

Russia Study Group

September 6, 2010

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[Overview of research]

Research topic: "Energy, Environment and Modernization in Russia"

Russia is well known as a resource superpower possessing a wealth of natural resources. Benefitting from the surge in petroleum prices to drive its economic growth over the past decade, the country has demonstrated its presence on the diplomatic stage by leveraging its exports of resources to Europe and Asia. The availability of such resources has not proven entirely advantageous for Russia, however; it has also produced weaknesses in an industrial structure heavily skewed toward resource industries and in greater vulnerability to global market conditions. In a departure from current practice, the Medvedev administration has advocated "modernization" in medicine and medical equipments, energy efficiency, nuclear energy, space and communications, and IT in an effort to improve economic efficiency and create considerable added value. Attempts to tie efforts toward a low carbon society to the promotion of new industries, typified by the "green New Deal" in USA, have hit the mainstream, especially in the developed countries, and Russia's own efforts to implement its modernization policies are sure to garner attention in terms of how Russia as an energy superpower will involve itself in worldwide trends.

In light of these circumstances, this Study Group is conducting research to clarify the nature and status of Russia's reform policies, utilizing the keywords energy, environment, and modernization. What is the present state of the Russian economy, what policy directions are being pursued, and how should the prospects for reform be assessed? The Study Group is employing a multifaceted approach to Russia spanning economics, domestic politics and foreign affairs, looking not only at economic matters such as Russia's mainstay energy industries (petroleum, natural gas, etc.), nuclear power as a source of green energy, modernization efforts in the areas of manufacturing and high-tech, and steps taken to carry out environmental policies, but also at domestic politics under the Medvedev administration, new foreign policy guidelines stemming from its modernization policies, etc. Such research should enable the Group to grasp numerous implications for future Japan-Russia relations.

[Activities thus far and future plans]

This Study Group was established in April 2010 to carry out this project spanning the two-year period from FY2010 to FY2011. The Study Group is scheduled to meet six times during the current fiscal year, and three of these meetings have already been held. An interim report will be compiled at the end of this fiscal year to check on the project's direction and to determine any points meriting greater consideration in future. This research will be further developed over the following fiscal year, with a final report to be prepared and hopefully published at the end of FY2011.

[Study Group Members]

Group Leader: MIZOBATA Satoshi, Professor, Institute of Economic Research, Kyoto University

Members: UENO Toshihiko, Professor, Faculty of Foreign Studies, Sophia University
SAITO Motohide, Professor, Department of Policy Studies, Kyorin University

SAKAGUCHI Izumi, Deputy Director, Institute for Russian & NIS Economic Studies

TOKUNAGA Masahiro, Associate Professor, Faculty of Commerce, Kansai University

MOTOMURA Masumi, Senior Research Fellow, Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation

MOROTOMI Toru, Professor, Graduate School of Economics, Kyoto University

OKADA Miho, Research Fellow, Center for the Promotion of Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, Japan Institute of International Affairs

Member and Secretary YOKOGAWA Kazuho, Research Fellow, Japan Institute of International Affairs