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## 5 Client, agent or bystander?

### Patronage and village leadership in India, Russia and China

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#### Introduction

This essay focuses on 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, I will argue 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 (Figure 5.1). These four village-level leadership characterizations are byproducts of different forms of patronage networks that reflect specific political features in each of the three countries.

In these three rapidly growing regional powers, local residents have become more affluent and their lifestyles more complex, and subsequently the need for and requirements of local governance and public service have extended beyond the scope of the relatively simple rural governance of the preceding era. For example, as local people began consuming foods that packaged in plastic, garbage disposal has become an important task for local administration. Similarly, as more local people buy cars, the need for better paved roads to connect local residents with places beyond the village is expected to grow.

With this shifting socio-political environment in common, India, Russia and China have taken a dissimilar approach from many Western countries



Figure 5.1 Typology of village leadership  
 Source: Author.

and Japan which eradicated administrative villages, merging them into larger local self-governing bodies in the process of modernization. India, Russia and China are unique for having preserved the village unit as an important level of local government. The reasons for this preservation are not the focus of this chapter, but it is easy to imagine that since all three countries are characterized by vast territory and large population, it was reasonable from the viewpoint of administrative cost for the state, to utilize the autonomous functioning of the village community (Matsuzato and Tahara, 2014).

At the same time, village organizations in these countries frequently confront the dilemma of choosing between 'what should be done' and 'what actually can be done' because of financial shortages. In interviews in Russia, a government official dealing with local self-governance issues commented that it was almost unimaginable that the local municipality be provided with 'enough' financial resources.<sup>1</sup> This is the very condition that motivates village leaders, in an effort to mobilize resources, to create a broad patronage network outside of formal financial arrangements. 'Patronage' here means the system by which important persons give support, especially financial, to local communities in return for their allegiance to those patrons. Under common structural conditions, village leaders in the three countries have developed unique patronage networks. This is the starting point for our comparative analysis.

Nonetheless, despite such distinctiveness, relatively little scholarship has paid attention to the relationship between the village and outside resources. Village studies by anthropologists and rural sociologists tend to spotlight social relations and organizations, as well as the power structure *within* villages, rather than focusing on the interaction between the village and the larger political and economic environment.<sup>2</sup>

In this sense, there is much to learn from Indian village studies. In the Indian context, which has showcased the combination of competitive electoral politics in a huge agrarian population, election studies and political science have not treated the political behaviors of rural residents as a mere exception.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, many works in village studies have attempted to trace national- or state-level politics at various stages from the village perspective (Opler *et al.*, 1959; Mitra, 1979; Krishna, 2007). Combined, these studies show Indian villages in the process of becoming more involved in national- and state-level politics.

Based on preexisting studies including those in India,<sup>4</sup> the goal of this chapter is to clarify the diverse development patterns of modern rural communities by employing a comparative perspective. More broadly, the comparison will contribute to deepening our understanding of a multi-polar structure of the modern political world.<sup>5</sup> Of the three countries, little has been presented about the patronage politics evolving in Russian villages under the rule of the United Russia party (hereafter UR). Similarly, while much research has focused on village-level balloting in China, little has been written about the patronage networks between village leaders and outside actors, perhaps because they are essentially 'invisible'. Comparative study will help to overcome the shortcomings in our tacit understanding of the politics of the three countries.

Aside from secondary written materials on village life in the three countries, the village information on which this paper is primarily based was collected during my fieldwork in four villages in China, two in Russia, and two in India.<sup>6</sup> Although data collected in these villages cannot perfectly represent the social reality of each country and should be complemented by written sources, I can confirm that none of them are extreme cases in terms of geographical or economic conditions, and that they are representative of important aspects of the local politics of each region.

### National electoral arrangements

In order to illustrate the political background in which patronage networks develop, this section will offer a brief overview of the electoral arrangements employed in the three countries. Descriptions from my research sites will be used to provide a concrete picture.

In India, as clarified by Table 5.1, all administrative levels including the village, block, district, and state, up to the federation have representative bodies. Viewed by rural residents, there are as many as five levels of patrons: ward members of Gram Panchayat (GP hereafter),<sup>7</sup> members of Panchayat Samiti (block level), members of Zilla Parishad (district level), MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly at the state level), and MP (Member of Parliament at the country level) act as representatives and increase the

Table 5.1 People's representatives of Indian research sites

Level	Category	Term (years)	AP	Orissa
Country	MP (Raja Sabha)	6	233 seats, 18 of which are from AP	233 seats, 10 of which are from Orissa
	MP (Lok Sabha)	5	543 seats, 42 of which are from AP, 1 from Nizamabad	543 seats, 21 of which are from Orissa, 1 from Cuttack
State	MLA (Members of Legislative Assembly)	5	AP has 294 seats, 9 of which are from Nizamabad, 1 from Kamareddy constituency	Orissa has 147 seats, 9 of which are from Cuttack, 1 from Badamba block
District	Members of Zilla Parishad	5	Nizamabad has 36 seats, 1 of which is from Bhiknoor block	Cuttack has 46 seats, 5 of which are from Badamba block
Block	Panchayat samiti	5	Bhiknoor block has 14 seats from 18 GPs, 2 of which are from Peddamallareddy GP	Badamba block has 36 seats from 36 GPs, 1 of which is from Desarathipur GP
Village	Ward members	5	Peddamallareddy GP has 14 seats from 14 wards	Desarathipur GP has 11 seats from 11 wards

Sources: Author's interviews and the website of Election Commission of India ([http://eci.nic.in/eci\\_main1/index.aspx](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/index.aspx)), accessed 11 January 2013.

opportunities for mobilizing government resources. All of the electoral constituencies, including the GP election, are single-member constituencies.

