

## BELGOROD OBLAST. POLITICAL CONTEXTS

*as of October 2025*



*Belgorod as part of the Ukrainian People's Republic (1918), a photo collection*

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## 1.1. Brief description of Belgorod Oblast as an administrative-territorial unit of Russia

Belgorod Oblast [is one of the constituent entities](#) of the Russian Federation, located within the Central Federal District. Established in 1954, the region covers an area of about 27,000 square kilometers and includes 21 municipalities, among which there are three urban districts: Belgorod, Stary Oskol, and Gubkin. The administrative center of the region is the city of Belgorod.

Oblast [borders](#) Kursk and Voronezh Oblasts and shares an extensive southern border with Ukraine's Kharkiv Oblast. Its geographical location has historically contributed to the development of the region as an important agricultural, industrial, and logistical hub of Russia, especially in the context of the metallurgical industry and [iron ore extraction](#) in the Stary Oskol and Gubkin areas.

The [demographic features](#) of the region also have a significant impact on political processes. As of early 2024, the population of Belgorod Oblast was approximately 1.5 million people. The majority of the population lives in cities, with the largest urban agglomerations being Belgorod, Stary Oskol, and Gubkin. At the same time, a considerable share of the population—around 35%—lives in rural areas, which creates [specific demands](#) for social support, infrastructure development, and agricultural policy. These factors are being actively considered during election campaigns.

Belgorod Oblast is characterized by relatively stable [ethnic composition](#): ethnic Russians comprise 90% of the population; Ukrainians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and Belarusians also reside in the area.

According to the 2020 census, the following [nationalities](#) lived in Belgorod Oblast:

Nationality	Population	Share
Russian	1 234 338	80,13 %
Ukrainian	15 481	1,00 %
Armenian	4931	0,32 %
Turkish	3818	0,25 %
Azerbaijani	3471	0,23 %
Tartar	1639	0,11 %
Roma	1543	0,10 %
Other (or did not indicate nationality)	275'265	17,87 %
Total	1'540'486	100,00 %

## Ethnic map of Belgorod Oblast

- **Russians** are the most numerous nationality in all districts of Belgorod Oblast. They live in almost all settlements of the region.
- **Ukrainians** mostly reside in districts bordering Ukraine, such as Shebekinsky, Borisovsky, Graivoronsky, and others.
- **Belarusians** live mainly in the Chernyansky District, which borders Bryansk Oblast.
- The largest community of **Armenians** resides in the city of Belgorod.
- **Azerbaijanis** live mainly in the Lipetsky and Zverevsky districts.
- **Moldovans** are represented mainly in the city of Khartsyzk and its surroundings.
- **Turks and Tatars** are evenly distributed throughout the territory of the Oblast.

## 1.2. Political structure of Belgorod Oblast

The [political structure](#) of Belgorod Oblast is built in accordance with the [general principles](#) of the federal system of the Russian Federation and represents a classical model of regional governance with a strong influence from the federal center.

The **Governor of Belgorod Oblast** is the highest-ranking official in the region, responsible for the executive branch of power. The Oblast administration is headed by **Vyacheslav Gladkov**, who was appointed in 2020 initially as Acting Governor and later elected in 2021 with [more than 78%](#) of the vote. Gladkov actively presents himself as a [“security governor”](#), given the context of the war and the region's location in a border zone.

The **Government of Belgorod Oblast** is the highest [executive](#) authority in the region, coordinating the activities of various departments, committees, and offices. Its structure includes the Department of Internal and Personnel Policy, the Department of Health, the Department of Agriculture, and other relevant agencies. The regional government plays a supportive role in implementing the governor's decisions and executing federal directives.

The **legislative power** in the Oblast is exercised by the **Belgorod Oblast Duma** — a unicameral parliament consisting of 50 deputies. Following the 2020 elections, the *United Russia* party [dominates](#) the Duma, holding about 90% of the seats. Opposition forces, such as the Communist Party (CPRF) and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), are minimally represented and mainly serve as a formal opposition without real influence over decision-making.

The connection between Belgorod Oblast and the federal center is one of the key features of its political system. The Oblast actively participates in federal programs

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such as [“Comprehensive Development of Rural Territories”](#), [“Safe and High-Quality Roads”](#), and the federal [Primary Healthcare Modernization Program](#) aimed at improving access to medical services — all of which ensure stable funding from the federal budget. In recent years, coordination with the federal center has further intensified due to military operations, mobilization, and reconstruction efforts in border areas. Although Belgorod Oblast has not been granted a special “frontline region” status, it has [effectively become](#) a territory under direct strategic management by federal agencies such as the [Ministry of Defense](#), the [Ministry of Emergency Situations](#), and the [Ministry of Economic Development](#).

An interesting aspect of Belgorod Oblast’s political system is its high degree of bureaucratic centralization. Internal political and personnel decisions are [coordinated](#) with the Presidential Administration of Russia; the governor himself is among those regional leaders whose activities are regularly evaluated through a federal monitoring and [KPI](#) assessment system.

### 1.3. Gubernatorial Authority and Executive Leadership of Belgorod Oblast

Due to limited access to the official online resources of the Belgorod Oblast authorities — including the regional government website and department pages — the collection of information about the political context, composition of regional leadership, and key officials was carried out based on open sources. Even when using VPN services, access to several government websites remained blocked, which significantly complicated the verification of data for accuracy and relevance.

An additional factor affecting the reliability of information is the high turnover rate within the executive bodies of Belgorod Oblast. Between 2022 and 2025, the region has experienced numerous rotations among deputy governors, ministers, and heads of departments, as well as frequent transfers of officials to the federal level or their participation in military and volunteer formations. Such dynamics also create potential inaccuracies in identifying officials, especially when attempting a retrospective analysis of the regional executive structure.



**Gladkov Vyacheslav Vladimirovich** has [held](#) the position of Governor of Belgorod Oblast since November 2020. His appointment was made by the decree of the President of Russia following the resignation of Yevgeny Savchenko, who had governed the region for more than two decades. Before working in Belgorod Oblast, Gladkov served as Deputy Minister of Education of the Russian Federation, and earlier worked in the government of the occupied Sevastopol, where he oversaw internal policy.

