

Involving young people into social and political life as one of the factors of its consolidation in a border region (on the example of the Altai region)

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Abstract: The paper focuses on the problem that an active part of young people leave the Altai border territory. The author believes that one of the most effective ways to retain this active part in the region is to involve them into politics. The article presents an analysis of elections to the Altai Regional Legislative Assembly in the period of 2004-2016. The data analyzed clearly demonstrates a tendency of increasing a number of young candidates. It is noted that not all parties consistently attract many young people as candidates. The author concludes that this is facilitated by changes in electoral legislation and the growing popularity of opposition parties, where the proportion of young people is always higher than in the “party of power”.

Keywords: young people, political parties, candidate, young candidates, election

1. Introduction

The Altai region is a border region, in close proximity to Kazakhstan. Any socio-economic and political processes are considered in the geopolitical spectrum. An important problem is the outflow of young people from these regions. Territory retention is impossible without solving this problem. One of the most effective ways to consolidate the young generation is to involve them into social and political life of the native region, providing a subsequent opportunity to enter the realm of public service without protection. This implies becoming a deputy at various levels and getting financial opportunities to implement projects in the nonprofit sector. Growing awareness among the young about region and people's needs would become a serious deterrent in their migration attitudes.

This problem is a backbone for the Altai region. The region belongs to the areas with the largest outflow of population [1].

When solving the task of attracting young people to the social and political sphere, the researchers note a number of problems. For instance, N. M. Belyaeva notes that young people of 17–18 years old were already born after *perestroika* and entered social and political life with the lack of established value orientations. Using a value approach to the study of youth, priorities in the interests of the youth parliamentarian in descending order were identified: learning, politics, social activities, well-paid work. In addition, the author emphasized the importance of effective interaction of youth subcultures with youth organizations and authorities [2, 3, 4, 5].

According to Ya. Yu. Shashkova, the young people are an active participant in modern political processes and transformations, but the lack of civil institutions does not allow unleashing the potential of young people in politics. She considers the following points to be positive: (a) the process of

rejuvenation of power structures that has begun; (b) the penetration of young people into business circles and (c) the creation of their own youth organizations and elements of political culture [6]

At the present stage, the youth is the most important participant in various transformations: from value-oriented, cultural to global economic and political processes. The potential of young leaders is needed for the world to achieve a qualitatively innovative breakthrough. Those leaders who can interact in a global crisis are in need. As a result, there is a need to cultivate youth political elites, because they would be able to provide the governing bodies at the federal, regional and municipal levels with leaders and competent specialists in various areas in Russia [7].

2. Research Methods

In the Altai territory, during election campaigns, the main political parties are actively turning to youth topics and attracting young people as candidates for vacant position at the Altai Region Legislative Assembly (regional parliament). This hypothesis is proved empirically. The necessary data are obtained by monitoring the official website of the Election Commission of the Altai Region. Information is collected for the last 20 years.

3. Results

Over the past 15 years, important information about candidates for party lists and single-member constituencies has been collected. In 2004, the Altai Region Council of People's Deputies (AKSND) was first elected by a mixed system, namely 34 deputies by the majority system and 34 deputies by the proportional one. The analysis of youth participation in the AKSND elections showed the following: eight young people were nominated in single-mandate constituencies, six of them were registered as candidates, one was refused registration, and one canceled his nomination. Only two of the eight candidates were representatives of political parties, all the rest were self-nominated candidates. As a result, one of eight people was elected a deputy.

Looking into the general background of the nominated candidates, such age group as the youth looks very modest. Only 8 people out of 184 single-mandate candidates are young people. This represents about 4.3% of the total. During the 2004 AKSND election campaign, young people were represented on the party lists of the following blocks and parties: 4 people in the "Yabloko + SPS" block, 4 people from the Liberal Democratic Party, "In Support of the President" block; 4 people from the "For Our Altai, communists, agrarians, NPSR" block; 1 person from the Conceptual party "Yedineniye"; and 1 person from the "National Russian political party SOYUZ. In total, 15 people (8.5%) of the 177 candidates on party lists were youth representatives. This is significantly more than in single-member districts. Three young persons were elected as deputies. An interesting fact is that not a single youth representative was on the list of the "Yedinaya Russia" party.

