

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a concept for business from within developed, Western economies. Such economies are underpinned by functioning institutions, where compliance with regulation is assumed. Recently, however, the ability of this traditional understanding of CSR to take account of the different economic and institutional arrangements found in non-Western contexts has been challenged. It has been argued that CSR research needs to be more contextualized and that the Western interpretation and assumptions about what CSR is and how it is enacted needs to be broadened and challenged to take account of different stages of economic development. With this argument in mind, this article presents a contextualized critique of CSR undertaken in the Russian Federation. Based on a qualitative study involving managers within privatized Russian firms, this article explores the type, nature, and scope of CSR undertaken and attendant motivation of firms to engage in CSR practice. By taking account of the historical and cultural antecedents of both the Soviet Union and the post-Soviet transition period, the author reveals that while the market is driving conventional forms of CSR within some Russian firms, the historical legacy of both the Soviet Union and more recent political developments have a stronger influence on the type and nature of CSR undertaken. These findings challenge the assumptions about both the voluntary nature of CSR and the prerequisites needed for CSR to take place.

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