One factor that affects the motivation of elected representatives is clear correspondence with their electoral constituencies. For example, Peddamallareddy Village in Andhra Pradesh (hereafter AP) has fourteen wards, roughly equivalent to electoral districts. Each ward in the village has a clear-cut membership of between 50–200 households and encompassing a particular territory. Since the ward simultaneously functions as an electoral constituency, the village level representatives are called ‘ward members’ and are supposed to represent interests of the residents of the ward in which they are elected.

At the block level, representatives are called ‘Panchayat Samiti’ and are supposed to represent the interests of their GP. The same kinds of correspondences are found at the district level, state level, and in the Lower House of the Indian Federation (Lok Sabha). The distinct relationship between the representative of the people and their constituency can enhance a representative’s motivation to bring ‘pork’ to their own constituency, as well raising the expectations for it.

The scope of ‘village leaders’ in this chapter includes leaders who hold formal positions in GP organizations including sarpanch (village chief) and other elected ward members, namely Paddamallareddy in AP, which has fifteen leaders, and Desarathipur in Orissa, which has twelve.

Now, looking at Russia, the electoral system is comprised of a four-layer representative body: the federation, *oblast’* or republic, county (*raion*) and the village (Table 5.2), among which the latter two are regarded as local self-government municipalities. The *oblast’*-level election employs a combination of proportional representation and a single mandate system, but there is momentum recently to move toward a system based exclusively on proportional representation (Ross, 2011, p. 642). In the Tambov regional election in 2011, twenty-five out of fifty seats were for the single-member constituency, while the remaining twenty-five were for proportional representation. In general, the single-member constituencies are composed of two *raions* (e.g. Znamenka *raion* and Petrovskoe *raion* hold one elected deputy in common).

At the *raion* level, a deputy normally represents one village or central town. However, there seems to be great regional variation; in the Tambov case, we found that twelve of the twenty-one deputies resided in the central town of Znamenka, while the remaining nine came from villages; some big villages like Poklovo-Marfino had more than one deputy.<sup>8</sup> In the Tatarstan case, all forty deputies of Kamskoe Ust’e *raion* come from twenty villages in the territory and uniformly each village has two deputies. Interestingly enough, one of these two deputies is simultaneously the village chief while the other is a member of the village soviet.<sup>9</sup>

At the village level, council members seem largely to represent streets or hamlets in the territory. For example, Poklovo-Marfino has eleven council members, seven of whom are residents of the central hamlet while the remaining four are from small surrounding hamlets. Ten’ki Village in Tatarstan has ten

Table 5.2 People’s representatives of Russian research sites

Level	Category	Term (years)	Poklovo-Marfino (Tambov)	Ten’ki (Tatarstan)
Federation	Senators of Federal Council	none	166 seats, 2 senators are appointed from each of the 83 federal subjects	
	Deputies of State Duma	4	450 seats, proportional representation	
Oblast, republic	Deputies of Oblast’ Duma	5	50 seats, 25 of which are single-member constituency and 1 from Znamenka-Petrovskoe constituency	100 seats, 50 of which are single-member constituency and 1 from Kamskoe Ust’e-Apastobo-Kaibitsy-Tetyushi (partly) constituency
Raion	Deputies of Raion Duma	5	Znamenka <i>raion</i> has 21 seats, 2 of which are from Poklovo-Marfino Village	Kamskoe Ust’e <i>raion</i> has 40 seats, 2 of which are from Ten’ki Village
Village	Deputies of Village Soviet	5	Poklovo-Marfino Village has 11 seats from the whole village	Ten’ki Village has 10 seats from 10 constituencies, each of which is composed by 1–5 streets

Source: Author’s interview.

council members who represent each constituency, each of which is composed of between one and five streets (the village has forty streets in total<sup>10</sup>). Formal village leaders include village chief and deputies, totaling twelve in Poklovo-Marfino, Tambov and eleven in Ten’ki, Tatarstan.

Now turning to China, first we will look at two particular aspects of the Chinese electoral system; one being the weakness of the council system and the comparative strength in the party and administrative system. At the village level, the person regarded as most powerful is the secretary of the Chinese Communities Party (CCP, hereafter) branch while the second most powerful is the village chief. The secretary is not popularly elected but directly appointed by the town or township’s CCP organization, while members of the villagers’ committee are elected every three years by popular vote. Elections for the village representative assembly (*cunmin daibiao dahui*) are much less systematized than those for the villagers’ committee, and these representatives, if they exist, are not normally regarded as ‘village leaders’.<sup>11</sup>

The second conspicuous feature of the Chinese electoral arrangement is that the village, as a ‘self-government’ body, is the only stratum in which a substantially competitive election can take place. In fact, representatives to the town/

township and county level People's Congress have also been directly elected by popular vote since 1979. Representatives higher than the county level (city, province and center) are to be elected through indirect voting by lower-level representatives. However, these congresses are normally considered rubber-stamping organizations that are controlled and manipulated by the CCP and the government. Due to the limited power of these representatives, few people take the congresses or their elections seriously (Zhong, 2003, pp. 62–67). Obviously, it is quite difficult to regard these congresses as equivalent to those in India and Russia

