

**POLITICAL PARTIES. ELECTIONS: PROCESS OF ELECTIONS.
ACTIONS STRATEGY**

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Annotation: *This article is about political parties in the Republic of Uzbekistan, about the decisions made by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev on the further improvement of the electoral system. When the political parties of the Republic of Uzbekistan were founded and their first deputies were also announced.*

Key words: *Parties, innovations, prime minister, sovereignty, advocacy, government, priority, Oliy Majlis.*

Uzbekistan, a Central Asian country with a rich history, has undergone significant political changes since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Political parties and elections play a central role in its political landscape, though Uzbekistan has historically faced criticism for its lack of genuine political competition and transparency in elections. Here is an overview of political parties, the election process, and the strategic actions in Uzbekistan:

Political Parties: Uzbekistan has a multi-party system, with several officially recognized political parties that compete in elections. However, the political landscape has been dominated by the president and the ruling party. The key political parties in Uzbekistan include:

Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (UzLiDeP): Often seen as pro-business and supportive of the government's policies, this party has been closely aligned with the ruling government.

People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDPU): Historically linked to the Communist Party, this party has been rebranded to fit into the new political landscape.

Democratic Party "Milly Tiklanish": Focused on national revival and cultural issues.

Social Democratic Party "Adolat": Generally considered the party of social justice.

Ecological Party of Uzbekistan: Concentrates on environmental issues.

While these parties are officially distinct, they tend to share similar positions, and genuine opposition parties have historically faced significant barriers to entry and political participation.

Turnout for the election was relatively low, compared with previous elections, for which voting had been seen as compulsory. The results were announced by the Central Election Commission of Uzbekistan on December 9, 2016. Of 20,461,805 voters a total of 17,951,667 or 87.73 percent voted. The results were the following:

✓ Sarvar Otamuradov (Democratic Party Milliy Tiklanish) - 421,055 or 2.35%;

✓ Shavkat Mirziyoyev (Liberal Democratic Party) - 15,906,724 or 88.61%;

✓ Khotam Ketmonov (People's Democratic Party) - 669,187 or 3.73%;

✓ Narimon Umarov ("Adolat" Social Democratic Party) - 619,972 or 3.46%.

The power of the presidential office was and is all-pervasive in Uzbekistan. Mirziyoyev was himself a symbol of continuity and stability in that post and in the country. Yet the public received his explicit promise of a new day dawning very positively. His well-established public persona, combined with his electoral victory, thus addressed directly both the public's hope for stability and continuity and its visceral sense that fundamental changes were needed.

Elections in Uzbekistan include presidential, parliamentary, and local elections. Here's an outline of the election process:

➤ **Presidential Elections:** Held every five years. The President of Uzbekistan is a powerful figure with significant authority. Presidential elections have been criticized for lacking genuine competition.

➤ **Parliamentary Elections:** Uzbekistan has a bicameral legislature consisting of the Legislative Chamber (lower house) and the Senate (upper house). Parliamentary elections occur every five years, usually a year after presidential elections.

➤ **Local Elections:** These involve the election of local councils (Kengash) at different administrative levels.

Elections in Uzbekistan are supervised by the Central Election Commission (CEC), which is responsible for ensuring that elections are conducted according to the law.

Given the nature of political parties and the electoral system in Uzbekistan, here are some of the strategies and challenges involved in the election process:

• **Controlled Competition:** The government often controls political competition, ensuring that the ruling party and its allies maintain dominance. This control includes candidate approval and restrictions on independent political activity.

- Public Mobilization:** Political parties in Uzbekistan focus on mobilizing public support through state-sponsored events, media campaigns, and community outreach.

- Monitoring and Oversight:** The CEC and other state bodies closely monitor elections, leading to concerns about fairness and transparency.

- International Scrutiny:** Uzbekistan's elections have been subject to scrutiny by international organizations, with frequent criticism over a lack of political pluralism and electoral transparency.

- Reforms and Changes:** In recent years, there have been some efforts to improve the electoral process, allowing more diverse participation and increasing transparency. However, genuine political competition remains limited.

In summary, Uzbekistan's political parties and election process reflect a system where the government has significant control over political competition and electoral outcomes. While there have been attempts at reform, challenges remain in achieving a truly open and competitive political environment.

Recent Political Developments

Under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who took office in 2016 after the death of long-time ruler Islam Karimov, Uzbekistan has seen some reforms aimed at modernizing the country's governance and opening up its economy. Mirziyoyev's administration has taken steps to reduce political repression and increase political participation, though the pace of change remains measured.

Mirziyoyev's tenure has included a focus on judicial reforms, anti-corruption measures, and a more open approach to international relations. In terms of elections, the government has made some moves toward increasing transparency and public engagement:

- Electoral Reforms:** Revisions to electoral laws have been enacted, aimed at streamlining election processes and increasing competition. The Central

Election Commission (CEC) has issued new guidelines for political parties and candidates.

- **Opening of Political Space:** Efforts to reduce restrictions on political activities have been made, though genuine political opposition is still limited.

- **Increased Role of Civil Society:** There's been a slight increase in the role of civil society organizations in monitoring elections and advocating for human rights.

Despite these reforms, Uzbekistan continues to face significant challenges in achieving full political freedom and electoral fairness:

- **Limited Opposition:** Genuine opposition parties or candidates are still rare, with most parties either directly or indirectly supporting the government's agenda.

- **Press Freedom:** While there have been some relaxations, Uzbekistan's media landscape remains tightly controlled, with independent journalism facing significant restrictions.

- **Human Rights Concerns:** Despite some improvements, human rights organizations continue to raise concerns about political repression, arbitrary arrests, and restrictions on freedom of expression.

Elections and International Observers. Uzbekistan has invited international observers to monitor its elections, with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) being a notable presence. Reports from these observers have highlighted improvements in some areas while pointing out continued issues with transparency and genuine competition. Uzbekistan's reforms have also aimed at increasing public participation in governance. This includes:

- **Online Engagement:** The government has embraced digital platforms to engage with citizens and seek their feedback on policies.

•**Youth Participation:** Efforts have been made to involve younger generations in political processes through youth-oriented programs and education.

Economic Impact on Political Stability. Uzbekistan's economic reforms, which aim to attract foreign investment and modernize the economy, are closely tied to political stability. The government recognizes that continued political stability is essential to maintaining investor confidence and promoting growth.

Overall, while Uzbekistan has taken steps toward a more open political environment, significant challenges remain. Achieving a truly competitive political landscape with free and fair elections will require sustained efforts to address systemic issues and foster genuine political pluralism.

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