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JAPANESE AND RUSSIAN POLITICS

**Polar Opposites or
Something in Common?**



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Japan and Russia: Domestic Politics and Foreign Policy*

Takashi Inoguchi

Introduction

This volume attempts to present how Japanese and Russian academics portray and analyze the domestic politics and foreign policy of the two countries in the 2010s. In an era of globalization, Seymore Martin Lipset¹ is most apt when he says that one never knows one country without knowing other countries. A foremost scholar specializing in and well-versed with one country cannot automatically be a scholar in the Lipset sense. When “socialism in one country” was a good slogan for Russia during much of the Soviet period (1917–1991) and when the Economic Planning Agency drew Japan’s “national economic outlook” in much of the preglobalization era (before 1985–), knowing one country was almost enough for country specialists—a starkly different feat in the 2010s.

Japan and Russia are widely considered one of the many pairs of countries that are polar opposites in many senses. For example, one can say that Japan is democratic in politics, market-oriented in economics, “dovish” in foreign policy, whereas Russia is authoritarian in politics, control-oriented in economic management, and “hawkish” in foreign policy. Scholars specializing in one country tend to characterize other countries’ politics and economics in light of their familiar home country. Those scholars who are well-versed with two or more countries are sometimes different. Alexander Gerschenkron² coined the concept of the advantage of a latecomer on the basis of his

unrivalled familiarity with Russian and German economics. Ronald Dore³ compared the strengths and weaknesses in British and Japanese management of manufacturing factories due to his unsurpassed knowledge of British and Japanese factories.

This volume aims at a much more modest task. It is to present how Japanese and Russian scholars portray and examine the domestic politics and foreign policy of the two countries. In order to alleviate the deficiencies of one country specialists in the Lipset sense, the editor formulated the team of scholars as follows: the team of Japanese scholars examined both Japanese and Russian domestic politics and foreign policy, while the team of Russian scholars examine both Russian and Japanese domestic politics and foreign policy. Strict pairing of scholars was not adopted in terms of the same comparative concepts used. What is the merit of this approach in comparing Japan and Russia? What is the merit of avoiding strict fixed conceptualization? The editor has recourse to Albert Hirschmann,⁴ when he argues that what he calls the hiding hand principle enables one to be creative when facing difficulties. Or in his own words:

Since we necessarily underestimate our creativity it is desirable that we underestimate to a roughly similar extent the difficulties of the tasks we face, so as to be tricked by these two offsetting underestimates was into undertaking tasks which we can, but otherwise would not dare, tackle. The principle is important enough to deserve a name: since we are apparently on the trail here of some sort of Invisible or Hidden Hand that beneficently hides difficulties from us, I propose "The Hiding Hand"⁵.

Hence the task of this volume is for Japanese and Russian scholars to portray and examine the politics of both countries in a set of somewhat loosely assigned instruction: Identify the key characteristic of the politics of both countries and title your chapter accordingly.

Then readers may ask a key question: Why is the hiding hand principle possibly effective in guiding this volume? The world, besides country specialists in both countries and beyond, knows little of these two countries; their perceptual and behavioral interactions; their analytical and judgmental slants and biases; and their low probability "correlation of forces." However "correlation of forces" might perhaps be better phrased as "coincidence of ideas or models. For example, what would happen if Japan in Asia and Russia in Europe become closer? Or what would happen if they remain as "cold" as it has been since 1945?

Two Historical Portrayals

Japan is normally compared either with other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) industrial democracies⁶ or more recently with East Asian democracies.⁷ Russia is commonly compared to other former communist countries in Eastern Europe. Both are often treated as *rara avis*, and thus neither is compared with the other. Why are we interested in this comparison? Because they have one commonality: they are latecomers vis-à-vis the West. This introduction attempts to lay out why the Japan-Russia historical comparative portrayal is important to those interested in their politics, internal and external.

