

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LEGISLATION ON CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC ORDER PROTECTION AND PUBLIC SAFETY: THE EXPERIENCE OF KAZAKHSTAN, RUSSIA, BELARUS, AND TAJIKISTAN

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Abstract

This study provides a comparative analysis of legislative frameworks governing citizen participation in public order protection and safety in Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, and Tajikistan. Rooted in the Soviet tradition of voluntary people's patrols, or "druzhinas," these nations have adapted their systems to address modern challenges, balancing state coordination with civic initiative. By examining Kazakhstan's Law No. 590 of 2004, Russia's Federal Law No. 44-FZ of 2014, Belarus's Law No. 214-Z of 2003, and Tajikistan's Law No. 1969 of 2023, this paper explores the general principles guiding participation, the rights and duties of participants, the strengths and weaknesses of each system, and their legislative similarities and differences. Drawing on legal texts, official reports, and academic studies, the analysis highlights best practices – such as Russia's regional adaptability, Kazakhstan's focus on prevention, Belarus's structured coordination, and Tajikistan's culturally rooted councils – offering insights for mutual learning and enhanced collaboration within the Eurasian Economic Union (EAES) and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) frameworks.

Keywords: citizen participation, public order, public safety, legislation, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Tajikistan, comparative analysis, Soviet legacy, best practices, CSTO.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, and Tajikistan have made remarkable progress in modernizing their public safety systems, creatively adapting historical practices to meet contemporary demands. These countries, inheritors of the Soviet tradition of voluntary people's patrols – known as "druzhinas" – have developed legislative frameworks that reflect both a shared heritage and distinct national innovations. The Soviet model of citizen participation, formalized by the Council of Ministers' Decree No. 731 on March 2, 1959, was a pioneering effort to engage communities in maintaining order, a practice that historian Yoram Goralzki

describes as a unique blend of state oversight and grassroots mobilization [1]. By the 1960s, over 2.5 million Soviet citizens were involved in *druzhinas*, assisting the militia with street patrols, petty crime prevention, and even anti-hooliganism campaigns, forming a critical component of the social fabric of the time.

Following the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, these nations faced the complex task of reimagining this system in the face of new realities: rapid urbanization, economic transitions, and shifting security threats. Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, and Tajikistan each responded with approaches that, while diverse, share a common goal – ensuring the safety and stability of their citizens. Kazakhstan’s Law No. 590, enacted on July 9, 2004, and published in *Ведомости Парламента Республики Казахстан*, 2004 г., № 18, ст. 104, and *Казахстанская правда* от 17 июля 2004 года № 161, emphasizes prevention, a cautious approach shaped by the social and economic turbulence of the 1990s [2]. Russia’s Federal Law No. 44-FZ, adopted on April 2, 2014, and published in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* No. 76, prioritizes flexibility, a necessity for a country with vast territorial and demographic diversity [3]. Belarus’s Law No. 214-Z, passed on June 26, 2003, and registered in the National Register of Legal Acts No. 2/964, integrates *druzhinas* into a state-led framework, ensuring systemic stability through close coordination with the militia [4]. Tajikistan’s Law No. 1969, enacted on June 22, 2023, and published in *Akhbori Majlisi Oli* No. 12, leverages traditions of collective responsibility – rooted in pre-Soviet communal practices – to foster innovative forms of participation through public councils [5].

The evolution of these systems has not been without challenges. In Kazakhstan, early attempts to revive *druzhinas* in the 1990s were hampered by insufficient funding and low citizen motivation, issues addressed only with the 2004 law [2]. For instance, in Almaty during the mid-1990s, informal groups struggled to coordinate with police due to a lack of legal clarity, leading to sporadic effectiveness until Law No. 590 formalized their role as preventive auxiliaries. In Russia, the transitional period saw chaotic, localized initiatives – such as Moscow’s ad hoc patrols in the early 2000s – until the 2014 federal law standardized their roles, introducing mandatory training and unifying their efforts under a national framework [3]. Belarus maintained continuity with the Soviet model, gradually enhancing it with social guarantees in the 2010s, such as insurance and compensation for injuries, which boosted participation to over 15,000 *druzhinniks* by 2022 [6]. Tajikistan, emerging from a civil war (1992–1997), relied on informal community structures – like village councils in Gorno-Badakhshan – to maintain order until Law No. 1969 formalized them in 2023, marking a significant shift toward institutionalization [5].

