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MODERNIZATION REVISITED: SEARCHING FOR A NEW CONCEPTUAL SCHEME

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Abstract. *The author reviews a monograph recently published abroad on issues of modernization in post-Soviet Russia. The book Russian Modernization, A New Paradigm indeed offers a new paradigm of research targeting social change in Russian society. The paradigm is based on the theory of structuration by Anthony Giddens furthered by Finnish sociologist M. Kivinen. The theory enables researchers to expand the number of actors who can influence the situation in the country. The theory incorporates three levels of analysis, the general one, reflecting on the basic structural characteristics of society, the local one that aims at theorizing in the medium-term context, and the empirical one that amasses and analyzes data attempting thereby to confirm or refute the hypotheses related to reproduction and change. The prospects of Russian society are presented as an inevitable choice between several scenarios of further evolution. The structuration theory approach has both strengths and obvious weaknesses. It overlooks the matter of the social-change actors' presence understood as modernization. In the current situation, there is a consensus in Russian society between elites and the bulk of the population that guarantees relative stability of the existing social order and social system. Therefore, modernization, having no obvious advocates in the ruling elite, will most likely assume the form of gradual cultural, as it were, evolution that includes gradual transformation of the fundamental values and behavior standards.*

Keywords: *Modernization • reforms • social structure • ruling elite • social institutions*

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In Russian discourses on social changes mentions of the concept *modernization* provoke predictable apprehension. In the 20th century Russia repeatedly embarked on a modernization course, and every time the policy of modernizing the life of society yielded contradictory results. In Russia modernization, its goals and means have always, at all times been determined by the ruling elite that proceeded from the assumption that the masses were archaic, inert and could be set in motion only by tough (and occasionally, ruthless cruel) measures. Each time modernization from on high plunged society into a state of non-freedom: in some cases, by a series of reprisals, in others, by economic measures that pushed the public to the brink of survival. It is this experience that has instilled in today's social consciousness a lasting aversion to the very notion of reform (let alone revolution). After all, in Russia's history reforms and revolutions, that initially evoked an upsurge of energy and enthusiasm, then inevitably caused large-scale violence, the Dark Ages, where the best part of society paid a heavy toll. And every time

the benefits gained as the result of reform were questioned afterwards, while the pre-reform condition of society was described as the good times, as the true Russia that we had lost.

All of this can be fully applied to the neo-liberal reform of the last twenty years. Monetizing perquisites, reforming education, optimizing and commercializing medicine, raising the retirement age brought about massive losses, plummeting living standards, glaring inequality, an increase in problem strata locked in social space. Every time, in order to preserve social and political stability, the authorities had to take one or several steps back; neither the monetization nor the education reform had been implemented as they had been conceived originally. One of the reasons was, alas, the reformers' extremely vague idea of the society they lived in, and their conception of reforms borrowed from foreign, far from unambiguous, practice. Yet the main reason for their failure and half-measures was apparently the fact that the changes they planned were not based on a theoretical construction, which might correlate the general and particular goals of reforms, creating an acceptable repertory of means to achieve the latter. Whereas Chinese communists plan the life of their country for decades to come, and carry out today's reforms in cold blood, having some notion of the kind of fruit these will yield tomorrow, the Russian reformers, conversely, are chiefly guided by neo-liberal models, quite often rejected by other countries, because they have proved utterly inadequate in other societies.

If one wishes to understand the problems of Russian modernization, the book of considerable interest will be the new publication *Russian Modernization. A New Paradigm* recently published abroad by an international team of authors (including Russian sociologists M.V. Maslovsky, of the Higher School of Economics Research University in St. Petersburg, and others), edited by M. Kivinen and B. Humphreys [Russian Modernization..., 2021]. Stemming from comprehension of the Russian reform experience, it puts forward a sociological conception under which the purpose of reform should be shifted toward general welfare, while the means of attaining the goals set would imply not narrowing, but broadening civil rights and liberties. Let us examine this bold attempt at comprehending conceptually the Russian experience so as to have a better understanding of the way the problems of our national progress are seen from abroad. The point of this paper is not only to acquaint the reader with the new theoretical publication on Russian society, but also present an alternative vision of the concept of modernization given there.