### Patronage and village leadership

#### *India: from the agent of the Congress Party to the competitive client*

The patronage networks of Indian village leaders are formed exclusively through elections and party politics. Although the patron–village leader relationships inevitably hinge on personal elements, in most cases they are only byproducts of party-based relationships.<sup>12</sup> Under such competitive party politics, the village leader can switch patrons in an attempt to bring resources to his or her constituency. Thus, a combination of a high inclination to electoral patronage and the high selectivity of patrons encourages leaders to become what I have named the 'client' type of village leader. In the current Indian system, clients proactively choose their patrons rather than passively waiting for the patrons to find them.

#### Village politics and party competition

A remarkable facet of India's electoral arrangement is that this competitive electoral system, particularly at the federal and state assembly level, has a relatively long history, dating back to the enactment of the Indian Constitution in 1950. Moreover, competitiveness among political parties has grown harsher over time. In the 'Congress system' (1947–67) of post-independence India, efforts at ballot mobilization at the village level overall were undertaken in every village by the landlord caste, upon whom the Congress Party depended. Under this system, the mobilization pattern was 'vertical': villagers were mobilized top-down to vote in favor of an economically powerful landlord-Congress candidate. During this period, village leaders in India with a lower selectivity of patronage played the 'agent' role in the Congress Party. Therefore, the village leaders' role as the 'competitive client', each leader representing different segments of a village population, grew conspicuous only after the political climate became increasingly competitive during the multi-party rivalry after 1989.

Figure 5.2 illustrates that a diversion from the 'Congress System' in AP and Orissa began as early as the end of 1970s or early 1980s. The following thirty years revealed a more competitive trend in state politics. Both in AP and Orissa, two or three major parties are in cut-throat competition.<sup>13</sup> In recent years the ruling parties of the AP and Orissa state governments have changed frequently.

	AP	Orissa
1951		INC
1956	INC	INC
1957	INC	INC
1961		INC
1962	INC	
1967	INC	INC
1971		INC
1972		
1974	INC	INC
1977		JP
1978	INC	
1980		INC
1983	TDP	
1985	TDP	INC
1989	INC	
1990		JP
1994	TDP	
1995		INC
1999	TDP	
2000		BJD
2004	INC	BJD
2009	INC	BJD

Figure 5.2 Winning party in AP, Orissa MLA elections

Notes: \* INC = Indian National Congress, TDP = Telugu Desam Party, JP = Janata Party, BJD = Biju Janata Dal.

\*\* Gray parts indicate the period of 'Congress system' in two states.

Source: Website of Election Commission of India ([http://eci.nic.in/eci\\_main1/index.aspx](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/index.aspx)), accessed January 11, 2013.

Nakamizo (2012, pp. 58–66, 296–306) conceptualized the transformation of village-level politics as a change from a ‘landlord mobilization strategy’ to a ‘caste mobilization strategy’. In the ‘caste mobilization strategy’, two or three different political parties in search of potential clients try to find and connect themselves to different segments of village society, namely caste groups.

### **Parties in the eyes of village leaders**

In the present competitive political arrangement, the party that village leaders have supported and will support in the future becomes a vital issue because the party they support directly affects their access to resources. In this sense, patron–client relations in India are created in a ‘bottom-up’ manner instead of ‘top-down’.

The council members, excepting ward members and sarpanch at the village level, are entitled to discretionary funds that they can use for any purpose. At the lowest level, Panchayat Samitis in AP, locally called MPTC, are entitled to two types of fund; one is a general fund amounting to 15,000 rupees per member, per year, and the others is BRGF fund that is 90,000 rupees per member, per year.<sup>14</sup> Among others, MLAs in the state government control large amounts of resources and actually facilitate many rural development projects (Wilkinson, 2007, pp. 114–31). One such important fund is called LAD (Local Area Development) funds. An important project carried out with MLA funds in both of my research sites (AP and Orissa) was the construction of drinking water facilities.

Unlike upper-level council members, the village leaders, sarpanch and other elected ward members are not entitled to use discretionary funds. Since the independent panchayat income is very limited,<sup>15</sup> they are expected to extract funds from their patrons or decide how to allocate government project funds within the village.<sup>16</sup> It is difficult to imagine the representative (ward members) at the very bottom level mobilizing funds from higher up. A ward member in Peddamallareddy village told me that he was an activist in the Congress Party and had a good relationship with Shabir Ali, the ex-MLA from his constituency. Through Congress relationships, he mobilized 200,000 rupees to construct two cement roads in his ward, which is a SC (Scheduled Caste) area. Both of the roads were constructed with MLA funds.<sup>17</sup> Again, the husband of a sarpanch in Peddamallareddy village told me that it was difficult to raise funds for public construction. In order to obtain information about funds, he went to meet with Mr. Govardan, the current MLA for this constituency. He is from Baswarpur village (within the same block) and an old friend. They have also strengthened their connections through activities of the TDP (Telugu Desam Party).<sup>18</sup>

What is remarkable about the Indian version of patron–client relationships is that they are party-based and created through competitive elections. Naturally, individual village leaders have different patrons at different levels, for example, one is a Congress MLA and another a Zilla Parishad member from

TDP. In fact, at least eleven out of fourteen ward members in Peddamallareddy reported that they had parties they supported at the moment; six supported TDP, three supported Congress and two supported TRS (Telangana Rashtra Samithi).

