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## Ecological Public Policy of Russia and Latin America (On the Example of Ecuador, Mexico, Brazil)

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### ABSTRACT

The article describes the main characteristics of the state environmental policy and their impact on political processes in Russia and a few Latin American countries. Through the prism of comparative analysis, the relationship between a person and his environment is considered through the mediation of ideological constructions and power relations, which help to display the existing contradictions between the culture and the natural environment of the countries in question. Thus, the author identified and analysed in this paper, for each of the countries their specific “development pattern” and presented possible scenarios in the field of environmental policy.

**Keywords:** ecology; public policy; ecological development; extractivism; eco-territorial progress; buen vivir

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### INTRODUCTION: ENVIRONMENTAL PANORAMA OF LATIN AMERICA

In Latin America, as in the world, environmental problems are characterized by all natural resources: land, forest, freshwater, coastal and coastal ecosystems, atmospheric air.

Latin American region — one of the world’s first land-use areas. About 47% of the land is still forested, but this figure is declining rapidly due to the expansion of agricultural land. Over half a century (1961–2011) the area of agricultural land in Latin America has grown significantly, reaching 741 million hectares.<sup>1</sup>

The rapid growth of arable land has led to serious problems in the region: Latin America suffers from reduced land for agriculture, urban expansion, soil erosion and an increased number of forest fires.

Previously, forest fires were mainly of natural origin and are now mostly caused by human factors. Expansion of agriculture, wood extraction with development of small-scale agricultural production — major reason of deforestation.

Soil degradation (physical, chemical and biological) is reflected in reduced vegetation cover, reduced fertility, soil and water pollution and, as a consequence, reduced yields. The main reasons of degradation are water erosion, intensive use of agrochemicals and deforestation.<sup>2</sup>

Land degradation is also linked to poverty and the lack of equitable distribution of natural resources: poor have less access to land and water. In areas with high levels of poverty there are many lands unsuitable for agricultural use. Forecasts also indicate that between 5 and

<sup>1</sup> URL: <http://www.fao.org/americas/prioridades/suelo-agua/es/>

<sup>2</sup> URL: <http://www.fao.org/3/t2351s/T2351S08.htm>

6% of Latin America's land area could change biomes as a result of climate change by the end of the century [1].

The Latin American region is rich in renewable water resources, accounting for more than 30% of the world's reserves. 30% of water intakes in Latin America are groundwater [2]. The hydrological balance is changing as a result of deforestation, land-use development, reduction of vegetation cover, overexploitation of aquifers and drainage of natural water bodies.

Agriculture uses the most water in the region — 70% of all water intakes. Next are household uses (20%) and industry (10%). Tropical glaciers in the Andes account for more than 80% of the freshwater available to grass-roots populations and ecosystems in the semi-arid tropical regions of Latin America. They are melting at an accelerated rate due to climate change [3].

There are two main water-related problems in the region: reduced availability and quality of water. The decrease in water quantity (quantitative degradation) occurs when the water balance changes and more water is used than is available. Loss of quality (pollution) occurs when water is less useful and its properties are damaged by the environment and its organisms. This situation is mainly due to the insufficient degree or non-existent water purification and the uncontrolled use of chemical fertilizers. Pollution of water by the extractive industry also leads to reduced water quality.<sup>3</sup> In addition, artificial canals, dams and active urban development are causing changes in aquatic ecosystems.<sup>4</sup>

Air pollution — is another acute environmental problem affecting the Latin American region. This is due to high rates of urbanization, population and industry growth and the ever-increasing number of cars.

More than 80% of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean<sup>5</sup> lives in urban areas.

<sup>3</sup> URL: <http://www.fao.org/americas/prioridades/suelo-agua/es>

<sup>4</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> URL: <https://www.elobservador.com.uy/nota/america-latina-es-la-region-mas-urbanizada-del-mundo-en-desarrollo-20171116500>

Population growth also affects the environment, not only through the consumption and use of natural resources, but also indirectly, for example, through violent conflicts over limited resources.

Thus, global climate change has a negative impact on the Latin American region, given its socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities. A combination of anthropogenic factors could push some regional social and environmental systems beyond critical points and lead to a sharp reduction in biodiversity [4].

### ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION PROGRAMMES: THE EXPERIENCE OF MEXICO, ECUADOR, BRAZIL AND RUSSIA

Faced with serious environmental problems, Latin American countries have begun to implement various mechanisms for the management and sustainable development of natural resources. All the countries under review were parties to international environmental treaties and were actively implementing climate projects.

In Brazil, for example, in the 1980s the institutional framework for the preservation of the Amazon began to be defined. One of them was the National Environmental Policy. In the 1990s, the environmental theme in country became relevant in the context of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. At the same time, Brazil established the first mining reserves and began the process of demarcation of indigenous territories, allowing to slow the progress of agricultural boundaries and urbanization of local forests. In addition, the National Biodiversity Programme was adopted in 1994.

In the 2000s, Brazil launched one of the world's most innovative and important biodiversity conservation projects called "Arpa" for the sustainable development of the Amazon region. And in 2010, Brazil again hosted the UN conference "Rio+20".