One has to give the authors their due: they are actively using the theoretical legacy, as it were, at the disposal of modern sociology. The basis of the modernization conception in the view of its creators, M. Kivinen and M. Maslovsky, is the theory of structuration by A. Giddens [Giddens, 1984: 1–34]. Giddens pioneered his structuration theory in 1976 in *New Rules of Sociological Method* [Giddens, 1976] as a project of overcoming limitations set on the understanding of society by previous theoretical schemes.

Marxism and structural functionalism, he believed, imposed a what might be called imperial approach on social sciences, under which society prevailed over the individual will. An alternative to both paradigms at the time was the hermeneutics school that proceeded from the fact that it was precisely the individual who was the end subject of social action, while society existed merely as a sum of individual wills and was totally dependent on their configuration. The advocates of "total" theoretical constructions saw no point in delving into the details of individual life, while the adepts of phenomenological sociology did not regard society as something essential, for the latter appeared in this paradigm as a simple aggregate of standard actions performed by actors at the individual level.

Giddens thought that it was not only possible, but in fact necessary to combine the two approaches, tying together the micro- and macrolevels of social analysis. In his view, it would have been a wicked waste to reject the theoretical legacy left by Marxism and functionalism. These trends, for all their differences, help observe in public life that, which does not boil down to the individual will, and reveal emergent characteristics in the life of society that are beyond the individual's doings. But it would be no less wasteful to lose the individual will in these schemes, the ability of any person to make a choice. The subject of research in natural

sciences where the forces of nature are beyond human control is one thing, but society, where reality is created and altered by acting and interacting people is another. The difference between society and nature is that nature has not been manufactured by man. As for society, although it is not created by each person individually, it is produced and reproduced anew in the current circumstances by participants in social interactions. The production of society is a qualified process maintained and provided for by people. [Giddens, 1976: 15]. The obvious question to ask is what can fill the space between the structure and the individual will? Giddens thinks that these are social practices that imply, on the one hand, stable routine interactions, and on the other, modification of these interactions, with new elements introduced into those, which, in turn, transform the structures.

Giddens' theoretical idea affords a number of important advantages in those cases when the item under analysis is the changing society. First, the Giddens conception helps the researcher get rid of the a priori supposedly metaphysical premises that prompt conclusions before the research has been completed. The only presupposition of this scheme is that, like most other theoretical conceptions, it allows the very possibility of a social order. Second, under the Giddens scheme society is viewed as a reality undergoing continuous changes that vary in scale and speed. The "recalcitrant" social order, with ambitions of self-prolongation, is merely a tribute to short-sightedness displayed by contemporaries who cannot see *Kairos* (instant) behind *Chronos* (time), the current situation in its entire uniqueness and mutability. Third, the Giddens conception has the benefit of not excluding the individual will from social processes, and therefore, induces this will to be regarded not only a motive force, but also as a combination of conditions and limitations of the changes being observed. As Kivinen and Maslovsky emphasize at the beginning of their book, the important semantic drive of Giddens' theory consists in the fact that structures are born in the course of dynamic processes extended in time and space. In this reality, it is necessary to study not simply intended consequences, but also unintended ones. Precisely for this reason we cannot explain institutions or tendencies in Russian society (or any other, for that matter) other than by exploring the actions of various actors and the results of what they do [Russian Modernization, 2021: 23].

Thus, the new paradigm offered there implies that within this approach the object of analysis should be not only the elites, but also all the actors of the structuration process, not just discourses (which are important), but also actual institutions, as well as the routine and changing practices of daily life. In this sense it becomes possible to identify the process of modernization with those of structuration, while any modernization discourses are viewed from the angle of specific social interests stemming from the social situation in which the subject engendering those is found. In order to tie the actions of actors into a single analytical scheme, on the one hand, and the integrity of the modernization process, on the other, it is necessary to possess sociological imagination. None but this approach will enable one to comprehend the real essence of the events, avoid not only political and economic reduction, but also the kind stemming from the limitations of the paradigm used, whether modernist or antimodernist.