While the patron–client relationships are party-based, and not genuinely personal, one can also strategically switch one’s supported party in favor of another patron. A ward member in the village told me that before the election she switched from TRS to the Congress Party. She chose to do so because she could get funds more easily, because the MP from this constituency was in Congress. During her term she obtained funding from the MP for several projects, including 150,000 rupees to build a cement road, 30,000 rupees for a bridge, and 50,000 rupees for a drinking water borehole.<sup>19</sup>

These traits are particularly interesting when considered in comparison to China, where patron–client relationships are overwhelmingly personal and the village is much less likely to be affected by upper-level politics.

### ***Russia: convergence into the faithful agent***

When the patronage system has a relatively high inclination to electoral patronage, and at the same time the selectivity for patrons by village leaders is fairly low, we can assume leaders fall into the ‘agent’ category. Current Russian village leadership roughly represents this type. More specifically, these leaders, firmly and vertically integrated into a cascade-like patronage system, are acting as the ‘faithful agents’ of the UR, the dominant party of twenty-first-century Russia.

### **From fragmentation to ‘unity’**

Taking the questionable sustainability of electoral arrangements into account, Russia should be the most unstable of the three countries. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the era of party politics in mid-1990s Russia was one of ‘hyper-fragmentation’, where forty-three parties competed for popular votes during the 1995 parliamentary election (Gel’man, 2008, p. 914). It was only after President Putin took power in this century that a relatively stable regime began to emerge. As some scholars have suggested, ‘the organizational power in Russia increased from medium low in the early 1990s to medium high in the 2000s’ (Levitsky and Way, 2010, p. 190).

At the moment, Russian politics is still categorized as a multi-party system. Nevertheless, many observers have already come to the consensus that under the Putin regime the ruling UR party has established a ‘competitive authoritarianism’ that does not allow the outward competition with opposition parties.<sup>20</sup> As a result, in the Tambov Duma election in March 2011, forty-three seats out of fifty (86 percent) were won by UR candidates. At the *raion*-level council, in Znamenka, seventeen out of twenty-one deputies belong to UR, of whom fifteen have formal membership.<sup>21</sup> One notable current

situation is that the party is deeply interlocked in administrative power that obliges administrative chiefs at the *oblast'*, *raion*, as well as village level to play a part in the UR. Among others, after the abolition of gubernatorial elections in early 2005, 'the appointment and further survival of regional chief executives largely depended on their loyalty to UR' (Gel'man, 2008, p. 919). In the Znamenka *raion* in Tambov, four out of seven village chiefs had membership in United Russia in 2009, while the remaining three were sympathisers.<sup>22</sup> In Kamskoe Ust'e County in Tatarstan, all twenty village chiefs in the county territory were members of UR.<sup>23</sup> Among the ten deputies of the village council of Ten'ki Village, Kamskoe Ust'e County, at least seven and possibly eight are UR members.<sup>24</sup>

### **Village leaders in the eyes of the party**

Under the present overwhelming dominance of UR, government resources are allocated to local leaders in exchange for the 'loyalty' or 'faithfulness' proven in elections. During electoral campaigns, local administrative leaders are supposed to work ardently as 'ballot collecting machines' and those locals who fail to mobilize ballots are seen as 'unfaithful' and are not to be awarded advantages. The former county chief of Znamenka, V. F. G., resigned in May 2011, just after the Tambov Duma election noted above. The reason for his sudden resignation is said to be that he was not passionate enough in the campaign and could not satisfy officials at the UR headquarters in Tambov.<sup>25</sup>

How does the UR party procure loyalty from local leaders and local residents? There are some unique ways in Russia. First, unlike in India where material benefits are the main motivators for winning votes, face to face contact between party members and residents is more important in Russia.<sup>26</sup> Members of the regional council often visit their constituency to communicate with local residents. In Tambov, one of the ongoing projects is called 'Don't Forget Even One', in which county leaders make courtesy visits to every veteran of World War II. In Znamenka County, there are 150 veterans on the list. According to the chief of the county council, while the living conditions of the veterans is fair, it is important to pay respect by actually visiting them at home. One of the veterans is an elderly woman who worked as a spy during World War II. The chief of her village forgot to visit her on her birthday and was reprimanded by the leader of the county council for carelessness. On Women's Day on March 8th, local leaders sent some gifts to assuage her anger.<sup>27</sup> As shown here, through daily, face to face contact, village leaders are expected to grasp residents' hearts.

Another UR method of exacting loyalty from residents is an emotional mobilization, calling on patriotic feelings. For example, the Tambov regional government is now promoting a project to erect war memorials. UR headquarters in Tambov is very supportive of this project. The plan is to build fifty monuments across the whole region, two of which are in Znamenka County. The county chief of Znamenka, speaking on behalf of the UP party, told us

that the erection of monuments is a substitute for history education. He stressed that 'without a proper history education, another government will emerge within two years'.<sup>28</sup>

### *China: fluctuation between the principal and the bystander*

In China, where the national electoral arrangements follow a different logic, patronage networks surrounding village leaders differ from those in India and Russia. First, since China does not have competitive elections above the village level, village leaders are unable to seek patrons among electoral representatives outside the village. It is not the electoral patronage as observed in Indian and Russian cases but personal patronage, if any, that they can rely on. As noted before, since these networks are essentially intangible and it is not so easy to study them in a systematic way, relatively little scholarship has paid attention to their functioning. Even when mentioned, these networks tend to be treated as specific cases and are not investigated for the structural arrangements in which the networks have developed.

