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Russia's Local Reform of 2003 from a Historical Perspective: A Comparison with China*

Matsuzato Kimitaka and Tahara Fumiki

This essay investigates Russia's rural self-government in historical, demographical, and social contexts, comparing it with its Chinese counterpart.[1] These countries differ from each other in terms of the level of urbanization[2] and the population density in rural areas, but they share a number of geographical conditions and a communist past. Both Russia and China are rising powers, but their further growth, to a significant extent, depends on stable and effective rural governance. A serious threat for Russia is its demographic decline, which is closely connected with the aging and devastation of its countryside. On the walls of the "palaces of culture" (community centers) in rural Russia, we often see posters with the slogan: "Don't Drink, Don't Smoke, Bear Babies!" In fact, the Russian authorities pursue the goal of increasing young families in rural areas as a nationwide strategic task.[3] In China, peasants often become prey to a widening disparity of income, expropriation of land, and other negative consequences of rapid economic growth. Peasants' discontents often result in

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1 In other words, Russia and China are not equal subjects for comparison in this essay. We refer to Chinese experiences in order to better understand Russia's local governance. It might seem strange that this essay sometimes refers to Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and Armenian experiences, but we should not forget that Ukraine, Lithuania, and Armenia, together with Russia, belonged to the same state until 1991 and shared a history of local reforms conducted by Catherine II, Stalin, and Khrushchev. Moreover, the differing conditions in which the local authorities of these countries operate (above all, differing population densities in rural areas) help us to better understand Russia's rural governance from a comparative perspective.

2 In Russia, only 22.3 percent of the population are left in rural areas (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Urbanization Prospects, the 2011 Revision*, esa.un.org/unup/CD-ROM/Urban-Rural-Population.htm, accessed June 6, 2013), while in China almost half (50.05%) of the population continue to live in the countryside in 2010 (Zhonghua renmin gongheguo guojia tongjiju [National Bureau of Statistics of the PRC], ed., *Zhongguo tongji nianjian 2011* [China statistical yearbook 2011], Beijing: China Statistics Press, p. 93).

3 For example, Russia's state program "Decent Houses for Young Families" gives preferential treatment to young specialists who intend to build their houses in rural areas.

riots. Rural self-governments, as an infrastructure of social policy, cannot but cope with this situation.

In many countries, villages function as the most basic arena of party politics combined with patron-client deals between the elites and the masses. Even in urbanized Japan, the Liberal Democratic Party enjoyed one-party dominance for decades because this party firmly grasped rural votes. This essay argues that the relatively effective rural self-government in Russia enables the ruling United Russia Party to control the rural population better than the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) does.

A specialist of the former Soviet Union (Matsuzato) and a China specialist (Tahara) coauthored this essay, which is mainly based on the expertise and separate experiences of the authors. Yet the authors jointly conducted fieldwork in Znamenka County of Tambov Oblast and Komskoe Ust'e County of Tatarstan in August 2009, and again in Znamenka in March 2012.[4]

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC COMPARISON OF ADMINISTRATIVE TERRITORIES BETWEEN RUSSIA AND CHINA

Russia				China			
Tier		Example		Example		Tier	
				Shandong 94,000,000	Jiangxi 42,840,000	**Province (*sheng*)**	**Region**
				Yantai 6,460,000	Shangrao 6,420,000	**City (*shi*)**	**Sub-region**
Region	**Republic and oblast**	Tambov 1,178,443	Tatarstan 3,779,265				
				Panglai 450,000	Yugan 920,000	***Xian***	**Locality**
Locality	***Raion***	Znamenka 19,134	Kamskoe Ust'e 17,072	Xiaomenjia 41,000	Shegeng 38,124	***Xiang/ zhen***	**Sub-Locality**
Community (administrative village)	***Selo***	Pokrovo-Marfino 2,431	Tinki 1,758	Dachijia 1,543	Huadun 2,179	***Cun***	**Community (administrative village)**
Sub-Community (settlement)		Hamlet average 143	Hamlet average 293	Small Group average 154	Hamlet average 156		**Sub-Community (settlement)**

As table 1 shows, Russia has a three-tier system of sub-national government, composed of (1) regions or federal constituents, (2) localities, namely cities and counties/*raion*s, and (3) communities (administrative villages),

4 The first English-language product of this joint research is Fumiki Tahara, "Principal, Agent or Bystander? Governance and Leadership in Chinese and Russian Villages," *Europe-Asia Studies* 65:1 (2013), pp. 75–101.

called village soviets. Populous China runs a five-tier system.[5] Let us identify *shi* ("cities" or 市), *xian* (县), and *xiang*/*zhen* ("towns/townships" or 乡/镇) as sub-regions, localities, and sub-localities, respectively. This essay investigates governance at the local and community levels, and the relations between them. Table 1 shows the population sizes of the administrative units where we conducted fieldwork. As this table demonstrates, Russian regions are demographically even smaller than China's sub-regions, and Russia's counties (*raion*s) are almost equal to China's sub-localities (*xiang* and *zhen*). For further discussion, we should bear in mind that Chinese locality units (*xian*) are excessively populous and therefore an intermediary tier (townships) between *xian* and villages is necessary.

The 2003 Law and How It Has Been Analyzed

The existing Federal Law on the General Principles of Organization of Local Self-Government in the Russian Federation (amended in 2003; hereafter, the 2003 Law) is a good starting point for our discussion because not only its contents, but also the research situation around this law would justify our approach.

Since Russia is a federal state, the federal legislature adopts "general principles" to regulate the laws implemented on local self-government at the regional (federal constituent) level. The first Federal Law on the General Principles of Organization of Local Self-Government in the Russian Federation was adopted in August 1995 (hereafter, the 1995 Law). The drafting process of this law and the early stage of its implementation caused the first scholarly boom regarding Russia's local self-government which continued from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. Most of the studies on this topic published then were normative by nature, but some of them were based on empirical research and covered not only legal norms, but also local politics.[6] In 2001-03, keeping pace with the

5 Over the past several years, the Chinese government has attempted to directly subordinate counties to provinces, eliminating "city"-level government, yet "cities" still function vigorously. See Jiang Xiumin and Dai Shengliang, "Woguo 'sheng zhi guan xian' [省直管县] tizhi gaige de zuli ji shixian lujing jiexi" [Our country's direct management of counties by province: Obstacles and realization of China's institutional reform], *Dongbei daxue xuebao* (Shehui kexue ban) [Journal of Northeastern University (Social Science)] 12: 4 (2010), pp. 343-347.

6 Kimitaka Matsuzato, ed., *Tret'e zveno gosudarstvennogo stroitel'stva Rossii: Podgotovka i realizatsiia Federal'nogo Zakona ob obshchikh printsipakh organizatsii mestnogo samoupravleniia v Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 1998); Idem, "Local Elites Under Transition: County and City Politics in Russia 1985–1996," *Europe-Asia Studies* 51: 8 (1999), pp. 1367–1400; V. Gel'man, S. Ryzhenkov, E. Belokurova, N. Borisova, *Avtonomiia ili kontrol'? Reforma mestnoi vlasti v gorodakh Rossii. 1991–2001* (St. Petersburg: Evropeiskii universitet, 2002); Tomila V. Lankina, *Governing the Locals: Local Self-Government and Ethnic Mobilization in Russia* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004); Alfred B. Evans and Vladimir Gel'man, eds., *The Politics of Local Government in Russia* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004).

general restructuring of inter-governmental relations under President V. Putin, Dmitry Kozak headed a commission which prepared a fundamental amendment of the 1995 Law. On October 6, 2003, Putin signed the amended law. This process provoked a second wave of scholarly attention, though much lower than the first, to Russia's local self-government. The 2003 Law set an exceptionally long period of transition by proposing that federal constituents prepare regional laws implementing the "general principles" by January 1, 2006, but only forty-six regions were able to meet this deadline. By January 1, 2009, almost all regions with the exception of Chechnya and Ingushetia introduced the new system of local self-government.[7]

The 2003 Law was much more cumbersome and detailed than the 1995 Law. The 1995 Law was composed of 62 articles of about 8300 words, while the 2003 Law is composed of 86 articles of about 39,000 words. This volume alone betrays the law's title as being "general principles." The cumbersomeness and unsophisticated text of the 2003 Law seemed to symbolize the Putin administration's interventionism in local affairs and contempt for the spirit of self-government. However, a reason for its cumbersomeness was that, while the 1995 Law acknowledged only abstract principles of separation of municipalities from the state, the 2003 Law prescribes the functions of the three existing kinds of municipality (county or *raion*, city, and village) concretely.