According to Kivinen and Maslovsky, the Giddens structuration theory applied to the concrete Russian situation presupposes three interconnected and interlaced levels of analysis. The first one keeps within its field of vision processes related to structures typical of Russian society, and those that have caused their current state. The general provisions of the structuration theory are impossible either to confirm or to refute, and in this sense, they are the axiomatic basis of the other two levels. The advantage of using it is that eventually it creates a species of protective cover that ensures uniform understanding of processes occurring in various areas of public life. This level is essential, apart from anything else, for lending a multidiscipline nature to the research. On the second level, structure analysis should be supplemented with active theorizing with regard to a specific sphere of public life. In this context we need medium-level theories that rely on falsifiable hypotheses, and explanatory schemes that include the historical-cultural dimension. And, finally, at the third level it becomes possible to conduct empirical research turned toward the theory and intended to characterize the specifics of production

and reproduction of social structures, and agents, which support reproduction and simultaneously provoke the process of social change and discourses, and mobilize actors to perform certain acts.

The obvious question arising as the Giddens scheme is being applied to the Russian experience can be formulated thus: How are the three levels mentioned here connected with each other? How do routine practices or change therein in specific social circumstances affect the trajectory of social progress? The authors tend to think that the practices enabling Russian society to change are found primarily in the political sphere. The reference is to actors' participation in political parties, civil society organizations, and public movements forming the reflexive style of society and challenges it faces. In part, for this reason, too, the challenges faced by Russian society are viewed by the authors as an objective basis of sociopolitical action that follows from the current circumstances, as something that can and should be taken as a program of transformation by reasonable political actors who wish their country well.

Russian Modernization names five such challenges: diversification of the economy, the extent to which the state influences economy, the social state and social policies, the foreign-policy choice, evolution of the social consciousness (the correlation of rational and irrational elements therein). I do not intend to look in detail at all the five spheres in which the authors examine modernization choices. I would merely like to dwell on the two most important challenges that seem axial, i.e., capable of forming the public life climate, the environment where decisions are taken on key issues of Russian life.

The first challenge as formulated by the authors of the monograph is the need to diversify the economy. The dilemma Russia is facing is either to continue relying on its raw materials or to use the available opportunities in order to build a diversified multistructure and multibranch economy that would organize into a single whole both big state corporations and minor entities. The prospects of Russian modernization will in any case depend on the state of the economy, according to the authors. Given this, the chief challenge Russia encounters is economic diversification... The country should reduce its excessive dependence on oil and gas both in foreign trade and in the makeup of domestic consumption. Their approach to diversification consists in viewing it not merely as diversification of production, but also as development of social and organizational forms of functioning for public and private enterprises working in the economic sphere [*Russian Modernization*, 2021: 25]. Should the country's objective need of economy diversification be ignored, believe Kivinen and Maslovsky, this will result in the underemployment of the human capital it has accumulated. Preserving the raw-material orientation will perpetuate excessive inequality, corruption and indifference to the problem of environment conservation that prevails in the minds of decision-makers.

Russian bureaucrats predictably parry similar reasoning by practical considerations: the budget has to be filled, the population has to be fed, equipment has to be purchased, and all of that takes money that can be obtained first and foremost from selling primary goods. The arguments laying stress on the problem of survival in the current situation are so convincing that even an ordinary member of the public, e.g., one of the many old-age pensioners, will not fail to agree, yes, indeed, today is more important than remote consequences; pensions are meager as it is, and their size should not be sacrificed to the radiant future; wages must be paid to public servants, or the entire edifice of the Russian state will collapse. Thus, the problem of diversification is solved in favor of the status quo, moreover, with arguments that are easily comprehensible not only to officials, but also to the general public. The logic of every day, reproduction of public life in its current parameters has been embodied in the existing practices and is equally lucid not only to those who take managerial decisions, but also to those who seemingly have no noticeable advantages in the present social order. It is precisely the routine practices forming the social order that encourage reproduction of the status quo erecting barriers on the way of modernization in this aspect. The question arises, who, which social group can become an agent influential enough to rupture the social consensus oriented strictly toward the needs of today?

