

Eurasia's Regional Powers Compared – China, India, Russia

**Edited by
Shinichiro Tabata**

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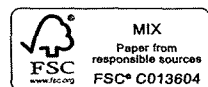
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Notes on contributors

Yuko Adachi is Associate Professor in the Department of Russian Studies, Sophia University, and specializes in Russian political economy. Publications include *Building Big Business in Russia: The Impact of Informal Corporate Governance Practices*, London and New York: Routledge, 2010; and ‘Subsoil law reform in Russia under the Putin administration’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 61 (8), 2009, pp. 1393–1414.

Jun Akiba is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Letters, Chiba University, specializing in the history of the Ottoman Empire. Publications include ‘The local councils as the origin of the parliamentary system in the Ottoman Empire’, in T. Sato, ed., *Development of Parliamentarism in the Modern Islamic World*, Tokyo: Toyo Bunko, 2009, pp. 176–204; ‘Preliminaries to a comparative history of the Russian and Ottoman Empires: Perspectives from Ottoman studies’, in K. Matsuzato, ed., *Imperiology: From Empirical Knowledge to Discussing the Russian Empire*, Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2007, pp. 33–47; and ‘A new school for Qadis: Education of shari‘a judges in the late Ottoman Empire’, *Turcica: Revue d’études turques*, 35, 2003, pp. 125–63.

Yoshiro Ikeda is Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology at the University of Tokyo, and specializes in modern Russian history. Published work includes ‘The reintegration of the Russian Empire and the Bolshevik views of “Russia”: The case of the Moscow Party organization’, *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 22, 2005, pp. 120–40; *The Republic and the Nation in Revolutionary Russia*, Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2007 (in Japanese); and ‘A new horizon of Soviet imperiology’, *Study of World History*, 234, 2013, pp. 1–12 (in Japanese).

Toru Ito is Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Security Studies at the National Defense Academy. He specializes in international relations in South Asia and India’s diplomacy. His published work includes ‘“China threat” theory in Indo-Japan relations’, in T. Horimoto and L. Varma, eds, *India-Japan Relations in Emerging Asia*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2013, pp. 113–31; and ‘The approach to Indian diplomacy: How to establish alternative IR rooted in

India', paper presented to the Annual Convention of the Indian Association of International Studies, December 2012, India International Center.

Hiroshi Kobayashi is a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at the, Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, specializing in Chinese society and culture. Publications include 'Traditional environmental knowledge in Hakka vernacular architecture' (with H. Kawai), paper presented to the forum on 'Hakka tulous: Lessons to be Learned, Past, Present and Future' at the launch of the International Hakka Tulou Alliance (IHTA), June 24, 2009, Xiamen University, Fujian, China (in Mandarin and English); and 'Regeneration of Hakka culture from the perspective of Fujian tulous', in M. Segawa and N. Iijima, eds, *Generation and Regeneration of Hakka*, Tokyo: Fukyosya, 2012, pp. 97–127 (in Japanese).

Hisae Komatsu lectures in the Faculty of International Liberal Arts at Otemon Gakuin University, and specializes in Hindi literature and Indian cultural studies. Her published work includes 'Women of virtue: A case study of Janakidevi Bajaj (1892–1979)', in U. Sachidanand and T. Sakata, eds., *Imaging India – Imaging Japan: A Chronicle of Reflections on Mutual Literature*, New Delhi: Manak, 2005; 'Tell me what love is: A study of "love" in early twentieth century Indian women's narratives', in T. Mochizuki and S. Maeda, eds, *India, Russia, China: Comparative Studies on Eurasian Culture and Societ*, (Comparative Studies on Regional Powers no. 11), Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2012, pp. 131–39; and 'Speaking about Desi: The sense of belonging in contemporary British-Asian writers', in T. Mochizuki and G. Koshino, eds., *Orient on Orient: Images of Asia in Eurasian Countries* (Comparative Studies on Regional Powers no. 12), Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2013, pp. 97–107.