Over the past three decades, Brazil has made great progress on the biodiversity

agenda. In 2021, the project started GEF-Pró-Espécies, the purpose of which — conservation of endangered species. The project consists of four components: conservation of endangered species; control and prevention of illegal hunting, fishing, illegal harvesting of plants, combating plant and animal smuggling; preventing and early detection of invasive alien species and responding rapidly to these situations; coordination, monitoring and communication.<sup>6</sup>

The project is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) with the participation of the Federal Government, states and municipalities. It is planned to operate in at least 13 states, covering a total of 9 million hectares. Duration of project GEF Pro-Espécies — 4 years.<sup>7</sup>

In the past few years, the Ministry of the Environment of Ecuador has also undertaken a number of important initiatives. These include, it's about, forestry incentive programmes, water treatment programmes, as well as initiatives to manage solid waste through environmental education and elimination open dumping sites throughout the country.

Mention should also be made of the programme Socio Bosque, which aims to improve social and environmental mechanisms aimed at strengthening the financial sustainability of the green economy. The concept Buen Vivir<sup>8</sup> are played an important role as a new model for equitable and balanced development. Both programmes saved 1 670 000 hectares of forest in Ecuador in 2020.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Brasil lanza un proyecto para proteger especies amenazadas de extinción. URL: <https://www.wwf.org.br/?65584/Brasil-lanza-un-proyecto-para-proteger-especies-amenazadas-de-extincin>

<sup>7</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Buen Vivir — the intellectual movement that emerged in the Andean region in the late 20th — early 21st century, based on the ethical principles and knowledge of the indigenous peoples of Latin America. The main postulates of Buen Vivir criticize existing Western models of society development.

<sup>9</sup> Ecuador alcanza acuerdos de cooperación ambiental. URL: <https://www.ambiente.gob.ec/ecuador-alcanza-acuerdos-de-cooperacion-ambiental/>

Mexico is also actively implementing conservation and conservation programmes. In 2018, at the initiative of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the project was presented Sembrando Vida, aimed to combat land degradation and deforestation. The Government intends to plant 3 400 000 trees, paying villagers who plant trees. According to the Mexican authorities, such an initiative not only preserves the country's territory from deforestation, but also contributes to food security, as it is predominantly fruit trees that are planted.<sup>10</sup>

In the context of programmes and initiatives to preserve the environment and strengthen sustainable development, the ratification by Mexico of the Escasu Agreement in 2021 is particularly noteworthy. This is the first agreement in Latin America and the Caribbean to guarantee public participation, access to information and justice in environmental matters.<sup>11</sup> Latin America — the region where environmental defenders are currently most killed, so the ratification of the Escasu Agreement (Ecuador also ratified it) shows an awareness of the importance of environmental problems, expands the rights and capacity of citizens in the field of environmental protection.

Russia, like the Latin American countries mentioned above, has long been a full participant in the process of establishing the sustainable development agenda. In 1996, the concept of transition to sustainable development was adopted,<sup>12</sup> which included a number of decisions of a socio-economic nature and proposals for maintaining a favourable environment and natural resource potential to meet the needs of present and future generations.

<sup>10</sup> URL: <https://www.gob.mx/sembrandovida>

<sup>11</sup> México ratifica el acuerdo de Escazú que entrará en vigor 22 de abril. URL: <https://www.efe.com/efe/america/mexico/mexico-ratifica-el-acuerdo-de-escazu-que-entrara-en-vigor-22-abril/50000545-4447235>

<sup>12</sup> Decree of the President of the Russian Federation on the concept of transition of the Russian Federation to sustainable development. URL: <https://docs.cntd.ru/document/9017665>



The main feature of Russian initiatives for the preservation of the environment is that they are integrated into national projects, written both in federal documents and in the development strategies of the Russian regions. At present, Russia is a party to approximately 100 international agreements in the field of environmental protection. The most effective international cooperation is developing in improving the system of specially protected natural areas.<sup>13</sup>

In early November 2020, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a Decree on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in order to implement the Russian Federation's obligations under the Paris Agreement. President's Decree instructs the Russian government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 70% of 1990 level by 2030.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, introducing programmes and initiatives to preserve the environment at the level of public policy, Russia and Latin America focus primarily on decoupling dependence of economic growth from the use of natural resources through the sustainable management of ecosystems and the search for alternative solutions.

However, despite all efforts, these countries have some difficulties in implementing initiatives to preserve the environment. This is primarily due to economic and political factors that directly influence the decision-making of the State in the field of environmental policy.

Some achievements in the field of environmental protection are "eroded" due to the implementation of the policy of extractivism — approach, involves the extraction of minerals and the overexploitation of natural resources by both the State and large businesses.

A number of large infrastructure mega-projects in Russia and Latin America threaten

the environment, reduce biodiversity and causes serious social and environmental conflicts. In the final analysis, the implementation of these projects shows that environmental problems are not yet a priority for Governments. This is also demonstrated by the number of cases described below.