The situation in which stable reproduction is more important than social or economic innovation is far from a rarity in the modern world. In most developed and developing countries (barring China, perhaps, and certain other East Asia countries) the current interests take priority over any radiant prospects. And there are several perfectly obvious reasons for that.

First, industrialized countries are most often guided by the logic of electoral cycles (in other words, the logic of preserving power and influence on society by certain political or economic actors). Besides, in European countries the logic of progress is imposed on national states by Brussels whose decisions frequently cause annoyance.

Second, in modern societies where the postmodern style of reflection on society still carries weight, any configuration of the future, any integral vision of the latter is rejected on principle. The future is constructed apophatically (through negation), by affecting those areas of public life that require improvement, thus submitting to the logic of small acts in the current situation. There the priority can be, for instance, minority rights or rights of migrants, but long-term consequences of encouraging migration, typically unintended, are very rarely taken into consideration.

Third, the homeostasis (the state of stability) in which many societies find themselves today (Russia's society included) is often seen by the national elites as the best of all possible conditions, which, if abandoned, will aggravate rather than improve the situation. Indeed, argues the collective Russian official, say, what else can the public want? After all, the country has never lived so well as at present. The shops are full of goods, in terms of the number of cars per thousand population Russia is almost on a par with East European countries, and some of those it has actually surpassed. Virtually every Russian national, from baby to retiree, can use mobile communications; each household has hundreds of television channels at affordable prices. With a little effort one can better one's housing by taking out a mortgage for an apartment or building a house. Any criticism of the authorities from this viewpoint is groundless, because the authorities let people enjoy the main gain of Soviet times, private life (unless, of course, the people try to call in question the existing social or economic order). Any attempts to convince a high-ranking Russian official that things are not quite like that, or not at all, are doomed to failure. The appalling inequality as an argument against the existing order will cause their utter displeasure: What? You are again suggesting that we requisition all and divide the spoils equally? In other countries the logic of reasoning by actors in the ruling elite may differ from the Russian variety, but there, too, the current state is most often defined as progressive with regard to any previous development stage. It is hardly an accident that Piketty compared the state of today's societies to the *belle époque*, the serene times in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when enormous inequality was no hindrance for the elites in possession of large fortunes that plunged into luxury consumption with gay abandon [Piketty, 2014: 127–132]. The *belle époque* could have gone on indefinitely, had it not been for the First World War that put paid to the untroubled life of the elites and made people in grey trench-coats, former peasants and workers, rulers of destinies in developed states.

Thus, speaking of diversification, I mean not practices, but the general idea, the ideology of the common weal projected into the future. Ideologies tend to represent the world in terms of good and evil, salvation and death, but they, as Markku Kivinen himself has splendidly shown in his book *Progress and Chaos*, can rarely, if at all, preserve their initial impulse in clashes with the structural and cultural characteristics of the changing society [Kivinen, 2002].

Speaking of the structure and its reproduction, one has to bear in mind the interests of social groups already in existence and the way these interests are refracted in the policies implemented by their principal actors. In today's Russian society the political processes are defined in the field made up by various factions of the bureaucratic class (here I side with Theda Skocpol who considered bureaucracy in modern societies precisely a class [Skocpol, 1992]). Russian bureaucracy is structured by levels and segments each of which has its own vision of the current state of society and its prospects. Within the bureaucracy there emerge tensions and conflicts in which entities that are external with regard to the ruling elite rarely take part

as full-fledged players (if at all). Therefore, speaking of the likely modernization of Russia's economy, one can formulate the first question thus, What are the conditions under which advocates of diversification inside the ruling elite may acquire a decisive influence on decision making in the area of economics?