Yugo Konno is Senior Economist at Mizuho Research Institute Ltd, specializing in the Russian economy. Publications include 'Analysis of structural changes in Russia's trade with CIS countries', *Slavic Studies*, 55, 2008, pp. 29–59 (in Japanese); and 'Comparison of trade liberalizations in Russia, China, and India', in T. Sato, ed., *The BRICs as Regional Economic Powers in the Global Economy* (Comparative Studies on Regional Powers, no. 10), Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2012, pp. 1–13.

Go Koshino is Associate Professor in the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center at Hokkaido University, specializing in Russian and Belarusian literature. Publications include 'Image of Empire and Asia in the contemporary science fictions of Russia', *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, 26, 2009, pp. 177–90; and (co-edited with T. Mochizuki) *Orient on Orient: Images of Asia in Eurasian Countries* (Comparative Studies on Regional Powers no. 13), Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2012.

Noriko Maejima is Assistant Professor in Nagoya University Graduate School of Environmental Studies and specializes in Regional sociology,

urban sociology, and studies of Buddhist sacred places in India. Published work includes: 'Decline of the traditional rule and social change in Bodh Gaya: An approach to the local context of social change', *The Sociological Review of Nagoya University*, 27, 2007, pp. 83–104 (in Japanese); 'The significance of local context for the formation of "sacred place": the social formation of "sacred place" in Bodh Gaya, India', *The Annals of Japan Association for Urban Sociology*, 28, 2010, pp. 167–81 (in Japanese); and 'The sphere of "sacred place": social construction of "sacred place" with local society', *The Annals of Association for Regional and Community Studies*, 2011, pp. 67–81 (in Japanese).

Tomoo Marukawa is a Professor at the Institute of Social Science, University of Tokyo, and specializes in the Chinese economy. Publications include 'Why Japanese multinationals failed in the Chinese mobile phone market: A comparative study of new product development in Japan and China', *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 15 (3), 2009, pp. 411–31; 'Why are there so many automobile manufacturers in China?' *China: An International Journal*, 11 (2), 2013, pp. 171–86; and 'Japan's high-technology trade with China and its export control', *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 13 (3), 2013, pp. 483–501.

Yoshifumi Nakai is a Professor in the Department of Political Studies at Gakushuin University, and specializes in Chinese politics and international relations. His publications include 'The return of the learned politician: Abe's security strategy', *Tamkang Journal of International Affairs*, Taiwan, forthcoming; *How can China live in harmony? Empire, sovereignty, and discourse*, Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, forthcoming; and 'Japan's perspective on U.S.-China-Taiwan relations', in C. Lin and D. Roy, eds, *The Future of United States, China, and Taiwan Relations*, New York: Palgrave, 2011, pp. 189–208.

Atsushi Ogushi is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Law at Keio University, and specializes in Russian and post-Soviet politics. Publications include *The Demise of the Soviet Communist Party*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2008; *Post-Communist Transformations: The Countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Russia in Comparative Perspective*, Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2009, edited with T. Hayashi; and 'Russian bureaucratic elites: Patrimonial or technocratic?' paper presented to the VIII World Congress of the International Council for Central and East European Studies (ICCEES), July 27, 2010, City Conference Centre Stockholm, Sweden.

Shinichiro Tabata is Professor in the Slavic-Eurasian Research Center at Hokkaido University, and specializes in comparative economic systems and studies of the Russian economy. His publications include *The Elusive Balance: Regional Powers and the Search for Sustainable Development* (Comparative Studies on Regional Powers, no. 2), Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2010, edited with A. Uegaki; and 'Growth in the International Reserves of Russia, China, and India: A Comparison of

Underlying Mechanisms', *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 52 (2), 2011, pp. 409–427.

