

COMPARATIVE, COLLECTIVE PORTRAIT OF THE HIGHEST REPRESENTATIVE BODIES OF KAZAKHSTAN 1938-2024 (PROSOPROGRAPHIC ANALYSIS)

Baurzhan * SHERIYAZDANOV	<i>Candidate of Political Sciences, Chief Researcher, RSE "Institute of State History" Committee of Science, Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Astana, Kazakhstan, b.sher54@mail.ru, ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6574-1016, Scopus ID: 58110803300</i>
Zhanat MOMYNKULOV	<i>Candidate of Philosophical Sciences, Senior Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Faculty of International Relations, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan, momynkulov_zhb_1@enu.kz, ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6818-9397</i>
Kuandyk KAKIMOV	<i>Head of Department, RSE "Institute of State History", Committee of Science, Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Astana, Kazakhstan, kakimoff01kz@mail.com, ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0003-3976-1894</i>
Veli KOÇ	<i>Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of Public Administration, PhD Student, Turkey, t.veli.koc@gmail.com, ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1981-0065</i>

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Abstract. This article identifies key trends in the qualitative composition of deputies of Kazakhstan's highest representative and legislative bodies from 1938 to 2024. Given the extensive timeframe, the analysis is divided into two stages: the Soviet period (activity of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR) and the period of independent Kazakhstan (activity of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan).

The study examines party affiliation, socio-professional background, ethnicity, education, gender, and age of deputies. It reveals dynamic changes over time and demonstrates how CPSU policies influenced the exercise of representative authority during the Soviet era. That period was marked by the absence of genuine parliamentarism, both formally and substantively. In contrast, the Parliament of independent Kazakhstan shows a gradual trend toward democratization, competitive and alternative elections, and increased pluralism within a relatively short historical span.

The article concludes by emphasizing the growing role of representative and legislative institutions in ensuring the sustainable development of the Republic of Kazakhstan in contemporary conditions.

Keywords: Deputies, Supreme Soviet, Constitution, Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, CP KSSR, elections.

Аңдатпа. Мақаланың мақсаты 1938-2024 жылдардағы Қазақстанның жоғары өкілді және заң шығарушы органы депутаттарының сапалық құрамының өзгеруінің негізгі тенденцияларын анықтау болып табылады. Бұл тарихи дәуір үлкен хронологиялық кезеңді қамтитындықтан, оны екі кезеңге бөлу ұсынылды. Біріншісі – Кеңестік кезең – Қазақ КСР Жоғарғы Кеңесінің қызметі, екіншісі – Тәуелсіз Қазақстан Парламентінің қызметі кезеңі.

Жоғарғы Кеңес депутаттарының партиялық, әлеуметтік-кәсіптік, этникалық, білімділік, гендерлік және жастық құрамына талдау жүргізілді, өзгеру динамикасын көрсетті және КОКП саясатының биліктің өкілді тармағы ретінде өкілеттіктерін толық жүзеге асыруына ықпалының байланыстары мен мысалдарын анықтады. Қазақстан мемлекеттілігінің дамуының кеңестік кезеңі формальды және нақты парламентаризмнің болмауымен сипатталды деген қорытынды жасалған.

Тәуелсіз Қазақстанның алқалы Парламентінің жоғары өкілді және заң шығарушы органының сапалық құрамын талдау Қазақстан Республикасы дамуының қысқа кезеңінде пікір плюрализмін ескере отырып, қоғамды демократияландыру, баламалы және бәсекелес сайлау үдерістерінің серпінді тенденциясын көрсеткендігі дәлелденген.

Қорытындылай келе, мақалада қазіргі жағдайда Қазақстан Республикасының тұрақты дамуындағы өкілетті және заң шығарушы билік тармақтарының рөлі мен маңызы туралы түйіндер жасалады.

Түйін сөздер: Депутаттар, Жоғарғы Кеңес, Конституция, ҚР Парламенті, ҚазКСР КП, сайлау.

* Corresponding author: B. Sheriyazdanov, b.sher54@mail.ru

Аннотация. Целью данной статьи является определение коллективного портрета высшего представительного и законодательного органа Казахстана в 1938–2024 годах, а также выявление основных тенденций изменения качественного состава депутатского корпуса.

В связи с тем, что данная историческая эпоха охватывает большой хронологический период было предложено разделить на два этапа. Первый это советский период – деятельность Верховного Совета Казахской ССР, второй период это – период деятельности Парламента независимого Казахстана.

Проведенный качественный анализ состава депутатов ВС показал динамику изменения и выявить связи и примеры влияние политики КПСС на полную реализацию своих полномочий как представительной ветви власти. Советский период развития казахстанской государственности характеризуется отсутствием парламентаризма, как формальным, так и фактическим.

