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Formation and Prospects for Development of Political System of Uzbekistan

Today, as political powers of Uzbekistan are about to have an unusual test that needs to be passed in the course of upcoming elections to Oliy Majlis (Supreme Assembly) by Social Democratic Party 'Adolat', National Democratic Party 'Fidokorlar', Liberal Democratic Party, National Democratic Party of Uzbekistan and Ecologic Movement of Uzbekistan, it is more and more often that we observe interest of foreign expert circles in the so called "Uzbek model" of political reform.

Leading foreign political analysts see direct link between sustainability of Uzbek economy in the current situation of global economic crisis and dynamically developing political system of the country. The formed and strong political system whose main reformer was a state emerged as reliable foundation on which rested are sustainable economic growth, raise of living standards of population and the status of the country as self-sufficient and, in many aspects, as "backbone" state of the region.

Indeed, the thesis of "strong state" ab initio was a methodological essence of the Uzbek model of reforming, where state, having identified priorities and algorithm for efficient modernization, is undergoing reform of itself and initiates and arranges reforms in other areas and, accordingly possesses requisite powers therefor some of which are reallocated to social institutions as reform goals achieved. That is why development of parliamentarism became an important component of societal development strategy.

Since the first days of independence the country's leadership has had clear understanding of the need to form efficiently functioning parliament. It was at the time when unicameral parliament Supreme Assembly was established and, for the first time, elected on multiparty basis in 1995.

Parliamentary reform was carried out in ten years, taking into account experiences accumulated and new needs and opportunities emerged. In Winter of 2004/2005 bicameral parliament, Supreme Assembly of the Republic of Uzbekistan, working on professional basis, was formed as a result of democratic elections.

Process of strengthening the role of political parties in public life and in furthering democratization and modernization that resulted in Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan On Financing Political Parties became another landmark stage of democratic reforms. By previous law, "financing" was carried out by State.

Notwithstanding this, examination of reforming our country's political system inevitably brings us to conclusions about close relationship between the current modern stage and various historic stages in the origin, understanding and development of democracy per se on the territory of modern Uzbekistan.

Provisionally, the first stage stems from the beginning of the 20th century (1905 - 1917) with signs of colonial regime's crisis and spiritual revival emerging. First Russian revolution forced Czarist power make significant concessions to peoples of enslaved lands - grant population number of freedoms, including freedom of press and expression.

At the second stage, following the second Russian revolution (February - October 1917), first Uzbek groups with elements of party work were set up. They tried to use elections to city dumas of

Turkestan for [carrying out] anti-colonial activities and [promoting] freedom of religion and national culture. Young Khivans and Young Bukharans parties that aimed to establish constitutional secular parliamentary regimes were born at that stage.

The third stage (October 1917 – 1929) witnessed Bolsheviks repressions launched against the national liberation movement and elimination of the political parties. The Uzbek opposition opted to work within the frameworks of Social Revolutionaries-Mensheviks' block that was also fighting Communists.

The fourth stage (1929 – 1938) is characterized by emergence, within the national Communist party, of groups that attempted to fight against Stalinism and colonial policies disguised under new Communist ideas and assigning Uzbekistan the role of raw-material appendage of the Center and his people - cog in the "machinery of global revolution".

At the fifth stage (1938 - 1985), patriotic-minded intelligentsia was functioning inside the country. They tried to express, through their works, aspirations to revival of national culture and its "immigrant" wing abroad was openly calling for overthrow of the Bolsheviks regime.

In 1985, program of "perestroika" of Socialist society, including "renewal" of CPSU, was announced. It was the time, when CPSU that ruled the country couldn't find answers to questions that started rising to the surface.

These problems were related to, among other things, distortion of national interests of the USSR member-states, oppression of national traditions, worsening of environmental situation, gaps in economic development of the regions and so on. It is the period when the six stage begins with multiparty culture starting to shape in Uzbekistan; it lasted till 1991.

It was already at that time, in mid 80-ies, when there emerged forces within CPSU which understood that reforming economic and political system of USSR was hollow, attempts to renew facade of Communist system - futile, efforts to revive administrative system - useless and attempts to save totalitarian regime - hopeless.

In Uzbekistan, these healthy and constructive forces with realistic plans were united by I. Karimov, then the first secretary of the local Communist party's Central Committee. They waged uncompromising struggle for economic independence, implementation of *khozraschet* (self-financing system), liquidation of dictate of the Center and its planning agencies.

There was an opposition too. At the end of 80-ies, informal groups appeared among Uzbek arts and science intelligentsia; they would raise problems of Aral sea, protection of *Bostanlyk* [natural reserves], single-crop culture, use of chemicals in agriculture, forced labor of schoolchildren and students for cotton-picking. These slogans were widely used by leaders of these groups for the purpose of gaining political capital.

In May 1989, the so called Popular Movement 'Birlik' (Unity) was established. However, narrowness of practical and theoretical views of Birlik's leaders predetermined radicalization of the movement's nature that boiled over into mass street demonstrations that were heating hair-trigger social situation in Uzbekistan. Later, lack of coordination of actions, differences in views as to the movement's tactics and strategy, personal resentment of [their] leaders of each other and fights of the latter for chairmanship aggravated confrontation that came about between groups originating within Birlik ranks and brought the movement to inevitable rift.