Fumiki Tahara is Associate Professor in the Department of Area Studies, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, University of Tokyo. He specializes in community studies and contemporary China studies. Publications include *Rural Leaders in China: Connection, Cohesion and Agrarian Politics*, Jinan: Shandong People's Press, 2012, (in Chinese); and 'Principal, agent or bystander? Governance and leadership in Chinese and Russian villages', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 65 (1), 2013, pp. 75–101.

Sanami Takahashi is an Assistant Professor in Slavic-Eurasian Research center, Hokkaido University, and specializes in the cultural history of Soviet Russia and Russian religious studies. Publications include 'Church or museum? The role of state museums in conserving church buildings, 1965–85', *Journal of Church and State* (Oxford University Press), 51 (3), 2009 pp. 502–17; 'Religion as an object of science in atheistic society: The function of the Historical Museum of Religion and Atheism in late socialist Russia', in T. Mochizuki and S. Maeda, eds, *India, Russia, China: Comparative Studies on Eurasian Culture and Society* (Comparative Studies on Regional Powers no. 11), Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2012, pp. 11–18; and 'Religious practices in Latgale (Eastern Latvia) during the Soviet era: Catholicism, the old believers, and "the socialist new rituals"', paper presented to BASEES/ ICCEES, European Congress 2013: 'Europe: Crisis and Renewal', April 5–8, 2013, Cambridge.

Liang Tang is a Professor in the School of Political Science and Economics, Waseda University, and specializes in contemporary Chinese politics. His publications include *The Party-Government Relationship in Communist China*, Tokyo: Keio University Press, 1997 (in Japanese); *Transformation of Politics and Society in the Post-Mao China*, Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 2001 (in Japanese); and *Contemporary Chinese Politics: the authoritarian developmentalism and its future*. Tokyo: Iwanami-Shinsho, 2012 (in Japanese).

Akira Uegaki is a Professor in the Faculty of Economics at Seinan Gakuin University. Professor Uegaki specializes in comparative economic systems, and studies of Russian, Romanian and other East European economies. Publications include 'Development in the global economy: China since Deng Xiaoping and Russia since Gorbachev', *The Economic Review of Seinan Gakuin University*, 46 (1–2), 2011, pp. 99–121; *The Elusive Balance: Regional Powers and the Search for Sustainable Development* (edited with S. Tabata) (Comparative Studies on Regional Powers, no. 2), Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, 2010; and 'Russia and China in global imbalances: Analysis in open-macro framework', European Association for Comparative Economic Studies, the 12th Biannual Conference, September 7, 2012, University of the West of Scotland.

Introduction

Shinichiro Tabata

In this book, while the USA, EU and Japan are regarded as 'core' players that lead the contemporary world, China, India and Russia are designated as 'regional powers' which have emerged as challengers to the core countries or the existing world order.¹ These regional powers may represent developing countries or provide a certain model for developing countries. We think that by focusing on these three countries, we can understand the contemporary world more deeply and consider the future world more appropriately. In other words, the present world is not represented or controlled exclusively by core countries in the sphere of politics, economics and culture. Neither can it be understood sufficiently in the context of a dichotomy between developed and developing countries. The three countries may be an intermediary layer through which we can see the world completely differently.

The three countries have emerged as major regional powers since the beginning of this century. Historically, these regional powers have formed empires and civilizations in Eurasia. This is another reason that we focus on them and why we believe that we are able to understand the contemporary world and various international issues more deeply by doing so. It is safe to say that without properly placing these regional powers in the world system, we cannot sufficiently grasp the characteristics of the contemporary and future world system.

Our first approach is to compare these regional powers in order to distinguish their commonalities and differences so that we can analyze the sustainability of these states as regional powers in the future. In other words, we are seeking any obstacles that may constrain them from developing further as such powers.

This book includes the most distinguished accomplishments of our project, entitled 'Comparative Research on Major Regional Powers in Eurasia', which was adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science, Japan, at the end of 2008 as a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research on Innovative Areas, that is a special grant for the development of new research areas, and carried out until March 2013. This project, headed by Shinichiro Tabata, involves more than fifty Japanese specialists on China, India and Russia. We intended to make a comprehensive, systematic, and multidisciplinary comparison of major regional powers.