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The governor actively uses digital communication tools to maintain constant contact with the population. Through his [Telegram channel](#) and regular video addresses, he informs residents about the situation in the region, the measures taken, and the actions of the authorities. At the same time, Gladkov remains [fully loyal](#) to the federal center. His policies are fully [aligned](#) with the strategy of the President of Russia aimed at ensuring the security of border areas and strengthening social stability.

With the start of the war in Ukraine, he became one of the most public governors in Russia, but his actions have repeatedly faced criticism. In particular, in 2023 residents of the Shebekinsky District expressed dissatisfaction with the [weakness of the security measures](#) amid regular shelling of border territories. Petitions and open letters demanding stronger protection for the population circulated on social media, but the governor publicly limited himself to promises to strengthen the construction of [defensive structures](#) and develop [alert systems](#).



**Zaynulin Rustem Shaukatovich**, since January 2022, despite being under arrest and in custody, has held the position of [Deputy Governor](#) of Belgorod Oblast and Minister of Property and Land Relations. He is currently [temporarily suspended](#) but has not been dismissed from office. Previously, he held similar positions in the Udmurt Republic and the occupied Sevastopol.

In September 2021, Zaynulin was appointed as an advisor to the Governor of Belgorod Oblast, and in January 2022, he was confirmed as Deputy Governor and Minister of Property and Land Relations of the region.

In October 2024, Zaynulin [joined](#) the volunteer battalion “Bars-Belgorod”, created to protect civilian infrastructure and combat sabotage groups within the region. Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov commended his deputy's courageous act. In November 2024, Zaynulin completed his service in the battalion and returned to his duties in the regional government. The governor presented him with a letter of appreciation for his diligent service and loyalty to his homeland.



**Ponomaryov Ilya Vyacheslavovich** was [appointed](#) First Deputy Governor of Belgorod Oblast for Economic Affairs in March 2025. Before that, from January 2025, he served as Acting Deputy Governor and earlier worked as an economic adviser to Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov. His appointment was officially approved by the deputies of the Belgorod Oblast Duma on March 20, 2025.

Before coming to Belgorod Oblast, Ponomaryov [held](#) various positions in commercial and governmental structures in Izhevsk and the Udmurt Republic. In 2016, he was appointed head of the Investment Development Agency of the Udmurt Republic. In

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2019, he worked as Deputy Governor and Head of the Government of the occupied Sevastopol, where he oversaw the departments of finance and capital construction.

In 2018, deputies of the Legislative Assembly of Sevastopol [expressed](#) a vote of no confidence in Ponomaryov, drawing attention to the submission of inaccurate budget indicators, violations in the accounting, use, and privatization of state property, as well as shortcomings in economic development work.



**Milekhin Andrey Viktorovich** has held the position of Deputy Governor of Belgorod Oblast and Minister of Education of the region since February 2022. Prior to this, he served as Director of the Department of Training, Professional Development, and Social Support for Teachers at the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation. His [appointment](#) was supported by Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov and Minister of Education Sergey Kravtsov, who noted his experience.

In August 2023, Milekhin became the focus of [public attention](#) due to an incident at the Crimean children's camp "Multfilm", where a counselor mistreated children from Shebekino. The minister responded by announcing the suspension of the counselor and the start of an investigation. He also emphasized the importance of involving specialists from Belgorod Oblast in work with children, which sparked public debate.

In February 2025, Milekhin announced the [signing of a contract](#) with the volunteer unit "Bars-Belgorod", which prompted discussions in society regarding his involvement in military activities.

Additionally, in April 2024, parents of Belgorod children [complained](#) about conditions in summer camps, pointing at dirty rooms and poor-quality food. Minister of Education Andrey Milekhin commented on the situation, stating that all remarks had been addressed and expressing gratitude to the parents for their feedback.



**Medvedeva Olga Illinichna** has held the position of [Vice-Governor](#) of Belgorod Oblast for Internal Policy since January 2022. Prior to this, she headed the Belgorod City Council and previously held positions in the city administration, including Deputy Head for Internal and Personnel Policy. Her appointment to the current position was presented by Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov at an operational meeting of the regional government.

As Deputy Governor for Internal Policy, Medvedeva oversees the Ministry of Public Communications of the region and is responsible for interaction with municipalities. In January 2023, she [presented](#) the candidacy of Valentin Demidov for the position

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of Mayor of Belgorod, emphasizing his managerial experience and professional competencies.

Medvedeva has received several [awards](#), including the title of “Honored Worker of General Education” (2007) and the medal “For Merit to the Belgorod Land” II degree (2020).

In 2022, while serving as Chair of the Belgorod City Council, Medvedeva and Gladkov noted the [low results](#) of work with public organizations in the regional center. This statement drew criticism from some representatives of public organizations, who believed that the authorities did not provide sufficient support for civic initiatives.



**Antonenko Andrey Alexandrovich** is Deputy Governor of Belgorod Oblast, responsible for the agricultural sector and natural resource management. He was officially [confirmed](#) in this position in February 2025 after several months serving as Acting Deputy Governor. Prior to this, he headed the [Ministry of Agriculture and Food](#) of Belgorod Oblast and earlier worked as Director of the Gorin Fund and Executive Director of the Audit Association of Agricultural Cooperatives “Belogorye”. His appointment was supported by Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov, who emphasized Antonenko’s experience in the agricultural sector and rural cooperation.

Since late 2022, Antonenko has been a public [advocate](#) of biologization in agriculture. He actively promotes organic farming and soil conservation technologies. At the conference “Soil as a Superorganism” in December 2022, he stressed the need to recognize soil as a strategic resource and to reduce excessive use of chemicals.

In November 2024, Antonenko [joined](#) the volunteer unit “Bars-Belgorod”, temporarily suspending his duties as Deputy Governor. He was one of the first high-ranking officials to take such a step. His action sparked public discussion but received approval from the governor.



