

independent candidates close to the president received around 60.³⁷ This gives him effective majority control. By contrast, the Socialist Party received eight seats, the National Congress nine, the Republican Party one, and Lad four.³⁸

Also noteworthy was the ethnic mix of candidates. Russian politicians complained in advance of the election that the system was designed to ensure Kazakh preponderance in the parliament, despite the fact that Kazakhs comprise only 40-41 per cent of the population. In fact, this is what occurred. Preliminary data from the elections suggested that 105 Kazakhs and 49 Russians were elected. The Russian share was 28 per cent of the total, whereas their share of the population is 37-38 per cent.

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) and Russian observers declared subsequent to the election that it did not meet the "free and fair" standard on numerous counts, but notably the short campaign period, the registration requirements, arbitrary refusal to register candidates, the fact that in some cases electoral commission members were also candidates, and inadequate control over voting procedures, among others. That said, it bears repeating that at least so far, the president enjoys fairly broad popular support as a proven commodity and as a lesser evil. It appears that many Russians, for example, voted for supporters of Nazarbaev, because they view him as preferable to the more nationalistic alternatives on the Kazakh side of the fence.

In short, although Kazakhstan may be miles ahead of an Uzbekistan or a Turkmenistan, democracy is fragile and limited, circumscribed by the presidency's close control of electoral apparatuses, and of the resources necessary to compete effectively. One might well argue that this is a necessary evil in the turbulent economic and ethnic conditions prevailing in the republic. However, the danger is that such activities delegitimize the political process among the public and drive opposition outside the normal political process and into clandestinity. This is not a good recipe for long-term political stability.

³⁷ See *Le Devoir* (March 10, 1994), p.A5.

³⁸ For a final listing of results including breakdowns by party or social organization, profession, occupational affiliation, gender, and region, see "Soobshchenie Tsentral'noi Izbiratel'noi Kommissii ob Itogakh Vyborakh VSRK," *Vremya*, no. 5 (March 19, 1994), p.1.