This book is composed of four parts: economic development; political systems and diplomacy; history; and culture and society. Part I analyzes the emergence of regional powers in the world economy. Since the seventeenth century, when China, India and Russia governed Eurasia as empires, economic development in these areas has been outstripped by Europe and the USA, and later by Japan as well. As one of the important commonalities of China, India and Russia, they had opened up and liberalized their economies from the late 1970s till the beginning of the 1990s in order to fill the gap with developed countries.

Akira Uegaki compares the process of economic reforms in the three countries in Chapter 1, interpreting the liberalization reforms of these countries as an attempt towards industrialization or modernization of industrial power of the latecomers. He argues that Deng Xiaoping's China has succeeded in becoming a factory of the world by pursuing anti-Gerschenkron-type industrialization, while the Soviet Union and Russia have intermittently pursued and abandoned Gerschenkron-type industrialization and Russia remains a monopoly economy. Uegaki explains the differences in industrialization policies and their consequences among these countries by the relationship between the domestic economy and the external economy. In China, the leading export sectors have been transferred from labor-intensive industries with weak power of ripple effect to moderately capital-intensive industries with high power of ripple effect. In Russia there have been no such dynamic processes until today, while India has shown a unique type of industrialization, which can be called post-modern-type industrialization.

In Chapter 2, Tomoo Marukawa and Yugo Konno compare the economic opening policies implemented by China, India and Russia during the 1980s and 1990s. The comparison suggests that the sequence of economic opening has influenced their outcomes. China started from a partial opening, made full use of the dual trade system to promote exports and protect infant industries at the same time, and finally achieved a high level of openness. Russia started from a radical opening, and it failed to promote exports except for those of oil and gas, and also failed to protect its infant industries. Russia ended up creating a rather closed economy, because of the inefficiency of its customs procedures. In many respects, India stands in between these two extreme cases.

Chapter 3, written by Shinichiro Tabata, shows that China, India and Russia emerged as regional powers in the international financial system in the 2000s by accumulating huge foreign reserves. This is one of the consequences of the opening-up policies of the three countries. The new Bretton Woods system was said to be set up, where emerging economies represented by regional powers have re-established the United States as the center of the world economy through their commitment to maintaining an undervalued exchange rate. The global imbalance, which was another side of the revived Bretton Woods system, led to the global financial crisis in 2008. The author concludes that although the latter crisis has changed the mechanisms of

foreign reserve accumulation in regional powers considerably, their presence in the international financial system will remain large in the future as well.

Part II deals with the political aspects of the emergence of regional powers. Together with the enhancement of their economic presence, their political clout has increased as well. China, India and Russia, however, have common problems due to the largeness of their countries. A serious problem is how to integrate diversities of nationalities, religions, languages, and cultures while maintaining statehood or nationhood. In this context, we reveal that the political system, including election and party systems both at the national and local levels, plays a crucial role.

In Chapter 4, Atsushi Ogushi and Yuko Adachi argue that one of the keys to establishing a stable political order is the role of the dominant party, which works as an integrating mechanism in such huge, developing, and changing countries. While all dominant parties in China, India and Russia (the Chinese Communist Party, Indian Congress, and United Russia) have contributed to creating a political order, each party has a distinct mechanism. By advancing conceptual ideal types of dominant parties that help to reveal the peculiarities of the three parties, this chapter also demonstrates the limitations of each party's controlling power.

Chapter 5, authored by Fumiki Tahara, focuses on village leadership. In particular, he examines the patronage networks of village leaders in three regional power states in Eurasia. Employing two indices, the inclination toward electoral patronage and selectivity of patrons, the author argues that the characteristics of today's village leaders can be conceptualized as the 'competitive client' in India, the 'faithful agent' in Russia, and as either the 'principal' or the 'bystander' in China. These four village leadership types are byproducts of different forms of patronage networks as determined by the structure of party politics and competitiveness in the national and local elections of each of the three countries.