## MEXICO

Currently, the Mexican government is focusing on attracting foreign investment and creating new jobs to rebuild the economy damaged by COVID-19. It should be noted that prior to the pandemic, public policy did not address the environmental crisis. According to Mexican biologist Victor Toledo, the environmental crisis has been going on for several years.<sup>15</sup>

The best proof of this — before the pandemic, the entire environmental budget was reduced. Over the past five years, Mexico has experienced a sharp decline in its budget for environmental protection: while in 2015 the entire environmental sector totaled 67 976 million pesos (3 billion USD), in 2020 this figure decreased to 29 869 million pesos (1.5 billion USD).<sup>16</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has further affected the agency's budget reduction. Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT), and National Commission for Protected Natural Areas (CONANP), National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR) and Federal Prosecutors General for the Environment (PROFEPA) worked with minimal financial resources. This resulted in agencies not being able to fully perform their functions, including monitoring to fight environmental crime.

In addition, SEMARNAT became the agency that most often changed its leaders: in two years it had three. And the resignation of one of the ministers of SEMARNAT was due to

<sup>13</sup> Russia in international environmental conventions and agreements. URL: <https://geographyofrussia.com/rossiya-v-mezhdunarodnyx-prirodooxrannyx-konvenciyax-i-soglasheniyax/>

<sup>14</sup> Putin requested to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4559047>

<sup>15</sup> La democracia directa y participativa es la solución a la crisis ambiental y civilizatoria. URL: <https://unamglobal.unam.mx/la-democracia-directa-y-participativa-es-la-solucion-a-la-crisis-ambiental-y-civilizatoria-victor-toledo/>

<sup>16</sup> Presupuesto ambiental sufre descalabro de 37 por ciento. URL: <https://www.excelsior.com.mx/nacional/presupuesto-ambiental-sufre-descalabro-de-37-por-ciento/1349656>



his desire to prohibit a number of herbicides, which caused the Ministry to conflict with the powerful agrarian lobby and mining business, which are traditionally strong in Mexico.

In Mexico, after the rise of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, intensive promotion of mega-projects of the refinery “Dos Bocas” and “Tren Maya” began (project with an investment of 6,294 billion dollars for the construction of about 1 554 km of railway in five southeastern states: Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán and Quintana-Roo). Construction of refinery “Dos Bocas” in the lowlands of Tabasco is a cause for concern for several reasons. Environmental impacts of mega-projects already affecting coastal lagoons and mangroves. “Tren Maya” and refinery — not the only large-scale projects promoted by the federal government. There is also the project “Integral Morelos”, which is developed since 2012 and envisages the construction of two natural gas power plants; gas pipeline that crosses three states: Tlaxcala, Puebla and Morelos; and also — aqueduct to extract water from the Cuautla River in Morelos. In addition, resources are provided for the upgrading of coal, diesel, gas and oil power plants.

It should be noted that 91% of the energy produced in Mexico comes from hydrocarbons, and the country will have to reduce this number and increase its energy supply from renewable sources. Among the commitments, adopted by Mexico and enshrined in the General Act on Climate Change, — reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% of the 2000 level by 2050, and zero deforestation by 2030.<sup>17</sup>

Deforestation and illegal logging — are another serious problem in Mexico. According to research by the University of Maryland published by the Global Forest Watch, from 2002 to 2020 country lost 662 thousand hectares of primary forest.<sup>18</sup> One of the main causes of deforestation — expansion of

avocado plantations and other commercial crops (such as African palm or soybean). In addition, illegal logging has become part of the criminal business. At least half of the timber sold in the country is illegal and controlled by drug-related groups. This fact out of work community forestry enterprises.

In Mexico community forestry enterprises (CFE) have their origin in ejido, or agrarian communities, are social organizations that own forest lands on a common basis, and have different levels of production integration and produce wood for commercial purposes. In terms of governance and business, many community forestry enterprises in Mexico have not been successful due to the imposition of public forest conservation programmes and inadequate models of integration into the market economy. Of the 584 forestry communities in Mexico, only a few have proven to be competitive.

According to industry media Mongabay, before the COVID-19 pandemic, community forestry enterprises created about 160 000 jobs across the country,<sup>19</sup> and there is still no official data on how many of them were lost. Meanwhile, communities that produce legal timber must fight not only the presence of organized crime and impunity, but also with excessive bureaucratic paperwork and the absence of policies and budgets aimed at strengthening the forestry sector.

Thus, the process of deforestation in Mexico not only affects the environment but also provokes serious social and environmental conflicts. In this sense, environmental problems should be understood as social problems that affect the most vulnerable groups, first of all, indigenous peoples whose way of life is inevitably destroyed by environmental problems.

Mexico is among the four most dangerous countries (after Philippines, Colombia and Brazil) for environmentalists, according to a

<sup>17</sup> Compromisos de mitigación y adaptación ante el cambio climático para el periodo 2020–2030. URL: [https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/162974/2015\\_indc\\_esp.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/162974/2015_indc_esp.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> URL: <https://gfw.global/3Hr3tjX>

<sup>19</sup> Los desafíos ambientales de México en el 2021. URL: <https://es.mongabay.com/2021/01/desafios-ambientales-mexico-2021-acuerdo-de-escazu-nuevas-leyes-bosques-clima/>

report submitted by Global Witness in July 2020. 18 environmentalists and defender of territories were killed in 2019.<sup>20</sup> So far, Mexico has not solved the problem homicides based of ecologically. Moreover, Mexican President López Obrador is inclined to blame the NCB, who are involved in environmental and human rights issues by opposing mega-projects and self-serving help indigenous people to counter legal construction, thus destabilizing situation the region. According to the President, non-governmental organizations opposed to the construction “Tren Maya”, receive foreign funding of more than 13 billion dollars.<sup>21</sup>

Government action shows that Mexican public environmental policy still exists in the extractive paradigm<sup>22</sup> and directs efforts to increase the use of natural resources without paying due attention to environmental issues. This course is generally contrary to the climate agenda and the implementation of international commitments.

