provide the names of the authors of the reform, pointing out that there had not been any public discussion on the issue. At the same time, when the journalists asked the Majilis press service to release the voting list of MPs, it was found to be confidential information.[575] Later, it was revealed that the Communist faction voted against the reform, and some Ak Zhol party members abstained. Again, as in the case of the *Domestic Violence Act*, female MPs did not express their views, and preferred not to raise the gender dimension of the pension reform. The female MPs who voted against it or abstained, acted as members of the party.

Even when the public asked for clarification about a possible delay in the enforcement of the law, MPs could not provide it. For example, Aigul Solovieva, MP, gender activist, and the former director of the Civil Alliance (the organisation which united all civil society organisations), said that the parliamentarians were unaware of what was going on and what the government's intentions were regarding this law. To justify their position, she added that the government's calculations were convincing, and that MPs could not vote against the law.[576] The only (weak) voices of protest were articulated by two male parliamentarians—a leader of the Communist Party, and a senator.

Parliamentary requests

MPs can request information directly from executives at the national and local level through official requests. In the majority of cases, the requests are made collectively. MPs' questions to the government in written ("queries") or oral ("government hour") forms can serve as an effective tool of substantive representation. In developed democracies, the questions are used by MPs for a wide range of public and personal purposes. For example, an MP can influence the implementation of policies, and increase his/her popularity among constituents.[577] It is not relevant to compare the impact of MP's questions in authoritarian conditions, owing to the limited agency of the legislature as a political institution, as well

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[574] Kapital.kz," MPs Wonder About Authorship of Pension Reform," *Kapital.Kz*, 2 May 2013, accessed 13 January 2022, https://kapital.kz/finance/14997/deputaty-interesuyutsya-avtorstvom-pensionnoj-reformy.html
[575] Forbes Kazakhstan, "Who Out of MPs Voted Against Pension Reform?" *Forbes Kazakhstan*, 24 May 2013, accessed 13 January 2022, https://forbes.kz/process/kto_iz_deputatov_golosoval_protiv_pensionnogo_zakona/
[576] Zakon.kz, "MPs Did Not Confirm Delay of Pension Reform," *Zakon.kz*, accessed 13 January 2022, https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=31382697#pos=5;2
[577] Thomas Saalfeld, "Parliamentary Questions as Instruments of Substantive Representation: Visible Minorities in the UK House of Commons, 2005–10," *The Journal of Legislative Studies* 17/3 (2011): 271–89. DOI: 10.1080/13572334.2011.595121

as the reduced and controlled nature of its legislative proceedings. However, this particular form of substantive representation provides MPs with a certain degree of freedom to act as representatives to the regions, in contrast with their legislative function.

As discussed in Chapter III, the early parliaments acted more independently from the executive institutions owing to the less controlled nature of political recruitment.[578] Even though parliament enjoyed more space to conduct its activities and, in case of contradictions with the government, it dared to reject its proposed bill, it never ran the risk of being dissolved. In 1996, the government proposed amendments to the pension legislation, which were opposed by parliament. The amendments were designed to introduce a savings pension system,[579] and generated discontent in Kazakh society. The government called for a vote of confidence, which could result in the dissolution of either parliament or the government. In this situation, parliament gave in and approved the pension reform. It is more correct to suggest that the early parliaments were not independent per se, but played the role of interlocutors between society and the strong executive. Even though the legislature was more accountable to society, however, it never confronted the government seriously.

The fourth parliament was the first parliament where the dominant Nur Otan party established itself as the most broadly represented party in legislation, leaving almost no room for alternatives (Table 9). This development, however, has had little effect on women's professional profiles and their capacity to raise gender-related issues. MP's requests became more gender-divisive from 2007. Male parliamentarians dominated most of the thematic areas of the questions raised, including the fields of interest traditionally associated with women, such as culture and healthcare. Although male dominance in parliamentary questions was always a factor, from the fourth parliament this was particularly striking because, in most of the thematic areas addressed by the parliament, more than 80% of the questions were submitted by men. On the contrary, their female counterparts became more active in traditional women's areas of interest (e.g., people with disabilities)—although not in an overwhelming way. For example, in the fourth parliament, the only area which received equal attention from both male and female MPs were issues related to women, which included topics such as the problem of single mothers with many children; the rape of female employees in state institutions; the ban on abortion; and equal

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[578] Andrey Chebotarev, "Specificity and Perspectives of National Parliamentarism," *Alternativa*, 22 December 2011, accessed 13 January 2022, http://www.alternativakz.com/index.php?nid=91

[579] Kazportal, "Development of Pension System in Kazakhstan,", *Kazportal*, 15 January 2016, accessed 13 January 2022, http://www.kazportal.kz/razvitie-pensionnoy-sistemyi-v-kazahstane/

Table 9. Gendered dimension of MP questions, by thematic areas in the fourth parliament (2007–12)

Thematic area	Total number of MPs' submitted questions	Men		Women	
		quantity	%	quantity	%
Business	115	98	**85%**	17	15%
Education	541	421	78%	120	22%
Law enforcement and legal issues	475	412	**87%**	63	13%
Health care	303	240	**80%**	63	20%
Ecology and environment, natural resources	373	342	**92%**	31	8%
Economy and regional development	300	270	**90%**	30	10%
Social issues	728	551	76%	177	24%
Women related issues[580]	16	8	50%	8	**50%**
Human rights	34	26	76%	8	24%
Disabled persons	51	31	61%	20	**39%**
Culture and sport	923	806	**87%**	117	13%
Transport and communication	312	282	**90%**	30	10%
Agriculture	359	331	**92%**	28	8%
Industry	56	53	**95%**	3	5%
Urban and rural development	503	439	**87%**	64	13%
IR, defence, and security	210	194	**92%**	16	8%
Individual cases	363	310	**85%**	53	15%
Finance and budget	286	258	**90%**	28	10%
Corruption and transparency	65	56	**86%**	9	14%
Emergencies	84	73	**87%**	11	13%
State institutions (local government, civil service)	191	165	**86%**	26	13%

Source: Compilation of the data on MP requests:
http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/deputy-questions

rights for men and women. It is interesting to note that the types of gender-related issues raised in the fourth parliament were more feminist in their essence, as the questions submitted addressed gender inequalities and stereotypes prevailing in society. Given that women did not demonstrate any feminist or gender equality commitments prior to being elected, this increased interest in gender issues had a spontaneous character, and is unlikely to be correlated with the increased presence of women in parliament. Even though in later parliaments gender-related issues were raised by a greater number of parliamentarians, they were mostly related to the reproductive responsibilities of women.

Female MPs were mostly interested in the traditional domains of health and social issues, with a focus on those related to people with disabilities (Tables 10 and 11). The questions related to women were mostly approached from the perspective of demography and health

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[580] Women's issues and gender equality.

care, i.e., tackling increasing maternal and child mortality rates, promoting an increase in maternal allowances to stimulate the birth rate, as well as support for single parents. There was a small proportion of women MPs who raised region-specific questions; in the fifth parliament, for example, this amounted to only 23% of the female representatives (Table 10). This is owing to the pattern of regional representation of parliamentarians, which reduces the capacity of women to also represent regions at the national level. Such a dynamic contributes to limiting the role of women as political actors and representatives, as well as their influence on policy-making.

Table 10. Gendered dimension of MP questions, by thematic areas in the fifth parliament (2012–16)

Thematic area	Total number of MPs' submitted questions	Men		Women	
		quantity	%	quantity	%
Business	304	217	71%	87	29%
Education	494	304	62%	190	38%
Law enforcement and legal issues	236	260	**82%**	86	18%
Health care	318	190	60%	128	**40%**
Ecology and environment, natural resources	552	452	**82%**	100	18%
Economy and regional development	283/178	208/137	73%/77%	75/41	27%/23%
Social issues	809	534	66%	275	34%
Women related issues	50	34	68%	16	32%
Human rights	57	38	67%	19	33%
Disabled persons	134	71	53%	63	**47%**
Culture and sport	475	345	73%	130	27%
Transport and communication	345	282	**82%**	63	18%
Agriculture	238	193	**81%**	45	19%
Industry	59	44	75%	15	25%
Urban and rural development	207	160	77%	47	23%
IR, defence, and security	92	63	68%	29	32%
Individual cases	115	84	73%	31	27%
Finance and budget	337	248	74%	89	26%
Corruption and transparency	119	82	69%	37	31%
Emergencies	38	32	**84%**	6	16%
State institutions (local government, civil service)	167	117	70%	50	30%

Source: Compilation of the data on MP requests:
http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/deputy-questions

Table 11. Gendered dimension of MP questions, by thematic areas, the 6th parliament

Thematic area	Total number of MPs	Men		Women	
		quantity	%	quantity	%
Business	260	155	60%	105	**40%**
Education	466	292	63%	174	37%
Law enforcement and legal issues	188	126	67%	62	33%
Health care	390	205	53%	185	**47%**
Ecology and environment, natural resources	168	116	70%	52	30%
Economy and regional development	284	204	72%	80	28%
Social issues	520	326	63%	194	37%
Disabled persons	79	31	40%	48	**60%**
Culture and sport	282	183	65%	99	35%
Transport and communication	148	118	**80%**	30	20%
Agriculture	452	360	**80%**	92	20%
Industry	105	72	69%	33	31%
Housing and urban planning	126	92	73%	34	27%
IR, defence, and security	67	49	73%	18	27%
Individual cases	63	45	72%	18	28%
Finance and budget	200	122	61%	78	39%
Corruption	29	17	59%	12	**41%**
Emergencies	144	100	**70%**	44	30%

Source: Compilation of the data on MP requests:
http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/deputy-questions

It is important to describe the hierarchy of female MPs, as this aspect defines the level of MPs' engagement in representative work. At the top of this informal structure, there are women with prior professional backgrounds in ministries and the presidential office. They are followed by a group of so-called professional parliamentarians, who have been re-elected in more than two parliaments. There is also a group of active MPs without any influential past positions, who use their careers in parliament as an opportunity to become useful to the party and the regime. They are frequently mentioned by mass media, and they are more approachable and recognisable. At the bottom of the hierarchy, there are young women with neither influence nor experience, as well as women who have been elected through the quota system of the Assembly.

Women (as well as men) who join parliament from higher positions in the cabinet are less active in terms of legislative activity. They initiate a smaller amount of bills, which are usually included in joint requests. Their role as parliamentarians is primarily focused on party activities, i.e., field meetings with diverse social groups and constituencies, or attending international events. Thus, these types of formerly powerful women are not

interested in performing their representative function as MPs, but, rather in capitalising on their former status.[581] For example, a female MP who had previously served as minister of the environment and chairperson of the national women machinery, was not interested in advancing gender equality issues in parliament.

Women elected through the ethnic quota system as members of the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan serve primarily as ethnic representatives. These female MPs, together with young female representatives, are mostly passive in terms of initiating law, and they usually participate in working groups on the ratification of international agreements. This is another feature of female substantive representation in the Kazakh parliament. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that, usually, the endorsement of the ratification of bilateral agreements has already been processed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the presidential office before it is transferred to parliament. Therefore, it is particularly these kinds of bills which require less effort and involvement on the part of the MPs, who are not offered any room to exercise their agency as representatives. Young female MPs have less autonomy to choose committees and to raise individual issues. Therefore, they are usually listed in collective requests, which sometimes do not correspond to their professional activities, and do not necessarily reflect their level of engagement in the discussion.

> I don't see any ideological difference between the party members in parliament. There are no political contradictions between the parties. But representatives of other parties try to make speeches and express opinions on every issue because they are insufficient in number. So, I think those female MPs from other parties, they are selected more based on professional grounds, they have to be eloquent and charismatic to be visible. In the Nur Otan party, there are more opportunities to be silent, hoping that other deputies from the party will express the party's platform, reliance on others.[582]

Another important feature of the substantive representation of women is that even when women raise issues related to non-traditional fields of women's concern, such as finance or the economy, these become indirectly connected with the areas of education and healthcare. For example, in the fifth parliament, there were a number of requests raised by female MPs related to budget increases, additional funding, or support mechanisms. Essentially, they targeted specialists of the education and healthcare sectors and aimed at

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[581] Aitkul Samakova, Dariga Nazarbayeva, Gulzhan Karagusova, and Gulshara Abdikalikova.
[582] Interview with respondent S (27), MP.

improving the infrastructure facilities of schools and hospitals. Despite performing their legislative functions in a rather predictable way, female representatives of the fifth parliament raised certain issues which were not supported by society, and which faced resistance in the legislature. For instance, Aitkul Samakova, a former chairperson of the national women machinery and member of the cabinet, proposed to introduce a course on sexual relations in the high school curriculum.[583] This request generated resentment among schoolteachers and in the ministry of education. Another MP, Nadezhda Petukhova, suggested that young women over 16 should be given the possibility of visiting the gynaecologist independently, without being accompanied by their parents.[584] This proposal, however, was severely opposed by her male colleagues and the government, and it was not further developed. Given the gendered distribution of the questions raised, the performance of this particular function by female MPs seems to be less effective than by their male counterparts. Women are not well represented even in the expected areas, such as social issues. The exceptions are the concerns of disabled people and healthcare, which compose the domain of social issues.

As a rule, MP's questions are formulated on the basis of individual claims received from the citizens either directly, or during onsite visits in the regions. If we consider the table below as input (the basis of the MP's questions) and we compare it with the output (MP's questions), we observe that the questions raised by female MPs are more aligned with social issues. Among legislative (rule of law) and economic issues, the group of claims related to social problems drew the attention of a higher proportion of women in parliament. On the contrary, agricultural issues, mostly raised by male MPs, were the least considered in the voters' demands.

Meetings with constituents

Apart from legislative activity, MPs are obliged to meet with constituents on a regular basis. As a rule, these ten-day meetings happen once per quarter. The meetings are organised by the party, including the composition of the group, target region, constituency, and the agenda. Quite often there is no consistency in maintaining the similar group of voters of a particular MP. For example, an MP who has worked as a gender activist in the eastern regions of Kazakhstan has taken part in a group of MPs sent to the southern regions

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[583] Assel Satayeva, "MP Proposes to Introduce Sexual Education in Schools", *Tengrinews.kz*, 1 June 2012, accessed 13 January 2022, https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/uroki-polovogo-prosvescheniya-predlagaet-vvesti-215176/

[584] Majilis, "MP question #136," 16 March 2012, accessed 13 January 2022, http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/question-details/5270

of the country to meet workers in factories.[585] Given that she had no prior experience in, and awareness of, the specific problems faced by this category of voters, it was difficult for her to establish a meaningful connection. There is also a lack of consistency in the organisation of these meetings, in that MPs do not visit the same place twice. Without any follow-up actions, these constituency meetings lose their value in terms of citizens' representation. However, these meetings manage to gather crowds, as pointed out by one of the respondents in Somfalvy's study[586]. In this regard it is worth mentioning that participation is mandatory for the employees of a visited institution. As one of the MPs testified:

> Once per month I participate in the government hour—a meeting within which MPs ask questions to the ministers. Ten days per quarter I meet the voters in the regions assigned to me by the party faction. And you never know which region you will go to next; although I am a representative of the eastern Kazakhstan region I can be sent to any other region—there is no connection between the MP and the regional voters.[587]

Officially, the purpose of the meetings is to maintain connections with the voters. As the report of the Majilis mentions:

> Deputies conducted a massive explanatory work with the voters about the achievements of Kazakhstan in 25 years of independence; the Patriotic Act "Mangilik El" (which literally means "Eternal Country"); the Nation's Plan; the implementation of the Party programme; the tasks set by the President in his address on 31 January 2017, "Third Modernisation of Kazakhstan: Global competitiveness"; the contents of the presidential address on the redistribution of power between the two branches; and constitutional amendments.