Состав высшего представительного и законодательного органа Парламента независимого Казахстана показал динамическую тенденцию изменения процессов демократизации общества, альтернативных и конкурентных выборов, учет плюрализм мнений за короткий период развития РК.

В заключении статьи сделаны выводы о роли и значении представительной и законодательной ветви власти в устойчивом развитии РК в современных условиях.

Ключевые слова: Депутаты, Верховный Совет, конституция, Парламент РК, КПКССР, выборы.

Key provisions

The article presents a prosopographical analysis of Kazakhstan's highest representative bodies from 1938 to 2024, identifying both stable and transforming characteristics of the political elite across different socio-political formations - from the late Soviet period to independence and the present stage. The theoretical significance lies in advancing the prosopographical approach in Kazakhstani political science, particularly for long-term elite transformation studies. The research contributes to elite studies, institutional political sociology, and historical political science in the post-Soviet space by interpreting the evolution of representative power through social structure and political selection mechanisms.

The practical significance includes the application of findings to improve state HR policy, political representation mechanisms, and educational programs in political science and public administration. The data may also support efforts to achieve greater social, regional, and gender balance in parliamentary representation.

Introduction

The research hypothesis is based on a comparative analysis of the collective portrait of the highest representative bodies of Soviet Kazakhstan and the changes in the quantitative and qualitative composition of the deputy corps after independence. The aim is to identify major trends in the composition of deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR and the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan (RK).

Using prosopographical analysis, the study constructs a collective portrait of these institutions by examining party affiliation, socio-professional, ethnic, educational, gender, and age characteristics, as well as the scope of deputies' mandates under the respective constitutions. Deputies of the Supreme Soviet and later Parliament make key political decisions and are expected to function as a bridge between society and the state, forming a core element of checks and balances. Under the 1937 Constitution of the Kazakh SSR, the Supreme Soviet - like the earlier Congress of Soviets - was considered the collective head of state and the highest authority. The 1978 Constitution reaffirmed this structure within the prevailing socio-political framework. Following independence, the Parliament of Kazakhstan became the highest representative body exercising legislative authority. According to the 1995 Constitution, Parliament consists of two chambers-the Senate and the Mazhilis-both operating on a permanent basis. The Senate (50 seats) includes two representatives from each region, as well as from cities of republican significance and the capital, elected indirectly by local representative bodies. Ten senators (five nominated by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan) are appointed by the President. Senate deputies serve six-year terms, with half renewed every three years (Republic of Kazakhstan, 1995). The Mazhilis (98 seats) is elected through a mixed electoral system: 69 deputies by proportional representation (party lists with a 5% threshold in a nationwide constituency) and 29 through single-member districts. Deputies serve five-year terms. The relevance of this topic stems from the need to understand parliamentary development in the context of political modernization, social transformation, and foreign policy challenges in the 21st century. In his message to the people of Kazakhstan on 08.09.2025, the President announced a parliamentary reform aimed at enhancing public administration and strengthening democratic principles (President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025). A key proposal

is the transition to a unicameral Parliament, signaling a shift toward a more compact and functionally oriented legislative model.

Literature review

The evolution and composition of Kazakhstan's highest representative bodies remain subjects of active scholarly interest. N. Saulen (2023) analyzes the development of parliamentarism in the context of constitutional reforms in 2007, 2017, and 2022. Zalesny and Ostapovich (2021) examine the expansion of parliamentary powers, increased deputy numbers, the introduction of a mixed electoral system, and the consolidation of legislative initiative rights. Fundamental studies on the Soviets as state institutions are limited. A notable exception is K. N. Nurpeisov's monograph *The Formation of the Soviets in Kazakhstan (March 1917 – June 1918)* (Nurpeisov, 1987). Domestic scholars including K. Burhanov and S. Bulekbaev (2010), A. Nysanbaev et al. (2001), G. Nurymbetova (2007), and M. Ashimbaev (2009) have examined democratic processes and parliamentary development from various perspectives. From the standpoint of constitutional law, the Parliament has been studied by S. Z. Zimanov (2011), A. K. Kotov (2000), G. S. Sapargaliev (2008), and S. Tabanov and A. A. Orazova (2005). Zimanov's monograph *The Parliament of Kazakhstan during the Difficult Years of Independence* is particularly valuable for its theoretical contributions. Political scientists N. Qaliev (2003) and A. Bakır (2009) have provided systematic analyses of parliamentarism and practical recommendations. More recent works by B. Bekjanov (2010) and Q. Dautaliev (2010) contribute novel perspectives within legal theory. Dautaliev emphasizes that parliamentary oversight depends significantly on political factors, especially the presence of a parliamentary minority (opposition). N. Mustafayev's monograph *The History of Independent Kazakhstan: Parliamentarism and Local Self-Government* (2022) explores electoral practices and the development of the Soviets. A. Chebotarev (2022) examines the evolution of Kazakhstan's political system in the context of modernization. Recent conference materials, including the presentation by N. A. Pussyrmanov at the 2025 scientific-practical conference on state sovereignty and independence (Pussyrmanov, Ed., 2025), focus on parliamentary reform.