## ECUADOR

In the four years of Lenin Moreno, the Ministry of Environment was significantly weakened: six ministers were replaced, the Ministry itself merged with the Secretariat for Water Resources, and the budget of both institutions was significantly reduced, and the Joint Agency underwent large-scale cuts: almost 400 employees were laid off in 2020 alone.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Defender el mañana. URL: <https://www.globalwitness.org/es/defending-tomorrow-es/>

<sup>21</sup> Fundaciones extranjeras financian oposición al Tren Maya, acusa AMLO. URL: <https://www.proceso.com.mx/nacional/2020/8/28/fundaciones-extranjeras-financian-oposicion-al-tren-maya-acusa-amlo-248452.html>

<sup>22</sup> Ecuadorian economist A. Acosta by this term meant activities, associated with extracting large quantities of natural resources that are not processed (or are only processed to a limited extent). According to the Acosta concept, extractivism is not limited to minerals or oil, it is also present in agriculture, forestry and even fisheries.

<sup>23</sup> 398 personas fueron desvinculadas del Ministerio del Ambiente y Agua; guardaparques rechazan la medida. <https://www.elcomercio.com/tendencias/ambiente/personas-desvinculadas-ministerio-ambiente-ecuador.html>

The serious crisis, was exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, come on top by Ecuador’s traditional environmental problems: alarming proportions of deforestation and environmental conflicts with indigenous peoples.

Severe deforestation of the Ecuadorian rainforest has not received sufficient attention for several decades. Forest loss has been a serious problem in Ecuador for almost three decades. According to a number of studies, in the past 26 years the country has lost more than 2 million hectares of tropical forest, accounting for about 7.8% of the total area of Ecuador.<sup>24</sup> According to experts, this was due to the deepening of extractivism as the basis of the Ecuadorian economic model.<sup>25</sup>

The disappearance of the rainforest in Ecuador would not only mean the loss of one of the most biologically diverse places in the world, but also thousands of unique plant species on the planet. Their loss can change entire ecosystems. Researchers from the LaForeT project found that people living in or near tropical forests were forced to convert certain forest areas into agricultural areas (including areas under monoculture). The need for survival and exploitation of rich natural resources has led to the loss of enormous amounts of vegetation in Ecuador.<sup>26</sup>

Deforestation does not only have environmental consequences. In countries such as Ecuador, this phenomenon has serious consequences for the lives of people who (especially representatives of indigenous

<sup>24</sup> Estudio señala que Ecuador registró la pérdida más alta de bosque en la Amazonía durante el año 2020. URL: <https://www.elcomercio.com/tendencias/ambiente/estudio-ecuador-perdida-bosque-amazonia.html>

<sup>25</sup> Doménica Montaña. Nuevo estudio: en los últimos 26 años Ecuador ha perdido más de 2 millones de hectáreas de bosque. URL: <https://es.mongabay.com/2021/03/nuevo-estudio-en-los-ultimos-26-anos-ecuador-ha-perdido-mas-de-2-millones-de-hectareas-de-bosque/>

<sup>26</sup> Deforestación en paisajes forestales tropicales en Ecuador. URL: [http://inabio.biodiversidad.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/LAFORET\\_WEB.pdf](http://inabio.biodiversidad.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/LAFORET_WEB.pdf), p. 31.

peoples) may be left without the resources necessary for survival.

In the country since 2017 there is an Organic Environmental Code that regulates environmental legislation, including forest management. In practice, however, practically not being implemented.

Another vivid illustration of Ecuador's environmental problems, — this is the situation with the Yasuni National Park in the Ecuadorian Amazon. This region, where biodiversity levels are highest, was until recently the “last hope” for eco-activists.

Initiative Yasuní-ITT (Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini) consisted in refusing oil production, the reserves of which were in the park, while preserving the Yasuni ecosystem. In 2007, former President Rafael Correa launched such an initiative. Compensation from the international community in the amount of 3.6 billion dollars,<sup>27</sup> — this money was to be invested in renewable energy, biodiversity protection and preservation of 44 protected areas. Through this project, which was linked to the overall concept Buen Vivir, Ecuador planned to arrive at a post-extractive model of society and, as a result, improve the standard of living of Ecuadorians. However, in 2013, the plan was cancelled by the Correa Government on the grounds that the international community had not paid Ecuador with sufficient compensation.

Several eco-activist groups emerged in response to Yasuni's environmental threat. One of them, Yasunidos, planned to hold a referendum on the issue, for which activists had to collect signatures of at least 5% of the electorate. If successful, the referendum would be the question is that — whether to stop oil production in Yasuni National Park forever.