It is relevant to note that these reports use the same wording employed during the Soviet past to describe communications with the voters, i.e., "explanatory work".

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[585] Interview with respondent U (28), MP, Ust-Kamenogorsk, Kazakhstan, August 2016.
[586] Somfalvy, E., 2020. Parliamentary Representation in Central Asia: MPs Between Representing Their Voters and Serving an Authoritarian Regime. Routledge
[587] Interview with respondent U (28), MP.

Once per quarter there is a ten-day trip to the regions to meet with the voters; to report on the implementation of the state programmes and take complaints from the population. This is mandatory, you can't avoid it. I think the Majilis responds to the needs of the population. For instance, after the massive protests caused by the amendments to the land legislation in May 2016, the law-making process has become more transparent, to my mind. Each draft legislative act must pass through multiple discussions with the experts, civil society, a public audience, and the party. I am lucky that I was placed in the committee on the rule of law and legal issues—this is my topic, but I have to be in other committees as an observer.[588]

In the Soviet period, the propaganda work was conducted by the Communist Party. As the respondents confirmed, during these meetings the MPs inform the population and explain to them the existing policies on the country's development. As the Majilis Speaker has expressed, the primary task of the MPs is "to make each voter understand the key statements of large-scale presidential programmes",[589] with a focus on remote villages. In this sense, parliamentarians are used as channels to promote the discourse of the regime and its policies. Interestingly, in this particular function, the party division does not matter because the onsite meetings are organised by the ruling party. For example, Communist Party members reported that, during these onsite meetings, they explained to citizens the presidential address on the need to increase the well-being of Kazakhstan.[590] The Ak Zhol party does not include the section about their work with constituents, since this work is done centrally by the Nur Otan party. The data in Table 12 shows the scale of visits, which cannot contribute in a substantial way to building consistent connections between the voters and political representatives. By referring to the role of the Soviet local delegates, they "explain and propagandise the policies of the Communist Party, and by personal example sit as a model in the fulfilment of labour and social duties."[591]

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[588] Interview with respondent B (31), MP.
[589] A. Nigmatulin, "A Task of MPs in the Regions is to Explain Key Statements of the Five Social Initiatives of the President", 28 March 2018, accessed 13 January 2022, http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/news-details/id41706/1/15
[590] Majilis, Activity report for the period 1.09.2018 – 28.06.2019
[591] Barbashev, G. and Sheremet, K, 1981. Building Soviets (*Sovetskoe stroitelstvo*), Moscow

Table 12. Data on site visits by MPs during four sessions of the sixth parliament (2016–19)

	Number of sites	Number of meetings	Number of voters	Number of places	Number of issues raised
4th session	3	1911	128340	1023	695
3rd session	2	2310	143053	1167	1099
2nd session	2	1978	195000	844	1183
1st session	1	389	49000	170	109

Conclusion

Despite the overall assumption that the early parliaments were more independent, by providing more space for political representation, they did not dare to go very far in terms of confrontation with the executives. Fewer female MPs in the first parliaments opted to represent non-traditional areas. On the contrary, women MPs tried to distance themselves from gender issues, though they expressed support for certain popular women-related issues, such as domestic violence. In addition to this, in a political recruitment process where women candidates do not strive for office but rather are encouraged to take it, female politicians do not consider themselves to be political representatives. The control exercised by the party over MPs' activity contributes to their difficulty in identifying the target group whose interests they represent. Such a situation can be considered to be a strategy of the ruling regime to deter division amongst political forces, and to prevent parliamentarians from strengthening their connections with society and, thus, from posing a threat to the regime.

Women linked their low level of influence on policy-making in the parliament to the nature of their involvement, which is perceived as "fragmented and confined to specific areas" of women's traditional concern:

> Influence on decision making in Kazakhstan? This is a naïve question. Women themselves, like any other politician in Kazakhstan, are not able to influence and promote their own decisions and interests. Women can influence politics only if their interests coincide and present no threat to the regime. For example, recently the topic of domestic violence has gained attention, so it is on the agenda and well accepted by the elites. In terms of promoting gender-related issues, no woman

advocated against the equalising pension age law act. Women are used by the regime and real decision makers as a tool through their professional qualities.[592]

There is a lack of consensus among scholars on gender and politics with regard to what is a desired outcome of the substantive representation of women.[593] The assumption that one of the indicators of substantive representation might be more gender-related policies does not apply in the context of Kazakhstan. Here the tendency follows an opposite trajectory. In particular, a greater number of women in the Kazakh parliament, and in other political institutions, have not challenged gender inequality issues. Furthermore, even the achievements of earlier years have been ceded. Making parallels between the increased number of women in parliament and the changes in the gender regime in Kazakhstan, it seems that these are two separate processes. In the case of Kazakhstan, women have been brought into political office in order to promote gender policies designed by the regime.

The dynamics involved in the issues raised by MPs and their gendered dimension varies depending on the committees. Despite the low level of activity of the respective committees, social and agricultural issues were highly represented in the requests submitted by MPs in the current parliament. Given that the committee on social and cultural issues encompasses a wide range of areas, including the rights and status of disabled people, culture and sport, and healthcare and education, the number of social issues raised by MPs overwhelmingly exceeds other areas. Specifically, topics encompassing education, healthcare, and culture prevailed in the parliamentarians' requests.

The majority of the requests raised by female MPs related to the social sphere. However, within the proportion of the bills adopted by parliament, this category of issues occupies a minor space. The regime has focused on the function of women's MPs in terms of their interaction with the constituents, a task which involves explaining state policies and, thus, channelling the state discourses on the country's prosperity fostered by the ruling regime. Female MPs consider their role as political representatives as a way to contribute to the implementation of the presidential programmes, specifically in areas of interest traditionally related to women.

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[592] Interview with respondent B (17), ex-senator (one of the very few), and the former deputy of the region level maslikhat (Semei).

[593] Lena Wängnerud, "Women in Parliaments: Descriptive and Substantive Representation," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12/1 (2009): 51–69. DOI: 10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.053106.123839

Chapter VIII. Benefits of the political office for women

The chapter discusses the benefits of the political office for women parliamentarians, in comparison to their male counterparts. As noted earlier, the reduction of the role of women in parliament has been taking place in tandem with the diminishing role of parliament itself in the Kazakh political system. Coupled with decreased motivation and the lack of clearly articulated interests, women have found that a political career is less attractive in terms of political advancement. In terms of a political career, this chapter examines women's perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of being a parliamentarian. I also compare women's perceptions, as well as the findings of descriptive statistics on the capacity of women to retain political office and in their post-parliamentary career. The specific nature of the Kazakh political context reduces women's empowerment; this is owing to the lack of manoeuvring space for women officeholders to contribute either to their professional career or their political path. The discussion in this chapter is based on findings drawn from interviews with female MPs.

Pre-MP occupational positions of MPs

Background profiling of the representatives can help to define recruitment patterns, and shed light on the function of the authoritarian legislature in Kazakhstan. It is also important to examine the occupational patterns of MPs together with post-MP career patterns, in order to understand whether parliamentary seats provide a route to a political career. Aside from general trends in the professional backgrounds of MPs, there are certain aspects worth highlighting, especially in the case of the present sixth parliament. First, the major sources for the recruitment of male MPs are business, and local and central government. Local government has supplied a significant proportion of MPs for five successive parliaments. Even between 1999–2007 (the second and third parliaments), when businessmen took the lead, politicians from local regional governments still comprised 20% of the total. Since 2007, elected local government officials maintained a majority in parliament. This trend reflects the evolution of the political regime, except for the composition of the very first parliament. Representatives come mostly from the local government (38%), academia (11%), businesses, ministries, and public organisations (9% each). In general, the composition of the first parliament was more diverse, since it included a variety of social groups, such as non-professional politicians (i.e., factory workers and celebrities). In this sense, the first parliaments replicated the representation patterns of the Soviet period. There was no legislative institution at the central level with

such competencies, as those of the first parliaments constituted as a result of free elections held in Kazakhstan at that time (1995–99). Furthermore, there were no large business enterprises which could target political circles and establishments themselves in the political arena. Therefore, the only pool of candidates which had a vague idea of legislative work was that of local government servants. The result was a body that more closely resembled Soviet representative institutions, comprising non-professional politicians.

The sixth legislature stands apart from the occupational representative patterns of the previous parliaments. Its composition differs from the trend followed by recent parliaments, which recruited MPs mostly from executives, the presidential office, and businesses. The present parliament is more representative. First, the areas of local government, business, and the party generated an equal number of representatives—19% each. If having representatives from local government is not surprising, the increase in the number of businessmen (and, especially, party officials) was unexpected. Studies on the political parties in Russia and Kazakhstan have argued that ruling parties in these authoritarian states have less influence on political processes than their predecessor, the Communist Party. The breadth of representation of the parties grew steadily, however, in the course of all six successive parliaments, beginning with two individuals in the first parliament, and leading up to 16 in the present one. If other occupational areas have been more volatile in terms of parliamentary representation, the party has gradually enhanced its positions.

In the Soviet period, the Communist Party was the main vehicle used by men to gain political positions. Since 2007, Nur Otan has developed the scope of political recruitment, and this has helped to provide a key career development mechanism for women. It means that the occupational backgrounds of male parliamentarians are more diverse, whereas for women MPs, party experience is gaining importance as a pathway to a political career. The background profiling of MPs confirms this dynamic (Figure 6). On the contrary, the presidential administration and the government (including local governmental bodies) have monopolised access to representative politics. According to the findings from the study on women's recruitment patterns in local executive offices in Russia, discussed earlier, women give greater importance to party support in their decision to run for office and to further their political career. This observation fits into the argument of women's political candidacy as the "embedded emergence candidate" developed by Carroll and Sanbonmatsu. Female candidates value the role of the party in political recruitment. In this sense, female representatives are reliable and manageable, given the restricted framework

of institutional political activity in which they operate. Therefore, the increasing role of the party in the political recruitment of women gains additional importance in light of the literature on authoritarian political institutions, and the weaker position of hegemonic parties of post-Soviet origin. Overall, this trend, together with the previous findings about age and education of MPs, confirms the argument that, in elected political offices in Kazakhstan, the representative patterns of Soviet origin increasingly define the composition of the legislature.
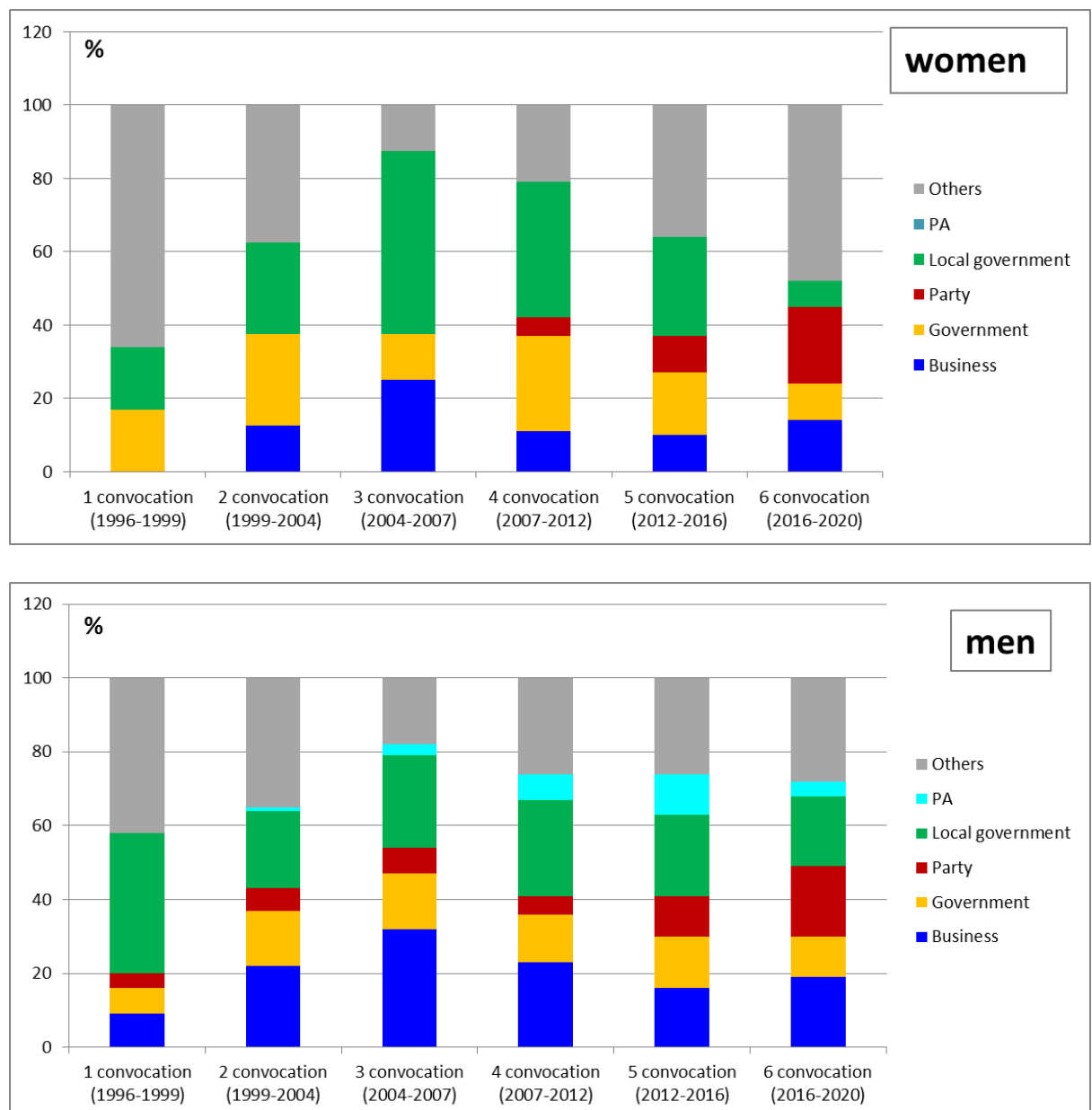
Figure 6. MPs by professional activity in the Majilis

Among the MPs who were drawn from the central government, there were high officials, former ministers, ambassadors, and advisors. The dismissed ministers consider parliament as an opportunity to continue their political career. Moreover, there is an increasing proportion of those who have experience in working at the central executive level, or in the presidential administration. In the two most recent parliaments, they constitute almost half of male MPs (47%) and one third of female MPs (30%). In the case of men, this indicator has reached its peak compared to other parliaments in the past, whereas women with relevant experience in the same areas were represented at the highest level in the fourth parliament, with a further reduction of 10%. This shows that the fourth parliament was dominated by the ruling party, which might explain the presence of a high proportion of politicians from the system. From 2007, there has been a tendency to include representatives from the judiciary. For example, in the sixth parliament, their share amounts to 7%, almost in equal proportions. Often, these MPs worked in the Supreme or Constitutional courts and, in this sense, they are considered more loyal to the ruling regime.