Tomila Lankina disclosed that regional leaders played a decisive role in the Kozak Commission, which in turn almost ignored the opinions of "the party most concerned," that is, municipal leaders. Lankina gives the plausible explanation that regional leaders perceived their strengthening control of municipalities as compensation for their loss of power imposed by Putin.[8] It was exactly in this context that the 2003 Law included a city manager system, lacking any historical roots in Russia, as one of the institutional options that municipalities were to choose. Lankina adds that the role of the city manager system was negative even in American municipal history.[9]

According to Lankina, regional leaders' intervention in the drafting process resulted in the 2003 Law's strong rural bias.[10] While granting counties, villages, and small cities useful judicial devices for autonomy, the 2003 Law neglects the problems that regional capitals and other large cities face. Small- and middle-scale cities are obviously borne in mind concerning the responsibilities and competences of city municipalities listed in Articles 16 and 17 of the 2003

7 John F. Young and Gary N. Wilson analyzed the twists and turns in the long period of transition from the 1995 to 2003 Law in "The View from Below: Local Government and Putin's Reforms," *Europe-Asia Studies* 59: 7 (2007), pp. 1071–1088.

8 Tomila Lankina, "President Putin's Local Government Reforms," Peter Reddaway and Robert Orttung, eds., *The Dynamic of Russian Politics: Putin's Reform of federal-Regional Relations*, Vol. 2 (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), pp. 150–153.

9 Lankina, "President Putin's," pp. 167–168.

10 Lankina, "President Putin's," p. 167.

Law; provisions regulating the activities of regional capitals should have been much more wide-ranging. The 2003 Law does not say what intra-city districts (*gorodskie raiony*) are; are they another tier of self-government or only branches of city hall?[11] Finding Lankina's criticism convincing, though, we cannot but notice that she rushes to the other extreme, in contrast to the rural bias cherished by Putin and Kozak, when she writes that "the law would perplex a naive reader seeking consistency as to why the drafters were so preoccupied, in an almost Tolstoyan/Slavophile way, with democracy in the dying-out Russian village while depriving the millions of residents of the more economically important urban areas of that same right."[12] One may find a similar urban-biased mentality in Vladimir Gel'man and others' collective monograph, *The Reform of Local Authorities in Urban Russia 1991–2006* (2008), which seems to equate Russia's local self-governments with the politics in regional capitals.[13]

Another methodological problem common to Lankina and Gel'man is that they tend to construe regional and local leaders' institutional choices according to their political preferences. To make this point understood, we need a preliminary, institutional explanation. The 2003 Law gave regional legislatures and county municipalities two sets of institutional choices. One concerns how to compose local councils: by popularly elected deputies or by delegates from the villages composing the county. The latter was a system functioning to compose Ukrainian regional assemblies until 2002 (by delegates from counties). The other choice is how to select county heads (mayors): by popular election, from among the county soviet deputies (the council system), or by appointment by the district council of the city manager. As mentioned above, granting the regional legislatures three options, Dmitry Kozak wished to spread the city manager system from the beginning, but this system was unfamiliar to Russian localities. During the first several years after 2003, most regions chose between a popularly elected mayoralty[14] and a council system. Around 2010, the regional authorities of Russia (perhaps under the guidance of the Kremlin) began to press local authorities to introduce the city manager system, which

11 Lankina, "President Putin's," p. 161.

12 Lankina, "President Putin's," p. 167.

13 V. Gel'man, S. Ryzhenkov, E. Belokurova, and N. Borisova, *Reforma mestnoi vlasti v gorodakh Rossii 1991–2006* (St. Petersburg, 2008). See Matsuzato's review of this book in *Russian Review* 68:1 (2009), pp. 177–178.

14 Robert Coalson argues that "the tradition of directly elected mayors is weak in post-Soviet Russia" (*RFE/RL Russian Political Weekly* 5:9 (March 4, 2005), "Mayoral Elections: Democracy's Last Stand?"). This seems a formalistic approach. Mayors (*glavy administratsii*) in post-Soviet countries are the successors to the local first secretaries of the CPSU, but not to the *ispolkom* (executive committee) chairmen, who had in fact been indirectly elected under communism. Once legitimation by the party demised, the population thought that the local top leader should be legitimized by popular elections. This is why the overwhelming majority of post-Soviet municipalities chose a directly elected mayoral system, unless the upper authorities imposed on them an appointment system of mayors.

differed from that operating in North America. According to our fieldwork in Tambov Oblast, the regional administration recommends a few candidacies to local councils, which then chooses one of them. Thus, under the guise of raising the status of local councils, the regional administration establishes a vertical configuration of executives. The year 2010 was when Dmitry Medvedev began to fully exploit the system, introduced in 2005, of appointing governors and republican presidents and released strong regional leaders, such as Mintimer Shaimiev and Yurii Luzhkov, from their posts. The pressure towards implementing the city manager system seemed to have the same purpose. As Medvedev's unbridled exploitation of gubernatorial appointments at the regional level produced a number of weak governors and republican presidents, who were obedient to the Kremlin but lacked charisma and were unable to mobilize votes, the same seemed to take place at the local level. As the Kremlin decided to partly return to the system of elected governors after the unsuccessful Duma elections in 2011, the "boom" of city managers will perhaps end.

In an article published in 2008, Gel'man and Lankina argue a step further that not only the city manager system but also the council system "reflect the Kremlin's preferences for top-down control of local governments."[15] Of course, they do not argue that council systems are generally less democratic than popularly elected mayoralties, but neither do they explain why the council system is more pro-Kremlin in the Russian context, nor do they show any evidence that the Kremlin pressed regional leaders to introduce the council system at the local level. In another article, Lankina judges the system of a county council composed of delegates from villages (instead of popularly elected deputies) to be non-democratic.[16] Institutionally, however, the delegation system is often based on the position that the main tier of local self-government is villages and small cities, while counties exist to help these small communities, conduct works unrealizable by individual communities, and solve inter-community problems. This is why Tatarstan (which has a legacy of municipal villages inherited from the 1990s) chose the delegation system. The idea of a district as a union of self-governing villages might be criticized for being unrealistic for the Russian countryside, but not for being a priori undemocratic.

During the 1990s, Tambov Oblast was the reddest region in Russia's Red Belt, whilst Tatarstan was the leader of Russia's ethnic regionalism. Today, both of them have become bastions of the United Russia Party. Despite this same political preference, Tambov Oblast continued to have popularly elected county mayors until 2010 and county councilors continue to be directly elected by the population, while Tatarstan chose a council system for municipalities,

15 Vladimir Gel'man and Tomila Lankina, "Authoritarian Versus Democratic Diffusions: Explaining Institutional Choices in Russia's Local Government," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 24:1 (2008), p. 48.

