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THE ROLE OF LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE AND EXECUTIVE BODIES IN UZBEKISTAN'S POLITICAL SYSTEM: LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS

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Abstract

This article explores the evolving role of local representative and executive bodies in Uzbekistan's political system, with a particular focus on the increased participation of political parties in local governance. It examines the expansion of the powers of the Councils of People's Deputies, especially in relation to monitoring local executive authorities and ensuring the implementation of laws and governmental decrees. The study highlights the need for enhanced parliamentary oversight at the local level and discusses the potential impact of party groups in strengthening the socio-political framework of the regions. The article also addresses the challenges faced by local authorities in ensuring efficient governance, including insufficient use of the powers granted to political parties and the lack of a unified approach to solving socio-economic problems. Drawing on recent reforms, including experimental governance models in Tashkent, the article argues for a more robust legal framework to support local political oversight and promote greater accountability among local executive bodies. The findings underscore the importance of legal reforms aimed at enhancing the autonomy and effectiveness of local governance as a key component of Uzbekistan's broader political and administrative modernization efforts.

KEYWORDS: Local governance, political parties, parliamentary oversight, socio-economic reforms, Uzbekistan, Councils of People's Deputies.

INTRODUCTION

Over the years of independence, significant progress has been made in establishing a democratic legal state and forming a strong civil society in our country. Approximately 10,000 non-governmental and non-profit organizations currently active play a crucial role in protecting the rights and legitimate interests of individuals and legal entities, promoting democratic values, and

achieving social, cultural, and educational goals. Their influence is particularly evident in the management of state and public affairs.

One of the priority areas for improving the system of state and societal development is the "development of the political system, strengthening the role of political parties in the life of the state and society, and creating a healthy

competitive environment between them." This leads to qualitative changes in the relationships within the political system. In turn, the multiparty system, considered one of the key elements of this process, is steadily evolving today.

The role and significance of political parties in the renewal and modernization of society are increasing, particularly in the context of ongoing reforms and in enhancing the social and political activity of citizens. The organizational, legal, and financial conditions for the activities of political parties are strengthening, their authority among the people is growing, and their influence in making state-level decisions is becoming more pronounced.

The State Program for the "Year of Active Investments and Social Development" in 2019 introduced the practice of approving members of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as leaders of the Oliy Majlis, regional, district, and city government bodies by the corresponding Councils of People's Deputies. This provides broad opportunities for political parties and their associations within representative state management bodies. These opportunities also increase the responsibility of political parties for realizing the interests of citizens.

In this regard, as the legal scholar I.R. Bekov aptly noted, "Political pluralism and multiparty systems have become an integral part of the social life of society. The consolidation of this principle at the constitutional level means that the intermediary role of political parties between civil society and the state, as well as their constitutional and legal status, is recognized at the highest level." However, it is not sufficient for a political party to operate solely at the parliamentary level. Reforms must be effective not only at the center but also at the local level. For this reason, political parties must actively engage in the efficient organization of work within local councils. Particularly in the context of introducing a new system for evaluating the performance of local representative bodies of power by reviewing the reports of local executive heads, the effectiveness and accountability of local representative bodies are increasing.

It is essential to mention that the reforms being implemented in local self-governance bodies not only involve the transfer of certain management functions from the center to local authorities and the expansion of their rights and responsibilities in governance, but they also ensure the "practical realization of the principle of separation of powers in the organization of the local state authority system." This necessitates the "liberation" of local governance from central oversight, requiring certain reforms in the powers of local representative and executive bodies, as well as in the mechanisms for their implementation.

It should be acknowledged that the issue of the role and responsibility of local representative institutions, which are considered a vital link in the local state governance system, in ensuring the implementation of laws is an important indicator of the effectiveness of administrative reforms today. Attention to this issue is driven by the crucial role local self-governance bodies play in ensuring the implementation of laws, in enforcing the requirements of ongoing reforms in our country, and in addressing the significant tasks currently facing them. In turn, when assessing the system of local governance, it is necessary to distinguish between its executive and representative branches.