In addition to this, a comparatively large number of representatives from public organisations is present in the current parliament. Public organisations, being formally non-governmental, are in fact are under the supervision of the state institutions and financially dependent on the state For example, the school of sport, and preparation for the army; the bar association; the trade union; the association of people with disabilities; the union of sportsmen; and the federation of boxing, and so on. In general, public organisations have always been moderately represented at the central level with an average of 9%. Starting with the fourth parliament, they increased their representation, reaching 19%. However, female MPs drawn from public organisations have not been represented at the same level since 1995. Between 2004 and 2012, there were no female representatives from public organisations. Interestingly, in the fifth parliament, 23% of female MPs came from public organisations. A similar trend has been maintained in the present parliament, though with a slight reduction (21%). Even though public organisations cannot be considered as a civil society sector per se, since they were created under the supervision of state institutions, the ruling regime has, through their inclusion, attempted to display the broad representative nature of parliament.

Research on the pathways of women's recruitment in the local executive bodies of Russia has shown that the regional civil society sector cannot produce local activists for recruitment in formal political institutions. The authors linked this phenomenon to the

weaker positions of NGOs on the periphery.[594] The non-profit sector is usually dominated by women in Kazakhstan. According to estimates, 85% of civil society organisations are led by women. This is explained by flexible working hours, lower salaries and, as a result, less competition in this sector. In all parliaments, the share of representatives from the civil society sector has not exceeded 1%; since the fourth parliament, all have been women. This finding is ambiguous, not only because public organisations are substitutes for civil society organisations, but also in the light of the co-optation strategies discussed earlier in relation to women's political recruitment. It is suggested that authoritarian legislatures are more likely to have a greater number of women in those societies, where women's influence in civil society is strong.[595] However, this suggestion does not consider the role played by civil society in the political system of Kazakhstan. Although women compose the majority of the workforce in civil society organisations, their influence on policies is low and, in recent times, their activity has been placed under government supervision. In can be argued that the measure of including CSO representatives in parliament can be interpreted as a preventive action taken by the regime: it minimises the risk of a potential threat in the form of civil society mobilisation, and limits their cooperation with international donors.

The economic liberalisation that took place after the demise of the Soviet system brought a new class of businessmen to the political arena. Around 20% of MPs in all parliaments were drawn from business activities, though the degree of representation of business elites has changed. For example, if we compare the third and sixth parliaments, the share of business elites has dropped by 8%. At the same time, the number of women among business elites has increased, although not by a large amount. This descriptive analysis does not include a discussion on party affiliation, owing to the presence of a weak party system (with no distinct ideological divisions between the parties) and an insignificant number of MPs from the other two parties in the Majilis (i.e., the Communist Party and Ak Zhol). Interestingly, MPs from these two political formations do not clearly associate themselves with their respective parties, and claim that all the political formations in parliament work in line with state development programmes. However, party-segregated data is particularly necessary while discussing the business background of MPs. In is regard, it is worth mentioning that the majority of women from the business sector represent the Ak Zhol party, which positions itself as a pro-business party. The decline in

[594] Avdeyeva O., Vinokurova, D, and Kugaevsky, A., 2017. "Gender and Local Executive Office in Regional Russia: Party of Power as a Vehicle for Women Empowerment?" Paper presented at the ECPR Conference, 5–7 September 2017, Oslo.
[595] Thames, "Women's Legislative Representation in Authoritarian Regimes."

the share of business representatives can be explained by a few factors. First, the regime re-oriented political recruitment patterns by drawing more loyal representatives from the party and executives. Second, the legislature has become less attractive as a platform for policy concessions for businessmen. Possibly, business elites tend to find other mechanisms for acquiring benefits. In this sense, the rewards obtained from the representative political office might bring more perks to other categories, such as public organisations. Compared to the executive or judiciary institutions, the legislature is less prestigious. It is important to highlight the type of business activities represented in parliament. Around 50% of the energy business elites in Kazakhstan are associated with the party, whereas the other areas of business are more independent.[596] This confirms the existence of strong ties between the sector of natural resources and politics in Kazakhstan, and the dependency of the regime on natural resources revenue. In addition to this, in the energy business sector there is a higher share of family connections with the ruling political elites, as in the case of the president. This increases the authority of the president over the management of the assets of the Fund, without requiring approval from other political actors.[597].

The present parliament represents certain arbitrary and non-traditional occupational areas such as art, sport, and the working class. Including celebrities in parliament is a new trend in post-Soviet political representation. In comparison with the professional MPs or specialists in other traditional fields, celebrities obviously have less influence and capacity to lobby for a particular issue and to conduct legislative activity. Nevertheless, celebrities are always present in the ruling party list. Very often, they do not obtain a parliamentary mandate, but usually serve in a token capacity to demonstrate that the composition of the party is broadly representative of the population. Interestingly, in the 2016 parliamentary elections, the inclusion of a popular pop-star, famous boxers, a sportsman, an actor (who played the role of Nazarbayev in the movie about his political career), TV showrunners, and a singer[598] raised criticism about the capacity of these candidates to serve as political representatives. From this discussion, a larger question emerged about whether the ruling

[596] Indra Øverland and Kristin Fjæstad, "Energy Elites in Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan," RussCasp Working Paper, accessed 13 January 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316366044_Energy_Elites_in_Central_Asia, 7.

[597] Christian E. Petersen and Nina T. Budina, "Governance Framework of Oil Funds: The Case of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan," *International Finance Corporation*, accessed 13 January 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265108668_Governance_Framework_of_Oil_Funds_The_Case_of_Azerbaijan_and_Kazakhstan_1

[598] Kairat Nurtas, Gennady Golovkin/SerikSapiev, Ilya Ilyin, Nurlan Alimzhanov, Artur Platonov/Maia Veronskaya and Zhanar Dugalova. The Nur Otan candidates' list is available here: http://today.kz/news/kazakhstan/2016-01-29/708575-polnyij-spisok-kandidatov-v-deputatyi-mazhilisa-ot-partii-nur-otan/

regime has been trying to enhance its positions through preposterous methods. According to political analysts, in periods of crisis, the traditional populist methods of increasing the popularity of the party and raising interest in the elections through the inclusion of celebrities do not work.[599] In the recent elections, out of eight celebrities, two were selected. Celebrities were also present in the first two parliaments. This can be considered to have been an understandable choice since Kazakhstan was experiencing election campaigning for the first time and, in that context, the popularity of singers and writers provided a good amount of social capital to win votes. The third, fourth, and fifth parliaments did not include celebrities, with the exception of one female athlete in the fifth parliament, who was re-elected in 2016. The current parliament revived the tradition of including celebrities in the candidates' list to attract votes.

Ordinary employees including factory workers, teachers, and doctors also have a share in the composition of post-Soviet parliaments in Kazakhstan. This is also, probably, a legacy of the Soviet period. Their number has decreased significantly, however, dropping from 8% in the second parliament to 1% in the current one. In a study on Russian political elites, Kryshtanovskaya and White reported a growing pattern of recruitment among military or intelligence people, including both those with prior experience as well as those who came directly from these areas[600]. Kazakhstan's case of elite recruitment does not correspond to this pattern; indeed, these areas have the lowest level of representation in parliament (1%).

Perceived advantages and disadvantages to political office for women

One of the patterns that has emerged from the interviews is that the level of negativity towards political representative offices tends to be lower at the local level. Even though the representatives receive no visible material benefits in the form of a salary, women do not express negative opinions about political representatives. At the district level of representation, some participants named this fact as one of the aspects they considered when deciding whether to run for office. Specifically, dissatisfaction with the work done by previous representatives made them decide to assert themselves as candidates. At the local level, political ambition developed more naturally, and with fewer barriers.[601]

The assumption that a higher office provides a higher salary, scope of influence, and status does not necessarily motivate a potential candidate to run for office. The reason is to be

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[599] Toguzbaev, "Expert View."
[600] Kryshtanovskaya, O. and White, S., 2003. Putin's militocracy. Post-Soviet Affairs, 19(4), pp.289-306
[601] Lawless and Fox, *It Still Takes a Candidate*, 50.

found in the value that each particular candidate assigns to a particular office. This means that "opportunity alone is insufficient to create ambition"; rather, "personal assessments" of the costs and benefits play a more important role.[602] In other words, owing to general personal and institutional factors, as well as conditions associated with a particular office, a political position might look more or less attractive depending on the candidate. This is particularly true for female candidates because their personal evaluation is more affected by personal circumstances, as compared to their male counterparts. In most of the cases where women politicians have to reconcile family and work responsibilities, the costs of a higher political office exceed the benefits. This does not happen in the case of male politicians.

The majority of female politicians derive no direct material benefits in political office. Central-level female representatives mentioned the disadvantages and negative impact of political positions on their professional career and status. This concerns those female MPs who run their own business, or who led civil society organisations. As one of the MPs pointed out:

> Material benefits…my business income decreased since I became an MP. I tried to compensate by gaining non-material advantages, such as learning the opinion of the government, access to information, including statistical data, analysis of economic indicators, the reasons for rejection of particular legislation acts; meeting with the categories of people whom the ordinary people can't easily meet (for example, to serve as observer in the parliamentary elections in Germany, to meet the prime ministers of other countries).[603]

The representatives of civil society mentioned a sharp drop in the trust of the local communities once they were elected. One respondent, who headed an organisation on customers' rights with around 38,000 members, said that after her selection as MP, only 500 members were left. As the respondent stated, "being an MP and a high-level politician in Kazakhstan is not a privilege, but rather a burden due to the criticism, hate attitude, and mistrust received from the population."[604] Another female MP of the current parliament,

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[602] Cherie D. Maestas, Sarah Fulton, L. Sandy Meisel, and Walter J. Stone, "When to Risk It? Institutions, Ambitions, and the Decision to Run for the U.S. House," *American Political Science Review* 100/2 (2006): 195–208.
[603] Interview with respondent S (27), MP.
[604] Interview with respondent A (7), Almaty, August 2016.

who, prior to be elected, was the head of a well-known civil society organisation working on women's issues, mentioned the negative attitudes received from her former colleagues, which she linked to her new status.

At the same time, most of the MPs mentioned indirect benefits in the form of an extensive network and connections with influential circles as elements that might bring profits in their post-MP careers. Most of the respondents mentioned that one of the advantages was easy access to government officials, who might let them have first-hand information.[605] Some MPs mentioned that these connections resulted in employment opportunities after their work in parliament:

> After the end of their MP mandate, women became very competitive in the labour market; for example, I myself got five or six proposals to consider after I completed my parliamentary activity. This is because now I possess a deep knowledge and the unique skills of law making and promoting initiatives. For example, lawyers know their specific parts of legislation, and MPs have more strategic and general views on that legislation. I became visible and respected.[606]

Contrary to the experience of female MPs, local-level female representatives do not experience changes in the attitudes of their local communities. However, they did not specify any benefits, except for personal self-empowerment and access to local government officials, that were previously not available to them. Benefits such as the availability of local decision-makers can be more helpful, especially in the case of neopatrimonial regimes, and they can bring direct advantages in case help is needed to solve some personal and private business-related issues.[607] Even though local female representatives who work as heads of state-funded institutions[608] have access to local decision makers, they did not mention any positive perks that were obtained from their official positions. Most of the local deputies emphasised self-empowerment as the main advantage of their position. It is remarkable that when talking about the absence of material benefits, they referred to the spoils of office rather than direct benefits, such as remuneration. As one of the respondents put it, "for example, when I came to the meeting

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[605] Interview with respondent R (44), ex MP, member of the Political Council of NO party.
[606] Interview with respondent S (27), MP.
[607] Interview with respondent A (8), representative of the Arys district level maslikhat, Shymkent (South Kazakhstan).
[608] The majority of women local representatives occupies management positions in hospitals and schools.

with you, the security guard in the building didn't allow me in, even when I showed my deputy's ID". Most of the respondents mentioned the level of distrust towards the deputies at all levels. At the same time, when talking about it, women distance themselves from society using the dichotomy of "we" and "they":

> The image of the deputy among the population is very low, and there is a general distrust towards the representatives of the state institutions in Kazakhstan. They [society] demand, claim from us [deputies], they don't kindly ask.[609]

In sum, along with their reluctance to run for political office, women do not see any clear benefits in a political career. The official material rewards gained through central-level representative positions are not considered attractive compared to the salaries received in private companies. The local-level office does not have any material benefits. Most of the local representatives emphasised that it was better to resume a full-fledged professional career outside representative authorities, by using access to decision-making officials in the regions and in central-level institutions obtained during their political career. Both former central and local-level representatives mentioned that quitting the parliament or maslikhat had a positive effect on their careers, and widened the scope of available job opportunities.[610] On the contrary, female MPs who came from the civil society and business sectors, especially at the central level, mentioned that their political career had a negative impact on their professional activity. A combined effect of reluctance and a negative perception of political office diminishes the level of women's meaningful participation in politics.

In the context of non-competitive elections, candidates consider the elective position as an appointed position. One of the key findings of a study on political gender gaps in U.S. politics was that women have greater ambitions and interest in appointed positions, which "can be fulfilled without engaging in such contentious activity" as required by elective positions.[611] However, this can occur in systems where political recruitment for elective positions implies competition. Within the political framework of Kazakhstan, where political offices are not occupied as a result of elections, but are rather distributed among

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[609] Interview with respondent E (46), a representative of the district level maslikhat, Shymkent (South Kazakhstan).
[610] Interviews in Uralsk, Astana, Almaty, Shymkent, August and November 2016.
[611] Edmond Costantini, "Political Women and Political Ambition: Closing the Gender Gap," *American Journal of Political Science* 34/3 (1990): 750. DOI: 10.2307/2111397

previously selected individuals, this premise cannot explain the absence of political ambition for elective offices among women. In this regard, it is interesting to note that women with different professional backgrounds and occupations accepted job offers with various levels of enthusiasm. Women from local government positions consider appointments to the national parliament as a decrease in the level of their influence and prestige. As one of the local deputies testified:

> I don't have material benefits. Even more to say, I contribute my own means—time and financial resources. Maybe, my status allows me to communicate with the local executives more efficiently. In the present maslikhat there are more representatives of business, and this is an advantage for me because I run my own business.[612]

This is quite understandable because, as a rule, these women previously occupied leading positions in the local government. In the light of this fact, the offer to exchange a local government position for one in the representative office is considered to engender a loss of authority and access to local resources.[613]

The level of prestige of the legislature is also taken into consideration. The low level of influence of the Kazakh legislature at the policy level has an impact on the status of MPs. Usually, an MP is subject to constant criticism in the independent mass media and on social networks.[614] The mass media portrays MPs primarily as rent-seeking politicians, distant from the needs of the population. In 2017, when I interviewed female politicians, the issue about MPs salaries received public attention. The reason for this was the decision to increase the salaries of the representatives owing to the devaluation of the local currency. Although I did not mention the debates around this issue, all MPs covered it during their interviews:

> Again, this question! We receive a rather low salary, around 500,000KZT [1300EUR, subsistence minimum for 2016 was 22,859KZT, equal to 60 EUR]. A few years later, this amount was higher than average. We cannot privatise the apartments after the termination of our mandate. The conditions of the apartments

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[612] Interview with respondent V (23), ex-deputy of maslikhat.
[613] Interview with respondent M (29), Shymkent, August 2016.
[614] For example, see the www.ratel.kz analytical resource.

are not of high quality, they are not in luxury residences. No personal cars are available.[615]

As discussed in previous chapters, female politicians in Kazakhstan do not have prior political ambition, which is a necessary step towards a meaningful and conscious participation in institutional politics. They do not see themselves as political actors, even though they have been offered a "secured" office, and consider themselves as competent professionals in their occupations.