780 000 signatures collected in April 2014. However, a few weeks later, the National Electoral Council confirmed only 360 000 of them, which was not enough to make the Yasuni issue to public discussion. Therefore,

<sup>27</sup> ¿Por qué fracasó la iniciativa Yasuní-ITT? URL: <http://ibdigital.uib.es/greenstone/collect/cd2/index/assoc/ocud0016.dir/ocud0016.pdf>

President Correa announced that he will continue oil production at Yasuni.<sup>28</sup>

Second stage of the disputed project Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini (ITT), started in 2016, provoked fierce criticism from conservationists and civil society organizations. At Tambococha-2, Petroamazonas company planned to build four platforms and drill nearly 100 drilling. The company insisted that it would do so discreetly by concentrating drilling on a small area, burying pipes and taking precautions against oil spills. However, environmental groups have argued that zero impact on such a biologically sensitive area cannot be guaranteed. They insisted that threats to the ecosystem would not only continue, but would increase.<sup>29</sup>

In October 2020, the Constitutional Court of Ecuador accepted an extraordinary claim for the protection of the collective “Yasunidos”, the main purpose of which is to preserve the oil reserves at Yasuni. But no decision has yet been made.

It should be noted that in Ecuador, the court sometimes sided with human rights defenders, eco-activists and the public. Thus, in 2021, in the town of Cuenca in the southern highlands of Ecuador, 80% of the population voted in a referendum to ban mining activities in water recharge areas of the Tomebamba, Tarki, Yanankai, Machangara and Norkai rivers. These five rivers are the largest in the city and its surroundings, and are important because they supply water to the population of Cuenca.<sup>30</sup>

The victory in the referendum is a serious precedent that guarantees the human rights to water protected by the Ecuadorian Constitution (but not always enforceable), and

<sup>28</sup> El presidente de Ecuador defiende la explotación de petróleo en la Amazonía. URL: <https://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20141107/54419022169/correa-defiende-extraer-petroleo-en-la-amazonia-y-dice-afectacion-sera-minima.html>

<sup>29</sup> Yasunidos pide que no se explote el campo Ishpingo. URL: <https://www.eltelegrafo.com.ec/noticias/politica/3/yasunidos-pide-que-no-se-explote-el-campo-ishpingo>

<sup>30</sup> Voters backed prohibition on mining in Ecuador city of Cuenca, mayor says. URL: <https://www.reuters.com/article/ecuador-mining-idUSL1N2KE2C3>

demonstrates a marked tendency to place the rights of nature above the economic benefits of overexploitation of natural resources in the country.

In some cases, judgements have been handed down in favour of nature, which, according to the Ecuadorian Constitution, is also a subject of law. However, the results of the presidential election in 2021 show that the general course to strengthen extractivism will continue. Another alternative to stimulate ecuadorian economy by Guillermo Lasso — the representative of the right-wing forces who came to power — has no power.

For example, during the presidential campaign, Lasso repeatedly stated that Ecuador could not afford to keep oil and mining resources underground without using them in any way.<sup>31</sup> According to him, mining and oil are important factors of economic growth, and therefore, oil and mining exploitation needs to be expanded. Lasso mentioned advanced technologies to minimize environmental damage. However, given the fact that extractive activities are in principle not possible without a negative impact on the environment, it is highly probable that during the presidency of G. Lasso “respect for the environment” will remain on paper rather than move into a practical plane.

### BRAZIL

Brazil, after the Eco-92 International Conference, became one of the main actors in the fight against climate change and banned the cutting of tropical forests in the Amazon, now likely to implement anti-environmental policies.

Jair Bolsonaro’s government reduces the country’s environmental budget. The budget for the Ministry of Environment and its agencies decreased by almost a quarter in 2021 compared to the same period last year and now

make 2 billion reais (365.3 billion dollars).<sup>32</sup> Of particular note is the fact that the decision was taken just one day after the Climate Summit, where the President of Brazil promised to double environmental spending. Such stringent budgetary constraints could significantly paralyse work of environmental institutions.

In addition to reductions in agency budgets, who deal with environmental issues, as in the case of Ecuador and Mexico mentioned above, Brazil did not avoid major staffing changes in environmental organizations. The situation with “militarization of staff” at the Brazilian Institute of Environment is particularly indicative (IBAMA): from there, specialists (ecologists, scientists, sociologists) directly involved in environmental problems were dismissed, and in their place (in violation of a number of legal requirements for employment) are appointed military personnel without appropriate qualifications.<sup>33</sup>

The Bolsonaro government has also virtually paralysed the forest service, transferred them to command of Ministry of Agriculture, headed by the Agribusiness Lobby. The anti-environmental trend of Brazilian public policy is not only demonstrated by the organizational changes in the institutions related to environmental protection, but data from the National Institute for Space Research (INPE), which collects data on forest reduction since 2015. According to the organization, deforestation in the Amazon increased by 42.5% in 2021 compared with 2020.<sup>34</sup>

The loss of forests is compounded by the spread of wildfires of non-target origin in the region. For the whole 2020 in the Brazilian

<sup>31</sup> Ecuador: Lasso, Correa y los límites del extractivismo. URL: <https://www.politicaexterior.com/ecuador-lasso-correa-y-los-limites-del-extractivismo/>

