

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNANCE IN KAZAKHSTAN DURING ITS INDEPENDENCE

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Abstract. *This article provides a comparative legal and chronological analysis of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On local government and self-government” with the corresponding articles from the text of the Constitution. The priority directions of the ways of reforming the conceptual foundations of local government and self-government in Kazakhstan during the years of independence are analyzed. The research uses general scientific and special methods of scientific knowledge. Among the results obtained, we point out the following: proposals for improving legislation; recommendations for improving the Constitutional Law “On elections in the Republic of Kazakhstan”; reflections on the advantages of a mixed electoral system; criteria for the election of deputies of Maslikhats; and the main tasks of the deputies of Maslikhats.*

Keywords: *Maslikhats, authorities, law, the system of public administration, elections of Akims.*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *Maslikhatai (vietinė atstovaujamoji valdžia), valdžios organai, teisė, viešojo administravimo sistema, Akimų (sričių administracijų vadovų) rinkimai.*

Introduction

Over the 30 years of its independence, Kazakhstan has turned into a democratic, secular, legal, social state. As practical experience and the actions of the country's constitution show, in accordance with the political and economic situation, these issues have developed well in the upper echelons of the republic's power (Baimakhanova and Zhatkanbaeva 2013).

Due to the weak initiative of the population, the low level of legal and civic culture, and the insufficient perception of the authorities on this issue, for 30 years local self-government (hereinafter – LSG) has remained one of the least developed institutions of civil society in the country. The main form of LSG is the active participation of citizens and local populations in the work and decision-making of local authorities (Schramm et al. 2011). One of the primary tasks is to activate the consciousness of the local community in direct participation in solving problems on the ground. Therefore, the main element of any civil society is LSG. In accordance with the current Constitution, a norm is recognized in Kazakhstan that ensures the independent solution of local issues by the population (Karagusssov 2015).

Local self-governance is exercised by the population directly, as well as through Maslikhats and other governing bodies in local communities encompassing areas densely populated by groups of citizens (How self-government..., 2021). The history of LSG in Kazakhstan goes back many centuries. Its foundations were laid during the emergence of clan and tribal communities, when a nomadic way of life was being formed. The elders of clans and tribal leaders were elected at kurultais and gatherings of nomads (Klyashtorny and Sultanov 1992). According to the work of famous historian B. Ayagan (2020) in *History of Ulug Ulus-Golden Horde*, "...The election of Temujin (Genghis Khan) at the time of the Great Kurultai in 1206, in addition to famous people, according to the 'Secret History', involved the following tribes: three thousand from the tribe Konyrat, five thousand Onkuts, Jalair Muhali, Merkits, Kereys clans, Naimans, and Oirats."

In general, local self-governance in most of the former Soviet Union and CIS countries was characterized by the following problems: insufficient budget, loss of many socially significant objects of state and municipal property due to privatization, incomplete formation of the corps of communal property, lack of funds in the budget, weak material base for exercising local authority, and widespread passivity of the population in the decision-making process at the local level (Borisova et al. 2021; Shalbolova et al. 2021).

The purpose of this study is to analyze and compare the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On local government and self-government" with the relevant articles from the text of the Constitution. The main objectives of the study were to analyze the peculiarities of LSG development in Kazakhstan and a chronological analysis of the system of local self-governance.

Materials and Methods

The comparative method was used, which facilitated an analytical study of the systems of local government and LSG in the country, and the formation of the view on the most appropriate reforms for their improvement.

The main theoretical basis of the study was: the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan; Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 148 "On local government and self-government in the Republic of Kazakhstan" (2001); Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 639 "On approval of the Concept for the development of local self-government in the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2025" (2021); and the "Concept of the New Law on Local Self-Governance"

approved in 2021.

The theoretical basis of the research was also formed by the works of Kazakhstani authors D. M. Baymakhanov (2021), L. T. Zhanuzakova (2014), and S. L. Midelsky (2021), who studied the peculiarities of the development of state and LSG models. The relevance of the study is due primarily to two messages from the Head of State, K.-Zh. Tokayev, to the people of Kazakhstan: “Constructive public dialogue is the basis of stability and prosperity of Kazakhstan” from September 2, 2019; and “Kazakhstan in the new reality: time to act” from September 1, 2020. The basic theoretical and methodological provisions on local government and LSG bodies were formed in the 19th century. These studies include the entire complex of relations between society and the state and are characterized by political processes.