16 Lankina, "President Putin's," p. 167.

and these county councils are composed of delegates from villages.[17] If one follows the scheme proposed by Gel'man and Lankina, one would erroneously suppose that Tambov Oblast until 2010 was less loyal to Putin/Medvedev than Tatarstan.[18] By the same token, according to Gel'man and Lankina, those local leaders who prefer a directly elected mayoralty to a council system, and a popularly elected local council to a delegation system, should be more democratic than the leaders with the opposite preference. Yet the head of Kamskoe Ust'e County of Tatarstan, Z. G. Garafiev, told us in 2009 that though his republic chose a council system at the local level, he believes a popularly elected mayoralty, chosen by the majority of other Russian regions at that time, to be more effective because popularly elected county heads have "sufficient legitimacy to punish village heads working weakly."[19] Thus, the juxtaposition between democratic system of directly elected mayoralties and authoritarian council systems hardly seems valid. Having said this, we neither challenge Gel'man and Lankina's opinion that the 2003 Law had the political purpose of strengthening the federal and regional authorities' control of rural voters, nor argue that leaders like Garafiev, who agreed to be interviewed by us even without a preliminary appointment, are authoritarian. We are just saying that the attempt to classify Russian sub-national leaders into democratic and undemocratic groups on the basis of their institutional choices is futile.

To avoid politicization in our understanding of rural governments, we should pay more attention to its managerial aspect, which can be better understood from a historical perspective. From this point of view, the significance of the 2003 Law can be summarized as follows. (1) The law overcame the regional mosaic of local systems. (2) The law established a two-tier system of local self-government (counties and villages) in the countryside. (3) The law confirmed and reinforced Eurasian and post-Soviet administrative practices, such as the implementation of social policies being assigned to private enterprises and direct mobilization of the population's labor force for budgetary economy. (4) The law followed a continental model of state-municipality relations at the county level and an Anglo-Saxon model at the village level. This essay explores the historical background to the local reform in 2003, following the above order of issues. The second issue, the establishment of a two-tier system of local

17 Each village sends two delegates to the county soviet; the village head becomes one of them automatically, and the village soviet selects the other.

18 One should not forget that Tatarstan moved from a system of appointed mayors to a council system as a result of the 2003 Law; this was nothing but a step towards democracy.

19 Our interview with Z. G. Garafiev, head of the Municipality of Komskoe Ust'e County, September 12, 2009, Kamskoe Ust'e, Tatarstan. As mentioned, county heads in Tatarstan are elected doubly indirectly: delegations from villages and election from among the county deputies. According to Garafiev, in this system, he represents a small portion of the county's population, while popularly elected mayors may act in the name of the whole county's population.

government, is of particular importance, so we divide our argument into two sections; after examining why the county tier has been so important for Russia's and China's statehood, we follow the history of consolidation of counties and villages in these countries.

Liquidation of the Regional Mosaic of Local Systems

The 1995 Law did not even determine how many tiers of local self-government should exist in the Russian countryside, leaving this institutional choice (as well as others) to the implementation of regional laws. During the 1990s, in ethnic Russian regions and the Finn-Ugric republics, counties had become the only tier of local self-government, while villages were not even authorized to have independent budgets. The county executive heads (*glavy raionnykh administratsii*) often recommended their own candidates for village heads at town meetings, which as a rule confirmed these candidacies. In Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, in contrast, cities (of republican significance) and counties were determined to be state institutions under prefects appointed by M. Shaimiev and M. Rakhimov, while villages and intra-city communities were granted the status of local self-governing body. These republics' leaders thus boasted that they had made local self-governments "closer to the people." The 2003 Law determined that there would be two tiers of local self-government in the Russian countryside (county and village) and prescribed the division of labor between them. Thus, the 2003 Law overcame the regional mosaic of local systems (see table 2).

Table 2: **Current Administrative Territories in Russia and China**

Tier	Russia	China
Region	National republics, krais, oblasts, federal cities, national districts, and an autonomous oblast	Provinces (*sheng*), autonomous districts, and special cities
Locality	Municipal counties (raions) and cities*	*Xian*
Sub-locality		Townships and towns (*xiang zhen*) (people's communes during the socialist era)
Community	Village soviets (administrative villages)	Village committees (administrative villages)
Sub-community	Hamlets (brigades of collective farms during socialism)	Hamlets (production teams of peoples' communes during socialism)

Borderline between the state and municipalities.

* Formerly, these cities were called "cities of regional significance," distinguished from small cities subordinated to county authorities.

Vital Importance of Counties for the Modernization of Russia and China

Sub-national politics in Russia and China began to attract scholarly attention after the collapse of the USSR and China's reform and opening-up policy. But until the recent past, scholars concentrated on regional, and to a lesser extent, community (village) politics, whilst mostly ignoring the ring between them, that is, county politics. There are reasons for this biased interest. Regions had become star players in the analysis of post-communist sub-national politics because (1) observers regarded regional elites as potential opposition to the central government (typically in Russia under Yeltsin); (2) observers were interested in competition between regions for the center's favor or foreign investment; (3) ethnic (non-Russian, non-Han) regions often caused problems for the statehood of Russia and China (Tatarstan and Chechnya in Russia, as well as Xinjiang and Tibet in China); and (4) corruption, power abuses, and electoral fraud at this level were notorious throughout the world.

Community politics attract somewhat excessive scholarly interest because (1) in China, township and village enterprises were one of the leading forces at the initial stage of economic reform during the 1980s.[20] Especially in coastal areas, a number of village authorities have been playing a critical role in pursuing their own collective wealth, showing autonomy from upper-level governments. Moreover, village heads began to be elected in 1987 as a democratizing experiment in China. (2) In regard to the former USSR and Eastern Europe, reformers and foreign observers regarded the regional and local (county) institutions as bastions of post-communist conservatism. In Eastern Central Europe, Estonia, and Latvia, reformers in national politics allied with community leaders and abolished self-government at the regional and local levels in the 1990s (the EU requested that this extremely monolithic form of state be remedied during negotiations for these countries' accession). (3) Populist political ideals, characteristic of Slavic and other former socialist countries, tended to admire face-to-face communities.

Recently, however, a number of scholars have begun to pay attention to local politics, and the traditional bipolar center-regions model is surrendering its place to a tripolar center-regions-localities model. Matsuzato called Russia's local politics "the third ring of state building" and examined the roles of local leaders in Russia's transition in the 1990s.[21] A great deal of literature on Chinese sub-national politics has turned its attention to the county as a unit deserving of serious political analysis.[22] Exploiting Robert Putnam's elite the-

20 Jean C. Oi, *Rural China Takes Off: Institutional Foundations of Economic Reform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

21 Matsuzato, ed., *Tret'e zveno*; Idem, "Local Elites Under Transition."

22 See, for example, Zhou Qingzhi, *Zhongguo xianji xingzheng jiegou ji qi yunxing: Dui W Xian de shehuixue kaocha* [Structure of county-level administration in China and its work: A sociological study of W County] (Guiyang: Guizhou People's Press, 2004); Fan Hongmin, *Xianyu zhengzhi: Quanli shijian yu richang zhixu* [County politics: Power practice and everyday order] (Beijing: China Social Science Press, 2008).

ory,[23] Fumiki Tahara analyzed "elite circulation" at the local and community levels in the early years of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and identified the relative independence of community politics from its local counterpart, because of which elite circulations at the community level were activated by Maoist efforts towards mass mobilization, while politics at the county level was dominated by outsiders.[24] Nintetsu [Renzhe] analyzed the inter-budget relations in the PRC and demonstrated that county-level governments almost completely monopolize income and land taxes and are deeply involved in market activities through state-owned real estate companies.[25]

Soviet and PRC leaders, including those who later became national leaders, often started their professional careers at the local level as, for example, local Communist Youth leaders. Local government was a stage where the highest leaders of the USSR and PRC reminisced about their bittersweet springtime (many Soviet films being dedicated to this motif). In the socialist countries, it was rare for children of political leaders to succeed to their parents' profession (in contrast to Japan), simply because they did not want to repeat their parents' long apprenticeships starting with rural Communist Youth organizations. They preferred to become diplomats, scholars, or other easier professionals. This was a reason for the renowned rural bias in the recruitment of political leaders in socialist countries; they were mainly picked up from among the rural, unprivileged youth.