In Chapters 6 and 7, Liang Tang and Yoshifumi Nakai compare China's political reform strategy with that of the former Soviet Union, respectively. Tang analyzes the interaction between dominant political power and political reform strategy in the two countries. He concludes that China has been able to maintain a steady conservative approach to political reforms characterized by slow-paced liberalization, while aiming at economic development as the primary goal. In contrast, the former USSR started with moderate reform, but ended up with radical democratization, marketization, and restructuring of the sovereign state.

In Chapter 7, Nakai concentrates on the crucial period from 1988 through 1991. He argues that the abandonment of political reform during 1988-91 saved the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from collapse. While the Soviet Union and its Communist Party headed toward dissolution, China and the CCP remained intact. China's retreat to its pre-reform position brought peace and stability, which made economic development possible. The political consequences of this peace, however, were grave. China turned into an economic

giant without political modernization. He concludes that while today's Russia is a post-empire, today's China looks increasingly like an empire, seeking prosperity without political reform.

We analyze the emergence of regional powers in international politics as well. We can say that, until the end of the Cold War, not only Russia, but also China and India had prepared for their emergence as regional powers in Eurasia. In Chapter 8, written by Toru Ito, relationships between regional powers and relations between regional powers and core countries are discussed with special emphasis on India. He shows that India has established strategic partnerships with almost all the major and emerging powers in the world today. The author highlights the different types of India's strategic partnerships with the US, China and Russia. This chapter concludes that India has no reliable and powerful cooperative partner and as a result, India has adopted 'omnidirectional strategic partnership' as pragmatic diplomacy in today's world. The analysis here may symbolize today's multipolar world.

Part III examines the regional powers from a much longer time horizon. If we start with the world around the seventeenth century when China, India and Russia ruled over Eurasia as respective empires, Eurasian history since then may be well described as the history of the relationships of these three empires and post-empires. In other words, comparison of these empires may give a new and deep insight into Eurasian history. In this part, comparison of various empires is made, which has contributed to the development of a new discipline, i.e., comparative imperiology (see Kimitaka Matsuzato, ed., *Comparative Imperiology*, Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2010 (Slavic Eurasian Studies, 22)).

The First World War brought about the downfall of a series of empires. In Chapter 9, Yoshiro Ikeda examines the 'autonomous region' system which was a key institution that supported the integrity of these empires and obtained a new significance afterward. In some places, they contributed to the reintegration of the post-imperial sphere, while their existence may also serve as a destabilizing factor in the borderlands. This chapter traces the development of the autonomous regions in Europe and Eurasia from the early nineteenth century through World War I to the 1920s. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, its autonomous republics have been inherited by Russia and other former states of the USSR. Furthermore, the Soviet nationalities policy gave inspiration to China as well, though Beijing did not grant any kind of statehood to its ethnic minorities. The author emphasizes that the practice and idea of the autonomous republic is still essential today in understanding the problem of stability in the Eurasian borderlands. The former Soviet autonomous republics or regions and their counterparts on the Chinese periphery, including Crimea, Abkhazia, and Xinjiang, are serving as a destabilizing factor for international relations.

Chapter 10, written by Jun Akiba, sheds light on the issue of the shari'a or Islamic law in nineteenth-century empires. Confronted with a Muslim society, these empires generally incorporated the existing Islamic legal system into

their governmental institutions, which resulted in the imperial powers' involvement in defining what the 'proper' shari'a was. The author takes examples from British India, the Volga-Ural regions in Russia, Russian Turkestan, and French-ruled Algeria to investigate the shari'a politics in each region between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries and examine their connections. The author also refers to the legal and judicial reforms in the Ottoman Empire, and argues that colonial shari'a politics after the late nineteenth century can be understood in the context of the encounter between 'Ottoman shari'a' and 'colonial shari'a'.