Despite existing scholarship, there remains a lack of comprehensive prosopographical research covering the entire 1938–2024 period, which this study seeks to address.

Research methodology

This study applies a combination of historical, logical, statistical, comparative, and prosopographical methods to analyze the development and composition of Kazakhstan's highest representative bodies. The historical method enabled the authors to trace the evolution of representative institutions in chronological sequence, considering the interconnection and conditionality of their stages and forms. The logical method was used as a system of theoretical premises guiding the identification of key historical and political issues related to the Soviets of People's Deputies and shaping the selection, analysis, and generalization of empirical material. The integration of historical and logical approaches led to the adoption of a problem-chronological principle. Historical and political problems of the Soviets were identified through logical analysis and examined within clearly defined chronological frameworks.

The study also employs a statistical (quantitative) method, which allowed the identification of objective patterns and qualitative characteristics. The establishment of reliable individual and aggregated numerical data, combined with the comparative method, ensured accurate quantification of qualitative features. This approach demonstrated the contradictory development of the Soviets of People's Deputies and revealed general historical trends. The comparative-historical method further made it possible to identify recurring patterns and interdependencies in the evolution of representative institutions, highlighting the connection between historical experience and contemporary political practice.

Archival materials were used to ensure empirical validity, including documents from Fund 17 of the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI, Russian Federation); Fund 5-R, Funds 11 and 12 of the Pavlodar Regional State Archive; Funds 32, 36, and 45 of the Astana State Archive; and Funds 30 and 55 of the North Kazakhstan State Archive.

A central methodological tool was the prosopographical method, defined as the study of dynamic changes within a group of individuals sharing common characteristics [8, p. 2]. In this research, prosopography was applied to the systematic analysis of social and biographical characteristics of

deputies united by institutional affiliation.

The sample included all deputies meeting the defined criteria:

Chronological scope: 1938–2023

Institutional status: deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR and deputies of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The total sample comprised 490 deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR and 148 deputies of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The following variables were analyzed: age, party affiliation, social background (class and education), ethnicity, gender, professional training and positions held, regional representation, state awards and titles, and terms of convocations. These parameters enabled identification of shared trends and structural characteristics. For visualization, distribution tables were constructed according to total number, age, social status, gender, party affiliation, and professional activity. Diagrams illustrated the qualitative composition of the 10th and 11th convocations of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR, as well as the party composition of the Mazhilis in 1995. These materials clarified structural dynamics and institutional transformations. The findings confirm the research hypothesis. While it was assumed that party affiliation and social origin significantly influenced the composition of the Supreme Soviet, analysis showed that most deputies were members of the Communist Party and predominantly originated from working-class and peasant backgrounds, often occupying key positions. This supports the hypothesis regarding political determinants in elite formation. Overall, prosopographical analysis revealed systemic features and confirmed the influence of political factors on the formation of both the Supreme Soviet and the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Research results

The qualitative analysis covers two main periods: The Soviet period (1938–1993) – activity of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR.

The period of independence (1995–2025) – activity of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The Supreme Soviet of the Soviet era cannot be considered a parliament in the full sense, as it lacked core features of parliamentarism: democratic competition, separation of powers, a professional full-time deputy corps, and institutional independence from executive authority. From 1938 to 1993, the composition of the Supreme Soviet evolved alongside broader political and social transformations. Notably, its numerical composition significantly exceeded that of the contemporary Parliament of Kazakhstan.

For instance, due to changes in representation norms and population growth, the number of deputies in the Supreme Soviet increased by 37 between 1961 and 1985. During the same period, the number of deputies in local councils grew by 45,988. These changes reflected demographic expansion and administrative restructuring but did not necessarily indicate increased institutional autonomy or democratization.

Thus, while structural and quantitative changes occurred during the Soviet period, they unfolded within a centralized political system that limited genuine representative functions. The transition to independence marked a shift toward institutional reform and gradual development of competitive parliamentary mechanisms.

Table 1. Aggregated Data on the Composition of Deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR

Period	Number of Deputies	Workers and Collective Farmers	Women	Members of the CPSU	Non-Party Members	Youth under 30 years of age	Members of the Komsomol
1938 y	300	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
1971 -1974	482	50,0%	35,3%	66,2%	33,8%	18,3%	6,6%
1975 -1980	490	50,0%	35,5%	66,1%	33,9%	16,1%	10,2%

Note: Data for 1938 are limited; detailed information is unavailable. Source: Rysbekov T. Z., Soviets of Kazakhstan, 1938–1986, Publishing House “Nauka” of the Kazakh SSR, Alma-Ata, 1988, 151 pp., pp. 124–125.