In contrast to Eastern Central Europe mentioned above, in CIS countries and Lithuania, regional and local government institutions continued to be influential. Yeltsin dealt with regional and local leaders in conducting his machine politics. Features of post-Soviet local administration, such as non-monetary public services and solidarity of the political and economic elites, imply that post-Soviet local leaders continue to have tremendous mobilizing potential in elections. As is well known, Russian governors and republican heads pledge their loyalty to the incumbent president or his successor in presidential elections, but their declaration of support does not automatically guarantee an actual vote. This holds true only if local leaders mobilize votes, implementing governors' commands. The PRC, although it has not introduced competitive electoral systems at the county level and above, will perhaps follow the same path after future democratization. Witnessing United Russia's successful party building at the regional and local levels achieved by the mid-2000s, it was possible to suppose that the federal and regional elites would no longer find

23 Robert D. Punum, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976).

24 Tahara Fumiki, *Chugoku noson no kenryoku kozo: kenkoku shoki no erito saihen* [Power structure in rural China: Elite reshuffling in the early years of the PRC] (Tokyo: Ochanomizu Shobo, 2004).

25 Nintetsu [Renzhe], *Chugoku no tochi seiji: Chuo no seisaku to chiho seifu* [Land politics in China: The central government's policies and subnational governments] (Tokyo: Keiso Shobo, 2012).

it necessary to continue their practices from the 1990s of usurping the public budget and mobilizing public servants during their working hours for electoral purposes, but would try to win elections by exploiting United Russia's own resources. Yet the extremely high percentage of United Russia party membership among local officials seems to imply the opposite.[26]

Establishing Two-tier Local Self-Government

The modern administrative-territorial reforms in Russia and China started from the same point. Both countries' county units (*uezd*s and *xian*) were too large for modernizers/elites to penetrate the peasant world. In Russia, both uezds and townships were artificial units. The institution of the uezd, meaning u-"ezd," namely territory combined with carriage transportation, was introduced by Catherine II and largely existed until the local reforms in around 1930. Townships were introduced as a result of the Great Reforms to replace the former serf owners' administrative and police powers. In contrast, the Chinese county (*xian*) was much more ancient and "natural" than the Russian uezds. In two thousand years of Chinese dynastic history, the number of counties has been stable between one and a half and two thousand,[27] this demonstrating that Chinese counties enjoy spatial integrity as economic, social, and cultural units.[28] While tsarist Russia's administrative units did not hold market gravity, Chinese county seats were often equivalent to what G. W. Skinner called "local cities" or "central market towns."[29] Chinese county seats often developed contiguous to a nexus of river transportation systems.[30] Precisely because imperial Russia's counties and townships were artificial, they were more conducive to changes than their Chinese counterparts.

In both imperial Russia and China, the state authorities reached no deeper than the county (*uezd* and *xian*) seat level, and administration at the sub-county level was run through negotiations between the government and community representatives.[31] Tsarist Russia's main modernizing institution, the zemstvo (local self-government), only existed at the provincial and uezd levels. In both

26 As of 2009, in Znamenka County, among seven village heads and the county seat mayor, four were United Russia members and three were sympathizers. In Kamskoe Ust'e County, a village head told us that all twenty village heads of the county were party members.

27 Shiba Yoshinobu, "Shakai to keizai no kankyou" [Social and economic environments] in Hashimoto Mantaro, ed., *Kanminzoku to chuugoku shakai* [The Han Chinese and Chinese society] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1983), p. 186.

28 Fan, *Xianyu zhengzhi*, p. 10.

29 G. W. Skinner, ed., *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), p. 340.

30 Shiba Yoshinobu, *Chugoku toshi-shi* [A history of Chinese cities] (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 2002), pp. 94–95.

31 Tahara Fumiki, *20 seiki Chugoku no kakumei to nouson* [The revolutions and villages in twentieth-century China] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2008), pp. 10–18.

Russia and China, peasants often selected their representatives to perform state duties at the township and village levels by lot or rotation, because these state functions were neither profitable nor prestigious and peasant notables evaded these duties at any cost. When the tsarist and Qing governments ceased to be satisfied with this inactive community governance, only capable of keeping public order, collecting taxes, and recruiting soldiers, the attempt to penetrate the peasant world began. In the socialist period, new tasks for the painful transformation of rural society, such as collectivization, food levies, and mobilization of rural resources for industrialization, made it necessary to strengthen the county institutions' leadership over these communities.

TABLE 3: TRANSFORMATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE TERRITORIES DURING THE SOVIET PERIOD

Tier	Pre-revolutionary Russia	After the 1930s*
Region (large)	**Gubernias**	
Region (small)		**Oblasts, national republics, etc.**
Locality (large)	**Uezds**	
Locality (small)	Various ad hoc districts (for agricultural, veterinary, and medical aid)	**Raions**
Community (large)	**Townships (*volost*s)**	
Community (small)	Blocs of a central village (*selo*) and surrounding hamlets (*derevnia*s)	**Village soviets**
Sub-community	Villages and hamlets	Villages and hamlets (the latter declining)

* We excluded union republics from this table since they were not of standard size. Some of them (Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan) were huge, while others (Moldavia and the Baltic and South Caucasian Republics) were of region size.

In the late nineteenth century, for deeper penetration into peasant communities, uezd zemstvos introduced ad hoc sub-local districts called *uchastok*s for agricultural, veterinary, and medical aid as well as statistical surveys. In pre-revolutionary Russia, the territories of these ad hoc districts did not overlap each other. During World War I, total mobilization of resources and wartime economic regulation pushed ahead the concept of "economic gravity," resulting in the administrative demarcations of the Soviet Union in the 1920s.[32] In other words, Soviet local institutions became similar to their Chinese counterparts in the sense that they responded to actual economic gravities. During the

32 Kimitaka Matsuzato, "Inter-regional Conflicts and the Decline of Tsarism: The Real Reasons for the Food Crisis in Russia after the Autumn of 1916," Mary Schaeffer Conroy, ed., *Emerging Democracy in Late Imperial Russia* (Denver: University Press of Colorado, 1998), pp. 266–267.

1920s, pre-revolutionary functional districts (*uchastok*s) were guided to overlap each other and eventually became raions (smaller counties) with their own Soviet and party committees.[33] Raions proved to be more functional than pre-revolutionary uezds and existed without significant changes until Khrushchev's amalgamation policy in the 1960s. After Khrushchev fell, the RSFSR (Russian Republic) authorities divided raions again to the pre-Khrushchev level.[34]

In the Soviet Union, village soviets (administrative villages) took shape, based on the bloc of a central village (*selo*) and surrounding hamlets (*derevnia*s); in Russian *selo* means the village with a church, while other villages with only chapels are called *derevnia*. Let us call this territorial unit the bloc of the selo and its surrounding derevnias (hereafter BSD).[35] Not only in Russia, but also in China did the peasants live their entire lives, be born and die, buy and sell, and marry within a BSD. According to Alexander Chaianov, a renowned agronomist in pre-revolutionary Russia, the average radius of a BSD in Russia was five Russian miles (5.3 kilometers).[36] In China, surrounding hamlets have been more autonomous than their Russian counterparts, firstly because of the population density in the Chinese countryside. Among the former Soviet territories, Ukraine and South Russia are similar to China, lacking the strict stratification of a central village and its surrounding hamlets.[37] In the Russian Empire, peasants periodically visited central villages for prayer and for bazaars. Zemstvos opened post offices and other agencies in central villages and thereby strengthened their leading position in the Russian countryside. In the USSR, BSDs became the basis for the introduction of village soviets, while in the Republic of

33 John P. LeDonne, "From Gubernia to Oblast: Soviet Territorial-administrative Reform, 1917–1923" (Ph. D dissertation, Columbia University, 1962), p. 140.