Second, the selectivity of personal patronage varies greatly across regions, which has led Chinese village leaders to fall into two broad categories, 'principal' and 'bystander' (Tahara, 2013). While keeping in mind that reality is much more complex than a twofold typology, in this section I will offer some typical forms of village patronage networks from my own research sites.

### **Case 1: the village level 'diplomacy' to create connections**

As is often the case with 'model villages' in China, Xiaofengying Village in suburban Beijing is located advantageously. It is only five kilometers from the county seat and well connected to the city center and its outdoor market. Ha Yunchao was a prominent leader who held the position of secretary of the village CCP branch from 1983 through 2000. After the late 1990s, he and other village leaders sought the development of the village through vegetable production (such as lettuce and broccoli). In order to raise funds for the village, Ha and other leaders made every endeavor to create personal connections with county (*xian*) and town (*zhen*) government cadres. As a result, they were quite successful in securing government project funds to construct a vegetable wholesale market and purchase refrigerators in which to store vegetables. They also built an intimate relationship with private traders from Guangdong province who came to purchase the produce. In this sense, the village leaders played the role of 'diplomat' by managing village development with politicians from elsewhere.<sup>29</sup>

### **Case 2: 'the third force' as a local patron**

Simen Village, in southern Henan (central China), displays another intriguing development style regarding patronage networks. One of the hamlets in Simen

Village (administrative village) is Qiaoying Hamlet. It has two good paved cement roads that connect the hamlet to the highway beyond. One is 2.5 kilometers long and was completed in 2010 with an investment of 350,000 yuan (about US\$58,000). An officer in the public security bureau of the central government who was a native of the village brought in this funding. The other road is 1.5 kilometers long and was completed in 2012 with an investment of 250,000 yuan (about US\$41,000). Funds were also raised by a native of the hamlet presently working as a vice magistrate of the People's Government in a neighboring county. An informant commented that this style of fundraising has been only possible because their hamlet has an exceptional number of villagers in influential positions in the government or other party organs. Had that not been the case, they would have had to build hamlet roads by themselves, as did some of the surrounding hamlets in the area.<sup>30</sup> In previous Chinese rural studies, people working outside the village but eager to assist in the village's public matters are known as 'the third force' (*disanzhong lilian*).<sup>31</sup>

### Case 3: 'entrepreneur turns village secretary'

Another research site of mine in Gansu province (western China), Linji Village, is also economically typical in the sense that it is a rural village with no collective economy. Yet in 2009, a private mine developer living elsewhere was appointed as party branch secretary by the local CCP organization in his native place, Linji. He had been working outside the village for a long time and was wealthy in comparison to other villagers. What local CCP leaders, as well as villagers, expected was that he could mobilize his own economic resources and personal networks in the local business and political circles in order to contribute to village public construction projects. From 2010 to 2011, he successfully applied for government funds for road building. Additionally, he utilized his own heavy mining machinery to launch the construction of village roads.<sup>32</sup>

### Case 4: helpless 'bystander'

The situation of village leaders in Huadun Village in Jiangxi Province (central China) is quite dissimilar from the above three cases but is representative of the 'bystander' type of leader found in most Chinese villages. With no financial base in their own territory and no useful networks to connect them with high-level officials, village officials are quite inactive and unable to implement public construction works, including road building which is regarded as the most important step toward overcoming geographical remoteness. As formal village leaders became 'bystanders', responsibilities for development were handed down to more informal, hamlet-based leaders. Consequently, whereas some hamlets managed to introduce 'New Rural Construction' (*xin nongcun jianshe*) funds through personal connections with the township government,

as well as raising funds by themselves to pave the local road, some other hamlets in the village have been rather unsuccessful in mobilizing resources (Tianyuan, 2012, pp. 121–43).

We should not assume the above cases are static village typologies because (1) diverse patronage patterns can develop simultaneously in one locality, and (2) specific types of patronage can weaken or even vanish as time goes by and under different circumstances. Although constantly fluctuating between principal and bystander, it seems that in this case, the 'bystander' role better reflects the normative state of the majority of today's Chinese village leaders.<sup>33</sup> The mainstream literature on today's Chinese rural society (e.g. Kennedy, 2007; He, 2012) attributes this growing 'bystander' type of leadership to the financial difficulties following the abolition of agricultural taxes in 2006. However, as shown at the end of this chapter, our comparative perspective draws out another interpretation.

### Patronage type and selectivity

I will now reconsider two indices by which to categorize local political patronages: (1) inclination to electoral patronage, and (2) actual selectivity of patrons.

#### *Patronage types: electoral or personal*

In general, it seems to be the case that the harsher the competition becomes in a political campaign, the more likely it is that electoral patronage prospers, leading to less need for personal patronage-seeking by village leaders. India is characterized by a full-fledged, multi-layered electoral patronage and negligible personal patronage, while Chinese village leaders can mobilize extra resources only through personal patronage and face-to-face connections with upper-level government personnel (if they exist).

