

Regional Political Process in Northern Kazakhstan

Gauhar Balgabayeva*, Svetlana Nazarova, Lyudmila Shevchenko, Yelizaveta Yarochkina,
Tamara Alibek and Elmira Nurpeisova

Kostanay State Pedagogical Institute, Kostanay, the Republic of Kazakhstan;
Balgabaeva_gauhar@mail.ru, sveta_nzr@mail.ru, monblan.pro@yandex.ru,
Yar.liz73@mail.ru, topai240345@mail.ru, elmira_tylegen@mail.ru

Abstract

Background: This article describes the theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of regional policy. **Methods:** The relevance of the research topic is due to the growing influence of regional political processes on the socio-economic and socio-cultural development of both the regions and the country as a whole. **Findings:** The importance of defining the role of regions in the sustainable development of the country is pointed out by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N.A. Nazarbayev. In the research, the political analysis of the regional policy formation in the Northern regions of Kazakhstan is carried out in the context of the republican model of regionalization, the main stages, trends and peculiarities of its implementation are identified. This study examines the infrastructure of the political process in the region and its dynamic aspects. A special attention is given to the study of electoral politics and activity of political parties in the regional political process. **Improvements/Applications:** The article investigates the political mechanism for the implementation of the regional policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan; practical recommendations for its improvement are proposed.

Keywords: North Kazakhstan, Policy, Process, Region, Regionalization

1. Introduction

The end of 20th – the beginning of the 21st centuries can be characterized as a period of growth of the regionalization processes in many countries of the world, which have been closely associated with the modernization transformations. In modern conditions of formation of market relations and democratic foundations of the society, Kazakhstan has also been involved in the process of improving the socio-economic structure of the regions and their administration; economic ties with many regions of foreign countries are being developed. The regions solve the problem of life support of the population; regional governments have the primary responsibility towards the people and the center for the situation on the ground.

The choice of the topic of this article is determined by the fact that one of the essential challenges of the state policy is to ensure steady social and economic development of the country's regions existing in the common economic space. In this context, the research of the regional political process allows considering the political system of the society in terms of the region in the functional-dynamic aspect revealing primarily the mechanisms of the macro-system functioning and dynamics of its interaction with the civil society.

In contemporary Kazakhstan, one of the seven regions of the republic is defined as the Northern Macro-Region comprised of North Kazakhstan, Kostanay, Akmola Regions and Astana in accordance with the Concept of Social and Entrepreneur Corporations. Kostanay is the

*Author for correspondence

center of the Northern Macro-Region. Kostanay and North Kazakhstan Regions did traditionally belong to North Kazakhstan first of all by the criterion of the geographic position. If the economy structure is chosen as a region division criterion, then these two regions still appear next to each other.

The 14 regions of Kazakhstan can be conditionally divided into the following categories:

- Oil producing: Aktyubinsk, Atyrau, West Kazakhstan, Kyzylorda, Mangystau.

- Industrial (coal mining, production of steel, copper, aluminum and generation of electric power): Pavlodar, Karaganda and East Kazakhstan.

- Agricultural: Akmola, Almaty, Jambyl, Kostanay, North Kazakhstan and South Kazakhstan.

It is worthy of note that in the Kazakhstan Cluster Initiative program, which defined 7 pilot clusters, Kostanay and North Kazakhstan Regions, but not Akmola Region, were allocated as No.3 – “Food industry: grain processing cluster”. This is why we chose Kostanay and North Kazakhstan Regions as the analysis subject, which in periods of different territorial and administrative reorganizations, unlike other regions, were stably identified and continue to be identified as the North Region.

The contemporary social and political reality in Kazakhstan is such that the regional features of the social development processes require corresponding state regulation measures aimed at creating equal conditions for social development of the population of all regions of the country and prevention from occurrence of social tension hotspots.

Relevance of the research of the regional policy problem of the Republic of Kazakhstan is determined by the following factors:

First, the carried out regional policy of the state is at the stage of recovery today. In a transit country, the mechanism of the regional political process implementation bears greatly a limited nature determined by its imperfection and insufficient theoretical development of this problem.

Second, the imperfection of the political and legal framework of the Republic of Kazakhstan. At this stage of the state development, the regional political process is at the stage of recovery, improvement of the laws and their active application.

Third, the location peculiarity of Kostanay and North Kazakhstan regions is such that they are the territory of the border with the Russian Federation. Creation of favorable conditions for social and economic upswing of the boundary regions, growth of wellbeing and spiritual development of the population are the most important factors of maintaining the social and political stability, assuring national security of the state within its frontiers. For this, it is necessary to conduct comprehensive scientific research of regional problems to be solved in the course of the political process.

Fourth, the controversy between the social demand for effective policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan and insufficient development of political tools of the state's influence on this process become obvious. The problem that requires rethinking of methodological approaches and theoretical principles of researching the regional political process, new assessment of the criteria characterizing it, its regulation principles, and also mechanisms of carrying out effective regional policy has been outlined in the national political theory and practice.

Thus, the relevance of this work is defined by the current tendencies of the regional political process in the contemporary Kazakhstan society, need in studying the problems associated with the peculiarities of its influence on social and economic development of the region, quality of interaction between the authorities and the civil society. Insufficient exploration of many aspects of the problem being investigated and the need in improving the mechanisms of the regional political process implementation determine the theoretical and practical importance and relevance of this research.

The authors used works of Kazakhstani, Russian and foreign scientists for the all-round consideration of the problem of the regional political process.

