

5. Governing System

Kazakhstan consists of fourteen oblasts and two special cities (Almaty City and Astana City, the capital of the country). An oblast is divided into counties, which are called “Laion,” and the head of a Laion is appointed by a provincial governor. There are space rocket launch facilities in Baikonur in Kzyl-Orda Oblast of the southern part of Kazakhstan constructed by the former Soviet Union. Even after the independence of Kazakhstan, Russia has been using the facilities as a rocket range. In 1995, the Governments of Kazakhstan and Russia entered into an agreement whereby Kazakhstan would lease the Baikonur rocket range to Russia as a Russian domain for twenty years. In 2004, the two governments agreed to extend the lease period through 2040.

The governing structure in Kazakhstan consists of the president as the supreme power holder, the cabinet, parliament, the supreme court, and the constitution committee. The president has enormous powers, including the power to appoint the prime minister, the ministers, the chief justice, the central bank governor, and the provincial governors. The current president, the former first secretary of the Central Committee of Kazakhstan Communist Party, was chosen as the first president of Kazakhstan by the people’s direct election held in December 1991. His presidential term was prolonged until the end of 2000 by the national referendum in April 1995. In 1998, the presidential term was prolonged from five years to seven years. He was reelected president with 80% of the vote in the election held in January 1999 with over one year remaining until the end of his term. In December 2005, he called an election again before the end of his term and was elected for a third term with over 90% of the vote, which was even more than in the previous election.

Kazakhstan has a bicameral parliament, which is comprised of the Senate (upper chamber) and the Mazhilis (lower chamber). The number of seats in the Senate was formerly forty-seven and is presently thirty-nine. Two senators are selected by each of the representative assemblies of the fourteen oblasts plus the cities of Astana and Almaty. The president appoints seven senators. The tenure of office for a member of the Senate is six years. Sixty-seven out of seventy-seven seats in the Mazhilis are elected in the single-seat districts and the remaining ten seats are elected in the proportional representation district. The Mazhilis member’s term of office is five years. The committee on environmental and nature management issues is one out of seven committees established in the Mazhilis. Ten Mazhilis members are appointed as the commissioners, including chairman, of this committee. Meanwhile, the five committees in the Senate do not include an environment-related committee.

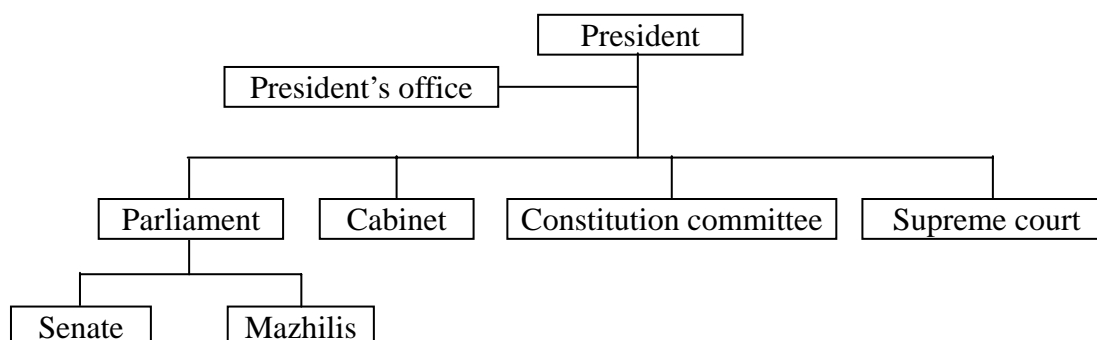


Figure 5.1 Governing structure

After the presidential election in December 2005, a cabinet was organized with one deputy prime minister. The cabinet used to have two deputies for the prime minister. Also, the number of vice ministers in each ministry was limited to two, though there had been no limitation before. Furthermore, study abroad experience was added to the qualifications necessary to be a vice minister. The cabinet consists of the prime minister, one deputy prime minister who assists the prime minister, and sixteen ministries (the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Culture, Information and Sport, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Economy and Budget Planning, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, the Ministry of Environmental Protection, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, and the Ministry of Transport and Communication).