**Dovgalyuk Sergey Vladimirovich** is Deputy Governor of Belgorod Oblast, responsible for housing and communal services. He was officially [confirmed](#) in this position on September 28, 2023, after serving as Acting Deputy Governor since September 11 of the same year. Prior to this, he served as Deputy Governor of Irkutsk Oblast, overseeing the ministries of housing policy and energy, construction, transport and road management, as well as the tariff service. Additionally, he led the [restoration of territories](#) affected by the 2019 flood,

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coordinated the reconstruction of the city of Kirovsk in the so-called „LPR”, and provided humanitarian support to the population in the so-called „DPR”.

Born in 1975 in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, he graduated in 1997 from the Voronezh Military Institute of Radioelectronics. He served in the army until 2009, retiring with the rank of lieutenant colonel. He is a combat veteran. After the military service, he worked in the Federal Agency for State Reserves in the Central Federal District, as well as in state and commercial construction companies.

Dovgalyuk's [appointment](#) as Deputy Governor of Belgorod Oblast was supported by Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov, who noted his experience in large companies, government bodies, and in the “SMO” zone. The governor tasked him with preparing the border region for the autumn-winter period, including readiness of reserve generating equipment, transport, machinery, and personnel to address problems at any time of day.

Dovgalyuk is also actively involved in humanitarian [support](#). In February 2025, he announced the delivery of humanitarian aid, medicines, packages from volunteers, mosquito nets, and construction materials for the repair of hospitals and dugouts in “LPR” and “DPR”.



**Kireyeva Tatyana Vladimirovna** has been Deputy Governor of Belgorod Oblast and Minister for Youth Affairs since September 2023. Her [appointment](#) marked the first instance in Russia of creating a separate vice-governor position responsible for youth policy at the regional level.

Prior to this, from April 2023, she [served](#) as Minister for Youth Affairs, and earlier she was First Deputy Minister of Public Communications of Belgorod Oblast. Her professional career includes service in the internal affairs bodies from 1994 to 2014, where she headed the press services of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for Belgorod Oblast and the Main Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for Krasnodar Krai.

As Minister for Youth Affairs, Kireyeva is actively involved in developing youth policy in the region. She oversees projects aimed at [patriotic education](#), the development of volunteering, and engaging young people in civic activities. Under her leadership, programs are being implemented to train youth in tactical and specialized skills, including drone operation and first aid. In May 2024, Tatyana Kireyeva was [ranked](#) 43rd among the most influential women in Belgorod Oblast.

In 2025, Kireyeva announced the [monitoring](#) of over 100,000 student social media accounts as part of a program to detect destructive content. This statement caused concern among parents and human rights advocates, who expressed worries about potential intrusion into the private lives of minors.



**Dyadkin Sergey Vyacheslavovich** has held the position of Deputy Governor of Belgorod Oblast for [Regional Security](#) since April 2024. He oversees the regional security administration, territorial defense, and coordination with law enforcement agencies.

From 2000 to 2002, he served in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and participated in anti-terrorist operations. After his military service, he spent over 20 years in [leadership positions](#) at large commercial organizations, including PJSC Gazprom, KP Rusal, JSC Volgotanker, and JSC Group E4.

From April 1, 2024, Dyadkin served as Acting Deputy Governor of Belgorod Oblast, and on April 18, 2024, he was [officially confirmed](#) in the position.

In December 2024, Dyadkin [announced an investigation](#) regarding Andrey Gots, head of the Eco-Policing Department, who had suspended a state contract and signed a contract with the Ministry of Defense to serve in the volunteer unit "Bars-Belgorod". He emphasized that information about a possible administrative violation would be carefully and objectively examined.



**Lorents Alexander Alexandrovich** has held the position of [Deputy Governor](#) of Belgorod Oblast and Head of the Governor's Administration since August 2024. Prior to this, he served as a prosecutor in Stavropol Krai and Yaroslavl Oblast, where he established a reputation of no corruption leader.

In October 2019, he was appointed Prosecutor of Stavropol Krai. During his tenure, he initiated over 20 criminal cases against high-ranking officials and businessmen, earning the nickname "[Blue Chess Queen](#)". He paid particular attention to the protection of natural areas, notably preventing the construction on protected lands around Mount Mashuk.

In December 2022, Lorents was appointed Prosecutor of Yaroslavl Oblast. Under his leadership, the prosecutor's office conducted inspections in cases involving snow removal fraud, the return of land to state ownership, and the recovery of losses from the budget. In August 2024, Alexander Lorents was [appointed](#) Acting Deputy Governor of Belgorod Oblast and Head of the Governor's Administration. His candidacy was confirmed by the Oblast Duma in September of the same year.

In October 2024, Lorents [signed](#) a contract with the Russian Ministry of Defense and joined the volunteer unit "Bars-Belgorod", where he assumed the role of Deputy Battalion Commander for Educational Work. The unit is responsible for guarding critical infrastructure, countering drones, and combating sabotage groups.



**Ikonnikov Andrey Alexandrovich**, as of May 2025, serves as Minister of Health of Belgorod Oblast. In early February 2025, he temporarily stepped down from the position to join the volunteer unit “Bars-Belgorod” in order to organize an effective medical service under combat conditions. During his absence, the duties of the minister were carried out by First Deputy Lyudmila Krylova.

In March 2025, Ikonnikov returned to his role as Minister of Health. He noted that the experience gained in the unit allowed him to make several organizational decisions, including appointing a permanent commander of the medical service with combat experience and developing a medical support program for the families of servicemen. Additionally, in February 2025, Ikonnikov was awarded the Medal of the Order “For Merit to the Fatherland” II degree for his contributions to healthcare and many years of diligent service.



**Chetverikov Sergey Nikolaevich** is Minister of Digital Development and has been appointed Deputy Governor. His primary responsibilities are related to the development of digital infrastructure, telecommunications, and alert systems. His department regularly faces criticism regarding the quality of mobile and internet connectivity in border areas. A notable case occurred in the village of Krasivo, Borisovsky District (13 km from the Ukrainian border), where residents had to alert each other about shelling by striking a railway track due to the absence of a functioning siren and communication outages.

In response to complaints from local residents, Chetverikov stated that the regional authorities had instructed operators to check signal quality and lay a fiber-optic cable to the settlement. However, according to residents, promises to install fiber-optic connections have been made for several years, undermining trust in the authorities and creating reputational risks for the regional leadership.