Results and Discussion

The acquisition of sovereignty and independence by Kazakhstan in 1991 paved the way for a process of developing the LSG system on Kazakh soil. In the period between 1995 and 2007, several attempts were made to develop a draft law “On Local Self-Governance in the Republic of Kazakhstan” (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan..., 1993; 2001), during which various drafts and recommendations were developed relating to LSG. Conventionally, the establishment and development of LSG bodies in Kazakhstan during these years may be divided into 4 stages (Table 1).

Table 1. Stages of Formation and Development of LSG Bodies in the Republic of Kazakhstan

	First stage 1990–1993	Second stage 1993–1995	Third Stage 1995–2007	Fourth stage 2007–present
Introduced laws and decrees.	Decree of the Supreme Council of the Kazakh SSR No. 307-XII “On the Declaration on State Sovereignty of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic” (1990); Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Local Self-Government and Local Councils of People’s Deputies of the Kazakh SSR” (1991).	The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 148-II “On local representative and executive bodies of the Republic of Kazakhstan” (1993).	The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 148 “On local government and self-government in the Republic of Kazakhstan” (1991).	The 2007 constitutional reform changed the relationship between local and state governance and self-governance in Kazakhstan.

Main changes in the Constitution.	democratizing government; eliminating the monopoly of the Communist Party in public and political life; increasing the role of local councils of all levels in resolving economic and social issues in their territory; proclaiming the state independence of Kazakhstan.	the first Constitution of independent Kazakhstan was adopted; the local Soviets were abolished en masse; Maslikhats (Assemblies of Deputies) and local Akimats were created.	amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan (1995); definition of Maslikhats and Akimats as local government structures.	Maslikhats and Akimats were recognized as structures of local state governance and self-governance, and their status and competence were enshrined, considering new tasks facing the state and society.
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The main core of the LSG system is defined by the local representative bodies – Maslikhats – which express the will of the respective administrative and territorial population and, considering the national interests, determine the measures necessary for its implementation and oversee their implementation (Abdrasulov and Gubaidullin 2019a). In essence, Maslikhats are a kind of bridge between the population and the authorities at the local level. Within the framework of their powers, they contribute to the solution of many urgent issues and accumulated problems of the local community (Baimakhanova and Zhatkanbaeva 2013). Local representative bodies imply a given community (Matsupa 2004). According to the definition of famous attorney A. O. Kopabaev (2000), “the status of Maslikhats is defined by the population as an institution of implementing state power and is simultaneously a subject of local state administration”.

The development of LSG based on Maslikhats may have been necessitated by the evolutionary state and political development of the country. The transition from a strong system of state administration to a model of local self-governance was carried out during a period of transition. It can be stated that Maslikhats were a kind of a compromise mechanism for the implementation of local self-governance. It is assumed that this model of self-governance in the transition period was justified and allowed for optimal consideration of the interests of central authorities and local communities (Zhangazy 2011). In this regard, the question of how Maslikhats became the basis for the formation of the system of local self-governance in our republic is answered, since they represent the practical unification of local state governance and self-governance. Giving LSGs the authority to implement state functions in accordance with the current legislation seems to be most appropriate in the current conditions of the country's development. Numerous scientific studies confirm the unreasonableness of opposition to the systems of state power and self-governance. For example, A.V. Turovsky (2015) noted that the formation of local self-governance should only have a functional meaning, not a political one.

Obviously, it is inadvisable to politicize the issue of LSG development; it should be guided by pragmatic considerations. Whichever model is implemented, it must first and foremost become an effective system of local community management. Naturally, LSG structures retain a certain autonomy from the state. At the same time, it must be taken into consideration that LSG is essen-

tially an extension of state power (Sheriyazdanov 2020). In addition, it is implemented with the participation of the local population and is therefore of a public nature. Consequently, LSGs fulfil two functions – state and public (The draft law... 2021). The latest amendments to the Basic Law of the country will allow Akims of settlements not only to exercise state powers but also to legally solve the problems of the local community (The election of Akims... 2021).