In April 1990, Erk Democratic party was established. Its program, though dissociated from Birlik's

one, was also designed for radical changes in socio-political life, [counted on] emotional disposition of masses and [sought] political benefits. Much like Birlik, Erk also failed to take into account specifics of political thinking and tried heedlessly to build an independent state and destroy totalitarian Communist ideology at one stroke.

So, 1990 elections to Supreme Council of the Uzbek SSR were held under conditions of Gorbachev-era perestroika and glasnost as well as against the backdrop of fierce competition of various political forces. One has to say that the opposition's tactics assumed, first of all, "giving a hard time to local leadership" that brought certain fruits as "rebuilt" Central Committee of CPSU was idle.

Demagogy and appeals to public helped Birlik and Erk members win some deputy seats - the destructive opposition got an extra tribune for publicizing its programs and Erk leader got an opportunity to run his candidacy in popular elections of president, but he lost, having won only 12,6% of votes.

Historic mission of gaining independence and shifting the country to the path of democracy, [free] market and rule of law state fell on shoulders of constructive wing in the Communist party of Uzbekistan led by I. Karimov.

The seventh stage in forming multi-party system in Uzbekistan can be said to have ended in 1995 when liberalization of socio-political life in Uzbekistan began.

By that time, destructive opposition in-immigration finally lost its authority not only in Uzbekistan but also before the international community. Having started with harmless discussions on environmental issues, it shifted to terrorist acts against own people. Opposition exhausted its ideological arguments against legitimate and constitutionally elected authorities, as the practice of state and nation building rested on popular masses had logically led to much-sought independence.

With gaining sovereignty, there began new modern stage of multi-party system which we talked about at the beginning of our article and which is characterized by emergence of the whole spectrum of parties on political landscape of Uzbekistan; their work directly impacts the course of development and democratization of the state and society as a whole.

The new stage of democratic reforms was marked with the process of strengthening the role of political parties in the societal life of the country and democratization and modernization of the country. President of the Republic of Uzbekistan I.A. Karimov, in accordance with art. 83 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, used legislative initiative and introduced to the Legislative Chamber of the Supreme Assembly a draft constitutional law of the Republic of Uzbekistan On Strengthening the Role of Political parties in renewal and Further Democratization of State Governance and Modernization of the Country that went in force on January 1, 2008.

Implementation of new provisions has had already a number of positive results; first, parties became more active in working with their local electorate. Intensified the work of factions in the lower chamber and of parties' groups in local Councils of Deputies, and second, parties began actively addressing the problem of their ideological identity.

By 2009, virtually every party clarified main pre-election points of their program. Today, a voter clearly and precisely knows which party fights for what.

Political reform brought such results due to well-thought model of planned changes on the basis of scientifically elaborated five principles - "incrementalism", "state as reformer", "priority of

economy over politics and its deideologization", "strong welfare policy" and "rule of law".

Priorities of national interests, dictates of democracy, maintaining of security, ensuring of human rights and freedoms, need to develop market economy capable of ensure well-being of citizens have become benchmarks for substance of reforms.

Departure from formal participation and passive observation of processes happening in the society to active and thoughtful participation as political actors has happened. It is signalled by intensified party building, appearance of new parties and merger of existing ones, growth of party ranks - two relatively larger parties UzLiDeP and Milliy Tiklanish (National Revival) sprang during the last few years.

It is also manifested in growing social activities of both private citizens and citizen-members of nongovernmental organizations during election campaigns. This tendency was, to the fullest extent, displayed during the elections to professional parliament and local Councils in 2004 when signs of competition which was at times fierce and with elements of modern electoral techniques.

Ethics of participation in political processes developed over the years of independence in Uzbekistan. It mainly rests on civility vis-a-vis issues of inter-ethnic and religious relations, privacy of citizens, social affiliation, beliefs and so on as well as on tolerant attitude to anything new that is not in conflict with Constitution and morals of the society. These are solid features of our political mentality.

It is also an indication of specifics in shaping political culture of citizenry where self-restraint and fidelity to principles have crystallized in special mode of behaviour. Such behaviour allows political system to develop with increasing participation of electorate that is non-radical but substantially stable in views.

Reform aimed at strengthening the role of political parties continues. Changes introduced in electoral laws have made parties the only institutes to nominate candidates to parliament and presidency who are then elected based on universal, equal right to suffrage through ballot voting.

One has to say that in general, strengthening the role of political parties in the work of state machinery is an indication of maturity of democratic institutions and socio-political mentality, of readiness to deepen further democratic reforms. Reform gives rise to new epoch of political development of the country the main criterion of which becomes process of implementation of "separation of powers" principle and of advancing the principle of "from strong state to strong civil society" to qualitatively new stage.

Main goals of political modernization are, first of all, practical implementation of liberalization of state governance system, growth of the role and responsibility of legislative and executive powers, of government and local state institutions for constitutionally vested powers.

Modern Uzbekistan is experiencing qualitatively new stage of development when democratization process requires active participation of civil society institutions that shouldn't simply grow to become social partner for the state but to take initiative and lead reforms.

Today the State spares no effort to ensure not only NGOs growth and active participation in the life of the country but also qualitative growth of nongovernmental relations in economic, political, social, spiritual and other areas. It is also necessary for every Uzbek citizen to have personal development, satisfy his civic needs and participate in public control over the work of state agencies and officials.

Civil society institutes are among the most efficient mechanisms for citizens' interaction with the society and state. The main value of such interaction is that in this case citizen and state are equal.