The modern political regional study as a branch of social sciences in the West goes back to the 1960's when the general methodological principles were proposed, and the subject field of regional research was circumscribed. The fact of renaming the Geography Department of the University of Pennsylvania (USA) to the Regional Science Department in 1971 is referred to in literature as an important example of institutionalization of the regional science. Starting from 1970, the political regional study in Western countries has taken shape as an independent

science in regional societies in their development and interaction with other levels of political and territorial structure of the society.

The works of such foreign scientists as Bentley¹ and Pareto² contain analysis of the political process from the point of view of interaction between social subjects and holders of political power. Very popular works are the theory of the political space, methods for spatio-temporal analysis of regions on the basis of the theory of diffusion of innovations, the concept of social watersheds. It is worth noting Isard³ who is rightfully considered to be the founder of the regional study as an inter-disciplinary knowledge having special methods and a study subject. The views of Landabaso⁴ reflecting individual aspects of the regional development theory are popular in the regional study.

Understanding the essence of the subject of investigation is revealed in the works of such Russian authors as Makarychev⁵, Kolosov, Mironenko⁶, Gelman, Ryzhenkov⁷, Turovsky⁸, Degtyaryov⁹, Dakhin and Raspopov¹⁰.

Works of official politicians and Kazakhstani scientists concerning the problems of establishment and development of the regional political process in Kazakhstan have special importance in development of theoretical-methodological and practical issues of the problem in question. The message of President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nazarbayev to the people of Kazakhstan “Kazakhstan’s entry strategy into the 50 most competitive countries of the world: Kazakhstan on the threshold of a new leap forward in its development”¹¹ makes important contribution to the development of conceptual basics of the regional policy. The significance of defining the role of regions in the sustainable development of the country is pointed out by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nazarbayev. In one of his addresses to the nation, he said: “Today we need a new, modern territorial development strategy aimed at enhancing economic activity in developed regional centers that can become “locomotives” of economic modernization of the country as a whole, as well as the formation of efficient economic specialization of regions”¹¹.

It is necessary to note that the regional policy was not a subject of special politological research in the end of the 20th century, although some of its aspects were addressed in the works of the leading Kazakhstani political analysts

Baydeldinov¹², Dzhunusov¹³, Laumulin¹⁴, Nasimova¹⁵, Syroyezhkin¹⁶ and others.

Works of Kazakhstani scientists Ivatova and Balapanova¹⁷, Ibrayeva¹⁸, Akishev¹⁹, Tazhin and Tazhimbetov²⁰, Medeuova²¹, Aliyarov²², Abulkasova²³, Kapanov and Sarsembayeva²⁴ were of great assistance in researching the features of regional political process.

Monographic research by Matsupa^{25,26} concerning the role of maslikhats in the political system of the society stands out in the range of the works considering certain aspects of the political process in North Kazakhstan, in particular, the Kostanay region.

Therefore, various aspects, forms and content of regional political process have found reflection in the domestic and foreign politological literature. One can state that the political regional science is demanded both as a systematic insight into territorial events, and as a conceptual ground for the public policy.

At the same time, while highly estimating the results achieved by domestic scientists, it is necessary to note that there is no special research dedicated to the comprehensive analysis of the political process in the northern region of Kazakhstan in the domestic politological literature. However, the need in such summarizing research is long overdue.

The relevance of the mentioned problems of the regional policy of the state, their insufficient degree of study predetermined the choice of the topic, object and subject of the research, conditioned setting of goals and objectives of this work.

Object of research is various forms of interconnection and interaction between the central, local authorities and social subjects of the region that constitute the basis of the regional political process.

Subject of research is the regional political process in North Kazakhstan.

Goal of research is comprehensive politological analysis of the forms and contents of the regional political process, its influence on steady development of the region.

The following **objectives** were defined based on the set goal of the research:

- Provide theoretical and methodological approaches to the research of the regional political process.
- Show the specific features of the content of the political process in the region.
- Reveal conditions required for successful implementation of the region development policy.
- Cover the interconnection between the real capabilities of the region (represented by its political actors) to ensure a dignified level of the population's life and its steady social and economic development.
- Define the main ways and forms of interaction between the citizen and the state implemented in the course of the regional political process.
- Reveal the specifics of the influence which the political process has on the outlooks of the regional development. Work out practical recommendations on optimization of the regional political process.

Scientific novelty of the article is that it is for the first time in the domestic politology that:

- Essence, structure and functions of the regional political process are determined on the basis of the analysis of scientific and theoretical ideas and approaches.
- Characteristics of the role of the participants of the regional political process in North Kazakhstan are given.
- It was shown that the Center set the goal to the regional authorities to work out their own regional strategies, which brings the local authorities to a higher level of management when transition from the paradigm of the region functioning to its development is possible.
- Specifics of interaction of the power structures and social subjects as a basis of regional political process are revealed.
- The main directions of mass political work of state authority organs in the North Region have been researched.
- The prospects of the political process dynamics are defined, practical recommendations on its optimization and improvement are proposed.

Theoretical and methodological basis of research consists of theoretical provisions and concepts developed within the politological and sociological research of the problems connected with implementation of the internal policy in the regions, management of the process of interaction between the government and the social subjects.

Methodological principles and approaches developed in^{1,2} are essential for analysis of the features of the regional political process. The micro-political approach that allows finding out how the regional policy is implemented and perceived underlies the analysis.

With account of the subject specifics and the features of the set goals and objectives, the methodological basis of this research is the principles of system analysis, concrete-historical, institutional and structural-functional approaches to consideration of the role of the political process in the social and economic development of the region.