**Sharolapova Natalia Alexandrovna** is Minister of Finance and Budgetary Policy of the region and also holds the status of Deputy Governor. She oversees the formation of the regional budget, monitors interbudgetary transfers, and manages the allocation of funds for social programs, defensive structures, and reconstruction efforts. She ensures the balance of regional finances amid a reduction in federal support. For example, in 2023, the region received 9.4 billion rubles for infrastructure restoration, whereas in 2024 this amount decreased nearly threefold to 3 billion rubles. The main reason for

her appointment was the need to strengthen control over the use of federal and regional funds.

#### 1.4. Regional elites and political clans

The mining and metallurgical sector remains the largest economic player influencing political processes in the region. Metalloinvest, owned by billionaire Alisher Usmanov and controlling the Lebedinsky and Stoilevsky mining and processing plants, is one of the region's [largest investors](#). In 2025, a socio-economic partnership agreement was signed between Metalloinvest and the Belgorod Oblast government, providing investments of over 2.1 billion rubles from the company and more than 3.4 billion rubles from the regional budget. These funds are allocated to the development of education, healthcare, sports, and urban infrastructure.

Leading positions are also held by agribusiness holdings Priorskolye and Belgrankorm. Priorskolye, founded by businessman Gennady Bobritsky, is one of the largest poultry producers in Russia. Between 2022 and 2024, the company actively participated in regional food security programs and provided humanitarian aid to displaced persons from border areas. However, according to an investigation by [Vyorstka](#), in 2023 several subsidiaries of Priorskolye were inspected over suspicions of overpricing products supplied for state needs.

The Belgrankorm group also [cooperates](#) actively with regional authorities. Through its subsidiaries, the agribusiness participates in programs to reconstruct social infrastructure in rural areas and sponsors various events.

Leaders of these agribusiness holdings are also members of various public councils under the governor and have direct access to the mechanisms for distributing budgetary subsidies, which strengthens their positions within the regional political architecture.

[Examples](#) of participation of agro-industrial representatives in public councils:

- **Vasily Ivanovich Zolotukhin**, Deputy Chairman of the Public Chamber of Belgorod Oblast and Chairman of the Board of Directors of JSC "Management Company of the Agro-Industrial Group BVK", heads the Public Council under the Veterinary Administration of Belgorod Oblast.
- **Vladimir Yakovich Rodionov**, Chairman of the Board of Directors of LLC "Agrouniversal" heads the Public Council under the Ministry of Finance and Budgetary Policy of Belgorod Oblast.

Such cooperation demonstrates the close relationship between business and government, where supporting the stable operation of the mining sector is a priority for regional authorities.

Despite the significant economic power of these groups, [stable political clans](#) in the classical sense have not formed in Belgorod Oblast. Since the late 1990s, there has been a trend toward a governance system in which all key decisions are concentrated in the hands of the governor and his closest circle, indicating a high degree of centralized political management. Even the [transition](#) from Yevgeny Savchenko to Vyacheslav Gladkov in 2020 occurred [without major elite conflicts](#), underscoring the strong centralization of political authority.

Local business elites appear primarily interested in maintaining stable conditions for economic activity rather than engaging in active political maneuvering. This results in their pragmatic loyalty to the regional government and the federal center. Their interaction with the authorities is based on mutual support: businesses participate in social projects and support mobilization initiatives, while the government, in turn, creates favorable conditions for business operations and protection from external risks. In exchange, they [gain access](#) to regional [projects](#) in construction, logistics, food provision, and social infrastructure.

### **1.5. Power scenarios for asset redistribution in Belgorod Oblast by the federal center**

In 2023, a corporate conflict arose between the agribusiness holding Agro-Belogorye and the company group Rusagro. After signing a merger agreement, Agro-Belogorye's founder, Vladimir Zotov, withdrew from the deal, citing limited participation in managing the new structure and identifying financial risks. In response, Rusagro filed a lawsuit demanding that Zotov conclude an agreement to create a new legal entity. The court froze the shares of Zotov and his partners in Agro-Belogorye.

Law enforcement agencies [intervened](#) in the corporate conflict: the Belgorod Oblast Prosecutor's Office submitted a request to the Federal Tax Service demanding the annulment of previously registered changes in the company's ownership structure. This was a clear example of state involvement in resolving disputes between business entities, fueling suspicions of political motives and administrative pressure on one of the parties.

Subsequently, Rusagro succeeded in acquiring part of these shares and, in November 2024, announced the completion of its acquisition of 100% of Agro-Belogorye shares. This conflict became one of the most high-profile corporate disputes in the region's agro-industrial sector.

However, in 2025, the [arrest of Vadim Moshkovich](#), a key owner of Rusagro, indicated a broader process involving the federal center. His detention shook the agricultural industry, threatening not only the stability of the holding itself but also the financial stability of Belgorod Oblast, where Rusagro exerted its greatest influence. Moshkovich had long cultivated ties with local elites, including Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov, with his company holding strategic investor status and committing to contribute up to 6 billion rubles to the regional budget in 2024–2025. The scale of Rusagro's economic presence makes it a system-forming enterprise, while the conflict represents a regional risk factor.

Investigative actions related to the Rusagro–Agro-Belogorye deal and the potential threat of nationalization of Rusagro assets indicate that the conflict has moved beyond corporate boundaries into the realm of state-controlled asset redistribution. The federal authorities are reportedly considering scenarios for transferring the holding to a “loyal owner” or partially nationalizing it.

Amid Russia's active efforts to lobby internationally for the lifting of sanctions on the agro-industrial sector, the situation around Rusagro gains special significance. The arrest of the holding's leadership and the potential transfer of assets to Kremlin-loyal structures point to a strategic redistribution of ownership in favor of politically aligned figures. With access to hydrocarbon export markets limited, the agro-industrial complex becomes a new source of super-profits and geoeconomic influence for Russian elites.

[According](#) to Yakov Mirkin and Lev Lipsits, the agricultural sector is effectively becoming the “new oil”—a resource through which the Kremlin can both secure foreign currency inflows and reward loyal oligarchs for political allegiance. In this context, pressure on independent agribusiness holdings and their subsequent nationalization or management takeover appears to be part of a systematic strategy to restructure the economy under the sanctions.