The existing experience suggests that shifts within the elite in favor of one or another position may occur only if the existing model reveals itself as utterly unsound, while the economy, for reasons of an endogenous nature, finds itself on the brink of collapse. In the foreseeable future this kind of crisis is hardly feasible for a number of reasons, first and foremost, because the economic authorities are skillfully applying the tactics of mitigating any shocks to the economy thanks to monetary tight-rope walking. The ruble exchange rate in the last couple of decades crashed several times, but each time the tremors were fully offset by a drop in the living standards of the public, after which the demand and supply recovered their balance.

The second question that has to be answered is as follows. What will happen, if the Russian authorities, despite all the available advantages of this best of all possible worlds they are living in, nevertheless dare to adopt the diversification program? In part the answer to that can be found in the present, in the policy of countersanctions that creates (albeit unconvincingly, selectively, with numerous corruption lacunae) protectionist barriers. The diversification of the economy clearly implies economic development, a rise in those of its branches that are now in decline because they cannot compete with foreign products. Let me cite one of the creators of the present-day US economy, Alexander Hamilton, the first US Treasury Secretary, who believed more than two centuries ago that an agrarian (and basically backward) country could achieve diversification and overcome raw-material dependence (in the case of the United States, on tobacco and cotton) only by taking protectionist measures [Johnson, 2018].

Economists do not often mention this, but the burgeoning, and therefore, diversified economies of East Asian countries became reality to a very great extent precisely thanks to the policy of import barriers, overt or covert. The cars in the streets of South Korean cities are mostly locally manufactured, and, to give them their due, they are improving, becoming more competitive by the year. Similarly, in China cars of foreign makes are typically the products of local full-production-run enterprises. The Chinese authorities encourage imports of technologies, but not of end products; the companies that blatantly violate copyright are hardly ever punished. Diversification, not only in the lifetime of Alexander Hamilton, but even today implies, first, restricted import of foreign-made goods, and second, massive investment in domestic production made by local businessmen, and after them, by foreign companies. The population of the countries embarking on the road of domestic production should be convinced that the inevitable (although, possibly temporary) narrowing of consumer choice, the high price of imported goods, are a sacrifice that will eventually pay off, when the local manufacturers have learned to produce high-quality goods no worse than the foreign analogs. And the domestic entrepreneurs must be broken of the bad habit of investing only in those industries that promise maximum yield in the short term (e.g., in unprocessed raw materials and commerce).

Politically speaking, this U-turn appears extremely risky; appeals for new economic sacrifices are unlikely to win public support, while the policy of goading the economic elite into investing in domestic production in the current circumstances will provoke protests on its part and a response aimed at undermining the proclaimed line. The politician who announces the policy of diversification should enjoy unquestionable political support, moreover, not only among the broad public, but also among the class of officials, and should possess enough moral authority to conclude a social contract with society and economic elites on new terms. The reference is not merely to coercion but to substantial reforming of the existing social and economic institutions, so that they would protect the rights of the citizens, safeguard property rights and ensure the safety of investment, including protection against institutional entrepreneurs backed by the power block. On top of everything else, the diversification policy will come up against opposition from international players that will regard the attempt by the Russian authorities to overcome the dependence on raw materials, and set up advanced industries in the country

as a challenge to the existing economic order, a violation of the division of labor established in the world economy where Russia has been given the role of primary goods producer and consumer of finished commodities manufactured in Europe and Asia¹.

It is not difficult to see that in the current circumstances the policy of diversification is doubtful for reason of a political and economic nature. A turn toward diversification would require serious institutional reforms in the interests of the majority, and substantial changes in the current system of distribution that are at the moment viewed by key decision-making authorities as unacceptable.

Hence some other considerations to do with the challenges cited by the authors of the book *Russian Modernization*. Let us look, in particular, at the second challenge named in the book, i.e., the choice between a conservative policy of keeping up the dismantlement of the social state and a constructive one of reforming the latter in the interests of the majority.

In the wake of the Soviet Union's disintegration the social system of state support of the people underwent rapid changes, while social policies were constantly revised. Modernization in this area and related institutional reforms have resulted in something vastly different from what was expected. The post-Soviet Russian institutions of social support proved much too weak and capable of rendering only inferior services. Meanwhile, the *Modernization* authors believe, Russia is facing the task of modernizing this area of public life, creating the conditions when the Russian social state could function according to the principles generally accepted in Europe's developed countries. Thus, the dilemma to be examined in Russia by various decision-making authorities has been formed by the contrast between the current deplorable state of the social sphere, on the one hand, and the standards to be observed if the state and society aspire to entering modernity, on the other.