In Russia and China, village leaders seem to have more alternatives for considering potential patrons in non-political spheres, typically industrial entrepreneurs. Russian village leaders extract resources mainly from upper-level electoral patrons. At the same time, local agro-firms make unique contributions in providing employment opportunities, snow removal services, food for schools, etc.<sup>34</sup> A similar trend was observed in China, especially in coastal eastern China where industrial entrepreneurs are thriving. Cases 1 through 3 show us that in current Chinese marketization contexts, building good relationships with industrial entrepreneurs as potential patrons is becoming more critical.

Through comparison between Indian and Chinese cases, another major finding of this study is that the electoral patronage has much higher penetrating power than personal patronage. 'Penetrating power' here refers to the power to facilitate the even redistribution of government resources and circulation to the entirety of the local population, including every electoral territory. The ruling and opposition parties bring about this distribution power as both are

ving to win the popular support of the vast rural population, of whom a good proportion belong to underprivileged groups including SCs, STs<sup>35</sup> and peripheral hamlets.<sup>36</sup>

China lacks such a mechanism. Personal patronage networks develop only unevenly across vast rural areas. Communities with abundant personal connections can access outside resources without difficulty, but this is not the case with the majority of ordinary inland villages. Fan (2008, pp. 135–36) also shows that in allocating poverty alleviation project funds, remote and consequently comparatively deprived communities that are most needy but lack the connections with county authorities, and are easily ignored.

Of course, one might argue conversely, that the CCP and the Chinese government, in an effort to lessen the rural–urban economic gap, have recently been investing a large proportion of their budget in rural and agricultural development. Surely this would give village leaders more access to government resources than before. However, the increase in government funds does not instantly substitute for the lack of electoral patronage networks because without an electoral constituency, distributive channels cannot cover all of the rural territory and inevitably misses links to government resources for residents of remote villages.<sup>37</sup>

On the part of the ruling CCP, there is little motivation to build extensive and tight networks with village leaders and local residents because there is no need to collect ballots from village leaders as their Indian and Russian counterparts do. Of course, this lack of motivation does not signal a lack of intention to maintain social order and control over the local population. More important here is that the legitimacy of the CCP is not being tested by popular elections but rather, by the party's ability to achieve economic development and foster improvements in local living conditions. That is the very reason why the top CCP leaders are extremely wary of the expanding regional inequality and the rural–urban gap, as these phenomena might stir up discontent among the deprived populations and in the end possibly undermine the ruling party's legitimacy.<sup>38</sup>

### *Highlow selectivity*

The selectivity of patrons mainly affects the autonomy of village leaders; the higher the selectivity, the more autonomous they become. As shown in Chinese cases, without competitive elections and electoral patronage, village leaders' chances to obtain personal patrons is rather adventitious, often determined by the socio-geographical position of the village. For many of the common rural areas, the number of patrons is so limited that there is little room for choice.

In comparing Russia and India, Russian village leaders have much less opportunity to choose their political patrons. Here, two conditions are crucial. First, in the Russian version of patronage politics, the loyalty of lower-level officials to higher-level ones forms a cascade-like structure, where regional leaders

require county leaders to pledge their allegiance and county leaders require the same of village leaders.<sup>39</sup> Among others, village leaders are under rigid surveillance by county (*raion*) leaders. For example, all village chiefs are called to weekly meetings at the county soviet office with the county chief. The county chief chairs a semi-annual residents' meeting in all the villages in his or her territory. According to a county chief in Tatarstan, the purpose of the residents' meeting is to give the village chief a chance to learn 'how to work for residents' (Tahara, 2013, pp. 95–96). The rigidity of vertical control, in one part, is a side-effect of the structural proximity of state (*oblast'*) county and village, which has enabled more frequent and intimate contact across different levels of administrative leaders. In Indian patronage politics, we have confirmed that lower-level leaders can simply bypass the next tier or tiers in the administrative strata allowing access to leaders higher up.

Second, from the view of chronological change, India and Russia are headed in opposite directions, leading them to dissimilar political values. Post-independence politics in India initially experienced 'unity' under Congress rule and then 'diversification' from the 1980s on. In today's Indian social context, 'competition' itself is highly praised as an embodiment of modern democratic values. Post-communist Russia first experienced a period of economic disorder and political fragmentation in the 1990s. It is only with the advent of the Putin regime in this century that it began to recover social order and, among other things, 'unity'. In the Russian context, competition as an embodiment of democracy *can* exist but should take place in a more subtle way. Mobilization of ballots is done in a less materialistic and more emotional way. Outward competition and material interests are sugarcoated in the rhetoric of national unity, harmony, patriotism, the mourning of war dead, and the subsequent stabilization of the whole society. No doubt the party is attempting to associate these sentiments with its own legitimacy. Since village leaders are at the frontlines of the realization of these intentions, their freedom to choose political patrons should be sacrificed.