According to the law, the functions of the representative body work in several ways: firstly, they approve all plans and economic and social programs for the development of the territory, and draft local budgets. Secondly, Maslikhats approve planning schemes and draft master plans for the development of almost all territorial units, except regional centers. Thirdly, Maslikhats approve all social development plans, including rules for the provision of social support to citizens of the local community. Fourthly, Maslikhats agree on the composition of the Akimat, approve the head of the local police and elect senators to the Senate of the RK Parliament. Fifthly, the powers of Maslikhats in the fields of industry, construction, transport, and communications, the development of entrepreneurship and other sectors of the economy are stipulated by other sectoral laws of the RK. Similarly, the powers of local representative bodies in the spheres of housing and public utilities and commercial services imply a very broad group (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan... 2001).

In Kazakhstan – after elections to the Mazhilis of the Parliament and Maslikhats of all levels on January 10, 2021 – 14 regional, 3 urban and capital Maslikhats of republican subordination, 30 regional cities, and 164 district Maslikhats were formed and continue to work. Until 2019, Maslikhats could include self-nominated representatives of the local community, but the elections of 10.01.2021 had several peculiarities (Abdrasulov and Gubaidullin 2019b). Firstly, for the first time the Maslikhat elections were held on the basis of lists of political parties. Secondly, in accordance with the amendments to the Constitutional Law on Elections, one single territorial constituency was created in the territory of the respective administrative and territorial unit for the election of deputies to the Maslikhat. Thirdly, the number of women and persons under twenty-nine years of age had to be at least thirty percent of the total number of persons included in the party list (Maslikhats in the Republic..., 2021).

The local executive bodies – Akimats – are part of a unified system of executive bodies and ensure the implementation of the general State policy of executive power in conjunction with the interests and development needs of the territory concerned. The responsibilities of local executive bodies include: 1) the development of plans, economic and social programs for the development of the territory and the local budget, and ensuring their implementation; 2) the management of communal property; 3) the appointment and dismissal of heads of local executive bodies and the resolution of other issues related to the organization of local executive bodies; and 4) the implementation in the interests of local public authorities of other powers entrusted to local executive bodies by other laws. Akims of regions, major cities, and the capital shall be appointed to the office by the President of the Republic, with the consent of the respective Maslikhats (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan..., 2001).

In his second Message to the people of Kazakhstan, the President announced an initiative to introduce direct elections of rural Akims and develop a new concept of LSG in Kazakhstan until 2030 (Message from the Head..., 2019). This step is a key aspect of the realization of the “Listening State” concept in the further development of regional self-governance institutions in Kazakhstan. It was a timely step for the further development of the institution of LSG in Kazakhstan and one of the key aspects of the implementation of the concept of the “hearing state”.

The Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan has developed relevant

draft laws on the introduction of the direct elections of rural Akims. New changes in the draft law include the introduction of elections of rural Akims based on universal, equal, and direct suffrage by secret ballot, including the introduction of the procedure of self-nomination of candidates and through political parties. Direct elections of rural Akims will allow citizens to fully exercise their constitutional rights, contributing to resolving the needs and problems of the local population and fully implementing the concept of a “hearing state” (What powers will..., 2021).

As a part of the plan to implement the Presidential Address, the MNE RK has developed and approved a Concept of the Development of LSG until 2030. As a part of the implementation of the concept, the following are envisaged: the introduction of direct elections of Akims of villages, settlements, and rural counties in 2021, and Akims of districts and cities of regional and district significance in 2024; the provision of additional types of taxes to the LSG level; the creation of a local representative LSG body with relevant competence; the introduction of a mechanism for passing public expertise and online survey regarding socially significant expenditures; and the provision to Maslikhat deputies of the right to draft petitions (collecting signatures) and organize the online broadcast of LSG deputies sessions (What powers will..., 2021). Direct elections of rural Akims have already been successfully held in 2021.

The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 60-VII ZRK “On amendments and additions to certain legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on issues of expanding the independence and responsibility of district, city and rural levels of government” (2021) introduces amendments and additions to several normative legal acts: expanding the revenue base of cities of district significance, villages, settlements, and rural counties; simplifying budget procedures; expanding the independence and increasing the responsibility of local representative and executive bodies; and improving requirements for administrative and territorial units (Bielov et al. 2019).

First, there will be an increase in Maslikhats’ oversight functions concerning the implementation of social and economic development plans and regional budgets by local executive bodies. Two chairmen of the standing commissions on major issues of regional development will work on a voluntary basis. The function belonging to the previously elected chairperson of the body pointed to their inefficiency, as they work voluntarily. Therefore, the transfer of the powers of the chairman of the session to the secretary of the Maslikhat would certainly increase the role and responsibility of the secretary of the Maslikhat and the people’s elected representatives.