The concept of latecomer and its use in analysis are fairly common both in Japan and in Russia.⁸ Cognizant of being a latecomer in the nineteenth century, both Japan and Russia chose a determined and quick development path. Let us compare Japan and Russia at the time of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905 in terms of prevailing conditions of the economy and the regime. Their learning from the West had brought about tumultuous transformations at times. One of them was economic development. Another was democratization.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Japan had a functioning parliamentary democracy of a limited sort⁹. The government was run by a regime based on a bureaucracy that was somewhat suspicious of increasingly powerful political parties as an opposition in parliament. Voting rights were limited to those who paid a certain amount of tax to the state. The government appointed the House of Peers, one of the two houses in parliament. The government wanted to strengthen those pro-government members in the House of Representatives who were busy coopting political parties that by definition were antigovernment in legislation, especially in budget legislation. The revolutionary heroes of the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and their successors were in charge and evolving their regime in the direction of democratization. In Russia the tsar's regime tried intermittently and cautiously to modernize the economy by focusing on banks and railroads to quell suspicions of the growing influence of Western ideas of freedom and democracy. Alarmed by the rise of Prussia and its modernization and arms buildup west of Russia, Russia's modernization drive wavered between the reformers and traditionalists in pushing for it. Russia's eastward expansion took place in the context of constrained and often stalled domestic modernization efforts. The Russo-Japanese

War took place in the very far East as both latecomer countries pursued expansionism.

World War I critically divided Japan and Russia. Japan formed an alliance with Britain and was victorious. The Japanese regime evolved in the direction of a more fully fledged parliamentary democracy during and after World War I. In 1925 universal suffrage was provided for the entire male adult population. In the same year, Japan enacted a stricter public security preservation law. In 1914 Russia joined the entente and endured a devastating defeat by the invading German forces, resulting in the fall of the government, which was subsequently taken over by a provisional government, all the while continuing to wage war against Germany. The antiwar Bolsheviks resorted to a coup d'état and revolution, employing the slogan of peace and land. Peace resulted. Communists consolidated their power through a reign of terror.

In the 1930s, both Japan and Russia initiated preparation for war. The efforts focused on not only arms buildups but also the purging of political domestic enemies. As democratization receded in Japan, in Russia the worst kind of physical elimination of political enemies were carried out. War preparation meant war-focused industrialization in both countries. Japan was drawn into a long war with China, yet continued to consider the possibility of launching a war against the United States. Russia's insecurity heightened as domestic political terror grew. The wars both countries waged seriously and deeply impacted their economies. Both Japan and Russia fought fierce battles respectively against Americans and Germans. Japan lost against the United States, and Russia won against Germany. Japanese territories shrank as Russian territory expanded. The Allied powers, led by the United States, occupied Japan. Russia became leader of the anti-US camp. Whereas Japan completely democratized itself under US occupation, Russia expanded communism in adjacent countries.

The commonality appeared also in the economic management of both countries: state-directed concentration of resources bore fruits after World War II. In the 1950s–1960s, both countries achieved high-economic growth and gained international status. Japan attracted attention in 1962, with the article, “Consider Japan” in *The Economist*. Russia gained attention by launching Sputnik into space in 1957. Some 30 years of heightened economic growth receded thereafter, however. In the 1970s–1980s, Russia stagnated, more or less, confronted by crossroads. Japan continued economic growth with an annual growth rates higher than most OECD countries, but with

rates halved compared to the 1950s and 1960s. In 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed and deserted communism. From then onward, Russia has been wavering between a loose dictatorship and authoritarian pluralism. Japan temporarily put an end to the rule of the Liberal Democratic Party in 1993. But since that time Japan has maintained a democracy of some kind, often featuring short prime ministerial tenures and mostly registering low-economic growth.

At the end of the Cold War, Japan and Russia had very different foreign policy positions and power in the world. Japan had a high per capita income level and lightly armed forces helped by its alliance with the United States. Yet how to direct the country into the twenty-first century was not well envisioned. Overshadowed by the enormous success of the recent past, Japan did not articulate its direction sufficiently after the Cold War¹⁰. The long recession, which started in early 1990s, continued for the next two decades. Meanwhile the significance of the alliance with the United States has decreased slightly. Russia was vanquished after the Cold War and resisted hard efforts to liberalize¹¹. The Boris Yeltsin regime worked hard toward economic liberalization made by the World Trade Organization, an organization Russia was eager to join to maintain its great power status. In the Vladimir Putin regime, the resource boom elevated Russia to an unprecedented level of economic growth. The Putin regime tried to orchestrate innovation and competitiveness during the boom years. Yet it remains an important agenda item without being a vigorous operationalized lever for industrial and technological breakthroughs¹².