The work employs both the politological, and special scientific methods for formal-logic, dialectical, systematic, historical and social research. However, we proceed from the fact that scientific significance of each method is determined by its ability to reveal new features in the researched phenomena and lead to more profound understanding thereof.

Source base of the research. The authors used a wide range of sources to attain goals and objectives set in the work.

An important group of sources was comprised of legislative and governmental documents reflecting the peculiarities of the political process in the regions: reports and works of the Head of the State, representatives of local authorities, Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Laws of the RK On Parties, On Mass Media, On Elections, On Local Representative and Executive Authorities, On Local Government in the Republic of Kazakhstan, Regional Development Concept, Small Town Development Program, Order of President of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 167 dated 28.08.2006 On the Strategy of the Territorial Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan till 2015, and also various local and state regional programs. They allow finding out the main tendencies and prospects of the political process development in the region.

Such sources as reports of the Statistics Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan, monographs, proceedings of research-to-practice conferences, collections of research works containing actual data on the political process in the region provided invaluable help in covering the topic.

Documents of regional archives and regional administration archives were used in collection of immediate local material for the Kostanay Region and the North Kazakhstan Region, in particular Foundation 1015 of the Akim Administration of the Kostanay Region,²⁷ materials of the official web-site of North Kazakhstan²⁸ and Kostanay²⁹ regions. Data of sociological research published on the official sites of the regions contain vast factual materials, as well as materials of the periodicals – Regional newspaper of the North Kazakhstan Region – “North Kazakhstan”³⁰, regional public and political issue “Kostanay News”³¹ and Kostanay regional weekly newspaper “Our Newspaper”³². Large factual materials on the regions were taken from the Statistical Collection of the Kostanay Region³³ and the Encyclopedia of the North Kazakhstan Region³⁴.

Theoretical importance of this work is in the fact that the theoretical results and conclusions can be used for research in the field of politology and regional studies, as well as in development of the regional strategy of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The authors of the article applied politological approaches which allow covering the complex and multi-aspect problem of political interaction between the government authorities and the subjects of the civil society.

Practical significance of the research is in the possibility of using the main provisions and conclusions in scientific research on the relevant problems of regional studies, regionalistics and political processes in Kazakhstan. The materials of the article can find practical application in development of concepts of regional development programs and regional policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan when planning the internal policy in regions, and also in higher education institutions when reading training courses and special courses “Region Study”, “Political Region Study”, “Regional Political Process”.

2. Concept Headings

1. The region is a basic notion of the comparative politological analysis of social and political development of various economic zones of the state. Variety of the approaches separating the region as an analysis object only confirms the assumption that the diversity is an immediate consequence of the space infinity.
2. Content of the political process taking place in some or another region of Kazakhstan is determined by the regionalization model, which was chosen for an independent state, and also the status, historical features of belonging of the region to this state, degree and nature of influence of the region on the nation-wide life of the country.
3. Success of the macro-economic reformations that have been implemented in Kazakhstan to date has created favorable conditions for shifting the emphasis towards the regions development policy as an important and prospective tool for increasing the general level of the social and economic development of the country. Formation of a regional subject as an initiator of the region development does not assume development of the existing and emergence of new productions as much as formation of favorable conditions for an innovative and investment climate.
4. Steady social and economic development of regions is characterized by their actual ability to ensure positive dynamics of the level and quality of the population's life, ability, first of all, to meet social needs that are objectively attached to the region as a result of territorial division of labor; second, arrange reliable reproduction, internal economic turnover and meet the needs of the local society with acceptable efficiency; third, create conditions (resource, social, organizational, etc.) guaranteeing decent life sustenance to the residents of the region.
5. It is in the course of regional political process that the citizens interact with the state, implement their rights and obligations. Real political self-expression of the population is regionalized to a certain extent, i.e. mediated by the features of the internal life of the region.
6. Study of a regional political process allows understanding how subjects of the political relations fulfill their functions, how changes of the political system take place in time and space.

3. Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of Regional Political Process Research

3.1 Notion, Essence and Methods for Study of Political Processes

Research of one of the political problems – the management of political processes – is a relevant subject of the modern political science. First of all, regional political process is a part of the nationwide political process.

Analysis of the political process and dynamics of the political life were considered by many scientists, philosophers. Even the classics of philosophy Plato, Aristotle, Al-Farabi, N. Machiavelli and other thinkers described the political process considering various types of state structure and looking for better forms of government. The classic works by K. Marx and F. Engels were an important milestone in development of the concept of the political process, with which the western political thought came close to the turn of the 20th century. But only in the 20th century the first attempts were made to build an expanded specialized theory of the political process.

We connect development of the conceptual views of the political process with development of two main paradigm approaches: the micro- and macro-level. Considerable contribution to development of the concept of the political process was made by the micro-theories associated with the names of Bentley¹ and Pareto². It is the concept of circulation and turnover of the elites developed in Pareto's *Treatise on General Sociology* that gave grounds to Schumpeter³⁵ for calling the latter the founder of the modern "sociology of the political process". Pareto² takes the idea of "elite" being the subject and the moving force of the political process opposed by counter-elites and the people playing more passive rather than active role here as the basic construct for his theory.

According to process theory of Easton³⁶, political process serves simultaneously as the reproduction of the integrated structure and the cyclic function of the political system in its interrelations with social and extra social media, affecting the processes of politics in economic, environmental, cultural and other factors. The functional

processes of separate governmental, political party and other institutions are included into the political process as elements at the macro system level.