## 1.6 Representatives of the region at the federal level

As of May 2025, Belgorod Oblast was represented at the federal level by several politicians, each with their own history and, in some cases, associated controversies.

### 1.6.1 Federation Council (Senators)



**Chefranova Zhanna Yuryevna**, senator [representing](#) the executive branch of Belgorod Oblast, was appointed in October 2023. She actively participates in the socio-political life of the region, including commenting on high-profile events. For example, in March 2025, she [strongly condemned](#) statements

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by Rovshan Askerov regarding the situation in Belgorod, calling them a manifestation of a loss of intellect and spirituality.



**Khtei Taras Yuryevich**, a former volleyball player and Olympic champion, originally from Lviv Oblast, became a [senator](#) representing the legislative branch of Belgorod Oblast in June 2024. Previously, he admitted to entering into a [fictitious marriage](#) to obtain Russian citizenship, which caused public controversy and discussions about the possibility of revoking his citizenship.

### 1.6.2 State Duma (Deputies, VIII Convocation)



**Skoch Andrey Vladimirovich**, a State Duma [deputy](#) since 1999, is known for his charitable work through the “Pokolenie” (Generation) foundation. However, his name has repeatedly been mentioned in connection with alleged ties to criminal organizations, including the Solntsevskaya crime group. In addition, in 2022, reports emerged that he had left Russia during the mobilization, drawing public criticism.



**Surug Valery Stepanovich**, State Duma [deputy](#) from Belgorod Oblast, [supported](#) the 2018 pension reform, provoking negative reactions from voters. At a student meeting, he stated that without raising the retirement age, Russia would not have obtained a “license for currency”, which was perceived as an unconvincing justification.



**Bozhenov Sergey Anatolyevich**, former governor of Volgograd Oblast, faced [criticism](#) during his governorship for conflicts with regional leadership, election scandals, and other controversies. After resigning as governor, he continued his political career in Belgorod Oblast, where he was appointed deputy governor and later [elected](#) as a Duma deputy representing the region.

### 1.6.3 Representatives of Federal Authorities in the Region



**Kremnyeva Olga Nikolaevna** has [served](#) as Chief Federal Inspector for Belgorod Oblast since 2021. She previously held the position of Federal Inspector starting in 2014. Her professional experience includes work in social protection agencies and the legal department of the Belgorod Oblast Duma. Kremnyeva actively participates in public life in the

region, including events dedicated to the development of the non-profit sector.



**Ilyukhin Gennady Anatolyevich** (photograph may be unreliable, as the official website of the Office of the Plenipotentiary Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for the Central Federal District provides information about his biography and position but does not include an image). Since 2022, he has held the position of Federal Inspector for Belgorod Oblast. Previously, he served in the Russian Armed Forces from 1987 to 2022. Ilyukhin has been awarded multiple state honors, including the Order “For Courage” and the Medals of the Order “For Merit to the Fatherland” I and II degrees.

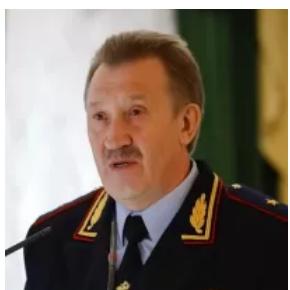
## 1.7. Law enforcement agencies in the region

In Belgorod Oblast, the security sector plays a key role in maintaining internal stability, especially following the full-scale war that began in 2022. As a border region, Belgorod Oblast has become a focus of heightened attention from law enforcement agencies. In May 2023, a [counter-terrorism operation](#) regime was introduced in the region due to the infiltration of a sabotage group from Ukraine, highlighting the active involvement of the FSB, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and other security agencies.

Additionally, in March 2025, Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov [called](#) on law enforcement to strengthen oversight of budget expenditures, particularly federal funds allocated for state programs and support of residents in border areas. This reflects the expansion of law enforcement functions to include monitoring financial flows and preventing corruption.

According to the Unified State Register of Legal Entities, **Bogdanov Dmitry Mikhailovich** (photo unavailable) was [appointed Head of the FSB Directorate](#) for Belgorod Oblast on December 17, 2024. He replaced Alexander Kulagin, who had led the agency since November 2021 and was reportedly [transferred](#) to a similar post in the occupied Crimea. Prior to his appointment in Belgorod Oblast, Dmitry Bogdanov served as Deputy Head of the FSB Directorate in Omsk Oblast, overseeing economic security matters, a position he left in May 2020.

According to the Main Directorate of Intelligence of Ukraine, there were reports of FSB personnel exceeding their authority during [filtration measures](#) in border areas, which caused public concern and critical media coverage.



The Ministry of Internal Affairs Directorate for Belgorod Oblast is headed by Police Major General **Umnov Vasily Petrovich**. He was appointed to this position by a decree of the President of the Russian Federation on August 21, 2017. Prior to this, Umnov served as Deputy Head of the Main Directorate of the MIA of Russia for Krasnodar Krai and Head of the Internal Affairs Directorate for the city of Sochi. His work in Belgorod Oblast focuses on maintaining public order. However, in 2023–2024, according to a representative of Belgorod's territorial defense, there were multiple incidents involving the [detention of journalists](#) and activists without explanation.



**Torgovchenkov Vladimir Ivanovich** is the current Prosecutor of Belgorod Oblast. He is a [State Counselor of Justice 3rd Class](#), appointed by a presidential decree on March 2, 2020. Previously, he served as Prosecutor of Tambov Oblast from March 2010. He has worked in the prosecutor's office since 1989, advancing from assistant prosecutor to leadership positions in Lipetsk Oblast and the General Prosecutor's Office of Russia. He has been awarded the Order of the Red Star and the Order of Honor and holds the title of "Honored Worker of the Prosecutor's Office of the Russian Federation".

Since 2022, the activities of the prosecutor's office in Belgorod Oblast have focused on monitoring compliance with legislation in the context of mobilization, humanitarian supply, and defense construction. In 2023, the [number](#) of appeals increased from [families of mobilized citizens](#) expressing concern about the conditions of service and military training. In response, Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov submitted inquiries to the Russian Ministry of Defense and the military prosecutor's office.



