

Russia: The Challenges of Transformation. Edited by PIOTR DUTKIEWICZ and DMITRI TRENIN. New York: New York University Press. 2011. \$45. Cloth. ISBN: 9780814785003.

This volume is an ambitious, multi-disciplinary compilation, which argues that the way Russia solves its pressing challenges has global significance. The fifteen essays (plus foreword, introduction and afterword) are written by a wide range of leading policymakers, diplomats, and academics from Russia and elsewhere. Setting itself an ambitious goal, the book aims to 're-think Russia'. It strives to give a comprehensive overview of the economic, political, and social challenges that 'modernizing' Russia faces, and to put these challenges in a global perspective. It disputes two widely-held perspectives: that the country has failed in its transition from communism to democracy, and that it is faring well in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The impact of the 2008 global economic crisis called into question these opposing views. The crisis and its implications for Russia justify the timing of the volume's publication.

The contributors write on a wide range of topics, including the theoretical reinterpretation of Russia as a developing country, historical interpretations of Russia's modernization, the state bureaucracy, dynamic changes in politics and society, elites, leadership, the implications of higher education for the country's innovation potential, healthcare, and foreign relations with the European Union, the United States, Central Asia, and Asia. The volume's comprehensive analysis of transformation and modernization in Russia is impressive.

The book's multi-disciplinary approach is commendable, encompassing sociology, history, political science, economics, management, and other disciplines. It offers a number of interesting discussions. Vladimir Popov convincingly disagrees with Andrei Shleifer and Daniel Treisman's much-cited 2004 thesis that Russia is a normal middle-income country following fifteen years of transformation and recession. Popov argues that Russia has not recovered to 1989 GDP levels even after twenty years because of weak institutional capacity, which he calls a 'binding

constraint of growth'. Popov concludes pessimistically that Russia – an 'illiberal democracy' – has 'fewer reasons to be successful in its catch-up development than other regions of the developing world'.

The discussion of modernization is of particular interest. What is meant by modernization? The concept is often used very broadly in the literature and in policy. No single definition is specified at the outset of the book, and the term is used differently in each chapter. For example, Georgi Derlugian writes about democratization and 'de-democratization' cycles throughout Russia's history. The volume focuses on the implications of Russia's current modernization cycle for 'ordinary' people. Modernization has been a political buzzword in Russia for several years. Many 'ordinary' Russians doubt it will lead to real changes in the economy or society. For example, analysts have noted Medvedev's nickname 'nano-president' in the liberal media, online blogs, and social networking sites in reference to Medvedev's nanotechnology and innovation projects. In fact, as the book reminds us, processes of modernization have occurred repeatedly over the past few centuries in Russia and throughout the world. The introduction analyses the historical context of successful and less successful modernization in Russia, such as reforms led by Peter the Great, Pyotr Stolypin, and Mikhail Gorbachev. References to Joseph Schumpeter regarding the idea of Russia periodically catching up in quick bursts of 'creative destruction' are notable.

The volume's editing is imperfect. It contains wrong page numbers (chapters 13 and 14) and the quality of the binding is unsatisfactory. Nonetheless, *Russia: The Challenges of Transformation* makes a thought-provoking contribution to the ever-growing literature on Russian economics. It offers a similar message about Russia's need to modernize as Trenin's latest book, *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story*. The book will be of interest to a general audience due to its comprehensive approach and to specialists for the wealth of primary and secondary sources analysed.

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