At the local level, women consider their political career as a double burden, whereas female MPs mention the harmful impact of political involvement on their professional activity. Therefore, women's capacity as political actors is already determined and limited. This finding provides an interesting insight into the effect of the state gender policy on women's political leadership and the nature of political recruitment, as well as the participation of citizens in an authoritarian context.

The capacity of women to retain political office

The literature on gender and politics establishes a strong relationship between retention rates in the legislature and the election of women. In authoritarian contexts, where voters do not influence outcomes either at the stage of nomination or in the selection phase of parliamentarians, benefits which are usually associated with the incumbent, such as access to media, financial resources, an established network, and closer links with the constituencies, do not work. Since there is no link between the constituencies and the representatives, delegates do not have any motivation for serving the interests of the represented and thus, to demonstrate their capacity to be elected.

In the case of the Kazakh parliament, the incumbency pattern can be described as stable, with a slight drop recorded in the fourth parliament, when the PR electoral system was introduced (Table 13). There is no term limit either for senators or for delegates of the Majilis, which allows parliamentarians to be re-elected as long as possible. There are cases in the Majilis where the delegates have served in all six successive parliaments.[616] Owing to changes in the number of representatives, the percentage can partially capture the real picture of the issue. For example, in the fourth parliament, 41 deputies retained their seats,

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[615] Interview with respondent B (31), MP.
[616] For example, Sergey Dyachenko, Mukhtar Tinikeev.

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compared to 28 deputies in the previous parliament—a considerable increase. Converting this value into percentages, however, a decrease can be observed (from 47 to 41%), which is owing to the overall increase in the number of delegates, from 77 to 107. Another fact that influences the figures is the total number of deputies during one particular session, which is higher than 107 owing to by-elections and reshuffles, common in the case of male deputies. For example, the total number of representatives who served in the fourth and fifth parliaments[617] was 118, and this figure also includes replacements.

Table 13. Percentage of MPs re-elected in the lower house of parliament (incumbency rate)

All parliamentarians	1st convocation (1996–99)		2nd convocation (1999–2004)		3rd convocation (2004–2007)		4th convocation (2007–12)		5th convocation (2012–16)		6th convocation (2016–20)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Re-elected	11		21	3	28	1	41	4	34	15	33	14
Total			71	8	59	8	99	19	88	30	78	29
In %			**30%**	**38%**	**47%**	**13%**	**41%**	**21%**	**39%**	**50%**	**42%**	**48%**

A steady increase in the percentage of re-election rates of both male and female deputies has been evident since 1995. Nevertheless, there is a specific gender characteristic that is worth highlighting. Incumbency rates among male parliamentarians have been growing gradually, except for a slight drop recorded in the fifth parliament. It maintains an average rate of 40%. Women's retention rates have also experienced a drop; however, in the third parliament, only one woman out of eight remained in office (13%). Since the fourth parliament (2007), when the PR system was introduced and the number of women in parliament has been steadily on the rise, the incumbency rate has also been growing. On average, the female retention rate of the last decade is 50%, which is higher than that recorded amongst male counterparts. Higher retention rates indicate the professionalisation of legislators and the "emergence of career patterns."[618] It is assumed that by accumulating legislative experience, a member of parliament changes his or her view on representative political office, and tries to get re-elected. The literature on incumbency rates assumes that 30–40% of change in each successive parliament is the optimum balanced level to enhance the professionalism of politics and to ensure an adequate level of representation.[619] This finding confirms the general pattern of women's political recruitment, visible in recent parliaments.

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[617] Majilis, "List of Deputies of the Fourth and Fifth Parliaments" (2016), accessed 13 January 2022, http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/history/convocation/5, and http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/history/convocation/4.

[618] Semenova, "Patterns of parliamentary representation and careers in Ukraine," 554.

[619] Best, H., Cotta, M., 2002. Elite transformation and modes of representation since the mid-nineteenth century: some theoretical considerations. Eurelite Project Working Paper. www.nds.rz.uni-jena.de/eurelite/

There are several factors that might contribute to this tendency: these include the functions and the role of the parliament in the political system of Kazakhstan, and the resulting specific needs of the regime in recruiting MPs who can contribute to the regime's stability. As discussed in the previous chapter on the functions of the MPs, women are used in meetings with the population to explain state development programs and to promote a good image of the party. In the changing political situation, soft methods can bring more predictable results than repressive ones. As noted, the composition of the parliament reminds one more and more of the perfect representation of society in Soviet Councils.

Benefits of political office for women

Tracing post-MP careers is an important indicator for understanding the purpose of legislatures in authoritarian regimes. Some information is missing—especially about parliamentarians of the early legislatures—but the omitted data amounts to only about 10% of the total number of MPs. The findings can be therefore considered sufficient to draw an analysis. In addition to this, since the names of MPs are not mentioned in open sources related to the central government or other important decision-making political positions, most probably, they are either retired or have pursued a career outside formal political institutions in the regions.

After serving as MPs, the majority of male MPs are recruited into the central government or continue their businesses, even though, in some parliaments, other non-typical occupational areas have emerged (Figure 7). More specifically, employment in the ministries represents the next step in the political careers of male MPs. For example, 33% of MPs of the first parliament accepted work in ministries. This share has been constantly decreasing, with only 11% of MPs employed in ministries, in the case of the fifth parliament. A similar tendency has been observed in local systems of government. 17% of the members of the first parliament obtained positions in regional executives, compared to fewer than 8% of the latest parliament. The judicial system has never been the priority area for ex-MPs, and continues to remain unpopular in the present day. One of the most important and influential institutions in the hierarchy of the Kazakh political system is the presidential administration, which has not recruited many ex-MPs. The highest share of the former MPs invited to continue their political careers in the PA was 6% (fourth parliament).
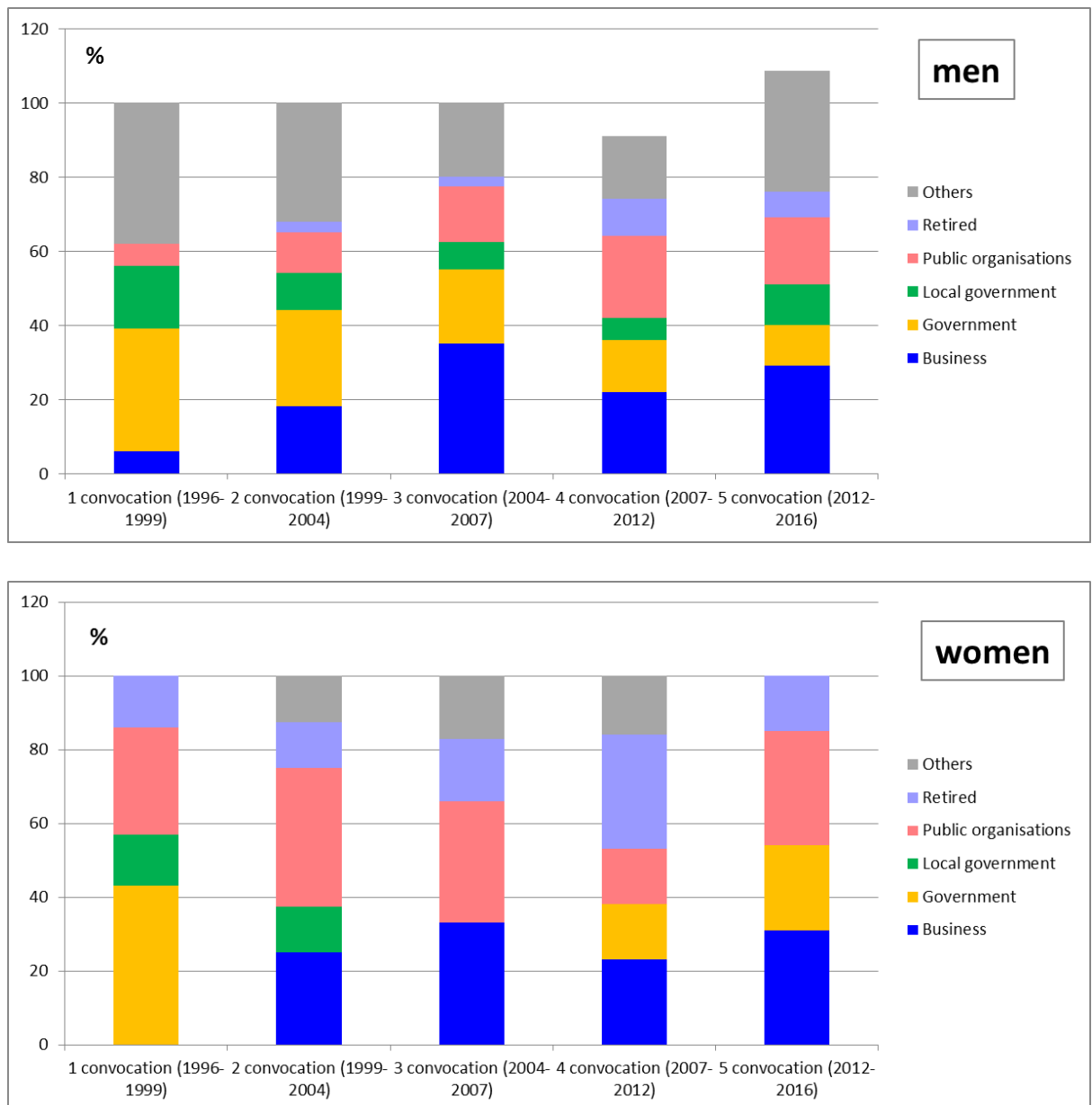
Figure 7. Post-MP career paths

The pattern observed here supports the argument that elected political office is losing its significance in the hierarchy of political offices in Kazakhstan, and that it does not facilitate political career promotion in the present day. This is true for both men and women. In this sense, elected political office is used to obtain benefits for professional activities in which MPs were involved prior to being selected. By pursuing personal goals and trying to get the most out of the term in office, MPs are less interested in either serving as representatives or focusing on legislative activities. In the case of men, the parliamentary position has been losing its significance for career matters, whereas for women, only on rare occasions has it proven to be a stepping stone in terms of their

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political career. Given the increasing incumbency rates, it can be suggested that elected political positions are considered to be a career destination point. This is especially relevant in the case of the fourth parliament, which recorded 13% of retired MPs after the end of their term.

The most frequent occupational area for ex-MPs is the business sector. This trend, however, has also been on the decline since 2007, when 35% of MPs returned to their businesses with extended opportunities in the form of contracts and networking. At the same time, the number of MPs for whom the work in parliament was a pre-retirement workplace increased. Another area which is experiencing a growing share of ex-MPs is that of public organisations. In the case of male MPs, the relative proportion amounts to an average of 20% in the fourth and fifth parliaments, double the rate recorded in the second parliament. Very often, these public organisations are created under formal or informal auspices of central government institutions to support activities related to the ministry's competence. Apart from mainstream career patterns, there is a small proportion of MPs who found themselves under investigation for illegal economic activities and financial crimes, or association with criminal activities. As a rule, they are businessmen. Academic institutions do not recruit a significant share of post-MPs. Since the first parliament, the importance of this sector in post-MPs' recruitment has been on the decrease.

There are certain similarities, as well as differences, in the occupational patterns of female ex-MPs. First, women do not continue their political careers at the level of local government after parliament, even if they began their careers in local government positions. One of the most striking examples is the case of the only female head of the region (East Kazakhstan) in the republic, who started a business after serving as an MP. Another prominent female MP who had a long experience in local government, continued her career as a freelance consultant for public organisations and businesses after serving as deputy head of the region (West Kazakhstan). The point is that an MP expects to be appointed to an office in the local government that is higher than that previously held. However, the highest positions in the regions are usually distributed among men. In fact, female ex-MPs have never been recruited in the presidential administration, or offered party positions.

Second, the recent occupational pattern of women's post-MPs is employment in the central government. However, the type of positions occupied by ex-female MPs in ministries cannot be compared to that held by former male MPs. Women are usually appointed to secondary level positions or heads of departments.

Third, more women continue their professional activity in businesses or in public organisations. As a rule, they establish businesses in the field of consultancy. In this sense, the network and connections they made during their parliamentary mandate bring results and help them to develop their activities. For example, one of the female MPs, a former civil society activist, lost most of the members of her organisation after being selected as an MP. During her term, however, she managed to obtain a degree and a qualification in mediation and, after her political career, she established a training centre for mediators. According to the law on mediation, all civil disputes have to be addressed by mediators before being assessed by the court, and so the need for qualified mediators increased and her centre became relevant. Also, one of the common tendencies concerning women who run their private businesses prior to a political career, is the negative impact on their pre-MP business. As one of the ex-MPs told me:

> I was a successful businesswoman before parliament. I have my own business in the milk industry in Atyrau region. My business pushed me to be active in public life. I founded a union of milk producers in Kazakhstan, and a union of women entrepreneurs of Kazakhstan, and later headed the civil alliance of Kazakhstan—a public organisation which coordinates the activities of NGOs in the country and provides interaction with government bodies. At a certain point I gained a reputation as a public leader; however, I understood that working in the public sector is only about articulating the needs and demands of the population but not decision making. So, I lacked the influential level. Now I have expanded my network with useful people, but my I had to sell my business.[620]

Finally, considering the higher incumbency rate of women in parliament, it can be argued that women follow a static political career, instead of a more dynamic one.

Discussion and conclusion

The main argument of this section is that women see fewer benefits from holding political office. This is the result of two reasons. First, prior to being elected, women do not have sufficient bargaining power to obtain policy concessions. Second, an elected political office in Kazakhstan has fewer direct material benefits that are considered attractive by

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[620] Interview with respondent S (27), MP.

potential candidates. In addition to this, the costs associated with political office reduce the potential benefits. In fact, a politician is usually perceived as a rent-seeker in Kazakh society. Though this negative attitude is less widespread at the local level, scepticism persists.

Findings about the background of local female representatives support the idea that the political representation of women in the regions has no necessary prerequisites for full-fledged political participation. At the city level, there are more women recruited from traditional occupational areas (e.g., education), whereas at the regional level, women from business constitute the majority. The pattern observed in the northern regions is of particular interest because, in these territories, the overwhelming majority of women in the maslikhat work in the areas of education and healthcare. As a rule, schools and hospitals are state-funded and under the supervision of the relevant department in the local government. In this sense, it can hardly be stated that these women are in a position to represent either independent views or particular interests.