Today, these legislative efforts illustrate a dynamic balance between state coordination and civic initiative, offering a rich field for mutual learning and collaboration within regional frameworks like the EAES and CSTO. Kazakhstan’s

focus on prevention has proven effective in rural areas, where citizens' rapid notifications have cut police response times, as seen in Aktobe's 2022 data showing a 10% drop in rural petty crimes [7]. Russia's flexibility allows druzhinniks to tailor their efforts to local needs – urban patrols in St. Petersburg contrast with rural support in Siberia – resulting in a nationwide force of 80,000 volunteers by 2023 [8]. Belarus's state-led approach ensures consistency, with joint militia-druzhina patrols during Minsk's 2022 Independence Day reducing violations by 30% [6]. Tajikistan's council-based model stabilizes remote regions, with Gorno-Badakhshan councils resolving over 50 disputes in 2023, enhancing trust in local governance [9]. Comparative studies suggest that such community engagement significantly enhances public trust in law enforcement across post-Soviet states [14].

This comparative analysis examines these frameworks through multiple lenses: the general principles guiding citizen involvement, the rights and duties of participants, the strengths and weaknesses of each system, and the legislative similarities and differences. Drawing on primary legal texts, official reports from ministries of internal affairs, academic studies, and archival materials, the study aims not to critique but to highlight best practices that enhance public security. The Soviet legacy provides a common thread, yet each country's adaptation reflects its unique socio-political context – Kazakhstan's post-independence stabilization, Russia's regional diversity, Belarus's centralized governance, and Tajikistan's post-conflict recovery. Examples such as Russia's 80,000 active druzhinniks and Tajikistan's rural councils stabilizing remote areas underscore the practical impact of these systems, making their experience a valuable resource for regional and international study. This analysis not only celebrates their achievements but also proposes pathways for collaboration, potentially elevating their models as exemplars within the global discourse on civic engagement in public safety.

General Principles of Citizen Participation

The principles of voluntariness, legality, and cooperation with state authorities provide a unifying foundation for citizen participation in public order protection across Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, and Tajikistan. These principles, inherited from the Soviet tradition of voluntary people's patrols, or "druzhinas," have been adapted to align with contemporary legal and social standards, reflecting each country's unique historical and cultural context [1]. While rooted in a shared past, their evolution demonstrates a commitment to balancing civic initiative with state oversight, ensuring that participation enhances public safety without compromising order or rights.

In Russia, Federal Law No. 44-FZ, published in *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* No. 76 on April 4, 2014, embodies these principles by integrating druzhina efforts with professional policing while emphasizing respect for human rights [3]. The law's preamble underscores the voluntary nature of participation, granting citizens the right

to opt into this role, while Article 9 mandates strict adherence to legal norms, reinforced by compulsory training and coordination with law enforcement. Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokoltsev highlighted their impact in 2023, stating, "The contribution of people's patrols to maintaining law and order is invaluable," with over 80,000 *druzhinniks* active nationwide – a testament to the principle of voluntariness driving widespread engagement [8]. This framework evolved from the chaotic post-Soviet 1990s, when local initiatives lacked uniformity, to a standardized system post-2014, ensuring legality through structured oversight [10].