The authors of the monograph think that the process of modernizing the social sphere is possible if we move in two directions. The first one consists in involving as far as possible agents genuinely interested in improving matters in discussions on social policies and principles of building the social state. Among them, trade unions protecting the rights of employees, public organizations forced to offset the lapses of state politics, and political parties representing the interests of considerable portions of the population. The second trend consists in enhancing the efficiency of the system, above all in coordinating its various levels, and also in correlating the objectives set and the means allocated for attaining the former.

In this the authors of *Russian Modernization* proceed from the same assumptions as they did in their analysis of the first challenge, namely, that there is an entity in Russian society interested in modernizing social policies after European patterns and aware that, unless this area is reformed, and the interests of the majority are taken into consideration, the country cannot possibly enter the state of modernity. But it is this point in reasoning that is causing serious doubts.

The entity reforming Russia's social sphere (or any other spheres, for that matter) has always been the state and its departments. As a rule, reforms in this area, be it the numerous attempts at updating the pension system or the reform of healthcare, were not offered for a public discussion. Possibly the reason was that of all the likely options of social sphere reforming, the one selected way back in the 1990s, at the dawn of the market economy, was not the European but the US variety, which placed commercialization in the center of the course to be followed. In other words, modernization, if viewed as a deviation from the principles of Soviet-style socialist distribution, was seen not as creation of a situation that would please most of the people, but as tough coercion of the neoliberal kind that attached primary importance

¹ M. Kivinen is apparently aware of the precedent when in 2007 the Russian government resolved to raise export duties on untreated wood sold to Finland where numerous companies specialize in timber processing. Between the two perfectly friendly countries there arose an economic conflict that was settled by a compromise, Russia backed away from restrictive measures, and the Finnish companies agreed to invest a billion dollars in wood treatment in the RF ("Russia and Finland Divided by Timber", *Kommersant Daily*, May 30, 2007).

to monetization, on the one hand, and to bureaucratic Panopticon regulating behavior in the social sphere, on the other.

One of the reform elements was the so-called optimization that ended in dismantling the Semashko system that had worked in Russia since the 1920s in favor of healthcare capable of rendering high-tech services. The reforms resulted in the numbers of hospitals, hospital beds, and medical specialists cut down, and in the load on those remaining in the system increasing accordingly. Also, paradoxically, instead of improving, medical services deteriorated dramatically; the services of medical specialists were now in short supply, and in many populated localities even emergency aid became virtually inaccessible in certain cases. All in all, the healthcare reform started in 2010 resulted in mortality rates going up in most RF cities, and noticeably increased the risks for the public owing to the exclusive nature of now less accessible healthcare. To quote the book under review, the Russian system benefits affluent strata of society, but those most in need of medical aid are doomed to low-quality services. Basically, national healthcare is still allegedly free, but the better-off members of the public or privileged officials get the most modern services at prices below those paid by the rest of the population for low-grade ones [Russian Modernization, 2021: 117]. Put differently, healthcare is dominated by the standards, formal and informal, that reproduce extreme forms of inequality that are the result of neo-liberal reform.

The same kind of inequality appears in other areas of public life as well, for instance, in education or in access to social services, recreation, or in the labor market. I mean not temporary deviations from the norm, but systemic features, and established institutions, which can change only gradually and strictly in the long term, along with changes in the public consciousness related to generation replacement.

The reasoning of the authors of *Russian Modernization* unwittingly suggests that the concept *modernization* can mean different things for different reform programs. The authors lend a political sense to the notion of modernization implying that movement toward modernity occurs only in those cases when political players take correct decisions, opting for diversification, democracy, and cooperation with European partners. Meanwhile, modern sociology may also view modernization in a different sense, as gradual progress of society toward civilization as understood by Norbert Elias [Elias, 2001]. That sociologist believed that modernization was a process extended in time, and implying gradual, step-by-step transformation of daily practices determined by culture models. The transformation of culture that brings back to normality the so-called figuration, society structuring ties between people should be viewed, he thought, as a genuine civilization process that guided society, not instantly, but over decades, to a new state.