Further evidence that supports the argument of women's formalistic political participation is the issue of advantages. The peculiarity of being a political representative under authoritarian conditions is that a political office is considered to be a channel through which a candidate can pursue personal interests and gain benefits in the form of policy concessions, especially in the local representative office – an unpaid position. Therefore, given the controlled recruitment procedures for local representatives, delegates in local bodies either pursue their own interests – which is usually the case in men's patterns of representation – or they are appointed for a particular purpose.

Chapter IX. Conclusion

This study has examined how women's political participation in formal political institutions in post-Soviet Kazakhstan is changing, with a focus on how women's political agency and representation is exercised within the context of the country's authoritarian regime. The primary objectives of this research were to understand how women compete for political office in restrictive post-Soviet regimes. This included how descriptive and substantive representation changes in an authoritarian parliament; the actions women take as legislative representatives on issues of gender equality and women's interests; and, finally, how political office (elected positions) has an impact on the political and/or professional careers of women after their terms in office. In addition, the 'black box' of political recruitment in Kazakhstan was also examined, in order to understand how women in this authoritarian regime actually get into politics and how they perform their duties as political representatives. This political engagement was contextualised by comparing the experiences of female elected officials with the experiences of male elected officials and, more specifically, focusing on patterns of descriptive and substantive representation among men and women in the Kazakhstani parliament from 1996 onwards. The research examined the political participation and representation of women by means of literature on women's political representation and the theoretical framework of authoritarian institutionalism, particularly literature addressing political institutions that were designed to be part of a democratic system but function in a non-democratic context.

The objectives of this research were to assess:

- how women compete for political office in post-Soviet regimes;
- how descriptive and substantive representation occurs in an authoritarian parliament, including an investigation of the actions women politicians take as advocates for gender equality and women's issues; and
- how political office affects the political and/or professional career of women after their term in office.

This paper argues that the characteristics of representation for women in the Kazakh Parliament since 1996 reflect patterns that are typical of the Soviet period. By discussing women's agency as political actors in Kazakhstan through their unique paths to political office, this thesis argues that despite an increase in the participation of women in institutional politics, their substantive representation and activity as political actors remains weak and insufficient to foment any meaningful change. The number of female parliamentarians in Kazakhstan has increased since 2007, but this has not lead to the

meaningful participation of women either as political actors or as gender advocates. The post-Soviet pattern of women's political participation in Kazakhstan has followed the Soviet experience. Along with the expansion of elite control over political recruitment, the Kazakh regime has reproduced a pattern of artificial participation in terms of women's political involvement, by assigning female politicians the role of communicating convenient and inspirational messages to society. At the same time, female politicians have limited capacity in legislative and representation functions. This research has provided a gendered perspective to the literature on autocracies and the functioning of institutions in non-democratic settings by examining the experience of women in authoritarian politics. Regarding women's political participation, there was less legislative participation owing to a lack of 'bargaining power', which could have allowed women to participate in policy negotiations and to take advantage of the benefits of holding office.

Empirical Findings

The analysis of women's representation and participation in the Kazakh legislature considered three main aspects: (1) women's pathway to politics, (2) descriptive and substantive representation, and (3) the value of holding parliamentary office for women's political advancement. These aspects were explored in three different chapters examining women in the political area, tracing patterns of descriptive and substantive representation in the Majilis from a gender perspective, and discussing the value of the legislature in terms of women being able to launch a political career.

The first empirical chapter (Chapter VI) provided a glimpse of the personal experiences of women and their path to politics. Owing to the specificity of the question, which covered the political recruitment process from women's points of view, the discussion compared the measures taken by the international community and the Kazakh state to advance the participation of women in politics. The narratives of women politicians at the national and local levels was contrasted against those measures. A key finding of the research was that, unlike in democratic regimes, women did not become politicians because of personal political ambitions. On the whole, women were not interested in holding political office in representative institutions at either the national or the local levels, although there was generally more aversion to holding political positions at the national level. But in spite of this reticence, large numbers of women had served as public representatives at both levels. Moreover, the findings showed that the state programme on women's political empowerment, in the form of training for women potential candidates, had almost no

relationship to women becoming politicians. The effectiveness and relevance of those activities to the experience of women running for office was also discussed.

The findings showed that Kazakh women did not have prior political ambitions, which is considered a necessary step towards meaningful and conscious participation in institutional politics. The women did not see themselves as independent and informed political actors, even though they were offered a 'secured' office and considered themselves competent professionals in their respective occupations. At the local level, women considered their political career an additional burden, whereas women MPs noted the harmful impact of political involvement on their professional careers. Therefore, the forced participation of women in politics limited their capacity as political actors from the beginning of the recruitment process. This finding provides interesting insights into the effects of the state's gender policy on women's political leadership, the nature of political recruitment, and the political participation of citizens in the authoritarian context.

The findings presented in Chapter VII traced the patterns of descriptive and substantive representation in the Majilis since 1995. Specifically, the analysis drew from an examination of several socio-demographic characteristics, such as age, educational attainment, and occupation; occupation was discussed in more detail in Chapter VIII assessing pre- and post-MP career patterns. Although it was clear that Kazakhstan has become more authoritarian since 1995, an interesting finding was the tendency towards the 'Sovietisation' of women's participation and representation. This became more visible with the fourth parliamentary session in 2007, with women's political representation in the Kazakh political system beginning to emulate the Soviet Supreme Council, characterised by more and younger women from traditionally female professions, such as doctors, teachers, and professional party workers.

The research also uncovered a change in what political representation means in Kazakhstan. Increasingly, MPs found that they were expected to serve as regime messengers, explaining policy to the public or performing administrative functions, rather than representing the views of their constituents. This is similar to representation during the Soviet period, when the deputies of the Supreme Council also served as state representatives. Female politicians during the Soviet period were mainly recruited for propaganda purposes. Under these circumstances, serving as an MP was viewed as an appointment, with deputies being assigned certain functions by the state. However, MPs did try to use the parliament to raise issues of concern to citizens, but this had the effect of turning MPs into mediators between individuals and the state rather than legislators

engaged in policy-making. Some men in this role see potential benefits in terms of political or administrative career advancement, but women, so far, have not successfully used their roles as MPs to further their careers in politics or the state administration. Even as the number of women in parliament increases, the conversion of women MPs into women holding government positions – a significant promotion route for men – remains virtually non-existent.

Despite a rise in the number of women in parliament, the proportion of leadership roles held by women has decreased compared with earlier parliaments. The regime has also expanded female recruitment to academia and civil society, professions from which it has not recruited men. This is perhaps an acknowledgement that women, rather than men, hold leadership positions in informal politics; thus, recruiting women from civil society and academia to parliament is part of a co-optation strategy to reduce the risks of social protest. In Kazakhstan, the pattern of women's political representation (WPP) was volatile during the first post-independence decade, as was the case across the post-Soviet region. With the regime's consolidation of power, the WPP pattern now resembles female political representation during the Soviet period, that is, characterised by a relatively higher number of women in elected office but a low number in strategic positions within state institutions and a general lack of influence in the decision-making process.

During the parliament's early years, fewer female MPs chose to represent what would be considered traditional women's issues. Instead, female MPs tried to distance themselves from gender issues, with the exception of certain issues that had widespread support, such as domestic violence. Women linked their low level of influence in policy-making to the nature of their involvement, which was perceived as 'fragmented and confined to specific areas' of concern to women. Scholars of gender and politics disagree on the desired outcome of substantive representation for women.[621] The assumption that more gender-related policies might be an indicator of representation does not apply to Kazakhstan, where the trend is following an opposite trajectory. Despite greater numbers in the Kazakh parliament and other political institutions, women have not been challenging gender inequality. Furthermore, gender equality achievements gained in earlier years have been eroded. In the case of Kazakhstan, it looks like the increase in the number of women in parliament and changes in levels of gender equality are on two separate courses: women are brought into political office to promote the gender policies of the regime.

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[621]Wängnerud, L., 2009. Women in parliaments: Descriptive and substantive representation. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 12, 51–69.

The dynamics that are involved in the issues raised by MPs, including any dimension of gender, vary depending on the committees. The majority of requests raised by female MPs are related to areas of social concern, but this category of issues comprises a small proportion of the bills adopted by the parliament. The regime has focused on female MPs mainly in terms of their interactions with constituencies, a task that involves explaining state policies and channelling state-sponsored messaging on how the regime is fostering prosperity. Substantive representation is presented separately from the descriptive representation of women in political office. This means that the country's advancements in gender policies are presented as achievements of the regime, and not as the result of more women in parliament. This perspective is supported by women MPs, who consider their role as political representatives as a means by which to contribute to the implementation of presidential programmes, specifically in areas traditionally associated with women.

The main argument of Chapter VIII was that some women are reluctant politicians because they receive fewer benefits from holding political office. This situation evolved for two reasons. First, women do not have bargaining power prior to their election and are, therefore, unable to obtain policy concessions. Second, elected political office in Kazakhstan confers fewer direct material benefits and is not therefore considered attractive by potential candidates. Furthermore, the associated costs of political office diminish the potential benefits. In fact, politicians are usually perceived as rent-seekers in Kazakh society. Although this negative attitude is less widespread at the local representative level, scepticism persists. The findings of this study on the backgrounds of local women representatives supports the idea that the country has no prerequisites for women to become fully fledged political participants. At the city level, more women are recruited from traditional occupations (e.g. education), whereas at the regional level, women in business constitute the majority of representatives. The pattern observed in Kazakhstan's northern regions is of particular interest because here the overwhelming majority of women in the *maslikhat* (local representative institution) work in education and healthcare. As a rule, schools and hospitals are state-funded and are supervised by the relevant local government department. With this in mind, it can hardly be imagined that these women are in a position to represent independent views or particular interests.

Further evidence supporting women's political participation can be found in the issue of compensation. A peculiarity of being a political representative under an authoritarian regime is that political office is considered a channel through which a candidate can pursue personal interests and benefits. This is especially relevant at the local representative level,

which is an unpaid position. Therefore, given the controlled recruitment procedures for local representatives, delegates in local bodies either pursue their own interests, as is usually the case for male representatives, or the delegates are appointed for a particular purpose.

This situation is a paradox for scholarship on authoritarianism, as it suggests that political office is a mechanism for distributing benefits to loyal members of the ruling elite or party.[622] For women in Kazakhstan, this is clearly not the case. To explore this point, this research investigated the types of benefits women associate with political office or that women gain from holding political office. The research also looked at how women could be considered useful to the regime, explaining their selection as political representatives. The interview results were unexpected because they demonstrated that women officeholders were not interested in fighting for parliamentary seats, as they believed that their professional career did not ultimately benefit from holding political office. The interviewees believed that being elected to political office even resulted in a loss of credibility and respect among their peer groups. Being an MP was also perceived by women as reducing their capacity to engage in business as successfully as they had done prior to election. These women did not see themselves as bringing personal 'capital' to their role as political representatives and, therefore, could not use such 'capital' to leverage the potential benefits of holding office.

This raises another question, which is related to the literature on authoritarian regimes: if women do not have 'bargaining capacity' that enables them to 'buy' into their position, why does the regime bring women into politics? This question applies to the majority of female politicians in Kazakhstan, with the exception a small number of women who have a close familial relationship with powerful members of the leading political family. The recruitment process and profiles of the majority of female politicians, who are not affiliated with elite circles, gives the impression of a top-down political mobilisation that serves the purposes of the state. By analysing the increasing number of women in parliament, this thesis argues that the state is interested in assigning the role of propaganda channel to women MPs. Compared with the Soviet period, when the number of female office-holders

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[622] To name a few works: Gandhi, J. and Przeworski, A., 2007. Authoritarian institutions and the survival of autocrats. *Comparative Political Studies*, 40(11), 1279–1301; Wright, J., 2008. Do authoritarian institutions constrain? How legislatures affect economic growth and investment. *American Journal of Political Science*, 52(2), 322–343; Svolik, M.W., 2009. Power sharing and leadership dynamics in authoritarian regimes. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(2), 477–494; Boix, C. and Svolik, M.W., 2013. The foundations of limited authoritarian government: Institutions, commitment, and power-sharing in dictatorships. *The Journal of Politics*, 75(2), 300–316; Gandhi, J., 2008. *Political Institutions Under Dictatorship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

was far fewer than the number of male ones,[623] the post-Soviet profile of female MPs is more solid in terms of education and experience, thereby fitting the regime's purposes. The gap between the development of a women's movement in the country and women's representation as elected officials, the distancing of feminists from the formation of the state's gender equality agenda, and the weakness of the state's WPP policies all reinforce the view that women are neither seeking nor campaigning for access to political office.

The analysis of the descriptive and substantive representation patterns in the Kazakh parliament questions the theoretical assumptions on authoritarian institutionalism discussed in Chapter II. The legislature in authoritarian regimes has been considered by scholars to be a platform for sharing the material rewards and policy benefits of holding office. Based on this assumption, parliamentary candidates should be interested in such positions and would, in fact, compete for them with other potential candidates. Candidates successfully obtain political positions, including as members of parliament, by offering social and financial capital benefits to the state in return. However, the parliamentarian profiles examined in this case demonstrate the decreasing significance of the parliament in terms of political career development for both men and women. This finding appears to conflict with the country's simultaneous transformation towards a parliamentary republic. For women, this finding is even more stark, as it appears that being a political representative has never provided women with benefits for either their political or their profession career outside parliament. This situation is similar to the position of Soviet female delegates, whose political engagement did not result in promotion within political institutions or within party ranks.

Current scholarship on the ruling parties of post-Soviet authoritarian regimes, such as Russia and Kazakhstan, argues that these parties do not have the capacity to influence political processes the way their communist predecessors did.[624] In these cases, the parties are considered organisations with technical functions, especially during elections, as well as vehicles for delivering messages to the public to reinforce the regime's legitimacy. In addition to these functions, this research found that in Kazakhstan, political parties had additional tasks. The political party of the ruling regime, Nur Otan, plays a greater role in

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[623] Hill, R.J., 1972. Continuity and change in USSR Supreme Soviet elections. *British Journal of Political Science*, 2(1), 47–67.
[624] Isaacs, R., and Whitmore, S. (2014). The limited agency and life-cycles of personalized dominant parties in the post-Soviet space: the cases of United Russia and Nur Otan. *Democratization*, 21(4), 699–721; Sakwa, R., 2012. Party and power: between representation and mobilisation in contemporary Russia. *East European Politics*, 28(3), 310–327, at 319; Magaloni, B. and Kricheli, R., 2010. Political order and one-party rule. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 13, 123–143; Bader, M., 2011. Hegemonic political parties in post-Soviet Eurasia: Towards party-based authoritarianism? *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 44(3), 189–197.

political recruitment and social mobilisation by public demonstration of engaging with the consideration of individual cases of citizens, positioning itself as a key channel of communication between the citizens and state. This engagement is operationalised through regular regional trips by MPs to meet with constituents and to explain the state's policies and programmes. The growing number of female MPs with a professional background in the ruling party's regional political offices supports this argument.