As the so-called socialist democracy developed, women became increasingly active participants in the political life of the republic. Among the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the first convocation there were 60 women; in the second convocation, 78 women; in the third convocation, 149 women; and in the fourth convocation, 131 women. Particularly indicative in this respect was the political advancement of Kazakh women: in the first convocation of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR there were 27 Kazakh women deputies; in the second convocation, 43; in the third, 71; and in the fourth, 49 Kazakh women deputies.

In comparative terms, while women accounted for 32.4% of the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR in 1959, the results of the 1985 elections show an increase to 35.9% (Binder, 1959).

Table 2. The number of women deputies of the Supreme Council of the Kazakh SSR (1-4 convocations)

Convocations	The Number of Female Deputies in the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR	Number of ethnic Kazakh women deputies in the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic
1	60	27
2	78	43
3	149	71
4	131	49

Source: Binder M. A., *the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR*, Kazakh State Publishing House, Alma-Ata, 1959, p. 103, pp. 17–31.

Youth became increasingly involved in state governance and in economic as well as socio-cultural development. If in 1963 deputies under the age of 30 accounted for 14.6% of the members of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR, by 1985 this figure had risen to 18.1%. Over the same period, the share of deputies under the age of 30 increased from 26.2% to 33.8%. During the period under review, a growing number of non-party members participated in governing the country, and their representation within the Supreme Soviet increased accordingly. A characteristic feature of the development of Soviet governing bodies was their renewability: following the 1985 elections, 69.2% of the composition of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR was renewed.

In connection with the development of virgin and fallow lands and the increase in the number of voters in the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the fourth convocation (1955) compared with the 1951 elections, an additional 25 new electoral districts were created. As a result, the total number of deputies increased from 400 to 425. The qualitative composition of the deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR of the fourth convocation was as follows (Table 3).

Table 3. Qualitative Composition of Deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR (Fourth Convocation)

Year	Total Number of Deputies	Workers		Peasants		Employees and Intelligentsia		Agricultural Workers			
			%		%		%	Directors of State Farms, MTS, Chairpersons	Agronomists, and Zootechnicians	Combine Operators, Tractor Drivers	Brigade Leaders, Shepherds, and Milkers
1955	425	114	26,8	165	38,8	146	34,4	37	10	16	53

Source: Binder M. A., *the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR*, Kazakh State Publishing House, Alma-Ata, 1959, p. 103, pp. 17–31.

Deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR, like other Soviet deputies, were not professional parliamentarians; parliamentary work was not their primary occupation. They were selected from among leading workers, collective farmers, members of the intelligentsia, enterprise managers, and party and Soviet officials. Among deputies of the first convocation, 35 were recipients of state orders. In the second convocation, 300 deputies received orders and medals, including the highest state distinctions and Stalin Prize laureates; this number increased to 301 in the third

convocation and 331 in the fourth convocation. A distinct group within the Supreme Soviet consisted of non-party deputies. In the first convocation, there were 59 non-party members (19.7%); in the second, 68 (22.7%); in the third, 120 (30%); and in the fourth, 109 (25.6%). Although comprehensive data on ethnic composition across all convocations are limited, available evidence indicates representation of Kazakhstan's multinational population. For example, in the fourth convocation there were 186 Kazakhs, 160 Russians, 52 Ukrainians, and 27 representatives of nine other nationalities (Binder, 1959). Comparative analysis also shows a steady increase in deputies with higher, incomplete higher, and secondary education, reflecting the overall rise in educational attainment within the deputy corps. In terms of age structure, the Supreme Soviet included both younger deputies and older individuals with significant practical experience (Table 4).

Table 4. Ethnic and Age Composition, and Educational Level of Deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR (3rd–4th Convocations, 1951–1959)

Year	Total number of deputies	Ethnic composition				Educational level				Age composition				
		Kazakhs	Russians	Ukrainians	Other ethnic groups	Higher and incomplete higher education levels	%	Secondary level education	%	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60 and older
1951	400	-	-	-	-	188	47	74	18,5					
1955	425	186	160	52	27	220	51,7	72	16,9	43	89	202	75	16

Source: Binder, M. A. (1959). *The Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic*. Alma-Ata: Kazakh State Publishing House, pp. 17–31, 103.