It would be a mistake to think that the figuration processes referred to bypassed Russian society changing nothing in the Russian daily routine. Russian society is in a state of mobility. Minor everyday practices constantly undergo changes overlooked by their participants, but never failing to amaze those who return to the country after a long absence. Blanket use of digital technologies, remote communications, contactless payments that not just younger people, but even older generations are adept at; car drivers who only a short while ago ignored pedestrians now brake in front of the zebra crossing letting them get to the other side; all of that seems insignificant at first sight, but eventually builds up to bring about the very long-term civilization shifts that in fact constitute the essence of the modernization process. An immaculate staircase in an apartment block, a fence repaired, ability to act on one's own and a rational, and at times, critical attitude to the state and its politics, these are modernization, too, but occurring gradually, step-by-step, momentarily imperceptible, yet no less real for that than the kind inspired by political change.

In the Russian context there are two factors that can tangibly affect the civilization process.

The first factor is rationalization and commercialization of various aspects of life, which induces the public to be prudent and practice monetization that affects most of the life spheres. It is this movement toward the more rational perceived world that can explain why the Russians, when answering the question about who they can rely on in a difficult situation, name themselves, and their own capital, as it were, economic, social and cultural. The rationalization and commercialization Russian-style clearly come at a cost, which is related, for instance, to the widely practiced corruption.

Short-term personal gain prevails in this case over long-term common interests, but eventually, in a rational environment formed by education, by the “numerate” population that realized on the example of other developed countries how relations between the state and society should really be constructed, corruption will increasingly often be viewed as a challenge to society and its future.

And this is connected, among other things, to the second important factor that conditions the process. The history of societies, Russian society included, suggests that the civilizational process is largely determined by the nature of the resource base of society; it develops as the former development resources are getting depleted and new ones are acquired. Present-day Russia has inherited the kind of cultural, qualification, and scientific capital that exceeds the limits of current use, and natural resources that are redundant with regard to the national needs and are sold abroad at a profit. However, these resources, as practice shows, are exhaustible. And here we are, in a country where only a short while ago there was an overproduction of skilled personnel, engineers and high-grade workers they are now in short supply. It is possible, of course, to import cheap labor from the near abroad, give these workers a slapdash training, pay them minimum wages, and so ease the tensions emerging in the labor market. Yet even this resource is ultimately exhaustible, while low labor productivity and low wages will eventually make the Russian labor market unattractive even for these categories of new arrivals.

If the current policies continue, problems that are no less acute will occur in turn or simultaneously also in those areas of public life where Russian nationals cannot be replaced with an inexpensive imported workforce. For instance, it is impermissible to send gifted young scholars abroad justifying oneself, not entirely sincerely, by the fact that modern science is global. This kind of attitude to national science will put an end to its reproduction, and there will be no one capable of teaching the next generation of scientists. Sooner or later, we will be faced with the choice between either giving up Russian science as a project or displaying more respect toward it. Similar exhaustibility crises will also eventually bring into the sphere of politics the problem of filling with real content the constitutional norms of a social state.

In most cases change impulses will come from society itself, from its changing makeup and motivation priorities. As a rule, similar changes are long-term and take a lot of time to occur and are related to the transformation of social consciousness in the generation dimension. In this perspective, the process of breaking the spell on public life and its rationalization (as a process of individualizing the goals and means of their attainment) will go on, bringing Russia closer to other European societies. The political choice that the authors of *Russian Modernization* write about is unquestionably important, albeit largely predictable. But a more important thing is that which is occurring in the sphere of daily life, in the area configured by routine practices, not merely political, and not only those related to the formation of the politics by the current elite. The changes that take place there will, not at once, but in the long term, remove the dilemmas of modernity. They it is that will make reforms a functional necessity, changing the very quality of public life.

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