In terms of the relationship between women's formal representation and women's activism in Kazakhstan, women's formal political representation grew as the regime consolidated its power during the post-Soviet period but, at the same time, women's activism was suppressed. Between the 1990s and the early 2000s, the women's movement in Kazakhstan was active and led to the development of the formation of a women's political party. However, this grassroots organising was not tolerated by the regime; even though the level of representation for women in formal politics grew, this did not reflect an increase in a meaningful political participation by women or improvements in the role of women in society. This controlled advancement of women's political participation can be interpreted as a type of limited emancipation. In Kazakhstan, women were brought into political office to promote the gender policies designed by the regime.

One of the objectives of this research was to draw from the experiences of female politicians as a basis for assessing the effectiveness of WPP policies designed by the state and the international community. As the discussion throughout this thesis demonstrates, WPP is considered by women political representatives as an artificial construction, with no basis in current political conditions or in the perceived needs of women engaged in politics. From the perspective of female politicians, the WPP approach of the Kazakh state is not intended to support women's political careers; instead, it exists to serve the purposes of the regime. For international organisations, WPP is a technical exercise.

Theoretical Implications

This thesis explored the pattern of women's political representation in post-Soviet legislatures using Kazakhstan as a case study. This research attempted to shed light on the previously under-researched topic of how women participate in institutional politics in restrictive regimes, classified as soft or hybrid authoritarianism, in post-Soviet countries with strong presidential power. The institutional aspect of political participation was

missing in existing literature on gender and politics in Central Asia.[625] Previous regional studies on gender have mainly focused on exploring women's agency and on representations of gender in nation building and art.[626] Thus, the study of women's political participation and representation in Kazakhstan adds richness to the studies of non-democratic states, as called for by Paxton, Kunovich, and Hughes.[627] This current work allows scholars on gender and politics to better understand the nature of women's political representation and the operationalisation of driving forces in a particular context. This research made the first attempt to look at substantive representation and the political recruitment process of women in authoritarian regimes, which had not been done in such depth before. This has been supported by statements from women political actors. This research contributes to the understanding of women as political actors in non-democratic contexts. Following the discussion of 'thick representation' in gender and politics scholarship, this paper argues that women's substantive representation in post-Soviet authoritarian regimes is more limited than that of men.

The findings also speak to the scholarship on authoritarian institutions and their impact on women's representation. As discussed in the section on empirical findings, owing to the marginalised position of women in Kazakhstan, the legislature does not produce the same political outcomes, nor act as a similar political path, for women as it does for men. In other words, the research attempted to bring a gender perspective to the literature on autocracies and the functioning of institutions in non-democratic settings by testing whether the key assumptions are relevant to women. The findings shed light on the impact authoritarian legislatures have on women in the context of power sharing and bargaining assumptions. Regarding women's political participation, their legislative functions are reduced owing to a lack of bargaining power, which could provide women with the motivation to participate in policy concessions and obtain other benefits from holding office. In light of the limited agency and capacity of the hegemonic political party in autocracies, a finding that merits special attention is the growing importance of the

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[625] Hrycak, A., 2010. Orange harvest: women's activism and civil society in Ukraine, Belarus and Russia since 2004. *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 44(1-2), 151–177; Salmenniemi, S., 2005. Civic activity–feminine activity? Gender, civil society and citizenship in post-Soviet Russia. *Sociology,* 39(4), 735–753; Richter, J., 2002. Promoting Civil Society?: Democracy Assistance and Russian Women's Organizations. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 49(1), 30–41; Ishiyama, J.T., 2003. Women's parties in post-communist politics. *East European Politics and Societies*, 17(2), 266–304; Moser, R.G., 2001. The effects of electoral systems on women's representation in post-communist states. *Electoral Studies*, 20(3), 353–369; Hrycak, A., 2007. Seeing orange: Women's activism and Ukraine's Orange Revolution. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 35(3/4), 208–225.
[626] Special Section: Gender and Nation in Post-Soviet Central Asia. *Nationalities Papers*, 44:2, 2016.
[627] Paxton, P., Kunovich, S., and Hughes, M. M. (2007). Gender in Politics. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 33, 263–284.

political party in the recruitment of women to the legislature; women's recruitment is not just a mechanical tool but also a mechanism by which to develop women's political careers. In these terms, the role of female parliamentarians is limited to being 'agents of the party',[628] reinforcing the regime's legitimacy and assisting efforts to garner the population's support. Lastly, the findings complemented emerging scholarship on representation beyond democracies.[629] Few studies in this area have started to explore the forms of representation under different socio-economic and historical conditions, including in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. These findings emphasised women's representational experience by underscoring the prioritised role of female politicians in parliaments, as expected by the party in power.

Empirical Implications

Given the findings from the interviews with female politicians, the state's policy on the promotion of women in political office presents certain gaps and inconsistencies that appear to have a negative effect on women's political activity. The shift from leadership in the household to political leadership contradicts the original purpose of the gender equality policy, in terms of the promotion of women in institutional politics. Since individuals are more positive about political engagement at the local level, both WPP training and party recruitment should be more attuned to local realities, with local political parties playing a larger role in political recruitment. Finally, the use of leadership training as a means by which to close the gap in the under-representation of women in political decision-making should be reconsidered, given the changing political situation and role of women in society compared with in the late 1990s, when this policy initiative was designed. Currently in Kazakhstan, the measures supported by the state to promote women's recruitment into institutional politics, and the reality of women's experience as representatives in these institutions, are worlds apart, bearing very little relationship to each other.

The actions of UN Women, the body that champions gender equality globally, are based on an analysis that identifies the main impediments to women's political participation in Kazakhstan as being derived from the electoral system and the cultural reluctance of political institutions to involve women. This perspective assumes that a closed list proportional electoral system results in a higher degree of representation of women in

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[628] Somfalvy, E. (2020). *Parliamentary Representation in Central Asia: MPs Between Representing Their Voters and Serving an Authoritarian Regime*. London: Routledge, p. 116.
[629] Somfalvy, E. (2020). *Parliamentary Representation in Central Asia: MPs Between Representing Their Voters and Serving an Authoritarian Regime*. London: Routledge

democratic contexts but in a non-democratic context, and this approach is a barrier to establishing a direct link between the voter and the candidate. For the UN, this implies that because female candidates are less visible in a closed list system, their chances of being elected in greater numbers decrease.[630] Therefore, to overcome the shortcomings of the electoral system, and to make it work for equal political representation, direct measures are considered the most appropriate for increasing the level of women's political representation. The UN Women strategy is based on promoting gender equality, primarily in terms of providing equal opportunities rather than ensuring equal outcomes.[631] As a result, the policy of the UN Women Multi-Country Office on women's political participation has two major limitations with regard to its engagement in Kazakhstan. First, it focuses on advocacy for legislative and institutional measures[632] and specifically, for introducing gender quotas for parliament. This emphasis on legislative measures means that UN Women focuses on the central government actors responsible for legislation initiation. This leaves local government and local political institutions – a significant source of political activity in Kazakhstan – outside the scope of UN Women where women's political career starts. This is a failure that stems from a lack of understanding about the experiences of women's participation in Kazakhstani politics and the factors that shape that experience. Second, the programmes on WPP set numeric targets of achieving certain percentage of women in political office, thus limiting the space for women's meaningful participation in decision-making.

The views of the female political representatives who participated in this research suggest that the introduction of gender quotas for parliament or local government bodies will not advance women's capacity to engage in high-level political decision-making. When women become political representatives, they face major – and in some cases insurmountable – barriers to exerting influence on policy-making. Women struggle to obtain the level of political office necessary to be involved in significant decision-making or positions of responsibility for policy development and implementation. In this context, women's reluctance to enter politics appears to be rooted in a realistic assessment of the value (or lack of value) political office holds for them, rather than only a function of traditional gender relations. Based on this analysis, UN Women should enhance cooperation with Kazakh authorities at the regional level, for instance local governments

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[630]UN Women, 2014. Women political participation in Kazakhstan: needs assessment and mapping of stakeholders. Report of the mission, April 2014.
[631] Russian and Kazakh translation of the 'women empowerment' notion, which is widely used in conjunction with 'gender equality' and literally means 'extending opportunities for women'.
[632]CEDAW Committee, 2014. Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Kazakhstan, 10 March 2014, Temporary special measures, paragraph 15.

and party offices. This type of engagement is crucial, since the political career of female MPs starts with their involvement in politics at the regional level. Significant improvement for women could be achieved by targeting this area, given regional inconsistencies in women's representation at the local level.

Future Research Directions

At the time of writing this thesis, Kazakhstan was introducing political reforms as part of a move towards what authorities call a 'listening state'.[633] One of the proposed amendments was the Law on Elections, intended to make elections more transparent and participatory. These recent changes introduced open primaries, lowered the threshold for political parties to gain seats in parliament from 7 per cent to 5 per cent, and mandated a 30 per cent quota for women and youth on party lists. However, the first official primaries after the Law on Elections was passed demonstrated that these changes are more declarative than substantial. For instance, there are claims that some local primary winners were not included on the original official candidates list; instead, these 'winners' were installed as candidates by the local administration.[634]

According to data provided by the Nur Otan party, 36.9 per cent of women participated as candidates in the primaries, with about 60 per cent residing in rural areas.[635] Considering the background of these women, the issues they raised, and the rhetoric of officials regarding women's political participation, we see no major changes from the neo-Soviet patterns discussed in this thesis. The deputy head of the Nur Otan party mentioned in an interview that the fact that women participating in the primaries raised issues of 'motherhood and childhood, vulnerable groups, domestic violence, ecology, and the issues of family and gender policy' was a sign of women's growing potential in political participation. This list of topics remains unchanged from those that were raised by female political representatives in the past. To prove her point, the Nur Otan party deputy attempted to provide examples of how women's political participation and interest in politics is transforming by naming women candidates – among whom were the youngest

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[633] President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's State of the Nation Address 'Constructive Public Dialogue – The Basis Of Stability and Prosperity of Kazakhstan', 2 September 2019, full text available at: https://www.akorda.kz/en/addresses/addresses_of_president/president-of-kazakhstan-kassym-jomart-tokayevs-state-of-the-nation-address-september-2-2019

[634] Radio Azzatyk, 'We won at primaries, but were not included in the list. Specificities of elections to maslikhat at Nur Otan', 23 November 2020, available at: https://rus.azattyq.org/a/features-of-elections-to-maslikhats-from-the-nur-otan-party/30964081.html

[635] Liter.kz, 'Female participants of the primaries are ready to solve social issues', 4 September 2020, available at: https://liter.kz/nazilya-razzak-voshishhayus-uchastniczami-prajmeriz/

female chess grandmaster – women in sports, traditional folk singers, and celebrities.[636] Again, this is in line with the typical female political actor profile, as approved by the regime, that serves the goal of constructing an image of comprehensive representation. Still, the regime's party continues to exert tight control over political recruitment by adapting its strategy to the new rules.

The findings of this paper suggest several directions for further research. In general, there is a strong need for more exploration about how the process of women's representation in political institutions happens, given the variety and combination of (non)contributing factors, including political context. Specifically, studies of women's political representation and participation in autocracies can further explore the role of female legislators in relation to gender issues. In this research, two examples were briefly covered – the laws on equal retirement age and domestic violence prevention – however, there are other issues that relate to gender equality. During fieldwork, many instances of difficult interactions between MPs, civil society, and gender activists were observed. Younger generations of feminist movement activists are becoming active in the informal political arena, which could be a good thematic area for future research. The recent introduction of quotas for women and youth on party lists could be explored from the angle of implementation within the extensive scholarship on multiple characteristic quotas, such as gender and ethnicity or gender and youth. Although this research was based on the political context of one post-Soviet country, the characteristics of Kazakhstan as an authoritarian regime are typical of those of other post-Soviet states and can contribute to an understanding of women's political participation in authoritarian institutions in other contexts. This is particularly true for states with democratic-like institutions, non-alternative elections, one-party regimes, controlled opposition, and the maintenance of authoritarian personalistic regimes. Potential case studies could include Belarus and Turkmenistan and could confirm or specify different varieties and levels of women's participation in politics, including experience at all stages of political participation. It would be valuable if more studies included qualitative methods by articulating the voices of female politicians who are not well represented in the scholarship on gender and politics in Central Asia. In terms of wider applications, this research might also provide a basis for examining WPP patterns in other post-Soviet countries that developed differently, such as Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, it would be interesting to conduct a comparison between the ways women participate in politics. The Kyrgyz

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[636] Liter.kz, 'Primaries created new opportunities for women in politics', 9 October 2020, available at: https://liter.kz/prajmeriz-sozdali-novye-vozmozhnosti-dlya-zhenshhin-v-politike/

government introduced quotas for women in politics in 2007 and, since then, despite an immediate, positive effect in the form of 25.6 per cent female representation in the Zhogorku Kenesh (the Kyrgyz parliament), the share of female parliamentarians dropped to 16.7 per cent in the 2020 parliamentary elections.

Another important thematic area for future research could be expanding the literature on authoritarian institutions. Future studies could further investigate the role of political parties on women's involvement in politics in the context of one-party regimes. As already mentioned throughout this thesis, the political situation has changed in Kazakhstan. For instance, when fieldwork was conducted from 2016 to 2017, nobody could have imagined that the long-standing president would step aside and that a 30 per cent quota for women would be adopted, something the government had been opposing for more than a decade, as discussed in Chapter IV. These are important developments that have an impact on the pattern of women's descriptive and substantive representation. Therefore, it is worth continuing to follow these changes and to discuss them in light of the findings of this research. In a few years, it might also be interesting to conduct a comparative study of the impact on women's representation before and after the quota. The findings of this research suggest that women's representation under autocracies in general also merits further examination, specifically as it relates to the interactions of female politicians with their constituents and individual actions that go beyond party guidelines.

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Appendices

A. Regions of Kazakhstan

B. The autobiography of Khatys Kairbekova, a female peasant at the Kzyl Tu collective farm, 1939. Source: National State Archives, Kazakhstan

АВТОБИОГРАФИЯ

Я Каирбекова Хатис родилась в 1890 г. в ... ской области Джетысуйской губерний ныне Алма-Атинского района Илийского Калининского аулсовета "Байсерке" бывший ... колхоз Кзыл-Ту № 4.

Мой отец был крестьянин бедняк и был батраком у бая. До 1908 года находилась на иждевении отца. В 1909 г. вышла за муж за гражданина Каирбекова, который тоже самое являлся бедняком, занимался крестьянством, до Октябрьской революции и после Октябрьской революции.

В 1929 г. вступила в колхоз, с 1929 г. по 1931г. работала в полеводческой бригаде рядовой колхозницей, с 1931 г. по 1936 г. работала в табачной бригаде рядовой колхозницей.

С 1936 г. до сегоднешнего дня работаю звеноводом по табакам в колхозе Кзыл-Ту № 4 за эти период за ударную работу по табакам правлением колхоза примировала меня в 1934 году батинкей, в 1936 г: мануфактурой в 1937 г. деньгами и одналом, я сама была неграмотная сейчас стала малограмотным, в данное время обучаюсь в школе по ликвидации неграмотности.