In its essence, the political process can be very diverse: developing some certain strategy or concept; formulating public opinion on that or another issue; holding presidential or representative authority elections, etc. It includes the following: social and political conditions for political process functioning; subjects of political actions and objects of actions; political interests, behavioral motives and objectives of subjects and objects; interrelations between subjects and between subjects and objects.

It is traditionally perceived that the sources of political process are represented by the following: economic relations³⁷; circulation of elites;² charismatic leadership³⁸; people playing different parts³⁹ conflict.^{40,41} Thereat, such an idea as "change" comes forth as the central characteristic of the political process. The changes encompass both basic elements of the system and the properties that are not connected with the fundamental structures of power. The types of political changes are expressed through such modes of political existence as functioning, development and decline.

Summing up the abovementioned different conceptual approaches, the following working definition of the category of "political process" can be suggested that includes a number of the specified parameters: "political process, as a form of functioning of the political system in society, is the activity of people who use power resources and technologies to achieve their individual and collective objectives; this is a dynamic dimension of the political life, political activity of social subjects and the struggle for powers of authority".

Interactions between the ruling group that fulfils managerial functions and other groups of civil society that put pressure on the elite and on each other make the general outline of the essence of the political process as a transition from one state of force balance to another. Special part in this process is played by social and political institutions.

Political process includes the functions of such state institutions as government and police, parliament and special services, activities of political parties and pressure groups, social and political activities of the citizens. In this respect, political process is not infrequently treated

as a quite complex configuration of conscious and spontaneous activities, i.e. both state-regulated activities and the spontaneous actions of the groups and individual citizens. Thereat, two approaches to interpreting the interrelations between these components should be considered, namely, “horizontal” and “vertical” that correspond to two political and cultural orientations: non-etatist (or democratic) and etatist (or technocratic) types of political culture.

Horizontally arranged process is founded upon recognizing formal equality and relative autonomy of its principal participants. The logic of their actions is predetermined by a non-etatist system of values (freedom, right, and consensus). Within the political process, the state and the social groups stand on *pari passu* positions, as equal partners that consciously aim to achieve the mutually agreed social objectives in a rational manner; not a single strategic decision can be made by the leaders and by the government without prior consultations with trade-unions, businessmen, farmers. The political regime of such interrelations was called “polyarchy” by American political scientist Dahl⁴².

Multilateral consultations between the major participants or actors, “round table” can serve as an ideal expression of the horizontal political process. Institutional form of such political process is represented by “tripartism” as a neo-corporatism model for equal dialog between the government and trade-unions and business associations.

“Vertical” political process is understood as some elemental power opposed by state authorities that play the part of the managerial subsystem in this process formulating objectives and making decisions on high-priority social issues. Thereat, the subjects acknowledge the authority of power and the rulers guaranty certain degree of freedom to the citizens. The meaningfulness and rationality of the political interaction are formulated by the government that tries to instill in the inhabitants of the country such values of political culture as law-obedience and rationality.

Of course, it should be noted that the suggested versions of the political process are ideal constructions that make it possible to understand the nature of the interactions between the participants of the political process. However, in practice, such interaction is expressed through making the decisions that realize the interests of

those participants. Power institutions, community, interest groups and mass media take part in the process of generating and making political decisions. Nevertheless, the central part is played here by the state power institutions: president, parliament, government. They distribute resources and authority between the groups by approving the budget and by formulating the objectives of political development. Thus, the cycles and fluctuations of the political process depend on the activities of the institutions of power, on their standing and their authority in society.

3.2 Regional Political Process as an Object of Politological Analysis

The authors believe that the key word in defining the idea of “region” is “territory”. Then, the region can be identified as a territory that is distinguished by some certain attributes relative to another territory (another region). Such attribute can include the aggregate of natural and/or historical; relatively stable economic-geographical and other specific characteristics that are often associated with peculiar features of the ethnic composition of the population. The region as an object of area studies represents a historically developed social space capable of self-reproduction and development. The region is constructed based on the set of mutually interacting factors: territory, natural conditions, common history and culture, demographic and social features of the population, economic, political and legal structure. The boundaries of the regions are formed as a result of the long-term political processes of self-organization. The most important indicator of regional belonging is territorial identity of the population as a trait of regional political culture.

The scientists distinguish the concepts that aim to investigate the characteristic features of regional development: regionalism and regionalization. In modern scientific literature, the concept of regionalization is used both for explaining the processes of political and economic integration of the regions and for explaining the processes opposite to globalization. Thereat, the direct average is represented by regional models of behavior. Regionalization is also understood as a response to the expanding process of globalization (the growing understanding of regional interests in the face of the global

threats) and as one of the ways of establishing universal political and economic system. The concept of regionalism affords applying very different approaches to understanding the roles of regional problems. This concept is especially important for political scientists and for international relations theorists, insofar as the theories of regionalism analyze functional applications and cooperative aspects of international relations based on the fact that regional integration is a question of feasibility and it is not necessarily affected by the global processes.

In all, both regionalism and regionalization are the concepts that help study the nature of regional cooperation. While the concept of regionalization is focused on understanding regional integration as a process, the concept of regionalism studies the boundaries of the same phenomenon.

Principal methods for investigating regional political process are represented by: systemic analysis, balancing method, method of economical and geographical investigation, method of economical and mathematical modeling, such methods of sociological investigations as standardized interview, individual interviews with the representatives of different sectors and spheres of the social and economic complex of the region; content-analysis of the interviews and public speeches of regional ruling elites, scientists and experts, etc.