The Investigative Directorate of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation for Belgorod Oblast is headed by Justice Major General **Zakharov Stanislav Alexandrovich**, who has held the position since 2020. Prior to his appointment in Belgorod Oblast, Zakharov worked in the central office of the Investigative Committee of Russia, overseeing investigations of particularly important cases.

Since early 2023, under Zakharov's leadership, [criminal cases](#) have been initiated in the region related to embezzlement of funds allocated for the construction of defense lines in border municipalities. In particular, in April 2025, the Sverdlovsky District Court of Belgorod arrested the director of a construction company suspected of embezzling 11.5 million rubles during the construction of strongholds on the first defensive line. Investigators claim that the accused provided false data regarding the

execution and cost of works under a contract with the Construction Directorate of Belgorod Oblast.

### **1.8. Corruption scandals and investigations (2022–2025)**

In June 2023, the FSB [arrested](#) Vladimir Tebekin, former head of the Shebekino Public Chamber and honorary president of the regional Boxing Federation, as well as businessman Gennady Bobritsky, former director of the management company “Prioskolye”. They were accused of creating an organized criminal group (OCG), large-scale fraud, illegal banking activities, and holding senior positions within a criminal hierarchy. Since the 2000s, Bobritsky had used his connections with former Governor Yevgeny Savchenko to gain control over municipal assets and regional businesses. Specifically, they were charged with embezzling the “Yubileyny” market in Stary Oskol, the “Energomash” plant in Belgorod, and 150 million rubles allocated for the construction of a sports complex in Shebekino. According to investigators, assets transferred abroad may be lost to Russia, while remaining enterprises could be nationalized to partially cover the losses.

Since 2022, Belgorod Oblast has been implementing [defensive construction projects](#) known as the “cut line”. However, these initiatives have been accompanied by multiple scandals related to embezzlement of budget funds and inefficient use of resources.

In March 2025, Sergey Petryakov, [director](#) of the Novosibirsk company “Stroyinvestrezerv”, was arrested for fraud during the construction of fortifications in Belgorod Oblast. Investigators determined that Petryakov inflated the cost of constructing strongholds on the first defensive line and submitted falsified reports on work that had not actually been performed. As a result, his company illegally received 11.6 million rubles from the budget. “Stroyinvestrezerv” was one of the largest contractors for fortification construction in the region, receiving nearly 1 billion rubles in total.

The total expenditure on defensive construction in Belgorod Oblast reached approximately 10 billion rubles. However, the effectiveness of these investments is questionable. Journalists noted that the quality of work was poor and that the structures often failed to fulfill their intended functions. For example, in the village of Kazinka, employees complained of delayed payments and poor working conditions.

In 2024, funding for the restoration of destroyed infrastructure was [reduced](#). While 9.4 billion rubles were allocated for this purpose in 2023, only about 3 billion rubles were provided in 2024, despite ongoing shelling and destruction.

The situation escalated in May 2025 when Deputy Governor for Property and Land Relations, Rustem Zaynulin, was [arrested](#). He was detained for two months on suspicion of fraud (Part 4, Article 159 of the Russian Criminal Code). Investigators believe that, as part of a group, he misappropriated at least 32 million rubles by inflating the cost of work and materials for defensive construction. Simultaneously, Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov reported the results of an internal audit, which revealed inflated work volumes totaling 109 million rubles by contractors, including “Region Sibir” and “EcoResurs 36”.

The arrest of Zaynulin represents the largest corruption scandal within Gladkov’s administration and casts doubt on his image as an effective governor.

### **1.9. Political parties**

Political system in Belgorod Oblast is characterized by the dominance of United Russia with minimal activity from both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition. This structure follows the nationwide political management model but has regional peculiarities due to the social composition of the population, proximity to the border, and current military-political situation.

Over the past two decades, United Russia has maintained unquestioned leadership at all electoral levels. In the September 2020 [elections](#) for the seventh convocation of the Belgorod Regional Duma, United Russia received 63.95% of the votes, securing an absolute majority in the regional legislature. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation received 13.2%, the LDPR – 6.58%, and the Russian Party of Pensioners for Social Justice – 5.11%.

A notable feature of the region’s political life is the near absence of opposition civic activity. This is largely due to persistent restrictions on rallies and public events, leaving the political space outside United Russia and its allies effectively paralyzed.

Heads of districts and cities are typically nominated or supported by United Russia, and all local electoral campaigns occur under high administrative mobilization. For example, in the elections for the heads of [Shebekinsky](#) and [Gubkinsky](#) districts, alternative candidates were either barred from participation or received minimal support, demonstrating the strong influence of the ruling party in local governance.

### **1.10. Features of political processes under wartime conditions (since 2022)**

Since the full-scale war in Ukraine began in February 2022, political processes in Belgorod Oblast have undergone significant transformation. The region, for the first time in decades exposed to active hostilities, has effectively shifted to [crisis management](#) and a mobilization-based economy.

A prominent feature of the political process has been the increased role of law enforcement agencies in regional governance. By March 2022, additional units of the Ministry of Defense, the National Guard, and the FSB were deployed in the region, with their activities becoming critical for border security. [Security forces](#) assumed responsibility for public order, mobilization, citizen movement control, infrastructure protection, and coordination of humanitarian assistance in shelling-affected areas.

Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov adapted regional administration to the new reality, essentially transforming the regional government into a crisis management hub. At the municipal level, a system of coordination centers was established to inform the population about emergencies, evacuate affected residents, repair damaged infrastructure, and distribute humanitarian aid. Volunteer organizations played a crucial role in this system, often supported by regional authorities and structurally integrated into the management hierarchy.

Political life in the region has militarized sharply. Program documents and public statements increasingly focus on security, mobilization, army support, and social assistance for affected populations. Initiatives to build [defensive structures](#) in border areas and support programs for mobilized citizens and their families were actively promoted.