### **Conclusion**

Obviously, in the midst of rapid economic growth in recent years, vast rural populations in the three focus countries still need the 'village' administrative level. However, village leaders in the three countries are not guaranteed resources within the boundaries of formal financial arrangements, necessitating the cultivation of patronage networks outside the village. In an attempt to categorize patronage types, two indices have been employed: the inclination to electoral patronage and the selectivity of patrons. Accordingly, the three regional powers in Eurasia studied here have displayed different patronage types. Indian village leaders are competitive 'clients' with a high degree of electoral patronage and high selectivity of patrons, (2) Russian village leaders can be characterized as faithful 'agents' with mostly electoral patronage and low selectivity, and (3) Chinese village leaders have only personal patronage



networks, with varied selectivity for patrons among communities, making only a few village leaders 'principals' while the majority are 'bystanders' who can provide few resources to improve local public life.

What factors, then, have ultimately brought about the above characteristics? The structure of party politics and competitiveness in national and local elections have determined village leadership. As summarized in Table 5.3, the three countries have clearly exemplified three different types of party politics.

To conclude this comparative study, it is crucial to emphasize a twofold set of implications of leadership types in China. First, a recent, growing tendency toward the 'bystander' type leadership in rural China should not be attributed only to the financial difficulty following the abolition of agricultural taxes in 2006. The 'bystander' phenomenon has a more profound institutional basis stemming from the fact that the CCP has not placed itself within the logic of competitive elections and does not need to create broad relationships with potential grassroots clients as in India and Russia. In this sense, the abolition of agricultural taxes has revealed the structural position of Chinese village leaders.

A second implication of this leadership type arises from the political structure; one cannot attribute the thriving 'connectionism' (*guanxi zhuyi*) in mainland China only to socio-cultural factors (e.g. Liu, 2000, pp. 161–64; Wong and Leung, 2001; Gold *et al.*, 2002). The lack of competitive elections above the village level can better explain the reason why village leaders need to pursue personal patronage through back door connections (often in vain). It also suggests that if competitive elections should take place in the distant future, the channels through which Chinese people obtain goods and resources will have changed drastically. Taiwan, which shares a socio-cultural background with mainland China, provides a good example because it has developed clientilistic networks through competitive elections (Wakabayashi, 1992, pp. 117–42). Accordingly, 'connectionism' can only explain a relatively small part of social life in Taiwan.

Table 5.3 Correlation between party politics and village leadership

<i>Competitiveness in Elections</i>	<i>Inclination to Electoral Patronage</i>	<i>Selectivity of Patron</i>	<i>Type of Village Leadership</i>	<i>Example</i>
high	high	high	client	India after the Congress system
middle	high to middle	low	agent	Russia under the UR, India under the Congress system
low	low	low/high	bystander/ principal	China

Source: Author.

In sum, the micro-level analysis done in this chapter has demonstrated that the development of the modern political world has been much more diverse than many have previously assumed. To deepen our understanding of this diversity, more effort should be made to elucidate the value systems hidden below the surface of political events in these three core nations.

## Notes

- 1 Interview with head of Bureau of Mutual Relations with Local Municipality of Tambov Government, 2 September 2009, Tambov.
- 2 On this point, Migdal (1974, p. 23) holds a similar view to the author.
- 3 As review articles for this sphere, see Graham (1975), Brass (1978) etc.
- 4 In addition to the Indian case, some other studies on the developing world have posed similar questions; Wolters (1984) for the Filipino case, Thiele (1986) for the Tanzanian case, Antlöv (2004) for an Indonesian case, Kasuga (1988) and Ookama (1994) for cases in modern Japan. Few of these have dealt with problems in a broad comparative perspective.
- 5 The major regional powers in Eurasia in our project are regarded as challengers to the uni-polar order of the United States and an EU-dominated international order. Some of the commonalities among these countries are political independence, late growth, economic, military and cultural power that influences neighboring countries, and a semi-peripheral status which leads them to distance themselves from the norms of freedom, democracy and prevention of nuclear proliferation in international society based on the logic of strength. For detailed information, see the project website: (<http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/rp/english/outline/index.html>).
- 6 The fieldwork in China was carried out intermittently from 2001 until now, while field research in Russia and India started in 2009. Specific names and the regions in which main sites are located are; (1) Xiaofengying, Beijing, China, (2) Simen and Zhaizhuang, Henan, China, (3) Huadun, Jiangxi, China, (4) Linji, Gansu, China, (5) Poklovo-Marfino, Tambov, Russia, (6) Te'nki, Tatarstan, Russia, (7) Peddamallareddy, Andhra Pradesh, India, (8) Desarathipur, Orissa, India. I am very grateful to Professor Kimitaka Matsuzato of Hokkaido University for accompanying my field trip to Russia in September 2009, March 2012 and August 2013. The Russian excursion would have been impossible without his kind assistance.
- 7 GP normally composes several administrative villages, which are locally called 'revenue villages'. Peddamallareddy GP is formed by two revenue villages (Peddamallareddy and Mallupally). Another research site, Desarathipur GP in Orissa, is also composed by two revenue villages (Desarathipur and Kharod).
- 8 Tambov cases in this section are based on the name list of *raion* deputies provided by Znamenka *raion*, obtained via Professor Dmitry G. Seltser of Tambov State University named after G. R. Derzhavin on 7 July 2012. Since the data do not provide information about the actual situation of electoral manipulations, I can only roughly associate the village with the constituency, judging by the home addresses of deputies.
- 9 Interview with Zufar Galimullovich Garafiev, chief of Kamskoe Ust'e *Raion*, 12 September 2009, Kamskoe Ust'e *Raion*, Tatarstan.
- 10 Data provided by Te'nki Village soviet, 11 September 2009.
- 11 See Zhong (2003, pp. 159–69) for general organizational structure in Chinese villages.
- 12 Dealing with a case in the Philippines, Wolters (1984, pp. 198–99) distinguishes political patronage from the 'patron-client relationship' in a traditional sense