In 2008, 13 young people were nominated to the Altai Regional Legislative Assembly in single-mandate constituencies, both by self-nomination (8 people) and from political parties (5 people). Four of them were denied registration as candidates, nine were registered. Two young people were elected deputies. In total, 171 people were nominated in all single-member constituencies. The share of young people was about 7.6%. According to party lists, the youth was represented as follows: "Grazhdanskaya sila" – 6, "Yedinaya Russia" – 4, Communist Party of the Russian Federation – 1, LDPR – 3, "Spravedlivaya Russia" – 2, and "Yabloko" – 2. At the same time, only one of them, I. I. Mordovin from "Yedinaya Russia," was able to become a deputy. It should be noted that the lists of both parties "Grazhdanskaya sila" and "Yabloko" were not registered, as the percentage of invalid signatures exceeded the permissible limits. Total, only 18 out of 184 candidates were young people under the age of 30.

Analyzing the subsequent electoral processes associated with the formation of the Altai Region Legislative Assembly, we turn to the elections of 2011 and 2016. During this period of time, there were 2 major changes in the formation of the regional parliament. The term of the parliament has been increased to 5 years, and the party lists are divided into general and territorial parts.

In the new socio-political conditions of 2011-2016 (the growth of protest sentiment), the activity of young people has changed. In 2011, 540 people were nominated by party lists, there were 76 young people (14%). The Liberal Democratic Party attracts the most youth (38 people). In single-mandate constituencies, 22 people (14%) out of 157 candidates. 2 people were elected by party lists. Also, 2 elected deputies went through single-mandate constituencies.

In 2016, according to party lists, 782 people moved forward, 125 of them (16%) are youth. 6 young candidates were elected. The party “Communists of Russia” put forward the biggest number of young people (30 in total). In single-member districts, a total of 191 people moved forward, 17 of them were young people (9%). Only 1 person was elected.

Table 1. Nomination of young candidates to the regional parliament*

Political parties	Young candidates in single-member districts				Young candidates on party lists			
	2004	2008	2011	2016	2004	2008	2011	2016
Yedinaya Russia	1	No	2	1	No	4	5	15
KPRF	1	No	5	1	4	1	14	1
LDPR	No	3	13	9	4	3	38	24
Yabloko	No	No	No	3	4	2	7	15
Spravedlivaya Russia			1	No			12	22
Pravoye delo Velikoye Otechestvo			1	No				
Communists of Russia				2				9
				No				28

* **Note.** Empty columns in the table indicate party’s non-participation in elections. “No” stands for absence of young candidates.

4. Discussion

After analyzing the electoral activity of young people, we can identify the following patterns. During the four electoral cycles under analysis, a steady increase in the number of nominated young candidates has occurred, both in single-mandate constituencies and in party lists. This is due to the increase in the number of party lists. It should be noted that the number of young people who received a deputy’s mandate changed and amounted to 4 people in 2004, 3 people in 2008, and 7 people in 2016. However, not all youth representatives included in party lists can be classified as full-fledged candidates for a deputy mandate. As a rule, in party lists, young people are obviously located on impassable places, and their presence is considered as a prerequisite. In general, in the region, political parties are aware of the need to attract more young people into their ranks, and to form a party elite. The analysis shows that the number of young people actively involved in the political process has increased. This fact sets a positive trend in the formation of the desire to remain and develop in the native territory of the active part of the youth.

5. Conclusion

As a result of monitoring the data on election results obtained from the Election Commission of the Altai Territory, a steady trend towards an increase in the number of elected young deputies under the age of 30 years was revealed. This gives a good example of the rest of the youth to realize their potential in their native land. Parties systematically solve staffing problems and go through an update process.

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