Kazakhstan's Law No. 590, published in *Ведомости Парламента Республики Казахстан*, 2004 г., № 18, ст. 104, and *Казахстанская правда* от 17 июля 2004 года № 161, prioritizes prevention as a core principle, articulated in Article 5, which tasks citizens with "warning against offenses" [2]. This focus emerged as a response to the 1990s, when informal vigilantism – such as spontaneous citizen groups in Almaty addressing petty theft – risked escalating tensions, prompting a legislative shift toward cooperation with police rather than independent action [11]. In practice, this means citizens primarily notify authorities, as seen in Kostanay Region, where *druzhinniks*' reports in 2022 reduced rural vandalism by 12% by enabling swift police responses [7]. The principle of legality is reinforced by Article 7, requiring participants to act within the law, a cautious approach reflecting Kazakhstan's emphasis on stability during its post-independence transition.

Belarus's Law No. 214-Z, registered in the National Register of Legal Acts No. 2/964 in 2003, highlights humanitarianism and transparency as guiding principles, with Article 3 stating that *druzhina* activities should "strengthen public morality" [4]. Cooperation with state bodies is mandatory, reflecting Belarus's centralized governance model, and is supported by a robust framework of state oversight. This principle has been enhanced since the 2010s with social guarantees – such as insurance and injury compensation under Articles 20-21 – boosting participation to over 15,000 *druzhinniks* by 2022 [6]. In Minsk, this cooperation shone during the 2022 Independence Day celebrations, where joint patrols with militia reduced public violations by 30%, illustrating how voluntariness paired with state support enhances effectiveness [6]. Scholars note that such incentives align with broader trends in post-Soviet governance [15].

Tajikistan's Law No. 1969, published in *Akhbori Majlisi Oli* No. 12 on June 25, 2023, intertwines voluntariness with patriotism, a principle deeply rooted in national traditions of collective responsibility that predate Soviet influence [5]. The 2023 Ministry of Internal Affairs report notes that public councils serve as "a bridge between the state and the people," formalizing previously informal structures that emerged post-civil war (1992–1997) [9]. In Gorno-Badakhshan, these councils resolved over 50 disputes in 2023, leveraging cultural motivations to stabilize remote areas where state

presence is limited [9]. This shift from ad hoc efforts to a legislated system underscores legality, with Article 4 requiring council actions to align with national laws, marking a significant step toward institutionalization.

The evolution of these principles reflects each country's response to its post-Soviet challenges. In Russia, pre-2014 *druzhinas* operated under fragmented local regulations – such as Moscow's informal patrols in the 2000s – until Federal Law No. 44-FZ introduced mandatory training and unified powers, enhancing consistency [10]. Kazakhstan's early legislation, like a 1993 Supreme Council decree, was vague, with Law No. 590 clarifying roles as police auxiliaries, reducing risks of overreach seen in the 1990s [11]. Belarus preserved Soviet continuity, modernizing it with incentives like insurance in 2015 [12], while Tajikistan's formalization in 2023 built on decades of informal community efforts, such as village patrols in Sughd Region that curbed livestock theft by 10% in the early 2000s [9]. These adaptations illustrate a shared commitment to refining a Soviet legacy into a tool for modern governance, as evidenced by regional security analyses [16].

Examples further illuminate these principles in action. Russia's nationwide coordination enabled *druzhinniks* to support urban policing in St. Petersburg, cutting pickpocketing by 20% in 2023, and rural efforts in Yakutia, reducing alcohol-related incidents by 12% [8]. Kazakhstan's preventive focus in Aktobe shortened rural crime response times by 15 minutes in 2022, enhancing safety [7]. Belarus's mandatory training improved *druzhina* efficacy in Gomel, where 50 mass events in 2022 saw a 25% drop in petty crimes [6]. Tajikistan's councils in Rudaki prevented 30 livestock thefts in 2023, fostering trust in local governance [9]. Together, these cases show how voluntariness, legality, and cooperation adapt to diverse national needs, offering a foundation for mutual learning.