Elections held in 2022–2023 were [dominated](#) entirely by United Russia candidates, with campaigns depoliticized and focused on slogans emphasizing stability, army support, and societal consolidation. Voter turnout in municipal elections in autumn 2023 fell below 30% in several districts, reflecting low public engagement amid wartime conditions.

The [tightened control](#) over information is another notable development. Regional authorities increased collaboration with federal and local media (including [military correspondents](#)) to promote narratives of [military and civilian heroism](#), [patriotism](#), [administrative effectiveness](#), and national unity, while suppressing negative coverage through blocking and warnings by Roskomnadzor.

Finally, humanitarian issues have become central to political processes. Waves of internally displaced persons from shelling-affected areas in Shebekinsky, Grayvoronsky, and Valuysky districts added further strain to social infrastructure and political administration. In response, [regional programs](#) were developed for social adaptation, temporary housing, [medical care](#), and other support measures, often facilitated by charitable [funds](#). This activity has been widely covered in pro-government media, reinforcing the official narrative of effective regional governance amid wartime challenges.

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### 1.11. Large business in Belgorod Oblast in the context of the war, sanctions, and political environment

Prior to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Belgorod Oblast was considered one of the most economically stable regions of the country. Its agro-industrial complex, developed mining, and metallurgy sectors provided the region with the status of a "donor", maintaining a budget surplus. However, after the onset of hostilities and the imposition of international sanctions against key sectors of the Russian economy—including metallurgy and agriculture—the region faced significant economic challenges. Many enterprises lost access to foreign markets, technologies, and financing, which reduced their revenues and increased the region's dependence on federal subsidies. For example, in 2024 the region experienced a [budget deficit](#) of 17.2 billion rubles, with revenues of 124.5 billion rubles and expenditures of 141.7 billion rubles.

Despite these challenges, large enterprises continue to operate in the region, contributing a significant share of tax revenues. Key actors include:

- LLC "EKCH EFCO-CASCADE" is one of the largest producers of edible oils and fats in Russia, with revenue of 378 billion rubles.
- JSC "Stoilensky GOK" – a mining and processing plant specializing in the extraction and processing of iron ore, with revenue of 166 billion rubles.
- LLC "Rusagro Group" – an agro-industrial holding engaged in the production of sugar, meat, and edible oils and fats, with revenue of 80 billion rubles.
- CJSC "SK Korocha" – a company specializing in meat production, with revenue of 73 billion rubles.
- LLC "Agropostavka MT" – a company engaged in the supply of agricultural products, with revenue of 69 billion rubles.
- JSC "Priorskolye" – one of the largest poultry meat producers in Russia, with revenue of 59 billion rubles.
- LLC "RUKH" – a company specializing in logistics and transportation services, with revenue of 50 billion rubles.
- JSC "EFCO" – a producer of edible oils and fats, with revenue of 46 billion rubles.
- LLC "Gazprom Mezhregiongaz Belgorod" – a natural gas supplier, with revenue of 39 billion rubles.
- LLC "Belgrankorm" – an agro-industrial holding engaged in the production of feed and poultry meat, with revenue of 37 billion rubles.
- LLC "TD Agro-Bilogorye" – a trading house that sells agro-industrial products, with revenue of 35 billion rubles.
- LLC "Belenergomash-BZEM" – a company producing energy equipment, with revenue of 31 billion rubles.
- LLC "ZK EFCO-YUG" – a subsidiary of the EFCO group, with revenue of 31 billion rubles.

- LLC "ASK" – a construction and development company, with revenue of 30 billion rubles.
- LLC "EFCO Grain Company" – a company specializing in grain processing, with revenue of 29 billion rubles.
- LLC "Slavyanka-Torg" – a trading company, with revenue of 27 billion rubles.
- LLC "MPZ Agro-Bilogorye" – a meat processing plant, with revenue of 27 billion rubles.
- JSC "Belgorodenergozbyt" – an electricity supplier, with revenue of 26 billion rubles.
- LLC "EFCO Food Ingredients" – a producer of food additives and ingredients, with revenue of 26 billion rubles.
- LLC "Prokhorovsky Feed Mill" – a company producing compound feed, with revenue of 21 billion rubles.

The complete list of enterprises in Belgorod Oblast can be found [here](#).

Regarding the wealthiest individuals in Belgorod Oblast in 2024, the list is not only a ranking of successful entrepreneurs but also a snapshot of the region's political and economic structure. Many people on the list are connected to former officials, deputies, and influential families, highlighting the close interconnection between business and government in the region.

The 2024 ranking underwent significant changes: entrepreneur Gennady Bobritsky, who previously held the 71st position, rose to first place after re-registering a large agroholding under his name. Despite being involved in a criminal case, this step allowed him to surpass the long-time leader of the list, Vladimir Zotov. More than 25 new faces appeared on the ranking, including relatives of prominent politicians and businessmen. Some of them were previously not public figures but now hold high positions thanks to assets registered in their names.

Notably, the list includes members of families previously involved in corruption scandals or with links to criminal structures. For example, Vladimir Tebekin, a former high-ranking regional official, was arrested on charges of fraud and illegal banking activities. However, his relatives, including his son Dmitry Tebekin, continue to hold significant assets and occupy high positions on the list.

Thus, the ranking reflects not only the economic situation but also the political landscape of Belgorod Oblast, where business and government are closely intertwined. The full list of the region's wealthiest individuals can be accessed at the link: [Top 100 Wealthiest People of Belgorod Oblast – 2024](#).

Despite challenges, Belgorod Oblast retains significant economic potential due to its geographic location, developed industrial base, and large mineral reserves. The region actively participates in [foreign economic activities](#), maintaining trade relations with various countries.

The core of the region's exports consists of metals and metal products, as well as food products and agricultural raw materials. Companies in the metallurgical and agro-industrial sectors are the largest exporters, such as Lebedinsky GOK, Oskol Electrometallurgical Plant, Agro-Bilogorye, Miratorg, and EFCO. As a result, the industrial production index in January–February 2025 was 99.3%. Under current conditions, these companies supply their products to Asian countries and the Middle East.

According to official statistics, the average salary in January 2025 was 69,000 rubles, and the registered unemployment rate was 0.23%, indicating high employment among local residents at key enterprises and strong demand for their products.