Life activity of the region is a constant factor that cannot be stopped. Therefore, regional interests envisage, in the first place, sustainable character of reproduction, continuous preservation and development of the region's potential. Otherwise, if the sustainable reproduction is disturbed, the region can be ranked as depressed. The experience in many countries shows that it takes decades to rehabilitate the undermined potential of a depressed region (by contrast to reconstructing a separate company), and the costs are many times higher than those required for maintaining the stable nature of reproduction.

The most significant indicators (parameters) of regional interests include the following:

- conformity of the ways and standards of living of the population to governmental or to other standards;

- availability of regional budgetary-financial and other material sources (property, etc.);
- opportunities for using the available resources, places to apply labor, intellect, creative efforts;
- availability of the infrastructure for developing intra- and interregional relations;
- natural resources and environmental potential of the region;
- social and political stability.

The idea of “regional political process” characterizes one of the aspects of politics as the most complex sphere of social life. It reflects the dynamics of developing political life of the community, its conditions that change in time and space, all the aggregate of the actions aimed at changing and ensuring the functionality of the political system.

The authors believe that, from methodological perspectives, the analysis of the regional political processes should take into account such important characteristic as their focus on events. Political process in the region is, preeminently, an event-related phenomenon, i.e. the process runs “from one event to another”. This means the following: a) it does not possess highly expressed cyclic or repetitive nature; b) each following event in this process has only separate connections with the preceding events and is seldom predetermined by them, which, in turn, makes c) its forecasting difficult.

It is not unreasonable to maintain that “the events that constitute the political process at the regional level basically belong to three types of political events:

First: the events and the rhythmic routine of everyday regional life in general and political life in particular, as well as the outbursts of social activity of the citizens of the region.

Second: functional cycles of the activities of regional and/or republican structures of state power and administration (elections, approving annual budget, resignations, appointments, etc.).

Third: “waves” of political initiatives of regional and/or republican power structures. Thereat, only political events that occur at the intersections of the rhythmical (or non-rhythmical) lines of all three abovementioned types of political phenomena fit in the basic political process”⁴.

Hence, the analysis of the regional political process, of its forms and contents should cover the parameters as follows:

1. Status of the region in the country, degree and nature of its influence over the national economy, politics, culture.
2. Interactions between governmental and party structures.
3. Division and balance of the legislative, the executive and the judicial branches of power; other elements of power relations and the techniques for their implementation.
4. Aggregate regional structure in its economic, ethnic, residential, demographic aspects; peripheral nature of the region.
5. Social and economic stratification and its nature.
6. Specifics of social relations (traditional and new, market-based).
7. Conceptuality of consciousness of the social subjects.
8. Presence (or absence) of common national ideology or its elements.
9. Interactions in the ruling elite; relations between: formally institutionalized and referent groups within the ruling elite, between industry-based segments of the ruling elite (military, administrative, financial and industrial production, agricultural. etc.), between the ruling elite and the counter-elite; peculiar characteristics of the relations between political authorities and administrative authorities (bureaucracy).
10. Consensus between political powers, trade-offs on roles and functions of the elite and the counter-elite.
11. Historical specifics of this region's belonging to the state, its historical integrity and consistency of the existing borders.
12. Summing up the abovementioned approaches and concepts, a conclusion can be made that the idea of "regional political process" characterizes one of the aspects of politics as the most complex sphere of social life. It reflects the dynamics of developing political life of the community, its transformations in time and space, the whole aggregate of

the efforts aimed at changing and supporting the functions of the political system.

Studying regional political processes implies using basic paradigms of socio-humanistic science and applying available scientific methods that could be subdivided in three basic groups: philosophical, general scientific methods and the methods of special sciences (political, sociological, economical, juridical, etc.). Politological approach to studying regional political processes should be preeminently founded on applying the institutional and the structural functional methods.

3.3 North Kazakhstan in the Context of Republican Model of Regionalization

The model of regionalization in Kazakhstan is based on the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, on the laws passed by the RK Parliament, on the regulations and decrees of RK government. Governmental programs have been developed and implemented aimed at developing separate problematic territories (small towns, rural territories). Thus, in Kazakhstan, the Concept of regional development and the Program on development of small towns have been adopted and are now effective as well as different local governmental regional programs:

1. Regional programs on supporting and developing small businesses in the Republic of Kazakhstan;
2. Regional investment programs;
3. Regional programs on preventing child and juvenile crimes, on combating alcoholism and drug addiction;
4. Regional program on drug control for 1999-2000;
5. Regional program on combating crime and corruption;
6. Regional programs on mass sports development;
7. Program on development of small towns for 2004-2006;
8. State program on developing rural territories in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2004-2010;
9. Regional programs on rehabilitating disabled persons;
10. Regional programs on homebuilding development.

Within the framework of Kazakhstan model of regionalization, the Kostanay Region and the North Kazakhstan Region are classified as regions that predominantly specialize in agriculture, although other industries are also present there.

In fact, general situation in the regions of Kazakhstan is characterized by considerable difference in industrial growth, investments, incomes and prices. This difference also includes deficiency of electric power in some of the regions, while other regions have redundant supply. There is regional difference in distributing gross regional product per capita. On the whole, disproportions of regional development reflect general problems of Kazakhstan economy. Those structural characteristics of Kazakhstan economy rousing well-justified concerns of the experts are given below:

- low degree of economy diversification in the republic, concentration of major financial, technological and other resources in the extractive industries;
- low efficiency of labor, especially in agricultural sector that gives jobs (according to Agency on Statistics of the RK data as of 2005) to more than 32% of the population of the country;
- low level of innovations in different industrial sectors;
- high centralization of planning the economic policy in different industries with low levels of administrative and financial power delegated to regional authorities.