It must be recognized that the network of local executive authorities has gone through several stages of development and has yielded positive results. As Professor M. Akhmedshaeva rightly stated, "In the context of the country's modernization, it is essential to emphasize that the introduction of the governorate institution aims at further democratizing this system. The institution of khokimiyat and the procedure for its formation have proven to be a highly effective mechanism over the years. The governors' operations, based on individual leadership, aim at enhancing their responsibility and ensuring the efficiency and promptness of local governance." Despite the positive results achieved, there is still no comprehensive system for addressing socio-economic problems at the local level. Cooperation between local executive bodies is insufficient, and the influence of deputies and public oversight remains underdeveloped. This indicates that much

work remains to be done in this area.

To legislation, regional departments of khokims, which are local executive authorities, and the khokims of Tashkent city are headed by khokims appointed by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan in agreement with the political groups that are deputies of the corresponding Councils of People's Deputies, and approved by these Councils. Currently, the involvement of political parties in the formation of local executive authorities is ensured through the above-mentioned procedure.

The introduction of the practice of approving the heads of regional, district, and city government bodies by the relevant Councils of People's Deputies in the State Program "Year of Active Investments and Social Development" in 2019 reflects significant trust in local representative bodies. The introduction of this procedure is expected to increase the responsibility of employees in local executive bodies and further improve executive discipline at the local level.

An analysis of legislation shows that the powers of the Council of People's Deputies have expanded in recent years. This can be observed in several areas:

1. ****Hearing of Reports****: The Council now listens to reports from the heads of departments, divisions, and other structural subdivisions of the executive authority, including reports on compliance with laws, the implementation of decisions by the corresponding Councils of People's Deputies, and the fulfillment of recommendations from permanent commissions. Previously, the executive power of the Council was limited to hearing reports from agencies, departments, and other divisions. Now, the scope of the Council's supervisory powers has expanded.

2. ****Supervision of Law Enforcement****: The Councils also hear reports from relevant prosecutors, the heads of regional divisions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and heads of regional healthcare administrations, district (city) medical associations, and district central multidisciplinary clinics. This process helps establish local representative oversight in these sectors and further increases the responsibility of relevant

leaders.

3. ****Judicial Oversight****: A procedural order has been established for relations between People's Deputies, regional, district, and city councils, and the courts, which are the third branch of government. Regional, district, and city Councils of People's Deputies are required to review the rights and freedoms of citizens protected by the respective court at least once a year during their meetings. They also hear reports on the activities related to the protection of the legally protected rights and interests of enterprises, institutions, and organizations. These Councils send relevant decisions to the Supreme Court of the Republic of Uzbekistan. This ensures mutual restraint and balance of interests between local representative bodies and local courts, contributing to strengthening the rule of law in judicial activities.

It is important to emphasize that public organizations must analyze how effectively available opportunities are being utilized. Certain problems have been identified in the fact that deputies elected from political parties do not always address pressing local issues in a timely manner, considering the unique circumstances of each region. Additionally, they may fail to initiate discussions on these issues during council sessions or meetings of permanent commissions. In other words, deputies are not always actively involved in finding solutions to local problems. As stated by the head of our state, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, "A number of programs for the socio-economic development of our country's regions have been adopted. But to what extent are local political groups involved in the preparation of these programs? Unfortunately, it is difficult to give a positive answer to this question. However, through such programs, parties can solve the problems that concern their electorate, thus expanding their voter base."

Indeed, elected deputies should effectively use the powers of local councils to protect the interests of their constituents. Thus far, the most important form of party participation in local councils is the establishment of party groups within these councils. Unfortunately, party groups have not fully utilized the rights granted to them. Legal scholar A. Mahmudov notes that "most party groups in local

councils have not exercised their right to propose or request reports or information from the heads of state agencies located in their respective areas at the sessions of the Councils of People's Deputies, or from individuals appointed to the position of khokim of the region and the city of Tashkent. The right to propose recommendations on unsatisfactory performance to the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan has not been used at all."

