Challenges of environmental security in regional policy (on the example of the Lipetsk region)

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Abstract. This article deals with how environmental problems within a separate subject of the Russian Federation are associated with the legitimacy of regional political power. The case of the Lipetsk region is taken as an example. The economic profile of the region includes a combination of a number of large enterprises and agricultural holdings. Enterprises are represented in cities, while agricultural holdings are represented in rural provinces. But all of them are potential sources of environmental problems. Using the case study method and the comparative method, the author tries to study the extent to which the regional administration controls the challenges of economic security. The author highlights a number of environmental problems and shows how they could be consistently updated during the reign of 3 governors of the Lipetsk region - Mikhail Narolin, Oleg Korolev and Igor Artamonov. Referring to the materials of a number of Russian researchers, the author shows how unique the case of the Lipetsk region can be. The situation in the Lipetsk region is compared with the experience of other regions, where major environmental problems were actualized, which contributed to the formation of the protest agenda.

1 Introduction

In the new political and economic reality, the problems of environmental security are beginning to take an increasing place. To the fullest extent, this turns out to be relevant for the Russian regions, which in the public consciousness initially have their own ecological image. There is such an image in the Lipetsk region, often associated with the activities of NLMK.

Economic indicators are becoming an important criterion for the effectiveness of economic entities. This puts the issues of their success much higher than the problems of environmental safety. Study showed that reaction of the regional authorities may be restrained. Politicians, on whom political decision-making may depend, may be delayed with it. As a rule, the lobbying efforts of economic of enterprises and organizations in modern Russia far exceed those of governors and their political elites. In turn, the
governors do not have the necessary fullness of functions to dictate terms to key economic entities in the regions entrusted to them.

In the case of the Lipetsk region, some researchers have already identified enterprises that cause maximum damage to the ecological space of the Lipetsk region [1].

It is becoming difficult today to maintain various kinds of anonymity, as noted by S. Zakharov. This is directly related not only to political activity, but also to violations of the norms of ecological culture [2].

The heads of municipalities, who are inferior in their status and powers to regional and federal actors, do not have full power either. The author here speaks of a situation of power deficit, which is periodically updated in the Russian provinces. The author explored the space of regional power in the previous material [3]. The Lipetsk region is not only one metallurgical plant. This is a combination of a combination of the center of the region - Lipetsk and the periphery [4].

The environmental safety of the Lipetsk region periodically becomes the subject of research, in which attention is paid to the perception of the current situation [5, 155-156].

In this article, we will highlight environmental problems that may threaten the legitimation of regional power. It will be interesting for us to what extent individual cases of environmental safety, noted during of Oleg Korolev’ policy in the Lipetsk region, do not exhaust themselves under the new governor, Igor Artamonov. Does the arrival of a new governor mean a solution to environmental problems, a certain cleansing of the region? It seems to us that this is a matter of principle.

2 Materials and Method

The author explores the Lipetsk region - a specific space within which various types of politics are produced. Policies lead to certain consequences. This also applies to the policy towards economic entities using the natural resources of both Russia and the Lipetsk region. The environmental consequences are tangible enough not to be associated with specific political decisions. This explains the author's use of the case-study method.

Environmental problems accumulate over a number of political cycles. The author compares the environmental problems of the Lipetsk region during the reign of several governors - Mikhail Narolin, Oleg Korolev and Igor Artamonov. The author shows how environmental problems accumulate with the legitimation of each new governor. The legitimation of effective managers who approach their own activities as rationally as possible threatens nature and the ecological space of the Lipetsk region with irreversible consequences. The author solves this research problem with the help of a comparative method.

3 Results

The new governor periodically notes the priority of developing the tourism potential of the Lipetsk region. The Governor periodically visits glampings and ethnic camps, with include great potential. This form of recreation today is interesting for wealthy tourists who have the opportunity to observe pure natural landscapes. Of course, such projects would not be possible if there were no prospects for managing the environmental agenda in the Lipetsk region.

Researchers confirm a strong disproportion in the contribution of a particular territory to the pollution of the Lipetsk region itself. Lipetsk opposes all other territory of the region. Lipetsk produces 84% of emissions into the environment. Among the enterprises, such as
NLMK, LMZ Svobodny Sokol, Lipetsk cement, a branch of Gazprom Transgaz Moscow, etc. were indicated [1].