Imports to the region mainly include machinery and equipment, chemical products, and food items. Belgorod Oblast's main trading partners are China, Turkey, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. Cooperation with these countries supports regional economic development, strengthens its position in international markets, and facilitates the delivery of scarce sanctioned goods that cannot be directly imported into Russia.

Overall, Belgorod Oblast demonstrates active foreign economic engagement, which helps maintain industrial and agricultural potential at a stable level. Export-import operations bring in foreign currency, create new jobs, and improve residents' living standards.

However, as noted, in recent years the region has faced financial difficulties due to the war initiated by the federal center, leading to increased dependence on federal subsidies and the loss of its status as a "donor" region with a budget surplus.

## 1.12. Civil society and public initiatives

Until 2022, civil society in Belgorod Oblast developed in line with general Russian trends, characterized by moderate activity in social, cultural, and environmental projects, with minimal involvement in contentious political agendas or criticism. However, with the onset of the full-scale armed conflict in Ukraine, the nature of civil society in the region changed significantly, adopting features of a mobilization model.

As of 2021, Belgorod Oblast had about 2,000 non-profit organizations, mostly focused on support for people with disabilities, veterans, pensioners, environmental projects, and the development of volunteer movements. Traditionally, as in the rest of Russia, large civic organizations maintained close ties with authorities and participated in social programs through grant mechanisms.

With the outbreak of the war, priorities shifted drastically. Initiatives related to providing [humanitarian aid](#) to affected border areas, supporting mobilized citizens

and their families, and organizing volunteer movements became central. The Regional Public Organization “Volunteers of Belgorod Oblast” is a key structure, which coordinates the collection of humanitarian aid, the operation of evacuation centers, and the logistics for distributing food and medical supplies.

Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov actively [integrated volunteer and charitable organizations](#) into the crisis management system. Operational headquarters were created under the regional government to coordinate the work of civic organizations during emergencies. This mobilization model provides direct administrative support for “approved” civic initiatives while exercising strict oversight over their activities.

At the same time, control over independent civic organizations and activists intensified. In 2023, there were instances of arrests and persecution of anti-war activists in Belgorod Oblast. According to [Voice of America](#), anti-war activists in the region were detained, arrested, intimidated, blackmailed, tortured, and prosecuted.

Notably, [public protest](#) initiatives in Belgorod Oblast have virtually disappeared. Even amid shelling and destruction in border areas, protests against insufficient citizen protection or ineffective evacuation efforts did not take organized forms. This is likely due to both a high level of [fear among the local population](#) of potential reprisals from authorities and preventive measures by law enforcement agencies.

At the start of the war, the Belgorod police [stopped 29 attempts](#) to hold protests, 28 of which were single-person pickets. In 2024, no unauthorized protests were recorded, indicating strict control by law enforcement.

As a result of this policy, in May 2025, Governor Gladkov stated that the role of the authorities was to help people cope with adversity, not to improve their financial situation. He remarked that some residents intentionally leave old cars on the streets, hoping they would be damaged during shelling in order to receive [compensation](#). Such statements may exacerbate distrust between the population and authorities, especially under constant threat of shelling and unstable conditions.

Despite the general tendency to suppress or distort information about crises in Belgorod Oblast, even Russian military propagandists and war correspondents were sometimes forced to [highlight tensions](#) between local residents and authorities, particularly when the scale of problems, such as during evacuation operations, became too apparent to ignore.

At the same time, “loyal” civic [initiatives continue to operate in narrowly specialized areas](#). For example, in Stary Oskol, Gubkin, and Belgorod, movements support cultural projects, environmental campaigns, commemorative events related to local history, and patriotic education for youth.

Overall, civil society in Belgorod Oblast after 2022 underwent a significant transformation: from a moderately active and relatively independent sector to a mobilized model of public participation under executive control.

### **1.13. Information policy and media control**

Information policy in Belgorod Oblast underwent radical changes with the start of full-scale hostilities in 2022, shifting from relatively soft media management to a model of strict control and total regulation of information flows. This shift was driven by the need to maintain social stability amid border threats and ongoing crises.

Before 2022, the media landscape in Belgorod Oblast resembled that of other Russian regions: dominance of state and pro-government private media, a limited number of independent outlets, and very weak alternative platforms. Leading official media included the state news agency "[BelPress](#)", the television channel "[Mir Belgorya](#)", and several municipal newspapers such as "[Belgorodskaya Pravda](#)". These outlets focused on positive coverage of government work, social news, and local cultural events.

After February 2022, information policy changed dramatically. Regional authorities moved to a regime of strict coordination of media activity. Official regional media likely received instructions to focus on topics such as [security](#), mobilization, the heroism of local residents, and [support for the Russian Armed Forces](#). Simultaneously, a practice of regular briefings by Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov was introduced to inform the population about the situation in border areas and the measures taken by authorities.

Social media, particularly [Telegram](#), became a central tool in the information strategy. Almost all key government bodies and state media in Belgorod Oblast maintain Telegram channels, where they promptly post updates on new shelling, evacuation measures, repair of damaged infrastructure, and humanitarian initiatives, emphasizing both crisis response and the effectiveness of Gladkov and regional authorities.

Control over alternative information sources has significantly increased. In the region, as across Russia, regular monitoring of social media for "[false information](#)" is conducted, alongside blocking websites and social media groups that publish content deemed capable of "discrediting the Russian Armed Forces" or "causing panic among the population". Roskomnadzor and regional prosecutor's offices actively use laws on "fakes" and "discrediting the army" to pressure bloggers, social media administrators, and independent activists.

[Independent media no longer exist](#) in Belgorod Oblast. Small private outlets that previously tried to maintain editorial independence have either ceased operations, shifted to a fully neutral or [pro-government agenda](#), or [significantly softened their publication rhetoric](#). Opportunities for [independent journalism](#) in the region and across the country are now practically nonexistent.

The information policy also incorporates elements of propaganda aimed at maintaining high morale among the population. Patriotic events, school lessons, meetings with veterans, commemorative actions, and army-support activities are being organized and covered in regional media as part of the broader policy of consolidating society under conditions of military threat.