Preview of this Volume

In this section, I will highlight what the chapter authors titled their chapter.

The early chapters on Japanese politics are entitled “Politics of Swings” and “Political Parties in Disarray.”

The chapters on Russian politics are entitled as “Politics of Volatility” and “Politics of Dictatorship and Pluralism.”

The chapters focused on the Japanese and Russian economy are entitled “Economics Takes Command” and “Politics of Modernization.”

The Japanese foreign policy chapters are entitled “Continuity in Alliance” and “Foreign Policy in *Statu Nascendi*.”

Russian foreign policy chapters are entitled “Improvising at Kremlin” and “Pragmatic Realism.”

Japanese Politics

What are the key characteristics of Japanese or Russian politics according to the chapter authors? On Japan, politics of swing and swing away (Inoguchi) and political parties in disarray (Streltsov); on Russia, politics of volatility (Smirnov) and politics of dictatorship and pluralism (Shimotomai).

On Japanese politics Inoguchi highlights the fairly frequent turnovers of prime ministers. Two preconditions were necessary. First, the stagnation of the economy prevailed since 1991 when the collapse of the largest bubble took place. Between 1991 and 2012, 12 prime ministers were born. A deflated economy registered almost zero to one percent annual growth. Between 2006, when the Liberal Democratic Party lost power to the Democratic Party of Japan, and 2012, when the Liberal Democratic Party recaptured power, six prime ministers were born. Second, prime ministers did not enjoy electoral strength and often times led them to procrastinate calling for a general election. Between 2006 and 2012, the general elections took place only twice (i.e., 2006 and 2012). The two years coincided with the maximum years of tenure for House of Representatives members. Inoguchi argues that the two key underlying conditions of frequent turnovers of prime ministers were deflation and prime ministers' timidity of facing electorates' verdict. These two conditions accumulated electorates' discontent, which led to the large scale swings of party support patterns, that is, from the Liberal Democratic Party to the Democratic Party of Japan in 2009 and from the Democratic Party of Japan to the Liberal Democratic Party in 2012. With Prime Minister Shinzō Abe's comeback in late December of 2012, these two conditions apparently disappeared at least for the time being. First, Abe's economic policy executed the first quantitative easing of money since March 2013, which resulted by summer 2013 in both the depreciation of Japanese yen's exchange rate vis-à-vis US dollars and most other major currencies. This boosted export sectors like automobiles, electric appliances, electronic devices, construction machines, precision machines, tourism. Poll figures favoring Abe as prime minister had been high hovering around 60 percent. Nikkei stock price averages went up somewhat up to approximately 16,000 yen from the nadir of lower than 10,000 Japanese yen in 2012. How effective will Abenomics turn out in 2014 and beyond? Of the three arrows of Abenomics, quantitative easing of money (monetary policy), fiscal tightening (fiscal policy), and deregulation and innovation (growth policy), the first arrow and the second arrow have been executed with some initial success, but the third

arrow has not been executed. Especially those deregulation measures (like the reduction of business firm tax, the liberalization of investment from abroad in areas such as insurance, banking, pharmaceutical, agricultural, and measures to encourage and induce innovation and discovery in development and research remain to be legislation in the National Diet in 2014 and beyond.

Streltsov analyzes the disarray of political parties as one of the key features of Japanese politics. Important in his analysis of Japanese political parties are: 1) blurred ideological difference of political parties, and 2) murky policy differences put forward by political parties. Perhaps a hidden comparison to Russian political parties seems to be made in Streltsov's mind. Indeed the array of ideologies attached with political parties like capitalism, communism, communitarianism, anarchism is sharper in Russia than in Japan. In Japan, conservatism in the vague meaning seems to be dominant. By conservatism is meant by him to be right-wing and market-focused. This ideological characterization does not explain the coexistence of two schools of thought in the Liberal Democratic Party, 1) constitutionalist about sovereignty and peace, and 2) constitutional revisionist about sovereignty and war rights. Prime Minister Abe belongs to the latter. Their ratio for and against is something like 70 versus 30 within the supporters of the Liberal Democratic Party when polls ask about constitutional revision. In terms of policy differences across political parties, including opposition parties, 1) pro-growth and pro-liberalization, 2) pro-welfare and pro-protection, 3) pro-alliance, 4) anti-alliance, 5) pro-small government, and 6) pro-large government do coexist within each party. But their coexistence does not take place by political parties. Rather within each party, these six dimensions of policy line coexist. The Liberal Democratic Party and the Democratic Party of Japan most typically exemplify this point.