34 This did not take place in Ukraine and Lithuania, where, as a result, raions are larger and more populous than those in Russia. A possible reason for this diversification was that the Ukrainian and Lithuanian countryside was densely populated and therefore advantageous for amalgamation, while enlarged raions in the sparsely populated Russian countryside required serious expenditure for intra-county communication. The large scale of raions in Ukraine is a reason why in Ukraine, raions are state institutions with prefects appointed by the president, while Russian raions are granted self-government.

35 Symptomatically, the Ukrainian language has only one word meaning village—*selo*; this is evidence that the Ukrainians do not tend to stratify villages.

36 A. Chaianov, *Metody izlozheniia predmetov* (Moscow, 1916), p. 4.

37 There are domestic differences in China, too. Similar to Ukraine and South Russia, in densely populated Guangdong and other southern regions of China and the great plain of North China, large hamlets often compose independent administrative villages. In contrast, in the Lower Yangzi area (Jiangnan) and the Sichuan Basin, hamlets are small and dispersed, so township seats often assume the BSD centers' role (this reminds us of the rural demographic structure in North Russia). In other regions of China, units similar to Russia's BSDs are functioning. See Segawa Masahisa, "Mura no katachi: kanan sonraku no tokushoku" [The form of villages: Characteristic features of South China's villages], *Minzokugaku kenkyu* [Japanese Journal of Ethnology] 47: 1 (1982), pp. 31–50.

China, BSDs played an important administrative role as a basis for the renewed *baojia* system.[38]

In the Soviet Union, the authorities pursued an amalgamation of both villages (hamlets) and collective farms, while the PRC only pursued an amalgamation of collective farms even during the period of leftist extremism. While in China production teams based on hamlets (counterparts to "brigades" of Soviet collective farms) continued to be vital economic and social units even under the larger-scale people's commune system, Khrushchev's amalgamation damaged Russian villages almost irreversibly. For the purpose of "overcoming the contradictions between cities and villages," the Soviet authorities made the working-age population move to selos, leaving only pensioners in the surrounding hamlets. Even after Khrushchev fell, in parallel with the demographic decline of the Soviet countryside, intra-BSD migration steadily continued. Today, village soviets do not endeavor to save dying hamlets. If there remain only several houses with pensioners in a hamlet, the village soviet does not as a rule try to extend gas pipelines there. Snowfall may isolate the hamlet from the central village and in this situation, even a common illness could become fatal for the pensioners living there.[39] In China, no large-scale population drain from peripheral hamlets to their central villages took place. As is well known, demographic pressure, not decline, continues to be a major challenge for rural China.[40]

The adoption of the 2003 Law accelerated the amalgamation of village soviets (municipalities), although Lankina's assertion that the 2003 Law decreased the number of Russian municipalities "from 25,000–30,000 to 12,000"[41] seems exaggerated. Article 13.1 of the law (added on December 25, 2008) authorized the town meeting of a village whose population has become smaller than a hundred to abolish the village soviet. As a result of amalgamation, the former central village becomes a satellite hamlet of another central village. In Tambov Oblast, the county authorities proposed that the village soviets not satisfying the above-mentioned demographic condition should organize a lo-

38 An ancient Chinese system of organizing peasant households in decimal order. This system was anachronistically reintroduced in 1931 in order to make peasants watch each other perform state duties and to prevent the Communists' penetration.

39 In contrast, in Armenia in the course of democratization restored pre-Khrushchev, satellite-village soviets. This reform fabricated unviable village municipalities with a population of a few hundred. Along with the abolition of collective farms, this radicalism devastated Armenia's public services in the countryside. See Kimitaka Matsuzato and Stepan Danielyan, "Faith or Tradition: The Armenian Apostolic Church and Community-Building in Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh," *Religion, State & Society* 41:1 (2013), pp. 19–20.

40 Massive migration of young and middle-aged villagers to coastal cities is widely known about, but the majority of these peasants sooner or later return to their native villages to take care of their elderly parents and their children.

41 Lankina, "President Putin's," p. 155.

cal referendum asking whether to dissolve themselves and unify with neighboring village soviets. A negative consequence of amalgamation is that the distance between newly incorporated hamlets and the central village often becomes enormous, for example, 20 kilometers. Perhaps because of its financial wealth, the Tatarstan government is in no hurry to push its small and poor village soviets toward self-liquidation but did, nevertheless, in 2009 suggest that small village soviets consider the possibility of amalgamation.

The 2003 Law requested that the village soviets be as independent as possible and obliged them to compose independent yearly budgets, while in most regions of Russia before the 2003 Law, the village budget used to be part of the budget of the county to which it belonged. Although the items that the 2003 Law assigns for village income are insufficient for maintaining their communal function and Russian villages continue to rely heavily upon budgetary redistribution from above, budgetary separation of villages from counties at least had the effect of making visible the systemic problems faced by villages.

To summarize, China's counties (*xian*) were historically more legitimate and vigorous than Russian uezds and therefore not conducive to territorial reforms, while administrative villages based on the BSD could not develop because of populous and self-sustainable hamlets. While counties in Russia have become smaller and administrative villages (BSDs) have become larger, in China, the distances between counties as bastions of modernizers and hamlets have remained huge. For example, Znamenka County of Tambov Oblast is composed of seven municipalities (six villages and the county seat of Znamenka), and Kamskoe Ust'e County of Tatarstan is composed of twenty villages. "One to seven / twenty" appears to be the ideal proportion for establishing operative relations between a commander and subordinates. In contrast, China's counties (*xian*) are composed of several hundreds of villages (see table 1). It should have been absolutely necessary for modernizers of rural China to develop meso-institutions, such as small cities and townships, to bridge counties and hamlets in China. For the several reasons outlined below, this requirement has not been fulfilled, either.

(1) Modernizers of rural China relied upon existing familist/clientelist relations in the countryside. Prasenjit Duara proposes the concept of "state involution" to describe their state building strategy during the late Qing and republican periods, in which "the formal structure of the state grew simultaneously with informal structures, such as entrepreneurial state brokers."[42] Thomas Bernstein contrasts the methods of land reform and collectivization in

42 Prasenjit Duara, *Culture, Power, and the State: Rural North China 1900–1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 74. Duara argues that "[a]lthough formal state depends on the informal structures to carry out many of its functions, it is unable to extend its control over them. As the state grows in the involutionary mode, the informal groups become an uncontrollable power in local society, replacing a host of traditional arrangements of local governance."

the Soviet Union and PRC, identifying the former as "command mobilization" (from outside) and the latter as "participatory mobilization." Participatory mobilization was more advantageous for the preservation of pre-revolutionary social relations.[43] Today, modern market institutions, such as agribusiness (*longtou qiye*), are penetrating rural China, but they should be identified not as substitutes of, but as complements to traditional human relations. In China, agricultural industrialization is often initiated by individual leaders, who are motivated by communal sentiment.[44]

(2) Although the PRC was no less cruel than the Soviet Union in liquidating the "kulaks," China had neither the Urals nor Siberia to which to deport them. The PRC never followed the Khrushchevite policy of amalgamation of villages, which devastated human networks in Russian villages.[45]

(3) In contrast to the Soviet Union, the PRC has not built a mechanism to make the rural youth who have received higher education return to the countryside. For them, higher education is nothing but a one-way ticket to the urban areas.[46] As a result, Chinese township and village institutions lack specialists with professional expertise and universalist (anti-clientelistic) behavior; thus, these institutions cannot serve as strongholds for modernization.