Dynamic changes in the qualitative composition of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR were particularly visible during the 10th and 11th convocations: the proportion of deputies under 30 with higher education increased, and representation from research institutions and academia expanded. The modern stage of Kazakhstan's parliamentarism began on 9 December 1995 with elections to the Senate and the Mazhilis. In the Senate, 40 deputies were elected on an alternative basis -two from each region and from Almaty-while seven senators were appointed by the President in accordance with the Constitution. Educationally, the senators exceeded former deputies of the Supreme Soviet. All had higher education degrees, including 10 lawyers, 10 economists, and 17 agricultural specialists; four held doctoral degrees and 11 were Candidates of Science. Sixty-seven deputies were elected to the Mazhilis. Men predominated (58 men, nine women). All deputies had higher education; among them were seven Doctors of Science and 10 Candidates of Science. This marked the beginning of a professional parliament. Major trends included the professionalization of legislative activity, the transition from a unicameral to a bicameral system, and the formation of deputy groups. The bicameral Parliament became a permanent supreme representative body, holding sessions from 1 September to late June, which improved the consistency and quality of legislative work. The first Mazhilis elections were held under a majoritarian system in single-member districts, producing 67 deputies. The corps was dominated by representatives of local executive bodies and maslikhats (19 individuals). Every fifth deputy headed an enterprise or organization. Nine deputies represented science and education, and every tenth worked in the Presidential Administration, ministries, or republican committees. Four were temporarily unemployed; 11 worked in agriculture, three in culture, two in law enforcement, and two were engineer-economists. The Mazhilis also included a lawyer, a military serviceman, and a pensioner. In the first convocation, there were seven Doctors of Science, 10 Candidates of Science, and nine women deputies.

Figure 2. Party composition of the Mazhilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 1995 (number of seats)

People's Unity Party of Kazakhstan

25

Democratic Party of Kazakhstan

12

Farmers' Union of Kazakhstan

7

Independent deputies

7

Federation of Trade Unions of Kazakhstan a

5

Union of Kazakhstan Youth

3

People's Cooperative Party of Kazakhstan

2

Party of Kazakh Revival

1

Congress of the People of Kazakhstan

1

Socialist Party of Kazakhstan

1

Public Movement "Harmony"

1

Source: Vilgelm, A. & Akkozha, D. How the Parliament of Kazakhstan Has Changed: From a Majoritarian System to Party Lists; online resource: CABAR.asia. Available at: <https://cabar.asia/ru/kak-menyalsya-parlament-kazahstana-ot-mazhoritanoj-sistemy-k-partijnym-spiskam>

Subsequent elections were held in 1999 under constitutional amendments introducing a mixed electoral system. Alongside single-member constituencies, candidates could now be elected through party lists. For the first time, 10 political parties participated, and more than 500 candidates were registered in single-member districts. As a result, 67 deputies were elected from single-member constituencies and 10 through party lists in a single nationwide district. These 10 seats were distributed among four parties that surpassed the 7% threshold: the Agrarian Party, the Civic Party, Nur Otan, and the Communist Party. In September 2004, elections to the third convocation of the Mazhilis were held, with 12 political parties participating, reflecting further development of the party system. A total of 77 deputies were elected: 67 from single-member territorial districts and 10 via proportional representation on party lists. Of the party-list seats, seven went to Nur Otan, and one each to the Asar Party, the Democratic Party Ak Zhol, and the AIST electoral bloc (Agrarian–Industrial Union of Workers), formed by the Agrarian and Civic Parties.

Following constitutional reforms, elections to the fourth convocation took place in 2007. Under the new provisions, 107 deputies were to be elected: 98 through party lists in a single nationwide district and nine by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. Voting occurred on 18 August 2007 with seven registered parties participating. Only Nur Otan surpassed the 7% threshold and secured all 98 elected seats. An additional nine deputies were delegated by the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan. Of the previous convocation, 39 deputies retained their mandates. The new composition included eight representatives of small and medium-sized businesses, 43 from state institutions, eight from education, healthcare, science, and culture, and nine from other sectors.

Table 5. Qualitative composition of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan in 2025

Total number of deputies	Party affiliation						Ethnic composition (%)			Gender composition		Age structure (%)				
	Amanat	Aul	Akjol	Respublika	People's Party of Kazakhstan	National Social Democratic Party	Non-Party Members	Kazakhs	Russians	Others	Male	Female	25-39	40-49	50-59	60-69
Senate 50								71	21	8	40	10	-	15	40	45
Mazhilis - 98	62	8	6	6	5	4	7	85,1	12,8	2,1	80	18	13	31	52	4
Total 148	62	8	6	6	5	4	7	78,5	16,9	5,5	120	28	13	23	46	18

The party composition of the Senate in 2020 showed that 45 of the 50 senators were members of the Nur Otan party (Factcheck.kz, 2024). The table below is compiled by the author based on these data.