Japanese Economics

On Japanese economics, Harada makes up the major list of Japanese economic problems that await politicians to resolve them and ameliorate difficulties, and he provides reasons for the extent of ease and difficulty in each of the policy tasks. The list includes deflation, public investment, pensions, and medical care for the aged. Harada regards putting an end to deflation should be easy. As a matter of fact, Abe's Abenomics has been able to transform deflation to inflation to a very minimum extent: from 0 percent to about 1 to 1.5 percent price inflation. The instrument is quantitative easing of money by

the Bank of Japan, which was instituted since March 2013. Public investment is one of the favorite policies for politicians to envisage for pro-growth persuasion, which is, according to Harada, useless or even poisonous to growth. For growth, Harada recommends to liberalization strategy typified by the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement. Yet politicians may not agree with liberalization. Also pro-growth strategy advocated by many politicians is industrial policy, whether it is sectorial or regional, which Harada regards as neither useful nor successful. Politicians want to give jobs to people in poor areas and increase their income. But people in those poor areas tend to be too old to work in the construction industry. Ageing is the most serious problem. Fiscal revenues and large accumulated debts will make it impossible to afford generous pensions and medical care for the aged. But politicians are too timid about persuading people along this recipe. Harada skips one of the key problems of astronomically accumulated fiscal debts amounting to some US\$10 billion dollars. As Abenomics is to proceed successfully through the first arrow phase (quantitative easing of money), the second phase (fiscal tightening and consumption tax hike) and the third arrow (deregulation and innovation), the fiscal debts problem might be alleviated in the long run. Yet so far as of May 2014, the deflation has stopped but the Nikkei average stock price went up from the nadir of 10,000 Japanese yen as of February 2013 and then started to fall from the peak of 16,000 Japanese yen by the end of 2013 to the level of 14,000 by May 2014. The cause for the most serious concern are the shortage of third arrow strategies. They include: trade liberalization; development and research breakthroughs; and the alleviation of negative demographic trends.

Russian Economics

On Russian economics, the scope of Karelova is broader than Harada on Japanese economics and yet narrower than Harada. Broader in the sense that Karelova examines Russian economic and socioeconomic modernization encompassing the relationship between the state and society, elite rotation, corruption, and effective governance institutions. Narrower because it focuses on how innovation strategy “making the active use of energy resources might work to enhance the strategic sectors of the economy and the strengthening Russia’s position in the world.” Salient in Karelova is the realistic tone of the prospect for Russia’s modernization. “Conservative modernization from above” means that it would produce a probably modest achievement

despite all the fancy plans and programs coming out from those elites stuck to the status quo. As Karelova correctly predicted, by the third Putin Administration period, the bonanza of booming resource sectors exports became things of the recent past. The whole chapter sounds like discussing one of those resource-based and corruption-ridden developing economies in the Middle East, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

Russian Politics

On Russian politics, William Smirnov characterizes Russian politics as a neofeudal system, an outcome of the initial stages of modernization toward civil society and the creation of the rule of law. “Disappointed in the failed democratic transition, irritations by poverty and social deprivation in the 1990s,” the majority of people accommodated the limitations of political rights in exchange for stability, order, and raising standards. Vladimir Putin is responsive to the popular accommodation of what may be called Putin’s personification of power. Political power is concentrated in the office of president because of the weakness of other branches of state authority. However, it is different from “superpresidentialism” with a “fig leaf” parliament, as some Western analysts argue. Smirnov argues that because of the predominant political-legal culture of elites’ paternalism over political subjects that the overwhelming majority of the population in the Tsarist, Soviet, *and* contemporary Russia have valued equality over freedom and justice over legality. Smirnov seems to be quite akin in this regard to Emmanuel Todd’s analysis of Russian modernization if Smirnov is not based on his analysis on the guiding principle of reproducing the family and the absence of the state’s election authority.