One of the instruments for regional development in Kazakhstan is represented by cluster initiative. Clusters as a method of developing regional economies is widely applied in developed countries. Classic examples of successful clusters are the groups of companies specializing in information technologies in Silicon Valley (USA), telecommunications in Helsinki (Finland), film-making in Hollywood (USA). Applying cluster method at regional level is most effective as it requires close contacts between the participants of the cluster and implies some territorial limitations. One of the advantages of the cluster-based management of the economy is the stron-

ger role of economic factors and lower significance of the administrative ones. The role of regional authorities is very important only at the first stages of the cluster formation: in the course of evaluating the external economic complex of the region, in selecting the most promising clusters and in their establishment taking into account the needs of the region. Later, the role of regional authorities decreases, and the laws of economics come to the fore stimulating the development of the most profitable industries.

The work on implementing the cluster approach in Kazakhstan economy was commenced in 2004. Its major objective is to improve competitive power of the non-extractive sectors of the country. Within the framework of legislative support of cluster development, in 2005, special Decree of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On approving the plans on creating and developing pilot clusters in priority sectors of the economy" has been passed.

In line with the program "Kazakhstan Cluster Initiative" developed by the Center of marketing and analytical investigations in partnership with American consulting company J.E. Austin Associates, Inc. and with the participation of the well-known economist M. Porter, the government carried out the evaluation of the existing, emerging and potential clusters in agricultural sector, in industry and in service sector. The following 7 pilot clusters have been identified for the purposes of providing further support:

1. Tourism: Almaty and Almaty Region.
2. Textile: South Kazakhstan Region.
3. Food industry: grain milling cluster: Akmola Region, Kostanay and North Kazakhstan Region; horticultural cluster: Almaty, Zhambyl and South Kazakhstan Regions; dairy cluster: Kostanay Region.
4. Construction materials: Astana, Almaty and Kyzylorda Regions.
5. Transport and logistic services: Almaty, passage "Bakhty" (East Kazakhstan Region, at the border with China).
6. Oil and gas mechanical engineering: West Kazakhstan Region.
7. Metallurgy: Karaganda Region.

In all, governmental support for developing clusters in Kazakhstan includes the measures as follows:

- improving tax and customs policy;
- setting quality standards for the manufactured goods / rendered services;
- information support, propagating information about the advantages of the cluster approach, marketing;
- allocating funds for some certain projects;
- creating favorable opportunities for cluster development (for example, free economic zone was established in South Kazakhstan Region to develop textile cluster).
- The analysis of the existing strategies of regional development shows that the majority of them have been developed expertly and realistically. The principal objective is to implement those strategies; and for this purpose, they should be aligned with the processes of drawing up local budgets; indeed, many things depend upon the balanced nature of budgetary support at the lowest levels of public administration. This will help the low level administrations participate properly in the process of planning the regional development programs. To achieve this objective, political will should be manifested by local administrations and by central authorities.

The analysis of the republican model of regionalization shows that Northern Kazakhstan takes a dignified position making its contribution to improving the competitive power of the country. Regional policy in Kazakhstan makes use of a great number of instruments for development. Obviously, from the perspective of the long-term viability of the achieved positive changes, the priority is given to the complex measures of regional development. These are the independent regional strategies for social and economic development that are prepared and implemented by the regions and also stimulation of the economic development of the regions by introducing different forms of partnership in relations between the state and the private business: developing clusters, establishing social and business associations. Northern Kazakhstan, as

a region, represents one of the objects of this model of regionalization.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Peculiarities of Political Process in Northern Kazakhstan

4.1.1 Institutional Components and Infrastructure of the Political Process in the Region

As a rule, the institutional structure of regional political process includes:

- bodies representing the central state power;
- bodies of local government;
- local authorities;
- organized subjects of political activity, or actors (regional branches of national parties, politicized movements and associations, and similar regional scale forces);
- non-formalized locus of power, political and financial groups.

Infrastructure of regional political process is referred to as a set of conditions and prerequisites necessary for its normal functioning. All the public and organized environment of the region, regional media, a set of legal rules governing the political life in the region can be considered as elements of the infrastructure.

The organization of local authorities assumes a great importance for the regional political processes in Kazakhstan due to the scale of its territory and the differences between regions.

Since the main subject of reforming all aspects of social life in Kazakhstan has been and continues to be the state, the decisive factor in the formation of statehood in Kazakhstan is a centralized system of government.

There is a number of preconditions of territorial, economic, social and political nature for the existence in Kazakhstan of the centralized power system. The territorial factor of the centralized control system is associated with the huge size of the country's territory that with a

great length of boundaries and a small population poses serious threats to national security. In economic and social terms, the choice of a centralized management system has been predetermined by both the multi-ethnic composition of the population, the lack of a class of owners, institutions and market infrastructure and the need to create a single economic space of Kazakhstan. In political terms, it was necessary to consolidate the society, to create a new state. All this has led to the choice of a centralized management system, involving the regulation and even the intervention of the central government in the affairs of the regions in the event of any threat to national security.

Institutional components and infrastructure of the political process in the North region, in our opinion, are subordinated to the main goal – the preservation of territorial control, maintenance of civil peace and consent. In the future, administrative and political reform becomes urgent, conducting of which is expected within the framework of political modernization of Kazakhstan. In the administrative part, the important place belongs to the de-concentration – partial transferring powers and responsibilities from the government to local authorities. To improve the efficiency of the process of de-concentration of public authority, it is necessary, first of all, to streamline inter-budgetary relations. The government continues to work to improve inter-budgetary relations, aimed at the optimal combination of the principle of equalization of budgetary security of regions with the principle of promoting the efficient use of public funds. This should promote the interest of local executive bodies in increasing the tax potential of regions and independence of local representative and executive bodies in the formation of local budgets.