<sup>32</sup> Um dia após promessa na Cúpula do Clima, Bolsonaro corta verba para meio ambiente. URL: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mundo/2021/04/um-dia-apos-promessa-na-cupula-do-clima-bolsonaro-corta-verba-para-meio-ambiente.shtml>

<sup>33</sup> Servidores do IBAMA protestam contra nomeações de militares por Salles. URL: <https://istoe.com.br/servidores-do-ibama-protestam-contranomeacoes-de-militares-por-salles/>

<sup>34</sup> La Amazonía brasileña bate su récord histórico de deforestación en abril tras perder más de 580 km de la selva. URL: <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20210507/amazonia-brasilena-bate-su-record-deforestacion-abril/2089127.shtml>



Amazon there were 103 161 registered fires, which is 15.6% more than in 2019<sup>35</sup> and is the highest since 2017.

The anti-environmental trend is due to the fact that Bolsonaro promotes a policy of productive use of the Amazon. During his presidential campaign, he promised that he would open the region to commercial development, including large-scale mining and agricultural development.

In doing so, the Brazilian authorities ignore the fact that the Amazon region is a protected land for indigenous peoples. For the Brazilian Government, indigenous people — these are primarily people who simply occupy 13–14% of the mineral and resource-rich land and other resources, but produce nothing. Their territories, on which they live, should therefore be used more rationally.

In February 2020 Bolsonaro presented a bill,<sup>36</sup> which would permit exploration mineral resources projects on indigenous Amazonian reserves (now prohibited by law). To promote agribusiness in these territories, Bolsonaro also plans to get out from ILO Convention N 169, which protects indigenous peoples and their lands.

The President of Brazil says that “Brazil shouldn’t nothing of the world with regard to the preservation of the environment”<sup>37</sup> and changed the environmental licensing procedure to facilitate construction on indigenous lands. Several new major infrastructure projects were announced, including the construction of a dam on the Trombetas River, the bridge over the Amazon and the 500 km extension of the road that will cross the tropical forest

<sup>35</sup> La Amazonía brasileña perdió más de 8 mil km<sup>2</sup> de selva en 2020. URL: <https://www.portalambiental.com.mx/impacto-ambiental/20210114/la-amazonia-brasilena-perdio-mas-de-8-mil-km2-de-selva-en-2020>

<sup>36</sup> Bolsonaro cumple sus promesas sobre la Amazonía y los indígenas de Brasil temen un “etnocidio”. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/es/2020/04/19/espanol/america-latina/bolsonaro-brasil-amazonia-indigena.html>

<sup>37</sup> Brasil renuncia al liderazgo global bajo el gobierno de Bolsonaro. URL: <https://dialogochino.net/es/clima-y-energia-es/27469-brasil-renuncia-al-liderazgo-global-bajo-el-gobierno-de-bolsonaro/>

from the Amazon to the border with Suriname. The increasing number of infrastructure projects in protected areas and the attempt to commercialize the Amazon for the economic exploitation of the region are fraught with an explosive increase in environmental conflicts and social tensions.

The authorities’ anti-environmental policies have already provoked conflicts between illegal miners and farmers and indigenous peoples. In April 2021, garimpeiro began fighting in Roraima (gold miners) and the Yanomami Indians, in whose territory there are large gold mines.<sup>38</sup> Although legal gold mining on these lands is not possible due to their current protected status, the areas are difficult to access and are insufficiently controlled by the Government, which encourages the miners to engage in criminal activities for them.

All of the above leads to the conclusion that, since Jair Bolsonaro took office as president in early 2019, Brazil has begun the actual dismantling of public policy, aimed to environmental conservation for strong economic growth.

Given the current anti-environmental trend in Brazilian public policy, social and environmental conflicts in the region are likely to worsen further, and the country itself risks becoming the final “environmental outsider”.

## RUSSIA

The situation with the environmental agenda in Russia, at first glance, unlike the Latin American case, more positive, increased funding for environmental initiatives.

According to the Russian President, by 2024 the country will increase the amount of funds for environmental protection by 50% and will direct about 1 trillion rubles to this sector<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Mineração e garimpo disputam área maior do que a Bélgica dentro da Terra Indígena Yanomami. URL: <https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2021-06-22/mineracao-e-garimpo-disputam-area-maior-do-que-a-belgica-dentro-da-terra-indigena-yanomami.html>

<sup>39</sup> Putin: Russia to spend 1 trillion rubles on solving environmental problems on environmental protection for 50% for 1 trillion rubles. URL: <https://rg.ru/2020/09/23/putin-rossiia-potrati-1-trln-rublej-na-reshenie-ekologicheskikh-problem.html>



(13065 billion dollars). These funds will be used for infrastructure development, solid waste management, air pollution reduction, water treatment and fight of deforestation.

Early in 2009, Moscow adopted a climate doctrine, which for the first time recognized the human responsibility for the global warming process. Russian authorities recognize the seriousness of the problem of climate change,<sup>40</sup> although, until recently, they shared the view of sceptics who denied that human activities had any impact on climate change.

In 2019, Russia became a full member of the Paris Agreement (PA) on climate, which demonstrates the change in the attitude of the Russian authorities to this problem. Russia is among the world's largest emitters of greenhouse gases,<sup>41</sup> which results in increased attention to its State environmental policy by the international community.