Родственников в заграницей не имею, к административной и судебной ответственности не привлекалась, 19/П-39 г. вступила в ряд КП/б/К, мой муж умер в 1932 г. на иждевении имею 4 души, кроме того старший сын Сентхасим в данное время в Октябрьском районе, в качестве инспектора Райммилиции. Призидиум Верховного Совета СССР от 15/П-39 г. за получение высокого урожая от табака и за стахановское работа награжден орденом ЛЕНИНА.

Мой адрес: Алма-Атинская область Илийский район Калининский с/сов. колхоз Кзыл-Ту № 4 сел. Байсерке.

К сему :- /Х.Каирбекова/.

4/П-39 г.

The extracts from the list of deputies of the 2nd Supreme Council of the Kazakh SSR, 1938-1942

147. КУЗЕМБАЕВА Мадина — 1914 казашка б/п — Тайпакский № 120 Западно-Казахстанская область — Старший чабан каракулеводческого совхоза, Каракулеводческий совхоз, Тайпакский район, Западно-Казахстанская область

148. КУЗЕМБАЕВ Нурдавлет — 1912 казах член ВКП/б/ с 1939 г. — Балхашский № 25 Алма-Атинская область — Председатель Алма-Атинского облисполкома, г.Алма-Ата, ул.Фурманова, д.№ 88

149. КУЛМУРЗИНА Шамшия — 1904 казашка б/п — Айртауский № 173 Кокчетавская область — Доярка колхоза "Сартюбек", колхоз "Сартюбек", Айртауский район, Кокчетавская область

150. КУНАЕВ Динмухамед Ахметович — 1912 казах член ВКП/б/ с 1939 г. — Челкарский № 90 Актюбинская область — Заместитель Председателя Совета Министров Казахской ССР, г.Алма-Ата, ул.Фурманова, д. № 88

1:	2	3	4
245.	СТАЛИН Иосиф Виссарионович Алмаатинский-Сталинский № 4 г. Алма-Ата	1879 грузин член ВКП/б/	Председатель Совета Министров Союза ССР г.Москва
246.	СУЛЕЙМЕНОВ Касым Сталинский-совхозный № 67 Южно-Казахстанская область	1908 казах член ВКП/б/ с 1932 г.	Секретарь Южно-Казахстанского обкома КП/б/К г.Чимкент
247.	СУХАНОВА Агафия Моисеевна Талды-Курганский № 293 Талды-Курганская обл.	1890 русская б/п	Учительница неполной средней школы № 2 г.Талды-Курган, ул. Шевченко, д. № 82
248.	ТАШИБАЕВ Мадихожа Сузакский № 69 Южно-Казахстанская область	1909 казах член ВКП/б/ с 1937 г.	Первый секретарь Сузакского РК КП/б/К с.Чулак-Курган, Сузакский район Южно-Казахстанская область

The extracts from the list of deputies of the 6th Supreme Council of the Kazakh SSR, 1963-1969

ЛОСЕВА Зоя Сергеевна Заводо-Затонский 184	1918 русская, чл. КПСС, высшее	Первый секретарь Семипалатинского горкома партии, г. Семипалатинск, ул. Чехова, 39. Депутат Верховного Совета Казахской ССР пятого созыва.
КОБЖАСАРОВ Кудайберген Дюсенович Семипалатинский — Железнодорожный 185	1928 казах, чл. КПСС, высшее	Начальник Семипалатинского отделения Казахской железной дороги, г. Семипалатинск, ул. МПС дом № 24, кв. 2.
МОЧАЛИН Федор Иванович Семипалатинский — Привокзальный 186	1920 русский, чл. КПСС, высшее	Заведующий отделом легкой, пищевой промышленности и торговли ЦК КП Казахстана, г. Алма-Ата, ул. Карла Маркса, 135, кв. 118.
ШАРИПОВ Исагали Семипалатинский — Центральный 187	1905 казах, чл. КПСС, высшее	Председатель Президиума Верховного Совета Казахской ССР, г. Алма-Ата. Депутат Верховного Совета Казахской ССР третьего, четвертого и пятого созывов.
БЕЙСЕМБАЕВА Дильафрус Хаиржановна Семипалатинский — Береговой 188	1939 казашка, чл. ВЛКСМ, н/высшее	Швея-мотористка Семипалатинской швейной фабрики «Большевичка Украины», г. Семипалатинск, ул. Кирова, 64.
ТРУХИНА Руфина Ивановна Семипалатинский — Калининский 189	1926 русская, беспартийная, н/среднее	Скотобоец Семипалатинского мясокомбината, г. Семипалатинск, Жана-Семей, мясокомбинат, дом ТЭЦ, кв. 11.
ИМАНБАЕВА Нагима Семипалатинский — Левобережный 190	1931 казашка, беспартийная, н/среднее	Сортировщица Семипалатинской фабрики первичной обработки шерсти, г. Семипалатинск, Жана-Семей, ул. Кустанайская, 91.

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АКТЮБИНСКАЯ ОБЛАСТЬ

Сельские округа

ШАБИКОВА Балсары Ключевой 191	1912 казашка, канд. в чл. КПСС, начальное	Трактористка колхоза «Коммунист» Алгинского производственного управления Актюбинской области, село Балгарское.
БОРОДИН Константин Петрович Джурунский 192	1909 русский, чл. КПСС, высшее	Председатель исполкома Актюбинского областного Совета депутатов трудящихся, г. Актюбинск, ул. Коммунистическая, 1 кв. 10. Депутат Верховного Совета Казахской ССР четвертого созыва.
МОРОЗОВ Виктор Михайлович Карабутакский 193	1928 русский, беспартийный, н/среднее	Бригадир тракторной бригады Щербаковского совхоза Карабутакского производственного управления Актюбинской области, село Талдысай.
КОЛОМИЕЦ Федор Степанович Мартукский 194	1910 украинец, чл. КПСС, высшее	Секретарь ЦК КП Казахстана, первый секретарь Целинного крайкома партии, г. Целиноград.
ЛУСКАНЬ Андрей Степанович Яйсанский 195	1925 русский, чл. КПСС, начальное	Бригадир комплексной бригады колхоза имени Кирова Мартукского производственного управления Актюбинской области, пос. Дмитриевка.
ТЛЕУКУЛОВА Кульпан Новороссийский 196	1935 казашка, беспартийная, н/среднее	Доярка Магаджановского совхоза Новороссийского производственного управления Актюбинской области.

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УСЕБАЕВ Кенесбай Чаяновский 462	1914 казах, чл. КПСС, высшее	Редактор газеты «Социалистик Казахстан», г. Алма-Аты, ул. Тулебаева 133, кв. 4.
БАЙМОЛДАЕВА Умсындык Ташкулакский 463	1916 казашка, беспартийная, начальное	Доярка колхоза «Коммунизм» Сары-Агачского производственного управления. Чимкентской области.
ПУПАШЕНКО Иван Трофимович Сары-Агачский 464	1907 русский, чл. КПСС, н/высшее	Директор совхоза имени Карла Маркса Сары-Агачского производственного управления Чимкентской области.
УСКЕНБАЕВА Райхан Келесский 465	1940 казашка, чл. КПСС, среднее	Механик-водитель хлопкоуборочной машины совхоза «Келесский» Сары-Агачского производственного управления Чимкентской области.
БЕРДАЛИН Айтбек Машрапович Абайский 466	1914 казах, чл. КПСС, высшее	Председатель исполкома Чимкентского областного Совета депутатов трудящихся, г. Чимкент, ул. Коммунистическая, 47, кв. 7.
ХОХЛОВ Иван Николаевич Борисовский 470	1910 русский, чл. КПСС, высшее	Первый заместитель министра строительства Казахской ССР, г. Алма-Ата, ул. Мукана Тулебаева, 154, кв. 9.
ГУЛАМОВА Курсия Туркестанский — Фрунзенский 471	1939 узбечка, чл. КПСС, среднее	Звеньевая колхоза «Ленинизм» Туркестанского производственного управления Чимкентской области.
МОРОЗОВ Андрей Константинович Чубаровский 472	1917 русский, чл. КПСС, высшее	Председатель . исполкома Южно-Казахстанского краевого Совета депутатов трудящихся, г. Чимкент, ул. Горького, 31, кв. 3. Депутат Верховного Совета Казахской ССР четвертого и пятого созывов.
БЕЙСЕМБАЕВ Улутбай Караспанский 473	1907 казах, чл. КПСС, н/высшее	Секретарь парткома Туркестанского производственного управления Чимкентской области, г. Туркестан, ул. Абая.

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The extracts from the list of deputies of the 9th Supreme Council of the Kazakh SSR, 1963-1969

БЕКБУЛАТОВА Кайша Абдрахмановна Жолымбетский 435	1939, казашка, б/п, н/среднее	Доярка совхоза им. КазЦИКа Шортандинского района. Член Мандатной комиссии.
СЕИТОВ Утеген Сеитович Атбасарский городской 436	1923, казах, чл. КПСС, высшее	Прокурор Қазахской ССР, г. Алма-Ата, ул. М. Тулебаева 138, кв. 2. Депутат Верховного Совета Казахской ССР VII и VIII созывов.
КОНОВАЛОВА Зоя Андреевна Городской 489	1937, русская, б/п, среднее	Аппаратчица теплоэлектроцентрали, г. Степногорск 474456, 4-й микрорайон дом 76, кв. 28. Член Планово-бюджетной комиссии.
СМИРНОВ Сергей Артемович Строительный 490	1918, русский, чл. КПСС, высшее	Заместитель Председателя Совета Министров Қазахской ССР, г. Алма-Ата, ул. М. Тулебаева 156, кв. 6. Дважды лауреат Государственной премии СССР, Герой Социалистического Труда. Депутат Верховного Совета Казахской ССР VI, VII и VIII созывов.

Чимкентская область

КУЗНЕЦОВ Семен Семенович Чимкентский — Ждановский 437	1917, русский, чл. КПСС, высшее	Первый заместитель Председателя Государственного планового комитета Совета Министров Қазахской ССР, г. Алма-Ата-64, ул. Панфилова 151, кв. 49. Член Комиссии по строительству и промышленности строительных материалов.
ГЛУЩЕНКО Нелля Ивановна Чимкентский центральный 438	1937, русская, б/п, среднее	Сверловщица Чимкентского завода прессов-автоматов, г. Чимкент-486019 ,ул. Ленина 48, кв. 44. Член Мандатной комиссии.
ХОБДАБЕРГЕНОВ Рзабай Жолдинович Чимкентский — Калининский 439	1929, казах, чл. КПСС, высшее, кандидат технических наук	Директор Чимкентского ордена Ленина свинцового завода им. М. И. Калинина, г. Чимкент-486002, ул. Победы 3. Председатель Комиссии по промышленности, транспорту и связи. Лауреат Государственной премии СССР. Депутат Верховного Совета Казахской ССР VII и VIII созывов.
УРЮПОВА Лидия Ильинична Чимкентский — Ленинский 440	1938, русская, б/п, среднее	Мотальщица Чимкентского хлопчатобумажного комбината, г. Чимкент-486019, ул. Ташкентский тракт 116, кв. 14. Член Комиссии законодательных предположений.
КАСЫМОВА Райхан Шариповна Чимкентский — Амангельдинский 441	1950, казашка, чл. ВЛКСМ, среднее	Швея Чимкентской фабрики «Восход», г. Чимкент-486005, ул. Нариманова 34, кв. 38. Член Комиссии по промышленности, транспорту и связи.

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C. List of deputies of region, district, city, villages and community settlements of the Kazakh SSR

5. СОСТАВ ДЕПУТАТОВ ОБЛАСТНЫХ, РАЙОННЫХ, ГОРОДСКИХ, РАЙОННЫХ В ГОРОДАХ, АУЛЬНЫХ, СЕЛЬСКИХ И ПОСЕЛКОВЫХ СОВЕТОВ ДЕПУТАТОВ ТРУДЯЩИХСЯ КАЗАХСКОЙ ССР

Показатели	Советы													
	Областные		Районные		Городские		Районные в городах		Аульные, сельские		Поселковые		ИТОГО	
	Абс.	%%	Абс.	%%	Абсол	%%	Абсол	%%	Абс.	%%	Абс.	%%	Абсол.	%%
Депутатов	1434	100,0	6066	100,0	5353	100,0	1314	100,0	40533	100,0	4046	100,0	58796	100,0
мужчин...	1053	73,4	4126	68,0	3259	60,9	800	60,9	26902	66,3	2649	65,5	38789	66,0
женщин...	381	26,6	1940	32,0	2094	39,1	574	39,1	13681	33,7	1397	34,5	20907	34,0
членов и кандидатов в члены КПСС	1068	74,5	4177	68,9	3216	60,1	777	59,1	18528	45,7	2148	53,1	29914	50,9
Беспартийн	366	25,5	1889	31,1	2137	39,9	537	40,9	22055	54,3	1898	46,9	28882	49,1
В т.числе чл.ЛКСМ	63	4,4	401	6,6	404	7,5	112	8,5	4576	11,3	406	10,0	5962	10,1
рабочих...	161	11,2	387	6,4	1304	24,4	369	28,1	3100	7,6	2131	30,4	6552	11,2
крестьян...	211	14,7	1306	21,5	77	1,4	—	—	22284	54,9	69	1,7	23947	40,7
служащих...	1062	74,1	4373	72,1	3972	74,2	945	71,9	15149	37,5	1796	67,9	28297	48,1
высшее....	456	31,8	946	15,6	1333	24,9	374	28,5	1381	3,4	434	10,7	4924	8,4
среднее...	533	37,2	2660	43,9	2011	37,6	601	45,7	8639	21,3	1307	32,3	15737	26,8
низшее....	445	31,0	2460	40,5	2009	37,5	339	25,8	30513	75,3	2305	57,0	38121	64,8

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D. Socio-demographic characteristics of the deputies of the 2nd Supreme Council of Kazakh SSR, 1947-1950

Age

Age/sex	Men	%	Women	%
20-29	5	2%	26	34%
30-39	83	37%	27	35%
40-49	109	49%	18	23%
50-59	16	7%	4	5%
60-69	9	4%	2	3%
70-79	1	1%	-	-
Total (n=300), 100%	**223 (74%)**	*100%*	**77 (26%)**	*100%*

Communist party membership

Status/sex	Men	%	Women	%
Membership	200	90%	24	31%
Candidacy	6	2%	8	11%
No membership	17	8%	45	58%
Total (n=300), 100%	**223 (74%)**	*100%*	**77 (26%)**	*100%*

Regional representation

	Men	%	Women	%
Moscow	5	2%	-	-
Almaty (city)	73	33%	4	5%
Almaty (region)	4	2%	2	3%
Taldykurgan	8	3,5%	4	5%
Karaganda	14	6%	3	4%
Pavlodar	6	3%	4	5%
Kustanai	9	4%	5	6%
Semipalatinsk	7	3%	4	5%
West Kazakhstan	12	5%	6	8%
Tselinograd	10	4,5%	9	12%
Kzylorda	11	5%	1	1%
Zhambul	8	3,5%	6	8%
South Kazakhstan	19	8,5%	8	10%
East Kazakhstan	13	6%	6	8%
Kokchetav	8	3,5%	3	4%
North Kazakhstan	9	4%	8	11%
Aktyubinsk	7	3,5%	4	5%
Total (n=300), 100%	**223 (74%)**	*100%*	**77 (26%)**	*100%*