Speaking about the development of civil society institutions in the region, first of all, the uneven development of the civil society infrastructure should be noted. A significant part of the public associations of citizens is concentrated in regional centers – Kostanay and Petropavlovsk. This confirms the fact that civil society is born mainly in the urban space that concentrates the various layers of intellectuals and professional groups, rather than in the countryside. In the region, as well as in the country as a whole, the development of civil society is

constrained by a number of factors. First and foremost, there are limitations of socio-cultural nature related to the state of the economy and standard of living generating population detachment from social and political life. Other restrictions are “set” by socio-cultural and socio-psychological factors, including the value orientations of the population.

The dynamics of the political process in the Northern region shows that its main participants, executive and representative local authorities, social movements and organizations direct all their efforts at strengthening social stability and national unity.

An important factor in the pace of socio-economic development of the region was the restructuring of the political infrastructure. It concerns the transformation of the existing political structures, political ideologies and technologies, the ratio of formal and informal political structures and movements.

The practice of social work has shown the need for a phased increase in the level of minimum state guarantees – minimal level of pensions and benefits, their regular indexation in accordance with the growth of consumer prices. To ensure the implementation of these programs, it is necessary: firstly, to create the most favorable economic, legal and organizational conditions for the growth of wages, pensions, allowances and other monetary incomes; secondly, stabilization of standard of living of population, building a solid foundation for its increase in all regions.

To minimize the negative effects of stratification of society, regional policy should be aimed at improving the tax system by phasing out taxes on the funds allocated to consumption by organizations, simultaneously increasing the tax burden on personal, especially ultra-high, incomes and property of individuals.

4.1.2 Dynamic Aspects of Regional Political Process

Dynamic aspects of the political process are largely determined by the event-series that can be viewed in the context of assessing the level of interaction between different branches of the public authorities to each other, as well as government and civil society actors. The dynamics of regional political process as a whole is due to the

following groups of factors: socio-cultural traditions and socio-economic characteristics of the region; structure of regional political space; influence of the national and international policy. In this understanding, regional political process can rightly be regarded as a structural element of the country's political life.

The analysis of the current regional system of power shared between the levels of the government and the structure of intergovernmental relations in Kazakhstan allowed the authors to identify *a number of key issues*, significantly reducing the effectiveness of regional development policy:

- a) imbalance between the local executive and representative branches of the government;
- b) representative power (maslikhats) has only monitoring functions, and is virtually devoid of influence over the activities of the executive branch;
- c) low involvement of the population, civil society representatives in the development and implementation of programs of development of territories of their residence.

In general, as a result of the carried out analysis, the following *perspectives and predictive appraisal* can be drawn:

- *firstly*, implementation of political-administrative reform, carrying out of which is expected within the framework of political modernization of Kazakhstan, becomes actual;
- *secondly*, in the administrative part, the important place belongs to the de-concentration – partly transferring of the powers and responsibilities from the government to local authorities.
- *thirdly*, to improve the efficiency of the process of de-concentration of public authority, it is necessary, first of all, to streamline inter-budgetary relations. The government continues to work to improve inter-budgetary relations aimed at the optimal combination of the principle of equalization of budgetary security of regions with the principle of promoting the efficient use of public funds. This should increase the interest of local

executive bodies to enhance the tax potential of regions and independence of local representative and executive bodies in the formation of local budgets.

4.2 The Role of Electoral Politics and Political Parties in Regional Political Process

One of the leading roles defining the content of the political process in the region is electoral politics. The very electoral process is an important part of the political process. An important role in the regional electoral politics is given to political parties. In Kostanay and North Kazakhstan regions in the 1990s the formation of parties was carried out asynchronously, the degree of their fragmentation and instability was great. It is important to emphasize that in our view, there is no regional political parties in Kazakhstan as such. To date, there are regional offices, subsidiaries, affiliates of 10 parties in Kazakhstan. Accordingly, the party management of such regional party organizations is centralized. And that is predetermined by both the unitary character of the state and the current legislation in the field of party building, excluding the possibility of establishing namely regional parties.

Analysis of electoral cycles and of the role of political parties as actors of the political process in the northern region shows that the leading political actors in the regional elections are the executive power of regions and political parties, with the dominant role of the first one.

A peculiarity of Kostanay and Northern Kazakhstan regions is the small number of most of the parties' regional offices, their low activity and as a consequence – low popularity among the population, which significantly limits their political resource. In view of this – too low ability of parties to have a real impact on regional and local policies. Low electoral potential of the majority of regional and local offices of the parties puts them at the mercy from the practice of selective protection by the administration or major economic actors.

Political parties, in comparison with the executive authorities, are the least active and effective actors in the regional election process because in the nationwide scale until recently, the role of political parties in the political

decision-making was negligible. In the future, the role of political parties, including those in the regions, will increase due to the introduction of the proportional voting system in Kazakhstan in 2007.

Thus, the peculiarities of the political process in Northern Kazakhstan are:

- paucity of most of the regional offices of the parties, their low activity and as a consequence – low popularity among the population, which significantly limits their political resources;
- programs of most political parties are same-type, they lack clear political platform;
- low level of political knowledge and political culture of population of the region;
- civil society is not actively involved in the establishment and activities of political parties;
- same-type of programs of most political parties, the absence of a clearly defined political party platforms;
- as a consequence – too low ability of parties to have a real impact on regional and local policies. Low electoral potential of the majority of regional and local offices of the parties puts them at the mercy of the practice of selective protection by the administration or major economic actors.