The human factor continues to play an important role in the perception of environmental problems in the Lipetsk region. In reality, the province is a tasty morsel in the colonization strategies of major economic players [6].

It is necessary to agree with the opinion of some authors who assert that a person, in the course of his development, moves more and more away from the natural environment [7].

Table 1. Environmental problems of Lipetsk region.

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<td>Emissions from large enterprises</td>
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<td>Shallowing of the Don and Sosna rivers</td>
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<td>Activities of agricultural holdings</td>
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<td>Construction of landfills</td>
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With the development of economic institutions, environmental problems in the Lipetsk region become much greater. The exploitation of nature becomes more evident. There are more landfills. Man has become less responsible for nature. It is no coincidence that during the governorship of O. Korolev and I. Artamonov, there are bans on visiting forests. Along with the threat of fires from human activity, there is also the threat of forest pollution.

The economic activities of enterprises under M. Narolin largely retained their place in the Soviet discourse. For him, there was a clear understanding of the boundaries of his own economic and political activity. The consequences of the change in business formats and the emergence of large agricultural holdings in the Lipetsk region significantly change the rules of the game. The activities of agricultural holdings lead to soil pollution. Shallowing of rivers is a serious problem. And if such a problem did not exist in the 1990s, then during the governorship of I. Artamonov, the shallowing of rivers cannot but attract attention. The authorities are making efforts to clean up the bed of a number of major rivers in the region.

Finally, the number of private cars in the Lipetsk region is gradually growing. A federal highway passes through the Lipetsk region, which also affects the ecological background of the region. Transport logistics is politicized, becoming part of the political system [8].

4 Discussion

The situation with environmental security in the Lipetsk region is a reflection of the existing policy in Russia itself, as well as the priorities of the regional political elite. The positions of the political elite may be weaker than influential economic actors. It is on their finances and will that political processes in the municipalities of the Lipetsk region can often depend. Current problems are a direct consequence of the diversity of political life, the lack of competition. Some systemic parties, in particular the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, periodically raise the topic of landfills. Strategies for positioning political parties in modern Russia may have their own specifics, as evidenced by some Russian researchers [9].
From time to time, activists-loners also speak about environmental problems. A similar situation a few years ago already arose in Sselki, a suburb of Lipetsk. Local residents took to the streets against harmful production. But all this does not look like a systemic opposition to the authorities in an ecological context. Examples of such resistance can be found in a number of Russian regions [10]. Environmental protests contribute to the emergence of new forms of political activism [11] and contribute to new expectations in the media space [12].

In the future, in Russia, as well as in its constituent entities, environmental parties capable of intercepting the agenda will be able to find their voters. Today it is clear that environmental services under the control of the administration do not cope with their work as society would like.

A decrease in economic activity at some point in time can lead to a situation where nature will win back and restore the ecological balance. As already noted, the economic life in the Lipetsk region fully depends on the benevolence of the regional regime.

5 Conclusions

The subordinating position of regional authorities in comparison with the owners of large economic entities can be easily rechecked by periodic political disagreements. Thus, in 2021, in the Lipetsk Region, a political conflict with lobbying for its own candidacy to the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation was resolved in favor of NLMK. Then the creature of the metallurgical plant turned out to be more influential than the nominee of Igor Artamonov, the governor of the Lipetsk region.

As this article shows, the regional authorities almost always take into account the position of the municipal authorities and do not interfere in the environmental agenda. Issues of the economy, the quality of life and the welfare of the population, the convenience of the functioning of important economic entities turn out to be more priority for the authorities than the consequences of their activities that affect nature. At the same time, this cannot but mean serious problems in the future. Some authors, describing the environmental agenda in the regions of Central Russia, pay attention to this. The problems are noted as "turbulent and unstable, moreover, requiring immediate solutions" [13].

On the other hand, this may indicate that environmental problems are masked in a certain way by a beautiful picture. The political space is highly differentiated, and this has its confirmation in relation to the Lipetsk region. Power can be positioned in the brilliance, in the sparkling center, while there are serious problems on the periphery. This is the anatomy of power [14]. Including environmental ones, which we will consider below. As well as individual political practices on the ground, sometimes not entirely correct, cannot cancel the right to existence of the state itself [15].

Nevertheless, it is in the interests of all subjects of the political process to work on such a structure of the political space so that it is as safe as possible. The role of the ecological component here seems to be very significant.

References

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