

## KAZAKHSTAN

Polity5 regime codes:

fac	scode	polity	pers	bmon	bday	byear	emon	eday	eyear	exrec	exconst	polcomp
1X	KZK	-3	4	12	16	1991	3	14	1995	3	3	6
1O	KZK	-6	24	3	15	1995	99	99	9999	4	1	2

PITF Problem Events: none

**1X) Date of Change to Factional-Autocratic:** December 16, 1991 (independence)

### Brief Explanation of Change To:

Kazakhstan, like the other Soviet Central Asian Republics, had originally favored the preservation of the Soviet Union; however, following the failure of the August 1991 coup and the collective decision to dissolve the union, Kazakhstan declared independence on December 16, 1991. Nursultan Nazarbayev was appointed First Secretary of the Kazakh Communist Party on June 22, 1989, and, on February 22, 1990, he was appointed Chairman of the Supreme Soviet. The Communist Party transformed itself to the Socialist Party on September 8, 1991, and, on December 1, 1991, Nazarbayev ran unopposed and was elected president. Although originally claiming a centrist position, Nazarbayev quickly instituted Kazakh primacy; a new constitution was promulgated on January 8, 1993, that made Kazakh the official language (with Russian allowed for “inter-ethnic communication”) and required that the president be an ethnic-Kazakh. On February 6, 1993, Nazarbayev founded the People’s Unity Party (SNEK) and acted to ensure that it would be the ruling party.

### Identify Main Factions:

- *Kazakh-nationalists* — The Soviet policy of “indigenization” of the leadership ranks in the republic communist party apparatuses set the stage for the transformation of the Kazakh Communist Party (KCP) to a Kazakh nationalist organization during the final collapse of the Soviet Union. Ethnic-Kazakhs constitute about 40% of the population and the Nazarbayev-led administration moved very quickly to ensure and secure Kazakh control of independent Kazakhstan; mainly through the early promulgation of restrictive citizenship laws and language laws making Kazakh the official language of government. Supporters of Nazarbayev’s pragmatic, nationalist regime reorganized as the Congress of People’s Unity (SNEK; now known as the Otan party).
- *Ethnic-Russians* — Ethnic-Russians constitute the second largest group in Kazakhstan (about 38%). Despite the defeat of extreme Russian nationalist and separatist groups, moderate parties representing Kazakhstan’s large Russian minority are tolerated. These include Yedinstvo (Unity), Civic Contract, Democratic Progress, and Lad (Harmony). Russians enjoy economic advantages that compensate, somewhat, for their restricted political influence.
- *Lesser factions:*

Opposition parties are generally small, poorly funded, and weakly allied. In the initial years of independence, opposition comprised the more ardent Kazakh nationalists: *Azat* (Freedom), *Jeltoksan* (National Democratic), and Republican parties. These parties advocated radical overhaul of the Soviet structure. More recently, opposition has rallied on an anti-Nazarbayev and anti-corruption platform. Government restrictions on, and overt harassment and suppression of, opposition activity is systematic. Some opposition alliances have transcended ethnic differences. Cossacks comprise a Russian-speaking minority that opposes Kazakh nationalism.

**10) Date of Change from Factional-Autocratic:** March 15, 1995 (presidential coup)

**Brief Explanation of Change From:**

August 30, 1995 – Legislative elections, held on March 7, 1994, were systematically manipulated to ensure victory by the president’s supporters. The Constitutional Court ruled the elections invalid on March 6, 1995, but, in response, the legislature passed a constitutional amendment granting itself the power to overrule the court. The president acceded to the court ruling and dissolved the legislature on March 11 but the legislature, then, voted to oppose its dissolution. The president stated on March 15 that he had “assumed the right to issue decrees with the status of laws and to amend laws, including constitutional laws.” On April 29, 1995, a public referendum was held that approved the extension of his term through 2000. A national referendum was held on August 30, 1995, that approved a new Constitution which replaced the Constitutional Court with a Constitutional Council whose rulings were subject to presidential veto. It also made Kazakh the sole official language and place tight controls on trade unions, which had been a source of political leverage for ethnic-Russians. Seriously flawed legislative elections were held in December 1995 but, by that time, the legislature had lost its authority to the executive; October 1999 elections fared no differently. Opposition parties were harassed and denied fair access and leading opposition candidates were routinely disqualified. By September 2004 elections, Nazarbayev had institutionalized his followers as the *Otan* (Fatherland) and had discarded any pretense of competitiveness.