In summary, a collective portrait of a deputy of the contemporary Parliament of Kazakhstan can be described as follows: a man around the age of 52 (with more than half of the deputies being over 50 years old), ethnic Kazakh, most likely a member of the Amanat party, and holding a higher education degree, most commonly at the bachelor's level. It can also be noted that Kazakhstan continues to demonstrate patriarchal tendencies in the distribution of political power. Out of 148 deputies, only 28 are women (10 in the Senate and 18 in the Mazhilis), meaning that approximately 80 percent of parliamentarians are men. In addition, the Parliament is characterized by the clear dominance of the Amanat party. Beyond party-list representation, the March 2023 elections to the Mazhilis showed that 24 out of 29 deputies elected from single-member constituencies to the lower house were active members of the Amanat party.

Discussion

The stages in the development of the Soviets as bodies of state power in the territory of Kazakhstan may be conditionally identified on the basis of the Constitution, normative legal acts adopted by the country's political leadership, and an analysis of the organization of their activities. The first stage can be defined as the initial period of the formation and development of the Soviets as bodies of state power, covering the years 1917–1925. The Supreme Soviet (VS) as the highest representative body of the republic was first established on the basis of the Constitution of the Kazakh SSR of 1937 and subsequently the Constitution of 1978. Although it retained its name, its powers were substantially modified by the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan of 1993. The Constitution of the Kazakh SSR adopted at the Tenth Congress of Soviets in 1937 stated: "The Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR is the highest body of state power. Under this Constitution, the Supreme Soviet was the sole legislative body of the Kazakh SSR" (Constitution of the Kazakh SSR (1937). The Supreme Soviet was elected by citizens in electoral districts for a term of four years, at a ratio of one deputy per 20,000 inhabitants. The principal form of its work was sessions convened by the Presidium twice a year. The Supreme Soviet elected a Presidium consisting of a Chairman, two Deputy Chairmen, a Secretary, and fifteen members. The Presidium was accountable to the Supreme Soviet for all its activities.

The first elections to the Supreme Soviet under the new Constitution were held on 24 June 1938. They were conducted on the basis of universal, equal, and direct suffrage by secret ballot. The formation of the deputy corps occurred on a non-competitive basis under strict control of the Communist Party. Candidates were selected according to class, party, national, gender-age, and other quotas and approved by party bureaus and plenums. Senior state officials and leaders of party, Komsomol, and trade union bodies were nominated by virtue of their positions, rendering the electoral procedure largely formal.

Archival data indicate voter turnout of 96.8 percent, with 98.6 percent voting for candidates of the bloc of communists and non-party members (Naida, 1967). Under the Constitution of 1978,

the Supreme Soviet consisted of 510 deputies elected from electoral districts with equal population. Although declared the highest body of state power, Article 6 of the Constitution on the leading role of the CPSU meant that its authority was not fully autonomous. Decision-making centers remained within party organs, with directives subsequently formalized by the Supreme Soviet and local Soviets (Naida, 1967). As we know from history, the end of the 80s marked the beginning of the collapse of the Soviet state. In the early 1990s, in the Kazakh SSR, and then in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Supreme Council adopted a number of laws that made significant amendments to the 1978 Constitution. In total, elections of deputies to the Supreme Council of the Kazakh SSR of 13 convocations were held in Kazakhstan: 1st convocation (1938-1946); 13th convocation (1994-1995). Seventeen political figures from various periods were elected Chairmen of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR. The Supreme Soviet in the republic was not a classic parliament—the highest legislative body in the state, empowered to pass laws, form, and oversee the executive branch (for example, to pass a vote of no confidence in the government). According to G. S. Sapargaliev, the Supreme Soviet was not a true parliament due to its rejection of the principle of separation of state power into branches, as well as its subordinate position to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. This assertion in no way implies a complete denial of its role in state building (Sapargaliev et al., 2000).

The Supreme Council was a single-party body, as the creation of other parties was prohibited in the USSR. The highest representative body was formed based on quotas established by the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Parties of Kazakhstan. This quota required formally electing a certain number of workers and peasants, including milkmaids, shepherds, machine operators, intellectuals, and others, to the Supreme Council. For Supreme Council deputies, this was not their primary job; they participated in the session on a voluntary basis, voting on laws and other legal acts prepared in advance by the Supreme Council apparatus. If they spoke, it was on the basis of pre-prepared texts of local party and Soviet bodies, and it mainly boiled down to approving the policies of the party and the Soviet state. Between 1938 and 1989, certain changes were observed in the qualitative composition of Supreme Council deputies: the proportion of workers and peasants, women, educated people, and people of mature and elderly age increased, while the proportion of white-collar workers and the illiterate decreased. The deputy corps became more balanced in all respects and significantly better educated, but it still overrepresented members and candidate members of the CPSU, men, civil servants, intellectuals, and functionaries, while non-party members, women, workers, and peasants were less so. Industrial and agricultural enterprise managers, members of the generals, and elite intellectuals were also represented, meaning that the Soviet "parliament" was dominated by representatives of the ruling class. Since three-quarters of the deputies were communists and 10-15% were Komsomol members, it can be assumed that approximately 90% had a communist worldview (Mironov, 2023). Summarizing the results of testing the hypothesis of this scientific study, it can be noted that the main objectives of the work have been achieved, and a portrait of the deputies of Kazakhstan's highest representative and legislative body has been presented. The development of parliamentarism in Kazakhstan (1990–2026) reflects a multi-stage process of institutionalizing representative power during state-building. A key milestone was the 1995 Constitution, which established a bicameral Parliament, strengthened the separation of powers, and enhanced the legislature's institutional role. Subsequent reforms improved electoral legislation, reinforced political parties, and expanded parliamentary oversight.