Nobuo Shimotomai analyzes Russian politics on the Aristotelian categories of political systems. Thus the dictatorship for Putin I (2000–2008), duumvirate for tandem regime (2008–2012), Putin II for Politburo (2008–today), and their alternative characterizations are discussed in his meticulous analysis of Russian elite politics spanning from 1991–2013. Shimotomai argues that Aristotelian categories are useful in fathoming Russian politics of the past 25 years as it has paraded the wide range between dictatorship and pluralism, and that branding Russian politics as a fixed, hard type monolithic dictatorship may as well hinder better understanding. In 2013–2014, the center of gravity of decision is concentrated in the presidential office, above all Igor Sechin and his Fuel-Energy complex. Shomotomai predicts, especially when Russia has been facing the general economic crisis in Europe, the United States, and Japan, the decline of energy resource

prices, and the Chinese self-assertive actions, that Putin's enhanced authority would be one of the outcomes of Russian politics..

Smirnov and Shimotomai together provide a lucid and thorough analysis of Russian politics: Smirnov on deep historical origins of what he calls neofeudal politics and Shimotomai on useful application of Aristotelian categories for understanding Russian elite politics.

Japanese Foreign Policy

Shigeki Hakamada gives what he believes is an authentic realist view of Japanese foreign policy. Authentic in the sense that the framework of Japanese foreign policy is based on what he calls the postmodernist world view where state sovereignty and power politics hide themselves low in foreign-policy formation. This kind of world view negatively affected the diplomatic performance of the Japanese government during the Democratic administration (2009–2012). Freed from this, the Liberal Democratic administration led by Shinzō Abe's top priorities in its Asia-Pacific policy include: (1) pro-alliance with the United States jointly sustaining the US-led international order; (2) managing the relationship with China by standing on your feet without unnecessarily provoking China; (3) continuing cultivating relations with Russia by focusing on commonalities; (4) strengthening ties with Southeast Asia, India, and Australia; (5) formulating a new energy policy.

Sergei Chugrov views Japanese foreign policy as *statu nascendi* (i.e., still in formative stage). By which he means that the Japanese foreign policy positions are not sufficiently articulated and that they are not fully integrated. Perhaps the deliberate contrast against the previous Democratic administration's foreign policy line, Shinzō Abe has been quite vocal in his political statements like Abenomics and Abegeopolitics. As seen from Russia, particularly salient are Japan-US relations, growing Chinese power, constitutional revisionism, North Korean security challenges and the free trade club membership, and negotiation and its outcomes. Shinzō Abe's "pro-active pacifism" is the best summarizing phrase. Its content is meant to be that Japan, joining the United States and others in sustaining the international order constructed by the principles of peace, rule of law, democracy, and human rights, proactively carry out its foreign policy. Russia's foreign policy elites, mass media, and academic's views are presented. Putin II faces Europe economically stagnating; politically antagonistic; with America often obstructing Russia's well-meant actions and China flexing its verbal, and not merely verbal, muscles here and there;

and falling energy resource prices. Recognizing these global trends, Russia is mildly apprehensive of Japan's proactive pacifism's concrete manifestations on its alliance with the United States, its Russian policy on energy and disputed territories, its constitutional revisionism, and Japan's handling of Chinese and North Korean relations.

Shigeki Hakamada and Sergei Chugrov jointly show two faces of Japanese foreign policy under Shinzō Abe. Hakamada contrasts the Liberal Democratic administration (2012 onward) with the Democratic administration (2009–2012) a little exaggeratedly, whereas Chugrov, not knowing as yet the concrete manifestation of proactive pacifism, is somewhat mildly apprehensive about Japan navigating from *statu nascendi* to *fait accompli* of nascent militarism and anti-Russianism.