Obligations under the PA will require a fundamental transformation of the Russian economy, as a significant part of emissions is accounted for by the energy sector.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, the Russian authorities have already approved<sup>43</sup> thermal power plant modernization programme, and a draft law on State regulation of greenhouse gas emissions is under discussion at the legislative level, — the aim is to establish an inventory system. Consideration is also being given to introducing a fee for carbon dioxide emissions above a fixed rate and a quota trading system. As part of the PA's obligation, Russia is undertaking to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 25–30% of 1990 levels by 2030. To date, this obligation has been fulfilled, but it should be noted that low

emissions — a consequence of the decline in production in the country after the collapse of the USSR.

In addition to climate change, the main challenges facing Russia in terms of environmental conservation — effects of environmental disasters and waste treatment.

Over the past few years, our country has faced several environmental disasters that have forced the authorities to take urgent measures. The largest in Russia (and the largest in the Arctic) was the leak from PP-3 JSC “NTEK” (is owned by “Nornikel”) in 2020 about 21 thous. tons of diesel fuel. Despite the statement of “Nornikel” that the situation is under control, and the obligation to send (as payment of a fine) 150 billion rubles<sup>44</sup> for cleaning and remediation of the affected area, the cost of remediation will be disproportionately higher. Irreparable damage to Arctic ecosystems is almost impossible to repair due to climatic conditions of the area where the spill occurred.

Environmental disasters such as the one in Norilsk show that Russia, like the Latin American states considered earlier, practices an extractive paradigm. Natural resources and infrastructure are exploited without the necessary modernization of the latter and without enhanced State control, while economic gain is given priority.

This model of State environmental policy leads to an increase in social and environmental conflicts when disaffected citizens resort to protests. According to Institute for the Economy of Growth, named after P.A. Stolypin, the environmental situation in Russia is worse than in other developed and developing countries.

Russia ranked 52<sup>nd</sup> in the ranking of countries by state of environment (along with Cuba, Panama and Venezuela).<sup>45</sup> One of the key

<sup>40</sup> «Russia feels threatened»: Putin told about the fight against climate change. URL: [https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2021/06/04\\_a\\_13620800.shtml](https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2021/06/04_a_13620800.shtml)

<sup>41</sup> Russia's climate agenda: responding to international challenges. RMC, Moscow, 2021. P. 17. URL: [http://www.dipacademy.ru/documents/2267/2021\\_1\\_%D0%94%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B4\\_%D0%9A%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%82\\_%D0%A6%D0%A1%D0%A0\\_%D0%90%D0%A6\\_%D0%A0%D0%AD%D0%90\\_%D0%A1%D0%A6.pdf](http://www.dipacademy.ru/documents/2267/2021_1_%D0%94%D0%BE%D0%BA%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B4_%D0%9A%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%B0%D1%82_%D0%A6%D0%A1%D0%A0_%D0%90%D0%A6_%D0%A0%D0%AD%D0%90_%D0%A1%D0%A6.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> URL: <http://ac.gov.ru/files/publication/a/17409.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> URL: <https://minenergo.gov.ru/node/13784>

<sup>44</sup> URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4406560>

<sup>45</sup> Household waste management systems of different countries: recipes for Russia. URL: <https://stolypin.institute/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/sistemy-utilizatsii-othodov-raznyh-stran-25-09-2019.pdf> C. 18.

problems that aggravate the environmental situation — is the lack of waste management.

In 2017 in Russia there was a “garbage crisis” when large-scale protests against polygons and landfills were organized in Moscow, the Moscow region and other parts of the country. One of the most notable was the protest of the residents of the village of Shies near Arkhangelsk. There, according to the original intention of the authorities, the garbage was to be transported from Moscow, which was no longer able to cope with its own waste.

Protests of residents had the right effect, and in 2018 Russian President Vladimir Putin approved the national project “Ecology”, which sets the target of recycling 36% of solid household waste (SHW) to 2024.<sup>46</sup> According to Greenpeace, currently in Russia about 70 million tons of waste is generated annually, of which about 4% is processed, burned — 2%.<sup>47</sup>

However, environmentalists criticize government measures to implement green projects, including the government’s plans to build 30 incineration plants. According to the head of the toxicology department of Greenpeace in Russia Alexey Kiselev, use of outdated waste incineration technologies instead of recycling will have a negative impact on the environment.<sup>48</sup>

Decision-making in the field of environmental protection is also affected by the virtual absence of a single environmental movement in Russia and ecological NGOs. The latter are often recognized in Russia by foreign agents and cannot contribute to the creation of large ecological projects, limited to solving local problems such as the elimination of landfills, the fight against point built-up, the clearing of parks and forests. Lack of

expertise and wide discussion of environmental problems with the public also keeps Russia in “the grip” of extractivism and significantly hinders the process of transition to a different model of social and economic development.

### SCIENTIFIC AND THEORETICAL BASIS

With regard to the factors that have a direct impact on the social and environmental development of Mexico, Ecuador, Brazil and Russia, we could not mention the theoretical conceptual framework for the environmental development of these countries.