5. Conclusions

The results of this study allow drawing the following *conclusions*.

It has been proved that ensuring stable development of the Republic of Kazakhstan is impossible without an efficient regional policy.

It has been found that the political process in the Northern region was aimed at:

- organization of the region's vital functions, reproduction and modernization of variety of livelihood mechanisms, maintaining its stability and controllability;
- political mobilization of citizens, promotion of their socio-political activity and responsibility;
- implementation of central government policies in the region;
- ensuring a single state and legal regime and the rule of law in the region.

It has been determined that the dynamics of the regional political process as a whole is due to such groups of factors as socio-cultural tradition of the region, structure of the regional political space, impact of national and international policy. In this understanding, regional political process is rightly regarded as a structural element of the country's political life.

It has been proved that the essence of regionalization consists in considering the specifics of regions in all-national structural, investment, financial policy; in transferring of a number of reforms to the regional level; in development of special programs on reforms for regions with special conditions of development.

It has been revealed that the current regional system of distribution of powers between levels of government and the structure of intergovernmental relations allows identifying a number of key issues, significantly reducing the effectiveness of regional development policy:

- imbalance between the local executive and representative branches of government;
- representative power (maslikhats) has only monitoring functions, and virtually devoid of influence over the activities of the executive branch;
- low involvement of the population, civil society representatives in the development and implementation of programs of development of territories of their residence.
- The current Kazakhstan administrative system is constructed as the vertical of power, which implies a hierarchical, rather than economic responsibility. To date, there is a need to make responsible decisions and to make fundamental changes in the organization of regional administration, decentralization and de-concentration of public functions, development of local self-government.

It has been found that in modern Kazakhstan the "center-region" ratio is characterized by the dominance of central government over local authorities. But in the future, the selection or the creation of such a body to coordinate issues of territorial development, to coordinate actions of central and local executive bodies, to be engaged in the improvement of financing mechanisms of territorial development is planned. This is the meaning of decentralization of administration – to transfer a

significant part of the rights and corresponding share of responsibility to local authorities that is in line with the objective tendencies of development of self-government and at the same time imposes new obligations on regional policy.

It is becoming increasingly clear that dynamic creation of an effective system of territorial administration and local government is required, where the authorities should and can respond much more completely and effectively to the needs, interests and expectations of the population, to protect it from the negative aspects of market relations, from the elements of the initial period of the mixed economy, from lowering the level and quality of life, from weakening of economic ties between the regions of the country.

Increased tasks of the local government in the implementation of national services at the territorial level necessitate continuing transfer of certain functions and powers, as well as responsibility by the center in addressing most of the issues of territorial development to the local level of government initiated in previous years.

In this article, the theoretical and methodological foundations of regional policy research has been defined, political analysis of peculiarities of its formation and development has been conducted; the current condition of the state regional policy has been determined, problems and shortcomings in its implementation have been identified. The results have been obtained through analysis of archival documents of Kostanay region, the factual state statistical and legislative bodies, as well as methods of using the systemic, comparative, structural and functional analysis.

This work is of a practical value. The findings provide important recommendations for their practical use in domestic and foreign policy of the state, scientific and educational spheres, and can also be used as a basis for the practical implementation of regional policy and the stability of the Kazakhstan society.

In order to improve the implementation of regional political process, the following recommendations were offered:

- the development of such program of modernization administration in regions is required, which would provide for decentralization processes for-

- mation of local self-government, electivity of local authorities, including the heads of executive bodies, strengthening the role of representative bodies;
- in social policy, the activation of strengthening the principle of equalization of living standards of the population in the region within the allowable minimum is needed;
- center of gravity of the reforms, especially in matters of livelihood, environmental management, quality and efficiency of social sector development, environmental protection, etc. should be more actively and consistently transferred to the regional level;
- it is necessary to pursue a more active policy of decentralization of administrative and financial powers for regional development planning. At the same time, with higher levels of administrative and financial autonomy of local authorities, it is necessary to improve their skills through the organization of special training programs;
- it is advisable to extend the control functions of local representative bodies – maslikhats – by the activities of local executive bodies – akimats. To do this, it is necessary to practice an annual report by akim at the sessions of the maslikhats of corresponding administrative-territorial units;
- the state support of the most problematic regions should be carried out simultaneously with the formation and development of growth points. For this, it is necessary to improve the procedure of allotment of transfers to local budgets, limiting the range of regions which will receive support.
- it is necessary to create conditions for industrial activity in the border regions with regard to the nature of new international and interregional relations;
- historical traditions and customs of the population living in the border area should be maintained and developed, kinship and friendly relations should be strengthened;
- it is necessary to expand the region's right to regulate issues of remuneration on the basis of regional agreements between associations of trade unions, employers and the executive authorities of the region.

In comparison with other works, the scientific value of this study lies in its goals, objectives, object and subject. Theoretical and applied aspects of the formation and implementation of the regional policy of Kazakhstan have been studied; the prospects and strategy of further development have been defined. A deep analysis of regional political process has been performed in this article. The ways to improve it in the future in the Republic of Kazakhstan have been shown.

The mechanisms and methods of implementation of the regional policy of Kazakhstan have been justified in this work. In the future, it can be used by the leadership of the Republic of Kazakhstan in determining further ways to improve the political system of the state, as well as the development of its strategic and tactical development.

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