Russian Foreign Policy

Sergey Oznobishchev terms Russian foreign policy as pragmatic realism. It is a broad phrase. Given the enormous workload of the feeble state apparatuses, Russia cannot afford to be fully concentrated on the needs of the country's long-term development and has to be reactive. Putin II (2012–onward) faces the three major difficulties: falling energy resource prices, the export of which Russia relies heavily for its state revenue; somewhat unpredictable Obama II foreign policy line with its general economic crisis from which the US economy has not fully recovered; and the European recovery from its own unforeseen economic crisis and now being tugged by NATO toward anti-Russian position on Crimea and Iran. Russia, needing high-technology transfer from the United States, Germany, and Japan for Russia's economic development, yearns for friendly relationship with these and some other countries. But the reality is very complex; Russia faces problems near abroad and far abroad, which have negative effects to Russia, reacting to which keeps Russian state apparatus busy and preoccupied. Crimea and Iran are such issues in relation to Japan in their implications to Japan's issues.

Akio Kawato portrays Russian foreign policy as it evolves on the basis of his diplomatic service for many years in Russia, the Soviet Union, and Uzbekistan. What he sees in Russian foreign policy formation is improvisation in reacting to what they regard as infringements of Russia's national interest. Because state apparatus are insufficient, inefficient and ineffective in many cases, the personification and its related problems ensue. Because Russia's priority is to ensure peace along the border and beyond, foreign policy issues keep coming up, awaiting Vladimir Putin to handle them in an improvisational manner.

Because Russia's priority is its economic development, resource economics and its administration are given priority in politics, which causes endless infightings among elite groups. On the relationship between Russia and Japan, the future projects are clear, but not easy. Kawato's solution is that Russia steps forward on the territorial issue whereas Japan steps forward on the development of Siberia and the Far East. Crimean issues evidence, however, how difficult it is because the positions taken on Crimea have directly to do with the Senkakus and the Northern Kuriles islands and with the position of sanctions led by the NATO and Group of Seven against Russia. Until the Crimean issues erupted, both looked as if they would move forward at least by one step diplomatically.

Together Sergey Oznobishchev and Akio Kawato converge their analysis from opposite angles. Russia likes pragmatic realism because it is constrained at home and abroad. Russia must improvise at the highest level, because the state is not equipped with high talents and fierce infightings between inraelite groups are not uncommon.

Notes

* Financial support from the Nomura Foundation and the University of Niigata Prefecture is gratefully acknowledged.

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3. Ronald Dore, *British Factory-Japanese Factory: The Origins of National Diversity in Industrial Relations, With a New Afterword* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1973).
4. Albert Hirschmann "The Principle of the Hiding Hand," http://www.nationalaffairs.com/doclib/20080516_196700602theprincipleofthehidinghandalbertohirschman.pdf (accessed May 13, 2014).
5. Jeremy Adelman, eds., *Worldly Philosopher. The Odyssey of Albert O. Hirschman* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).
6. T. J. Pempel, *Uncommon Democracies: The One Party Dominant Regimes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).
7. Takashi Inoguchi, "Higashi Asia Hikaku Seiji Taiseiron (Comparative Political System in East Asia)," *Leviathan* no. 3, (1988): 3-7.
8. Alexander Gershenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962); Emmanuel Todd disputes this thesis, says that Japan had never been late vis-à-vis Europe. Citing S. B. Hanley and Kozo Yamamura's *Economic and Demographic Change in Preindustrial Japan, 1600-1868* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton

University Press 1978). Todd argues that Japan and Europe kept demographic equilibrium and anthropological constancy in terms of the age for first marriage of the female population. Japanese demographic data (Hanley and Yamamura 1977) show that during 1680 and 1975 in Tokugawa, Japan, a female's first marriage took place when she was 21 to 24 years old. On this point, Todd may as well say that Japanese went ahead of Europeans in terms of achieving demographic equilibrium and anthropological constancy; (Emmanuel Todd, *Sekai no Tayosei: Kazoku Kozo to Kindaisei (La diversité du monde: Structures familiales et modernité)* (Tokyo: Fujiwara Shoten, 2013), 393).

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12. Alena Ledeneva, *Can Russia Modernize? Sistema, Power Networks and Informal Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Ben Judah, *Fragile Empire: How Russia Fell in and out of Love with Vladimir Putin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).