Occupation

	Men	%	Women	%
Party	96	43%	2	3%
Agriculture	33	15%	45	58%
Factory	31	14%	7	9%
Government	45	20%	-	-
Judiciary	2	1%	-	-
Local councils/governments	7	3%	5	6%
Mass media and culture	5	2%	1	1,5%
Schools/hospitals	1	1%	16	21%
Academia	3	1%	1	1,5%
Total (n=300), 100%	**223 (74%)**	*100%*	**77 (26%)**	*100%*

E. Socio-demographic characteristics of the deputies of the 6th Supreme Council of Kazakh SSR, 1963-1966

Age

Age/sex	Men	%	Women	%
20-29	22	7%	48	31%
30-39	106	34%	62	40%
40-49	79	26%	38	24%
50-59	97	31%	9	5%
60-69	4	1%	-	-
70-79	1	1%	-	-
Total (n=466), 100%	**309 (66%)**	*100%*	**157 (34%)**	*100%*

Communist party membership

Status/sex	Men	%	Women	%
Membership	258	84%	40	25%
Candidacy	5	1,5%	7	5%
VLKSM	6	1,5%	16	10%
No membership	40	13%	94	60%
Total (n=466), 100%	**309 (66%)**	*100%*	**157 (34%)**	*100%*

Regional representation

	Men	%	Women	%
Moscow	-	-	-	-
Almaty (city)	17	5,5%	6	4%
Almaty (region)	28	9%	17	11%
Taldykurgan	-	-	-	-
Karaganda	36	12%	17	11%
Pavlodar	15	5%	10	6%
Kustanai	25	8%	14	9%
Semipalatinsk	14	4,5%	11	7%
West Kazakhstan	23	7,5%	10	6%
Tselinograd	21	7%	14	9%
Kzylorda	-	-	-	-
Zhambul	27	9%	16	10%
South Kazakhstan	29	9%	7	4,5%
East Kazakhstan	26	8%	13	8%
Kokchetav	20	6,5%	6	4%
North Kazakhstan	15	5%	9	6%
Aktyubinsk	13	4%	7	4,5%
Total (n=466), 100%	**309 (66%)**	*100%*	**157 (34%)**	*100%*

Occupation

	Men	%	Women	%
Party	63	20%	2	1%
Agriculture	82	27%	70	45%
Factory	60	19%	52	33%
Government	30	10%	5	3%
Judiciary	2	0,6%	-	-
Local councils/governments	53	17%	4	3%
Mass media and culture	6	2%	2	1%
Schools/hospitals	1	0,4%	20	13%
Academia	7	2%	2	1%
Military	5	2%	-	-
Total (n=466), 100%	**309 (66%)**	*100%*	**157 (34%)**	*100%*

Re-election rate (number/percentage of men and women of the 6th council who served in the previous councils)

	Men	%	Women	%
1 council	2	2%	-	-
2 council	7	8%	2	16,7%
3 council	12	13%	2	16,7%
4 council	25	27%	2	16,7%
5 council	46	50%	6	50%
Re-elected	**92 (30%)**	*100%*	**12 (8%)**	*100%*
Total	**n=309**		**n=157**	

F. Socio-demographic characteristics of the deputies of the 9th Supreme Council of Kazakh SSR, 1975-1979

Age

Age/sex	Men	%	Women	%
20-29	16	5%	61	35%
30-39	49	16%	79	47%
40-49	141	46%	24	14%
50-59	78	26%	5	3%
60-69	20	6%	1	1%
70-79	2	1%	-	-
Total (n=476), 100%	**306 (64%)**	*100%*	**170 (36%)**	*100%*

Communist party membership

Status/sex	Men	%	Women	%
Membership	262	85%	48	28%
Candidacy	3	1%	7	4%
VLKSM	13	4%	34	20%
No membership	28	10%	81	48%
Total (n=476), 100%	**306 (64%)**	*100%*	**170 (36%)**	*100%*

Regional representation

	Men	%	Women	%
Moscow	-	-	-	-
Almaty (city)	20	7%	6	4%
Almaty (region)	16	5%	13	8%
Taldykurgan	15	5%	9	5%
Karaganda	27	9%	17	10%
Pavlodar	17	5,5%	9	5,5%
Kustanai	10	3%	6	4%
Semipalatinsk	17	5,5%	10	6%
West Kazakhstan	20	7%	13	4%
Tselinograd	20	7%	9	5,5%
Kzylorda	17	5,5%	5	3%
Zhambul	19	6%	10	6%
South Kazakhstan	32	10%	19	11%
East Kazakhstan	22	7%	14	8%
Kokchetav	-	-	-	-
North Kazakhstan	14	4,5%	8	5%
Aktyubinsk	15	5%	6	4%
Zhezkazgan	9	3%	8	5%
Mangistau	8	2,5%	3	2%
Turgai	8	2,5%	5	3%
Total (n=476), 100%	**306 (64%)**	*100%*	**170 (36%)**	*100%*

Occupation

	Men	%	Women	%
Party	80	26%	-	-
Agriculture	68	22%	78	46%
Factory	44	14%	73	43%
Government	61	20%	4	2%
Judiciary	2	1%	-	-
Local councils/governments	26	8%	1	0,5%
Mass media and culture	11	4%	1	0,5%
Schools/hospitals	-		11	7%
Academia	5	1,5%	1	0,5%
Military	6	2%	-	-
Public organisations	2	1%	1	0,5%
Students	1	0,5%	-	-
Total (n=476), 100%	**306 (64%)**	*100%*	**170 (36%)**	*100%*

Re-election rate (number/percentage of men and women of the 9th council who served in the previous councils)

	Men	%	Women	%
1 council	**-**	**-**	**-**	**-**
2 council	3	1%	**-**	**-**
3 council	5	2%	**-**	**-**
4 council	11	5%	**-**	**-**
5 council	16	7%	1	5%
6 council	25	11%	2	10%
7 council	62	26%	5	25%
8 council	112	48%	12	60%
Re-elected	**234 (76%)**	*100%*	**20 (12%)**	*100%*
	Total (n=306, 100%)		**Total (n=170, 100%)**	

G. Socio-demographic profile of the MPs of Majilis (descriptive statistic data)

MPs by age group in the lower house of parliament

All parliament arians	1st convocation (1996 – 1999)		2nd convocation (1999 – 2004)		3d convocation (2004 – 2007)		4th convocation (2007 – 2012)		5th convocation (2012 – 2016)		6th convocation (2016 – 2020)	
	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women
20 – 29	1/2	-	-	-	1/2	-	-	-	-	-	1/1	-
30 – 39	3/5	1/14	11/15	-	4/7	-	3/3	1/5	3/4	-	3/4	4/14
40 – 49	29/55	3/43	18/25	1/12	17/29	5/63	32/33	5/27	17/19	6/20	16/20	4/14
50 – 59	18/34	3/43	33/46	5/63	27/45	2/25	36/36	12/63	35/39	16/53	40/48	17/58
60 – 69	2/4	-	9/13	2/25	10/17	1/12	28/28	1/5	32/36	8/27	21/25	4/14
70 – 79	-	-	1/1	-	-	-	-	-	2/2	-	2/3	-
Total	**53**	**7**	**72**	**8**	**59**	**8**	**99**	**19**	**89**	**30**	**84**	**29**

MPs by educational level in the lower house of parliament

All parliamentarians	1st convocation (1996 – 1999)		2nd convocation (1999 – 2004)		3d convocation (2004 – 2007)		4th convocation (2007 – 2012)		5th convocation (2012 – 2016)		6th convocation (2016 – 2020)	
	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women
PhD	9/17	-	23/32	-	31/52	2/25	39/40	8/42	36/40	14/47	26/31	11/38
Masters	5/9	-	13/8	1/13	18/31	3/37,5	27/27	8/42	24/27	10/33	28/33	10/34
Bachelor degree	39/74	7/100	36/50	7/87	10/17	3/37,5	33/33	3/16	29/33	6/20	29/35	8/28
Secondary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/1	-
Total	**53**	**7**	**72**	**8**	**59**	**8**	**99**	**19**	**89**	**30**	**84**	**29**

MPs by professional activity in the lower house of parliament

All parliamentarians	1st convocation (1996 – 1999)		2nd convocation (1999 – 2004)		3d convocation (2004 – 2007)		4th convocation (2007 – 2012)		5th convocation (2012 – 2016)		6th convocation (2016 – 2020)	
	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women
Academic institutions or training research centre	6/11	-	4/6	-	5/9	-	7/7	-	4/5	-	2/2	3/10
Business	5/9	-	16/22	1/12,5	19/32	2/25	23[637]/23	2/11	14/16	3/10	16/19	4/14
Government	4/7	1/14	11/15	2/25	9/15	1/12,5	13/13	5/26	12/14	5/17	9/11	3/10
Judicial	1/2	-	6/8	-	-	-	4/4	1/5	2/2	1/3	4/5	3/10
Party	2/4	-	4/6	-	4[638]/17	-	5[639]/5	1/5	10[640]/11	3/10	16[641]/19	6/21
Local government	20/38	1/14	15/21	2/25	15/25	4/50	26/26	7/37	20/22	8/27	16/19	2/7
Civil society	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/5	-	1/3	-	1/3
Public organisations	4/7	3/44	4/6	1/12,5	2/3	-	8/8	-	9/10	7/23	14/17	6/21
PA	-	-	1/1	-	2/3	-	7/7	-	10/11	-	3/4	-
Military/security	2/4	-	1/1	-	-	-	1/1	-	1/1	-	1/1	-
Celebrity	3/6	1/14	2/3	1/12,5	-	-	-	-	-	1/3	1/1	1/3
Central representative authorities	3/6	-	2/3	-	1/2	-	1/1	-	4/5	-	1/1	-
Worker/employee	3/6	-	5/7	1/12,5	2/3	-	1/1	-	-	-	1/1	-
Local representative authorities	-	-	-	-	-	1/12/5	3/3	1/5	3/3	-	-	-
Schools and hospitals	-	1/14	1/1	-	-	-	-	1/5	-	1/3	-	-
Total	**53**	**7**	**72**	**8**	**59**	**8**	**99**	**19**	**89**	**30**	**84**	**29**
	60		**80**		**67**		**118**		**119**		**113**	

[637] Incl.one from business under auspices of government, i.e. Малонимдериunder Ministry of Agriculture
[638] One has extensive party experience before or combines
[639]Two has extensive party experience before or combines
[640] Two have extensive party experience
[641]Four out of 10 had solid and/or managerial party experience, though at the moment of election they worked in other areas

Regional representation

All parliamentarians	1st convocation (1996 – 1999)		2nd convocation (1999 – 2004)		3d convocation (2004 – 2007)		4th convocation (2007 – 2012)		5th convocation (2012 – 2016)		6th convocation (2016 – 2020)	
	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women
SOUTH KAZ	2/4	-	6/8	-	6/10	-	8/8	-	4/4	-	8/10	-
TARAZ	2/4	-	-	-	1/2	-	2/2	-	2/2	1/3	1/1	-
KZO	2/4	-	2/3	1/12,5	1/2	-	3/3	-	3/3	-	2/2	1/3
ATYRAU	-	-	1/1	-	2/3	-	3/3	-	5/6	-	2/2	1/3
AKTAU	1/2	-	1/1	-	2/3	-	2/2	1/5	1/1	1/3	2/2	-
WEST KAZ	2/4	-	3/4	-	3/5	1/12,5	4/4	1/5	4/4	1/3	2/2	1/3
AKTOBE	2/4	-	2/3	1/12,5	2/3	-	3/3	-	2/2	1/3	3/4	2/7
KOSTANAI	3/6	-	4/6	-	1/2	1/12,5	3/3	2/11	-	2/7	1/1	2/7
PAVLODAR	2/4	1/14	3/4	-	3/5	-	4/4	-	1/1	1/3	-	2/7
KARAGANDA	6/11	-	5/7	-	5/8	-	5/5	-	6/7	-	3/4	1/3
ASTANA (CITY)	4/8	-	5/7	-	9/15	1/12,5	36/36	8/42	37/42	13/43	33/39	9/31
AKMOLA	2/4	2/29	4/6	1/12,5	2/3	1/12,5	4/4	-	2/2	2/7	3/4	1/3
ALMATY (CITY)	15/28	4/57	24/33	4/50	15/25	2/25	13/13	4/22	12/13	7/23	15/18	8/28
ALMATY REG.	4/8	-	3/4	-	2/3	1/12,5	2/2	1/5	6/7	-	4/5	-
EAST KAZ	5/9	-	6/8	1/12,5	3/5	1/12,5	4/4	1/5	3/3	1/3	2/2	1/3
NORTH KAZ	1/2	-	3/4	-	2/3	-	3/3	1/5	1/1	-	3/4	-
Total	**53**	**7**	**72**	**8**	**59**	**8**	**99**	**19**	**89**	**30**	**84**	**29**
	60		**80**		**67**		**118**		**119**		**113**	

Experience in working in central level government institutions or PA

All parliamentarians	1st convocation (1996 – 1999)		2nd convocation (1999 – 2004)		3d convocation (2004 – 2007)		4th convocation (2007 – 2012)		5th convocation (2012 – 2016)		6th convocation (2016 – 2020)	
	% of men	% of women	% of men	% of women	% of men	% of women	% of men	% of women	% of men	% of women	% of men	% of women
YES	12	1	27	2	17	1	32	6	35	7	37	8
NO	41	6	44	6	40	8	62	10	39	18	42	19

Post-MP career path

All parliamentarians	1st convocation (1996 – 1999)		2nd convocation (1999 – 2004)		3d convocation (2004 – 2007)		4th convocation (2007 – 2012)		5th convocation (2012 – 2016)	
	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women	q-ty/ % of men	q-ty/ % of women
Academic institutions/research centres	6/13	-	6/10	-	4/10	1/17	4/6	2/15	3/7	-
Business	3/6	-	11/18	2/25	14/35	2/33	14/22	3/23	13/30	4/31
Government	16/33	3/43	16/26	-	8/20	-	9/14	2/15	5/11	3/23
Central representative bodies	3/6	-	3/5	-	1/3	-	2/3	-	-	-
Local representative bodies	2/4	-	-	1/13	-	-	1/2	-	-	-
PA	3/6	-	1/2	-	1/3	-	4/6	-	-	-
Local government	8/17	1/14	6/10	1/13	3/8	-	4/6	-	5/11	-
Judicial	-	-	2/3	-	-	-	1/2	-	1/2	-
Party	-	-	4/7	-	1/3	-	-	-	2/5	-
Sport	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Civil society	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Public organisations	3/6	2/29	7/11	3/38	6/15	2/33	14/22	2/15	8/18	4/31
Died	4/8	-	2/3	-	1/3	-	1/2	-	2/5	-
Retired	-	1/14	2/3	1/13	1/3	1/17	6/10	4/31	3/7	2/15
Under investigation or imprisoned	-	-	1/2	-	-	-	3/5	-	2/5	-
Total	**48**	**7**	**61**	**8**	**40**	**6**	**63**	**13**	**44**	**13**