(4) In the whole post-revolutionary period, the Chinese government requested that villages be financially self-reliant. In Russia, as mentioned above, village budgets significantly depend upon subventions from above and they must therefore obey strict state regulations imposed on their budgetary and personnel management. In contrast, China's townships are requested to be

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43 Thomas Paul Bernstein, "Leadership and Mobilization in the Collectivization of Agriculture in China and Russia: A Comparison" (Ph. D dissertation, Columbia University, 1970).

44 Tianyuan Shiqi (Tahara Fumiki), *Riben shiye zhong de Zhongguo nongcun jingying: guanxi, tuanjie, sannong zhengzhi* [Rural elites in China as they are seen in Japanese eyes: Connections, solidarity, and the three rural issues] (Jinan: Shandong People's Press, 2012), pp. 231–258.

45 During the initial period of the Great Leap Forward in 1958, rural China also underwent an extreme communization process including home demolition, communal living, and grave destruction, as described by Yanni Wang in "An Introduction to the ABCs of Communization: A Case Study of Macheng County," Kimberley Ens Manning and Felix Wemneuer, eds., *Eating Bitterness: New Perspectives on China's Great Leap Forward and Famine* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), pp. 148–170. Yet this anti-communal movement immediately faced the peasant masses' discontent and passive resistance and was suspended.

46 Recently, the Chinese government has implemented the "University Students Turned into Village Officials" project to simultaneously overcome the shrinking job market for university graduates and the deficit of intellectual cadres in the countryside. According to this project, new university graduates are sent to villages to work as assistants to village elders for three years. At the end of 2011, about 21,000 university graduates (one for every three villages) were serving in the countryside under this project. See Zhongguo cunshe fazhan cujin hui [Chinese Associations for the Progress of Village Communities], ed., *2012. Zhongguo daxuesheng "cunguan" fazhan baogao* [Report on the development of the "University Students Turned into Village Officials" Project in 2012] (Beijing: Chinese Agriculture Press, 2012), p. 11.

self-reliant and are accordingly granted much greater freedom in "feeding themselves."

With these factors combined, the PRC has failed to build a formal institutional mechanism to secure the counties' modernizing hegemony over villages.

Eurasian and Post-communist Administrative Practices to Balance Budget

Despite the traditional anti-bureaucratic discourse and self-image of the Russians and Chinese as living in a country with hypertrophied bureaucracy, in both countries, local officialdoms are tangibly smaller than in developed capitalist countries. For example, a locality with a population of 30,000 in Japan has a municipal bureaucracy with about 400 officials (not counting non-clerical workers such as teachers and medical staff), while in the former Soviet Union, the standard number of county administration officials for this population size is about forty. The capitalist transformation of the former Soviet Union limited the conditions that used to allow local bureaucracies to be small: (1) direct mobilization of labor of local populations and (2) assignment of social responsibilities to local enterprises. A number of social infrastructures managed by enterprises and collective farms in the Soviet Union (apartments, hospitals, kindergartens, palaces of culture, and gas, water supply, and heating systems) were passed to municipalities. Nevertheless, local administrations in Russia have maintained the small size that they used to have in the early 1990s.

Rank-and-file officials are almost absent in local administrations in Russia and China; thus, only cadre officials work like generals without soldiers. If we enter a municipal building in a developed capitalist country, we immediately arrive at a window beyond which we talk with a rank-and-file municipal official, but there are no such windows in the local administration buildings of the former Soviet Union and China. On a reception day, citizens must wait in the corridor for a long time to be invited into a cadre official's room to talk with him/her to solve a trivial problem, which would have been solved by a rank-and-file municipal official in a developed capitalist country. It is true that county and township administrations (together with party organs at these levels) in China expanded rapidly after the beginning of the reform and opening-up policy. Township leaders often introduce new offices to be offered to their relatives and clients.[47] Yet if one compares the number of these institutions' of-

47 Yang Zhong, "Dissecting Chinese County Governmental Authorities" in Yongnian Zheng and Joseph Fewsmith, eds., *China's Opening Society: The Non-State Sector and Governance* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 138–141; Thomas P. Bernstein and Xiaobo Lü, *Taxation without Representation in Contemporary Rural China* (Cambridge, UK : Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 96–105.

ficers vis-à-vis the population size, one comes to the conclusion that Chinese local bureaucracies have only just caught up with their Russian counterparts in terms of size (one city/county officer to 700–1,000 people), and are still lagging far behind local bureaucracies in developed capitalist countries (approximately one officer to about 100 people).[48]

An important raison d'être of the local communist organization was to be responsible for mobilizing social organizations (*obshchestvennoe formirovanie*) to assist public administration. Even in developed capitalist countries, some spheres of local government are not entrusted to professional bureaucracy; an example of this is fire-fighting volunteers in Japan. It would have been unbearably costly to organize fire fighting on a purely professional principle in rural areas, and the rural population cannot wait for fire engines to arrive from the county seat or nearest city. In Eurasian countries with low population densities, vast spheres of local administration (such as cleaning after thaws, preserving public peace, and care for the aged, women, and adolescents) were and continue to be performed through the "volunteer" activities of the population, bypassing the monetized budget and hired labor. It is true that the direct mobilization of the population for public services lost prestige during the 1990s, but the 2003 Law again stipulated this practice.[49] In contrast to Russia's return to decent practices, the Chinese government abolished agricultural taxes, fees, and levies in kind in rural areas in 2006. Yet this was no more than a populist appeasement to a discontented peasantry. Since then, various subventions emitted by the central government largely go directly to peasant households, bypassing local governments in counties, townships, and villages. These subventions, however, do not cover deficits caused by the abolition of local fees and levies in 2006, so township and village administrations are suffering from budget shortfalls. Local and community-level governments are no longer authorized to mobilize the population's labor for public construction and social infrastructure. As a result, the Chinese countryside is being devastated.[50]

Because of the assignment of social responsibilities to local enterprises, the socialist local government required cooperation between political (party

48 In 2000, a county in Jangxi Province with a population of 905,000 had a county government with 876 staff workers (*Yugan Xianzhi; 1986~2000* [Gazetteer of Yugan County; 1986~2000], Beijing: Fangzhi Press, 2005, pp. 55, 345–346). Another county in Inner Mongolia with a population of 473,500 had a county government with 597 staff workers, while 482 and 802 officers worked in the "political and jurisprudence spheres" and at the township level, respectively (Zhou, *Zhongguo xianji xingzheng jiegou*, pp. 18, 270).

49 For example, the law assigned on municipalities the obligation to organize the People's Volunteer Self-guards (*dobrovol'nye narodnye druzhiny*) to control minor offences (Article 14, Clause 33).

