

## **Authoritarianism and the Market: the 'Neoliberal' Reforms in Russia's Higher Education**

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This paper discusses a number of recent 'neoliberal' reforms in Russia's higher education and questions the connection between the market and the resilience of an authoritarian regime. To categorize the policy interventions I use the principles of the 'new public management' described by Osborne and Gaebler : (1) introduction of competition into the service delivery (the national standardized exam and the changed rules of admission to higher education institutions); (2) increasing the effectiveness of state funding (introduction of quality management systems and effectiveness ranking); (3) decentralization of funding and the financial autonomy of educational institutions; (4) concentration on regulatory impact (the development of licensing and accreditation).

The second part of the paper raises the question of the connection between authoritarianism and the market. This connection has been widely discussed in relation to the economy in general. Classical liberalism and economic institutionalism predict a negative relationship between authoritarianism and the market. According to these theories, individual political freedoms and inclusive political institutions stimulate entrepreneurial initiative and develop the market exchange, while suppression of individual freedoms and exclusive political institutions lead to market dilution. On the contrary, developmentalism and state capitalism argue that authoritarian governments may favor market development under certain circumstances.

I suggest that understanding of this connection requires disentangling the different logics of an authoritarian government in the various sectors of the economy and the public sphere. Based on my analysis, I discuss the three possible effects of the neoliberal policies in higher education, and the public sector in general, on the resilience of the political regime in Russia. First, these policies potentially work to minimize the amount of resources needed to maintain the social responsibilities of the state. Second, the organizational transformations that accompany the neoliberal policies undermine the capacities for political mobilization through educational institutions and build the tools for emergency response of the state in case such mobilization occurs. Third, by emphasizing efficiency and keeping the state in the game as a regulator, the neoliberal policies legitimize the market logic in the public sector. It alleviates the tension between the popular expectations to maintain the extended social responsibilities of the state and the needs of the authoritarian regime to minimize resources spent to maintain loyalty.