All of these key questions have been answered in “The concept of development of local self-government in the Republic of Kazakhstan until 2030” (2021). Following the approved concept, a new law has been drafted to ensure the effective resolution of issues at the local level. The concept – in addition to the direct election of an Akim of a district, town, village, or rural district for the development of LSG – provides the further decentralization of power and the creation of an effective system of LSG. Measures will be taken to gradually delimit the powers of local governance and local self-governance structures through the expansion of communal property and the increase of the revenues of district budgets in rural areas.

In addition, further improvement of LSG bodies in rural areas is envisaged. In rural districts, a collegiate body – a Kenes (council) – will be created with the functions of a representative body by transforming the role of a local community assembly. The Kenes will be supported by employees of the rural district Akimat. Members of the council will be elected by open ballot at the meeting of the local community for a period of 3 years from the citizens residing in the respective administrative and territorial units. The new representative body will adopt legal acts valid in the respective territory. In addition, their powers will include approval of the local community development plan

and the budget agreed with the local community assembly, and the monitoring of its implementation. The Kenes will also regulate issues of landscaping, sanitary cleaning of settlements, street trade, celebrations, and contests. In addition, the Kenes will have the competence to regulate the amount of taxes and payments (How self-government..., 2021). Hence, the creation of a local representative body, the Kenes, at the lowest level of LSG would bring power as close to citizens as possible (The concept of development..., 2021).

The main problems of modern society in the country are social injustice, corruption, and legal nihilism. Therefore, the broad participation of the public in the decision-making process at the grassroots level through local representative bodies, openness, and the interconnection of the relationship between the authorities and the local community is one of the most important ways of solving the existing problems. The main driving force of the development of self-governance can be the active part of the local population, fully aware of new opportunities and personally responsible for their future (Midelsky 2021). The electability of local representative bodies (Kenes, Maslikhat) is manifested in such an important attribute as their representative nature, which reflects the nature of their self-governance. As elected bodies of the population, they are entitled to represent and protect the interests of the citizens residing in the respective territory (Zhanuzakova 2014).

Conclusions

Having analyzed the specifics of the development of LSG in Kazakhstan, the system of local governance that originated from the kurultais of the Great Steppe before the independence of Kazakhstan, and the measures taken by the sovereign state in the last 30 years, the following conclusions can be made:

The current law does not establish a distinction between local state administration and LSG. The law implies that the Maslikhat is both a local state administration structure and a body carrying out LSG. The Akimat, being a collegial body headed by the Akim, carries out within its competence local state governance and self-governance in the respective territory.

To increase civic activity in order to preserve the stability and democracy of the country, it is necessary to elect deputies of local representative bodies and rural Akims from representatives of various parties and individual authoritative local citizens with alternative elections.

Due to the uneven development of the territories, it is relevant to consider measures to equalize the level of development of the territories in the modern environment through the centralized redistribution of resources.

Under the requirements of increasing civic engagement, including through internet resources, it becomes important to ensure the transparency of the activities of the state and LSG bodies.

After the direct election of rural counties' Akims and the approval of an independent budget mechanism, the need arises to create a local representative body directly involved in the governance of the rural district.

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KAZACHSTANO VIETOS SAVIVALDOS KŪRIMAS IR PLĖTRA NEPRIKLAUSOMYBĖS LAIKOTARPIU

Anotacija. Straipsnyje pateikiama lyginamoji teisinė ir chronologinė Kazachstano Respublikos įstatymo „Dėl vietos valdžios ir savivaldos“ analizė, į ją įtraukiant ir atitinkamus Konstitucijos teksto straipsnius. Nagrinėjamos nepriklausomo Kazachstano savivaldos ir prioritetinės savivaldos konceptualių pagrindų reformavimo kryptys. Tyrime taikyti bendrieji moksliniai ir specialieji mokslo žinių metodai. Akcentuotini šie rezultatai: parengti pasiūlymai dėl teisės aktų tobulinimo, pateiktos rekomendacijos dėl Konstitucinio įstatymo „Dėl rinkimų Kazachstano Respublikoje“ tobulinimo, išskirti mišrios rinkimų sistemos pranašumai, pateikti maslikhatų (deputatų) ir akimų (vietinės vykdomosios valdžios vadovų) rinkimų kriterijai, nustatyti pagrindiniai maslikhatų uždaviniai.

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