50 See, for example, He Xuefeng, *Zuqi qilai: quxiao nongyeshui hou nongcun jiceng zuzhi jianshe yanjiu* [Get Organized: A Study of the Construction of Basic-level Organizations after the Abolition of Agricultural Taxes] (Jinan: Shandong People's Press, 2012), pp. 197–204.

and Soviet executive committees) and managerial (economic) leaders. In contrast to local governments in developed capitalist countries, local enterprises (factories and collective farms) bore and continue to bear responsibility for providing public services, such as water supply, heating, "gasification" (extension of gas supply pipelines), school buses, lunch for kindergartens and schools, snow clearing, funerals, and transportation for emergency care for sick people. The reluctance of Mikhail Khodorkovskii to perform these public duties was a reason for his conflict with the Russian government. Since local political leaders needed to depend upon local enterprises for public services, local cadres in the Soviet Union often shifted back and forth between political and managerial structures. The post-communist labor codex of Russia adopted in 1992 confirmed the headhunting by local administrations of active workers in enterprises under the name of secondment (*perevod*). Rural enterprises are also expected to perform public duties in China, as is exemplified by the government project entitled "Agricultural Industrialization Policy." This project expects food processing enterprises to offer agricultural aid, procure products, and increase peasants' income. In contrast to the former Soviet Union, in China, rural enterprises, able to perform communal public duties, can be found only in the coastal counties. In China, scouting by local administrations of enterprise leaders is not a widespread practice; this is partially because semi-state enterprises established by county governments still operate and cadres are reshuffled between county administrations and these enterprises.[51] Since powerful local enterprises (similar to Russia's post-communist agro-firms) do not operate everywhere, Chinese township and village governments are forced to be self-reliant, cooperating with small and dispersed managerial units. Recently, however, general expectation of the roles of private entrepreneurs in public affairs seems to be growing, partially because of the difficulties that the local and community-level governments have had since the abolition of agricultural taxes in 2006.

In the Soviet Union, local councils (soviets) were large and cumbersome. The role of local deputies (councilors) was different from that in developed capitalist countries. A significant portion of local deputies comprised directors of local enterprises and collective farms, who directly supplied local administrations with resources, responding to the requests of party and executive leaders. Elimination of these "cumbersome" local soviets in 1993, immediately after the shelling of the Russian parliament by Yeltsin, seriously damaged Russia's local administration. Directors left the local soviets, which not only

51 Zhou, *Zhongguo xianji xingzheng jiegou*, pp. 106–107. One may find more examples of merging between private entrepreneurs and administrative leaders at the village level (particularly in coastal regions) than at the county and township levels. They are nicknamed "manager turned village head" (*laoban cunzhang*) or "manager turned village secretary" (*laoban shuji*). See Shen Yansheng, "Cunzheng de xingshuai yu chongjian" [The rise, decline, and reconstruction of village politics], *Zhanlüe yu guanli* [Strategy and management] 6 (1998), pp. 23–24.

became much smaller but also began to be composed of representatives of social spheres, such as teachers, medical personnel, local journalists, and workers in culture, who were accustomed to saying "give, give, give" (*dai, dai, dai*), but did not know where to find the resources to do so. This de-professionalization of local soviets took place in ethnic Russian regions immediately after 1993. It seems that conservative regions, such as Tatarstan, resisted for a while, but eventually followed this trend. Directors of local enterprises have preserved the sense of responsibility to serve not only their stockholders but also the local population. Since local soviets as assemblies of directors ceased to exist, however, local executive heads now need to persuade them individually, outside local councils.[52]

Partly so that cadres can be frequently reshuffled between enterprises and local executive and CPSU organs, the socialist regimes devised a specific open employment system under the nickname of the "nomenclature system." In the Soviet countryside, many young people were (and are) not blessed with the circumstances necessary to finish their higher education, supported solely by their own parents. After a middle or higher-middle technical education, they began to work at a local enterprise or farm. If they demonstrated professional devotedness and political talent, a local party or Soviet organ sent them to a university or higher party school to be educated on the state budget, as candidates for future cadres. In Russia, this system declined during the 1990s, but administrations and local universities are struggling to resume it. For example, in Tambov Oblast, local administrations conclude a contract with successful school pupils to offer them state-paid education at a prestigious university, such as Tambov State University, and in return, these youths are obliged to return to their locality to work as specialists for at least several years.[53] The system of cadre recruitment, described here, is more efficient for finding and maximally exploiting human resources in the countryside than Weberian bureaucracy, but constantly generates dependence of young cadres on those who "found" them, thus reproducing intra-bureaucracy clientelism. This is the social background explaining why state and municipal offices in Russia have readily merged with the ruling parties.

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52 Our interview with Sh. A. Zainullin, general director of the Agro-Firm "Ten'kovskaia," September 14, 2009, Ten'ki Village, Kamskoe Ust'e County, Tatarstan. See also Kimitaka Matsuzato, "Aparato demokurasi: roshia no chusho toshi, gun niokeru seiji to gyosei" [Apparatus democracy: Politics and administrations in Russia's small cities and counties], *Suravu kenkyu* [Slavic Studies] 43 (1996), pp. 93–128. This essay has an extensive English summary on pp. 122–128.

53 Our interviews with V. M. Yur'ev, rector of Tambov State University, September 2, 2009, Tambov City; with V. F. Gritsenko, head of the Municipality of Znamenka County, Tambov Oblast, September 3, 2009, Znamenka.

Confirming the Continental Tradition

In pre-revolutionary Russia, state institutions under the leadership of governors were responsible for bureaucratic works, such as tax collection, conscription, and anti-famine grain storage, while zemstvos were involved in creative, socioeconomic activities, such as education, medical, veterinarian, and agricultural aid, and the promotion of local commerce.[54] As mentioned, the lowest state and zemstvo agencies were districts (*uchastok*s). At the township and village levels, various state organs and zemstvos relied upon undifferentiated peasant officers, such as village heads and secretaries (*pisari*), who were overburdened and incompetent because of their low literacy. These undifferentiated peasant institutions irritated both state organs and zemstvos. Therefore, zemstvo liberals requested that township (*volost'*) zemstvos be introduced, while the Ministry of Internal Affairs drafted a police reform targeting the separation of police branches from general peasant administration at the beginning of the twentieth century. Both of these reform proposals aimed to have specialized branches at the community level of the upper organs, be it zemstvo or state. Thus, local institutions in pre-revolutionary Russia were characterized by the Anglo-Saxon system (meaning functional separation of state and municipal organs) at the regional and county levels and fused organizations of governance at the community level.

After the Russian Revolution and especially after the local reforms in around 1930, this situation changed. The Soviet system did not separate state and municipal functions. Regional and local soviets implemented state and local functions inseparably. In contrast, community organs (village soviets) concentrated on social policy. Accordingly, cadres were different. Village soviet chairpersons were often (and continue to be) recruited from pedagogic personnel and collective farm clerks. Their composition was and continues to be highly female in contrast to county leaders. As mentioned, county leaders could expect promotion to the regional, union republic, and, though rarely, even national (union) levels, but this was not the case for village soviet chairpersons, who remained community notables till the end of their career. The differentiation between county and village leaders has remained unaltered until today. To summarize, the Soviet system was a hybrid; higher than the county level, it was an extreme example of the continental model (in which state functions are delegated to local organs), while village soviets resembled Anglo-Saxon municipalities, concentrating on community and social affairs. The 1995 Law was not conscious of this duality, but the 2003 Law confirmed it by stipulating the possible delegation of state powers only to counties and cities, but not villages (Article 15.1, Clause 2; Article 16.1, Clause 2).

54 See Kimitaka Matsuzato, "The Role of Zemstva in the Creation and Collapse of Tsarism's War Efforts During World War One," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 46:3 (1998), pp. 333–334.