The final part, Part IV, is engaged in comparison of the cultures and societies of the regional powers. We pay special attention to the fact that China, India and Russia represented respective civilizations in the past. Through a comparison of the cultural aspects of the three countries that may challenge the cultural dominance of the USA and Europe in the contemporary world, we may obtain a deep insight into present and future world culture. In this part, we make a comparative analysis of some cases of representation, perception and self-consciousness illustrated in literature and cultural activities.

In Chapters 11 and 12, Indian and Chinese images in British and Russian literature are discussed, respectively. Chapter 11, written by Hisae Komatsu, examines British Asian migrant literature. She argues that in the 2000s, especially after September 11, 2001, British Asian literature garnered much attention in British literary world as it 'reveals the hidden worlds that shine in the darkness'. This chapter investigates the literary works of several authors of Indian descent who are second generation migrants living in contemporary Britain, and examines their sense of belonging, which is inherent in their work, as well as how they position and represent their roots.

Chapter 12, authored by Go Koshino, sheds some light on Chinese images in Russia today, mainly analyzing contemporary fantasy novels in which a remarkable role is allocated to the eastern neighbor. Vladimir Sorokin, Viktor Pelevin, Kholm van Zaichik and other contemporary writers create a kind of mirror image, intentionally reversing and grotesquely distorting traditional representations of the Celestial Empire. The author observes a sense of inferiority or superiority toward the West (or even toward the East), a 'megalomaniac' self-image of Eurasian power, a homophobic machismo mentality, anxiety over an energy-dependent economy, and various other aspects of Russian culture and society, reflected in the fantastic mirrors of China.

In the final chapter (Chapter 13), Sanami Takahashi, Noriko Maejima and Hiroshi Kobayashi compare three World Cultural Heritage Sites in China, India and Russia respectively, and discuss the problems arising from a discrepancy in the understanding of cultural heritage between these regions and the World Heritage Committee that recognizes the 'universal value' of the sites. They argue that religious heritage, inscribed on the World Cultural Heritage List, provides a prime example of fusion of traditional sacredness and modern mass consumer culture. By exploring cultural issues of their representation and management, they found several opposing and competing

stakeholders, giving contradictory accounts of the significance of each site. They conclude that UNESCO's seemingly neutral evaluation makes it more difficult to create a balance between preservation, economic stake and spiritual significance.

As a whole, we show that it is essential for these regional powers, i.e., China, India and Russia, to maintain huge country status in terms of population and territory, since they have regained their importance in the world economically, politically and culturally, and enjoy substantial benefits due to the expansiveness of their respective territories. If we look at per capita indicators, these countries are not among the top countries in the world. In this sense, they do not lead the world and they do not provide attractive models for the world, including the developed countries.

China, India and Russia have invented specific means or institutions in order to exploit the size of their countries and to integrate large territories containing divergent nationalities, religions, languages and cultures. These means and institutions include, for instance, a specific dominant party system, a state-dominant economic system, the institution of autonomous regions, and a specific ideology or nostalgia integrating the country. We have to admit that some of these institutions have not been regarded as normal or desirable by the current international standard created by the core countries. This may be attributed to the costs involved in maintaining regional powers. It should be noted that among developed countries, only the USA has maintained big country status in the contemporary world. We should take these Chinese, Indian and Russian institutions seriously, since they are playing an important role in the increasing world presence of these countries, and some of them may be regarded as models for other developing countries.

We believe that, as the importance of these regional powers increases, the significance of our study, i.e. the comparison of these regional powers, increases as well. And we are proud that our research is the very first attempt of this kind in the world.

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Note

- 1 We do not argue that China is still a regional power and not a global power. We just define regional powers as such countries as are challengers to the existing world order.

Part I

Economic development