- because 'in general the relationships between politicians and the electorate were short term, impersonal, instrumental and based on a specific transaction'.
- 13 Yadav and Palshikar (2006, pp. 112–13) note that there is a trend towards opening the competitive format and that single party dominance by the Congress Party is now an exception rather than the rule; they point out that a large number of states have shifted to a two party or two-plus party competition, and there are many more multi-polar systems than before.
  - 14 Interview with a Panchayat Samiti from Peddamallareddy Village, 23 December 2011, Peddamallareddy Village, Nizamabad District, AP.
  - 15 In 2009, the independent income of Peddamallareddy included; house tax, personal income tax, documentation tax, auction income of village markets, housing permission, shop license tax, water tap bills, etc., which amount to approximately Rs.560,000.
  - 16 In regard to this role, Joshi and Narwani (2002, p. 189) note that after the introduction of the Community Development Program in 1952, Panchayat Raj institutions at the village, block and district level are recommended and expected to properly utilize the development funds by the government.
  - 17 Interview with Eeshwar Reddy, a ward member in Peddamallareddy Village, 19 December 2011, Peddamallareddy Village, Nizamabad District, AP.
  - 18 Interview with husband of sarpanch in Peddamallareddy Village, 22 December 2010, Peddamallareddy Village, Nizamabad District, AP.
  - 19 Interview with Patluri Kondal Reddy, son of P. Vimalamma, a ward member in Peddamallareddy Village, 18 December 2011, Peddamallareddy Village, Nizamabad District, AP.
  - 20 Levitsky and Way (2010, pp. 186–201) argues that, as authoritarian consolidation progressed under the Putin regime from 2000 to 2008, elections became less competitive. For more on this point, see also Gel'man (2008, pp. 913–15).
  - 21 Among the four non-UR deputies, two are Communist and the rest are independent. Interview with Anatolii Ivanovich Bushuev, chief of Znamenka council, 13 March 2012, Znamenka *Raion*, Tambov.
  - 22 Interviews in Znamenka *Raion*, 3–8 September 2009, Tambov.
  - 23 Interview with Khalim Khamidullovi Ibatov, chief of Bol'shie Saltyki Village, 12 September 2009, Bol'shie Saltyki Village, Kamskoe Ust'e *Raion*, Tatarstan.
  - 24 Interview with Aleksandr Egorovich Khamkin, 22 August 2013, Ten'ki Village, Kamskoe Ust'e *Raion*, Tatarstan. He added that the high membership rate was not because they are village deputies but because most of them occupied important posts in various spheres.
  - 25 Interview with Vladimir Penikov, deputy chief of social institute in Tambov state, 9 March 2012.
  - 26 The more 'emotional', and thus less materialistic way of ballot mobilization in Russia might have something to do with its developmental stage. With this respect, Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007, p. 19) point out that 'in many systems characterized by relatively high levels of poverty – such as Thailand, India, Pakistan, or Zambia – patrons directly purchase clients' votes in exchange for money, liquor, clothes, food, or other immediately consumable goods'.
  - 27 Interview with Anatolii Ivanovich Bushuev, chief of Znamenka council, 12 March 2012, Znamenka *Raion*, Tambov.
  - 28 Interview with the chief of Znamenka *Raion*, 12 March 2012, Znamenka *Raion*, Tambov.
  - 29 See Tianyuan (2012, pp. 45–73). Earlier research (Liu, 1998) has also disclosed that village cadres, except for regular administrative contacts, have attempted to create good relationships with potential political patrons by means of holding banquets and gifting at ceremonial occasions.

- 30 Interview with Qiao Haijun, a villager of Simen Village, 9 August 2012, Nanyang, Henan.
- 31 See Luo (2002), Luo (2006, pp. 134–38), Shen (2006), Luo (2009, pp. 165–71). What they mean by 'third' is that it comes after the power of the state (first) and the village community itself (second).
- 32 From my field notes of Linji Village in August 2010 and August 2011. Largely focusing on rich coastal areas, recent scholarship has studied the 'entrepreneur turned village secretary' (*laoban shuji*) or 'entrepreneur turned village chief' (*laoban cunzhang*). See, for example, Lu (2010), He (2012, pp. 290–307).
- 33 Such villages are often labeled as *kongkecun* (empty village) or *tanhuancun* (paralyzed village).
- 34 On these points, see Tahara (2013, pp. 89–92), Matsuzato and Tahara (2014).
- 35 SC (scheduled caste) and ST (scheduled tribe) dwellings are often concentrated in a corner of a residential area in every village.
- 36 With regard to this penetrating power, Krishna (2003, pp. 1182) points out a recent trend where 'the budget for rural development has not only expanded many times, but it has also been fragmented into a large number of tiny parcels that can cover a larger number of villages than before'.
- 37 As a typical case, see Case 4 in the previous section.
- 38 On this point, Kou (2013) has come to a similar conclusion through a comparison of land acquisition cases in India and China.
- 39 This is equivalent to what Cameron Ross (2009, pp. 184–98) calls 'Putin's electoral vertical'.

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