The 1995 Law represented the specific public mentality of the time. It supposed that the separation of municipal functions from the state was most important, rather than making existing counties and cities more autonomous from the state (the regional and federal authorities). As a natural result, the 1995 Law advocated the obsolete idea that the Anglo-Saxon model of local self-government was more progressive than the continental model. This anachronism derived from then-Russians' ignorance of modern municipal theory. For example, Joachim Hesse, a leading scholar on local self-government in Europe, argues that a modified continental model (what he called a North and Middle European model), in which state functions are delegated to municipalities though following strict legal regulations and accompanied by financial compensation, would be the most viable future for local self-government.[55] The European Charter of Local Self-Government (1985) is based on Hesse's model.[56] The 2003 Law returned to the Soviet tradition and unintentionally, to Hesse's proposal, prescribing the procedure of delegating state functions to county municipalities and purifying village soviets as community organs. Village soviets only continue to implement state functions in limited spheres, such as registration for military conscription and notarial services.

This division of labor between county and village municipalities determines county municipalities' hegemony over the village municipalities. Non-community matters, for example, promotion of agriculture and invitation of industrial enterprises to the localities are concentrated in the county municipalities' hands, and village municipalities follow the guidance of county municipalities in implementing social policies in their villages. The administrative structure of Russia's countryside, the aforementioned small counties and enlarged villages, reinforces this command system. In Russia, county administrations convene *planerka*s (planning meetings, a title unchanged since the socialist period) composed of village heads of their counties once a week. Japan also has a two-tier municipal system (prefectures and cities/towns/villages), but such intense command-subordinate relations between the upper and lower tiers of local government are unthinkable.

In contrast to the Soviet-style division of labor between counties, performing both state and municipal duties, and villages, limited to social/municipal functions, in the PRC, even village governments perform state functions. Chinese local governments at the county, township, and village levels are supposed to be responsible for all aspects of rural life, and even village leaders' obligations are not limited to community matters. This situation did not change even after the municipalization of villages in 1987. A spectacular example of state obligations imposed on village leaders is birth control. The birth rate tar-

55 Joachim Jens Hesse, ed., *Local Government and Urban Affairs in International Perspective: Analyses of Twenty Western Industrialised Countries* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1991).

56 See Kimitaka Matsuzato, "Subregional'naia politika v Rossii: metodika analiza," in Matsuzato, ed., *Tret'e zveno*, pp. 12–35.

get for one or another village is assigned from upper governments. Economic growth is another example of state duties that village leaders should fulfill, though target indicators assigned from above are often infeasible without adequate investment of resources. In contrast to the command-subordinate relations between county and village leaders in Russia, which only impose social obligations on village leaders, Chinese village leaders are responsible for economic growth in their territories, and are often requested to accomplish this through self-reliance or, at most, by subordinating themselves to "indirect command" from upper governments.[57]

Conclusion

In Japan and several European countries, counties lost their administrative functions through modernization and only remain as geographic names. But in countries with vast rural territories, such as Russia, China, and the United States, counties continue to be a vital tier of public administration. This essay demonstrated how misleading it is to judge the local reform in Russia initiated by the 2003 Law from a narrowly political point of view, only questioning whether Russia's municipalities can be strongholds against Putin-Medvedev's authoritarian tendencies. The 2003 Law has many elements of atavism; the law reconfirmed Eurasian peculiarities in local public administration, once made illegitimate during the 1990s, such as multi-tier local self-government, levies in kind, enterprises' public responsibilities, close cooperation between business and administrative leaders, and the continental local system at the county level.

On the other hand, this essay's historical and sociological approach illuminated the social background to the diversification between the competitive authoritarianism of Russia and the one-party system of China.[58] In Russia,

57 See Tahara, "Principal, Agent or Bystander," pp. 98–99.

58 Competitive authoritarianism is a political regime in which the opposition was allowed to exist and participate in elections legally, but "electoral manipulation, unfair media access, abuse of state resources, and varying degrees of harassment and violence skewed the playing field in favor of incumbents" (Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 3). Since not only opposition to the CCP but even casting doubt on the existing hegemonic (practically one-) party system continues to be an object of criminal prosecution in China, this country is not a competitive one, but one of classical authoritarianism. The competitive elections held at the village level of China only allow personal, not party, rivalry. The end of the Cold War deprived the legitimizing cause of its classical authoritarianism and a number of countries in both the former capitalist and socialist camps shifted from classical authoritarianism or military dictatorship to competitive authoritarianism. This essay elucidated one reason that the CCP prefers to keep the costly one-party system in the post-Cold War world. See Kimitaka Matsuzato, "Due modelli di autoritarismo. Russia e Cina," *il Mulino: Rivista bimestrale di cultura e di politica* 5 (2011), pp. 837–843.

counties inherited the zemstvo tradition of rural modernization. Russia's counties have populations of only about twenty to fifty thousand and comprise from several to twenty villages; they have numerous specialist posts requiring higher education even at the village level as well as various mechanisms to oblige rural youth with higher education to return to the villages. Despite the formal municipal status of the Russian village, every Monday sees village heads convene at the county administration to participate in planning meetings. Observers will be amazed to see how well versed Russian village heads are in individual families' social needs. And almost all of them have become members (or at least associates) of the United Russia Party and act as agents of the county head, who is often the county leader of the party. Even if a pensioner has leftist tendencies and wants to vote for the Communists, it is difficult for him/her to disobey the local leaders who request him/her to vote for United Russia. The Eurasian administrative practices and cohesion of local elites (political and business, counties and villages), combined together, imply that Russia's county leaders continue to have strong leverage to mobilize the vote in elections. The firm control of the rural vote via rural notables is a reason that it was relatively easy for Russia to shift from a one-party system to a competitive authoritarianism, a condition that Chinese communist leaders can only envy.

It is almost impossible for county leaders in China to control a half-million population living in a few hundred villages in their county. Therefore, a meso-institution of townships is functioning, but they also serve to increase the autonomy of the peasants. In the Republic of China, the state tried to penetrate the peasant autonomy at the township and village levels by involving rural power brokers. The PRC sometimes continued this strategy and sometimes rushed to the other extreme to frighten the existing sub-local leaders by periodical mass mobilization. For China's rural youth, higher education is a one-way ticket to becoming an urban citizen. Thus, there remains a vast distance between county elites and peasants in the Chinese countryside, in which fifty percent of the total population continue to live. Any social tension in rural China tends to turn into violent confrontation. Overall, there is no guarantee that this country can shift to a competitive authoritarianism after abolishing the one-party system. The CCP leaders are perhaps well aware of this unpredictability and are not ready to follow Russia's path of reform.

Glossary of Chinese Characters Used in This Article

Baojia 保甲—An ancient Chinese system of organizing peasant households in decimal order.

Cun 村—Administrative village in China.

Dachijia 大迟家—An administrative village in Xiaomenjia Town, Penglai County, Yantai City, Shandong Province of China.

Daxuesheng "cunguan" 大学生 "村官"—Village officials recruited from university graduates.

Huadun 花墩—An administrative village in Shegeng Township, Yugan County, Shangrao City, Jiangxi Province of China.
Jiangxi 江西—A province in south China.
Laoban cunzhang 老板村长— Manager turned village head.
Laoban shuji 老板书记—Manager turned village secretary.
Longtou qiye 龙头企业—"Dragon head" enterprises which are supposed to play a leading role in agricultural industrialization.
Penglai 蓬莱—A county in Yantai City, Shandong Province, China.
Shandong 山东—A province in north China.
Shangrao 上饶—A district-level city in Jiangxi Province, China.
Shegeng 社庚—A township in Yugan County, Shangrao City, Jiangxi Province of China.
Sheng zhi guan xian 省直管县—Direct management of counties by province.
Sheng 省—Province in China.
Shi 市—City (district level) in China.
Xian 县—County in China.
Xiang zhen 乡镇—Town and township in China.
Xiaomenjia 小门家—A town in Penglai County, Yantai City, Shandong Province of China.
Yantai—A district-level city in Shandong Province of China.
Yugan 余干—A county in Shangrao City, Jiangxi Province of China.