Two historical stages can be identified: the Soviet Supreme Soviet (1938–1993) and the Parliament of independent Kazakhstan (1995–2025). The Supreme Soviet did not function as a genuine parliament: it lacked political pluralism, real competition, and institutional autonomy. Deputies were selected under Communist Party supervision to legitimize state policy. Although the share of workers, women, and educated citizens increased over time, about 75% of deputies were Communist Party members and 10–15% belonged to the Komsomol, reflecting ideological uniformity.

During independence, Parliament's composition changed significantly. Following the 2022 reforms, the typical deputy is a man around 52 years old, usually affiliated with the Amanat party and holding higher education. Of 148 deputies, only 28 are women, indicating persistent gender imbalance. Amanat dominates the Mazhilis, with other parties holding smaller shares.

All deputies have higher education; many possess advanced degrees. The most common professional backgrounds are education, law, economics, and engineering (Zulfukharkyzy, 2026).

Compared to the Soviet period, the modern deputy corps demonstrates higher professionalism and operates in a more competitive political environment. The planned 2026 transition to a unicameral Parliament requires strong party development and oversight mechanisms to maintain democratic balance and effectiveness.

Conclusion

The development of parliamentarism in Kazakhstan (1990–2026) represents a complex, multi-stage process of institutionalizing representative power within the broader framework of state-building. This evolution included the formation of a constitutional and legal foundation, successive institutional reforms, and the adaptation of legislative practice to shifting political and social realities. A pivotal milestone was the adoption of the 1995 Constitution and the establishment of a bicameral Parliament. This reform clarified the separation of powers, strengthened the role of the legislature in the political system, and laid the groundwork for a more structured model of representative governance. Subsequent reforms were aimed at redistributing competences between branches of government, strengthening political parties, improving electoral legislation, and enhancing parliamentary oversight. Together, these measures reflect a gradual process of political modernization.

A comparative analysis of Kazakhstan's highest representative bodies between 1938 and 2023 allows for the identification of two major stages: the Soviet period — the Supreme Soviet of the Kazakh SSR (1938–1993); the period of independence — the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan (1995–2025).

The Supreme Soviet of the Soviet era cannot be considered a genuine parliament in the classical sense. It lacked essential features of parliamentarism, including political pluralism, real electoral competition, institutional autonomy, separation of powers, and a permanently functioning professional legislative body independent from executive authority. The Supreme Soviet brought together respected representatives of various social and ethnic groups; however, their selection occurred under the supervision of the Communist Party. Its primary function was to legitimize state policy and demonstrate socialist achievements. Unlike parliaments in democratic systems, it did not consist of professional politicians but rather representatives of the social elite.

Between 1938 and 1989, certain changes occurred in the qualitative composition of deputies. The proportion of workers, peasants, women, educated citizens, and older individuals increased, while the share of clerical workers and poorly educated deputies declined. Nevertheless, the institution remained dominated by enterprise managers, members of the military elite, and leading representatives of the scientific intelligentsia. Approximately 75% of deputies were members of the Communist Party, and an additional 10–15% belonged to the Komsomol, meaning that nearly 90% shared a unified communist ideological orientation. This ideological homogeneity limited the development of genuine parliamentary debate and competition.

In the period of independence (1995–2024), the qualitative composition of Parliament changed significantly, reflecting broader political and social transformation. Following the constitutional reforms of 2022, the typical deputy can be described as a man around 52 years old (with more than half of deputies being over 50), most likely affiliated with the Amanat party, and holding higher education, most often at the bachelor's level. A pronounced gender imbalance persists. Of 148 deputies, only 28 are women (10 in the Senate and 18 in the Mazhilis), meaning approximately 80% of parliamentarians are men. Party dominance is another defining feature of the contemporary legislature. In the March 2023 elections, 24 of 29 deputies elected from single-member constituencies to the Mazhilis were members of the Amanat party. Within the Mazhilis, more than half of deputies represent Amanat. The Auyl party holds close to 9% of seats, followed by Respublica and Ak Zhol, each with less than 7%. The remaining representation belongs to the People's Party of Kazakhstan and the Nationwide Social Democratic Party. Educational attainment among deputies is high: 91 hold bachelor's degrees, 24 have master's degrees, 20 have doctoral degrees, and 13 possess postgraduate qualifications.

