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Russia: Escape from Modernization

In the 1990's social scientists widely shared illusion that Russia was ready to modernization, i.e. to establish a rule of law alongside with a more or less free market economy. The past years of the 21st century have convincingly shown that Russia is trapped in its traditional political and economic institutions (the Muscovite matrix). This is most easily verified by comparative analysis with the Baltic countries.

For this purpose, one can use the Human freedom index (Cato Institute), which combines the assessment of economic freedom and personal freedom. While the Baltic countries successfully completed the modernization in the post-Soviet period and support this index at a rather high level, Russia falls lower and lower and even concedes to Kazakhstan. In 2015, Estonia ranked 13th, Lithuania - 18th, and Latvia - 24th among 159 evaluated countries. At the same time, Russia was the 126th (Kazakhstan - 76th). In the Nations in transit project (Freedom House) Russian Democracy score considerably failed since the first year of the current century and the country turned from hybrid regime first to semi-consolidated authoritarian regime and then to consolidated authoritarian regime. Nowadays it is very close to Belarus meanwhile the Baltic states remain consolidated democracies all these years.

The main reason of the Russian resistance to modernization lies in its historical path dependency that keeps alive the unity of power and ownership and other institutions associated with so called "service state". At the present time Russia's way to modernized and free society is reliably blocked.