Attempts to build a system ecological theory — “basis” in Russia in the late XIX — early XX’s century are connected, first of all, with the name V.I. Vernadsky and the concept of the noosphere. Vernadsky considered the noosphere as an objective process, the outcome of human development, a new state of the biosphere. It is the sphere of the interaction of nature and society, within which intelligent human activity becomes the primary determinant of development [5]. Vernadsky’s thoughts developed by academician N. Moiseev, but he believed that intelligent human activity could not make the world process manageable [6]. Moiseev argued that people have no right to interfere in “environmental affairs”, and once this “active non-interference” is achieved, peace will come to “co-evolution” and balance of nature and society.

However, this concept remains at the level of philosophical reasoning in Russia and has not been included in the Russian social and ecological discourse.

In Latin America, the concept *buen vivir* has gained wide acceptance in recent years. This theory is closely related to the world view of the indigenous peoples of the region and focuses on — the relationship between man and nature. At the same time, the category of “human” occupies no central place, unlike the European (and Russian) anthropocentrism. In various forms, the concept of *buen vivir* is considered by individual researchers and intellectuals as an alternative to social and

<sup>46</sup> Energetic recycling: how to turn waste into energy. URL: <https://rostec.ru/news/energichnaya-utilizatsiya-kak-prevratit-otkhodov-energiyu/>

<sup>47</sup> Greenpeace. What to do with garbage in Russia? URL: <https://greenpeace.ru/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/report-RUSSIA-GARBAGE.pdf> C.2.

<sup>48</sup> Why is burning waste not the answer? URL: <https://greenpeace.ru/expert-opinions/2021/03/03/pochemu-szhiganie-othodov-jetone-vygod/>



ecological development in Mexico. In particular, one of the forms of the concept *buen vivir* can be called the concept of communism of Victor Toledo, who appreciates the experience of the Zapatista movement, practising such a form,<sup>49</sup> and concept “k’anel” Mexican philosopher of Indian Origin — Manuel Bolom [7], circulated also in Brazil [8].

It should be emphasized that the scientific and theoretical “basis”, connected with the environmental agenda and concept *buen vivir*, was most clearly manifested in Ecuador. Thus, the government of Rafael Correa in the early 2000s adopted the concept *Sumak Kawsay* (a decent life), which was formed in the late 1990s and promoted by Ecuadorian intellectuals of Indian origin Alfredo and Carlos Viteri Gualinga [9].

Uruguayan researcher Eduardo Gudinas, analyzing the key category of *Sumak Kawsay*, believes that there is a different interpretation of the processes of development of society and there is no traditional Western interpretation of the concepts of “progress” and “development” [10]. The concept redefines the roles of man and nature. In the concept of *Sumak Kawsay* man is no longer the center of the universe, nature becomes the same subject of law as man.

Another form of *buen vivir* (*Sumak Kawsay*) in Ecuador was the concept of the leader of the Kichwa indigenous people, José Gualinga living in Ecuadorian Amazon, which is called *Kawsak Sacha* (trans. Kichwa — living forest).<sup>50</sup> In fact, is a biodiversity initiative, which is based on three aspects: community life, fertile land and the treatment of the Amazon Forest as a living entity deserving of all care and respect as a subject of law. As part of this initiative, the Kichwa people manage to effectively conserve and manage 135 thous. hectares of Amazon

Forest through zoning. *Kawsak Sacha* created protected areas, hunting and fishing zones, as well as populated areas.

The concept of *buen vivir* and its derivatives, broadly understood as a critique of development, associated with endless economic growth, as an alternative to social development, which should take into account the experience of indigenous peoples successfully and harmoniously coexisting with the natural environment and relinquishing the key role of human beings in that system, have already managed to form a kind of discourse in the environmental agenda of Latin America. Russia does not have such a broad scientific basis on this issue. This situation may be explained by the less developed scientific school in the field of social and political ecology than in the countries of Latin America. However, with the growth of ecological consciousness in Russia, a similar direction of social and ecological thought may be formed. However, it is premature to talk about its inclusion in political life.

## CONCLUSION

Analyzing individual cases of environmental public policy in Mexico, Ecuador, Brazil and Russia, it is possible to conclude that all the countries under consideration, regardless of the political situation, cultural paradigm and scientific and theoretical foundation of social and ecological thought, currently implement the extractive model.

Results of extractivism — large amounts of non-renewable natural resources used and social conflicts in areas where they are practised. The appeal to extractivism today is related to the economic culture of the regions as a whole, where governments view the territories as resources with cheap labor, without considering the destruction of ecosystems.

This approach is currently driven by the severe economic crisis caused by the COVID-19. Governments plan to restart the economy and promote mining and natural resource exploitation for economic growth.

<sup>49</sup> La Comunalidad, tercera vía de transformación social: Víctor Toledo. URL: <https://lacoperacha.org.mx/comunalidad-tercera-via-victor-toledo/>

<sup>50</sup> A Different Vision of “Doing Conservation:” The *Kawsak Sacha* of the Kichwa People of Sarayaku, Ecuador. URL: <https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/section1/a-different-vision-of-doing-conservation-the-kawsak-sacha-of-the-kichwa-people-of-sarayaku-ecuador/>



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