Rights and Duties of Citizens

The rights and duties of citizens in Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, and Tajikistan under their respective legislative frameworks not only define their roles in public order protection but also reflect national priorities in balancing civic engagement with state authority. In Russia, Article 17 of Federal Law No. 44-FZ grants *druzhinniks* significant rights: they can demand compliance with public order, secure crime scenes, and use limited physical force, provided actions align with legal limits [3]. Their duties include undergoing training, adhering strictly to laws, and assisting those in distress. In Krasnodar Krai, *druzhinniks* prevented over 50 thefts at agricultural fairs in 2022 by securing perimeters and alerting police [8]. However, training inconsistencies undermine preparedness, as seen in Omsk, where poorly trained *druzhinniks* struggled to manage a 2022 crowd disturbance [8].

Kazakhstan's Law No. 590 empowers citizens to prevent offenses and notify police, with rights focused on observation and reporting rather than direct intervention

[2]. In Turkestan Region, druzhinniks stopped 80 illegal forest cuttings in 2022 by reporting suspicious activities [7]. Yet, their limited powers hindered action in Kyzylorda in 2021, where they couldn't stop violators, prompting calls for expanded authority [7]. Belarus's Article 17 of Law No. 214-Z allows druzhinniks to detain offenders under strict state guidance, with duties including regular training and detailed reporting [4]. In Mogilev, they bolstered industrial security in 2022, cutting equipment thefts by 25% [6]. However, over-reliance on militia instructions delayed action in Grodno in 2021 [6]. Tajikistan's Law No. 1969 frames participation as a patriotic duty, granting citizens rights to join public councils and report violations [5]. In Rudaki District, councils prevented 30 livestock thefts in 2023 [9], though informal structures limit consistency in mountainous areas [9].

Strengths and Weaknesses

Russia's model excels in adaptability, with St. Petersburg patrols reducing pickpocketing by 20% in 2023, but uneven training and funding weaken its impact in regions like Kalmykia [8]. Kazakhstan's preventive orientation shines in Pavlodar, preventing 90 illegal hunts in 2023, yet its cautious approach falters in urban settings like Uralsk [7]. Belarus's systematic coordination secures Vitebsk cargo by 22% in 2023, but heavy reliance on militia limits initiative, as in Borisov [6]. Tajikistan's cultural foundation stabilizes Isfara with a 15% accident drop in 2023, but lack of formalization hampers consistency in Gorno-Badakhshan [9]. These strengths and weaknesses suggest refinement opportunities: Russia needs uniform training, Kazakhstan broader powers, Belarus more autonomy, and Tajikistan consistent structures, as supported by regional policy reviews [17].

Similarities and Differences

A primary similarity lies in their Soviet origin, emphasizing voluntariness, legality, and cooperation [1]. Russia's 80,000 druzhinniks, Kazakhstan's rural informants, Belarus's 15,000 volunteers, and Tajikistan's councils operate under state oversight [8, 7, 6, 9]. Differences emerge in autonomy: Russia and Kazakhstan prioritize efficacy, while Belarus and Tajikistan emphasize cohesion [3, 2, 4, 5]. Russia's flexibility suits Moscow's 18% metro violation cut, Kazakhstan's prevention excels in Aktobe's 10% drop, Belarus's coordination shines in Gomel's 25% reduction, and Tajikistan's councils thrive in Sughd's 25 dispute resolutions [8, 7, 6, 9]. These contrasts offer mutual learning potential within EAES and CSTO frameworks, as noted in integration studies [18].

Conclusion

The legislative frameworks of Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, and Tajikistan blend Soviet tradition with modern innovation, yielding tangible safety gains: Russia's 20% urban reductions, Kazakhstan's 10% rural drops, Belarus's 22% cargo security, and Tajikistan's 15% accident declines [8, 7, 6, 9]. Weaknesses – training gaps, limited

powers, rigidity, and informality – invite collaboration. A regional platform could harness Russia’s flexibility, Kazakhstan’s caution, Belarus’s structure, and Tajikistan’s tradition, enhancing stability and offering a global model for civic safety integration. The positive experience of Belarus in engaging citizens, as highlighted by Urazbaev, underscores the value of structured coordination and social incentives, providing a benchmark for others [13]. Historical analyses further affirm that such systems strengthen societal resilience across diverse contexts [14, 15, 16, 17, 18].

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