In terms of professional background, the most common field is education (19 deputies), followed by law (18), economics (12), and mechanical engineering (10) (Zulfukharkyzy, 2026). This indicates a shift toward professional specialization and technocratic expertise in legislative activity. Comparative analysis clearly demonstrates that the collective portrait of the modern deputy differs substantially from that of the Soviet-era Supreme Soviet. Contemporary deputies display higher

levels of formal education, greater professional specialization, and operate within a more competitive political environment. These factors influence the quality of adopted normative legal acts and legislation, which increasingly reflects multiparty interaction, pluralism within the Mazhilis, and engagement between deputies elected in single-member constituencies and their voters. At the same time, structural party dominance and gender imbalance indicate ongoing challenges in achieving broader representativeness. While political competition has expanded compared to the Soviet period, it remains shaped by the strength of major political actors.

The proposed transition to a unicameral Parliament in 2026 should be evaluated within the framework of both classical and contemporary theories of parliamentarism. A unicameral system may enhance legislative efficiency, accelerate decision-making, and increase transparency of political responsibility. However, its effectiveness depends on the maturity of the party system, the presence of genuine political competition, and robust mechanisms of parliamentary oversight. Without these conditions, there is a potential risk of weakening the system of checks and balances. Therefore, the 2026 reform must be assessed not only from an institutional perspective but also in terms of its capacity to ensure democratic accountability, political pluralism, and sustainable development. Future research should focus on the mechanisms of forming the deputy corps, particularly examining social mobility, party affiliation, recruitment channels, and electoral dynamics. Such analysis would allow for a deeper understanding of how representative institutions continue to evolve within Kazakhstan's changing political landscape.

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1938-2024 ЖЖ ҚАЗАҚСТАННЫҢ ЖОҒАРҒЫ ӨКІЛДІ ОРГАНДАРЫНЫҢ САЛЫСТЫРМАЛЫ ПОРТРЕТІ (ПРОСОПОГРАФИЯЛЫҚ ТАЛДАУ)

Бауыржан ШЕРИЯЗДАНОВ*, саяси ғылымдар кандидаты, ҚР ҒЖБМ Ғылым комитетінің «Мемлекет тарихы институты» ПММ, бас ғылыми қызметкер, Астана, Қазақстан, b.sher54@mail.ru, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6574-1016>, Scopus ID: 58110803300

Жанат МОМЫНҚҰЛОВ, философия ғылымдарының кандидаты, Л.Н. Гумилев атындағы Еуразия ұлттық университетінің Халықаралық қатынастар факультеті «Саясаттану» кафедрасы, аға оқытушы, Астана, Қазақстан, tomynkulov_zhb_1@enu.kz, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6818-9397>

Қуандық КАКИМОВ, ҚР ҒЖБМ Ғылым комитетінің «Мемлекет тарихы институты» ПММ, бөлім басшысы, Астана, Қазақстан, kakimoff01kz@mail.com, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-3976-1894>

Вели КОЧ, Мұғла Сытқы Кочман университеті, Әлеуметтік ғылымдар институты, Мемлекеттік басқару кафедрасы, PhD докторанты, Түркия Республикасы, t.veli.koc@gmail.com, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1981-0065>

СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ, КОЛЛЕКТИВНЫЙ ПОРТРЕТ ВЫСШИХ ПРЕДСТАВИТЕЛЬНЫХ ОРГАНОВ

КАЗАХСТАНА 1938-2024 ГГ. (ПРОСОПОГРАФИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ)

Бауржан ШЕРИЯЗДАНОВ*, кандидат политических наук, главный научный сотрудник РГУ «Институт истории государства» КН МНВО РК, Астана, Казахстан, b.sher54@mail.ru, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6574-1016>, Scopus ID: 58110803300

Жанат МОМЫНКУЛОВ, кандидат философских наук, старший преподаватель, кафедра Политологии факультета международных отношений ЕНУ имени Л.Н. Гумилева, Астана, Казахстан, momynkulov_zhb_1@enu.kz, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6818-9397>

Куандык КАКИМОВ, руководитель отдела РГУ «Институт истории государства» КН МНВО РК, Астана, Казахстан, kakimoff01kz@mail.com, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-3976-1894>

Вели КОЧ, Университет Мугла Сыткы Кочмана, Институт социальных наук, кафедра государственного управления, докторант PhD, Турецкая Республика, t.veli.koc@gmail.com, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1981-0065>