It appears that simply granting rights to party groups in local councils is insufficient. There may be a need to improve the entire mechanism that drives this system.

There is also a method in legal practice called "experimentation," through which positive new ideas in certain areas are implemented, and the experiences that yield favorable results are then popularized. Today, it is commendable that an experimental method is being used in the city of Tashkent to further improve the local governance system. According to this, a Presidential Decree of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated August 15, 2018, "On Measures to Implement an Experiment on Improving the Investment Environment in Tashkent" was adopted. In accordance with the decree, an experiment to improve the investment environment in Tashkent city was conducted from August 15, 2018, to August 15, 2019. Based on this document, the city government of Tashkent was tasked with creating the most optimal conditions for conducting business, ensuring a favorable investment climate, enhancing the city's investment attractiveness at the district level, and implementing the necessary organizational measures to ensure economic growth and improve the standard of living of the population.

It is important to note that the tasks outlined in this document are not solely the responsibility of the executive authorities. Local representative bodies must also actively participate in addressing them. This means they should exercise their legal authority to monitor the implementation of the tasks specified in the decree and make important decisions aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of execution.

It is worth mentioning that local self-governance reforms are, of course, not limited to economic

measures. Specific objectives have been defined to improve the effectiveness of the Councils of People's Deputies of Tashkent city and its districts. According to Professor O. Khusanov, in order to increase the efficiency of these Councils, the following measures are envisaged: "Organizing the secretariats of the Councils of People's Deputies of Tashkent city and its districts as permanent state institutions funded by the corresponding local budgets; approving the composition of the secretariat of the Councils of People's Deputies; entrusting one of the Council deputies with the leadership of the secretariat; forming the secretariat from members of the Council of People's Deputies; and assigning the secretariat the responsibility of ensuring the day-to-day operations of the Council of People's Deputies." We believe that the implementation of this plan will contribute to the more effective organization of the work of these Councils.

At this point, it is appropriate to briefly discuss the forms of parliamentary oversight and Council control. Although these forms of oversight are practiced, their classification, types, and legal frameworks are not sufficiently developed, leading to varying interpretations. In our view, it would be incorrect to treat them as entirely identical. Parliamentary oversight is exercised by an individual deputy and is conducted in connection with the duties assigned to that deputy. Council oversight, on the other hand, relates to issues discussed in the Council and is controlled by a majority vote. We support the opinion of legal scholar A. Mahmudov regarding the introduction of a new form of parliamentary oversight, such as the "Council Inquiry." However, defining the "Council Inquiry" as a form of parliamentary oversight remains contentious. Therefore, it is impossible to ensure the principle of the separation of powers at the local level without enhancing the effectiveness of parliamentary and Council oversight.

To encourage the active participation of political parties in the activities of local state representative bodies, the following measures are considered appropriate:

1. The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Local State Power" should more clearly regulate the

forms of parliamentary oversight and the control of local Councils, in particular by defining “local control” as a separate form of oversight and solidifying its legal status.

2. The rights of deputies during sessions of the Council of People's Deputies, as stipulated in Article 5 of the Law "On the Status of a Deputy of the Regional, District, and City Council of People's Deputies," should be expanded.

3. Local Council websites should include a section titled “Responses to Deputy Inquiries,” where analytical articles are published, based on the work conducted in response to the inquiries submitted by deputies to the relevant authorities. These articles should showcase how the Councils of People's Deputies address current socio-economic issues in the regions.

CONCLUSION

In summary, strengthening the supervisory powers of local state representative bodies and expanding the participation of party groups in them are critical for addressing current socio-economic problems in the regions, as well as the issues that concern citizens.

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