

Book Reviews

David Laitin, *Identity in Formation. The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad*, Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press 1998.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, many feared the ethnic worst. The mix of hitherto-dominant minority ethnic Russians and hitherto-subordinated ethnic minorities led to many predictions of ethnic conflicts, even ethnic wars. Some have proved true. Armenians and Azerbaijanis, Uzbeks and Kyrgyz, and Georgians and Abkhazians/ South Ossetians have fought virtual wars over the last decade. But, as yet – though this is still early days – the Russians have been less involved, except in the peculiar cases of Moldova and Tajikistan, and against the traditional enemy of Russian states, the Chechens. Most conflict between Russians and the titular nationalities of the Soviet-successor states has so far been at quite a low level. Amid a world seemingly dominated by ethnic violence, this may seem a Russian ‘success story’. Is this so, and if so, why?

There are around twenty five million Russian-speakers living in ‘the near abroad’, in ex-Soviet countries outside the Russian Federation. In 1989 to 1991 they suffered what David Laitin calls a ‘double cataclysm’. In 1989 *glasnost* allowed new powers to the titular nations of these republics. The introduction of new language laws threatened the local dominance of the Russian language and more generally its role as the language of ‘international’ communication throughout the Soviet Union. The titular language of each republic would now become its sole official language. Some Russians feared that failure to speak the language might even deprive them of citizenship. It was as if New Yorkers were suddenly faced with the prospect of learning Iroquois or being deported to Britain, says Laitin. The second blow was the collapse in 1991 of the Soviet Union itself. These Russian-speakers were now not merely minorities in a Soviet republic, but minorities in a foreign country. They were a ‘beached diaspora’, says Laitin.

David Laitin is one of the two or three most interesting writers currently discussing ethnic conflict. He is not easy to categorize. Though increasingly interested in rational choice theory, he has substantial scholarly and ethnographic knowledge of at least two continents, and he is always able to reach out beyond the conventional wisdom of any school. In this book he analyzes the responses of Russians in four of the successor states, Estonia, Latvia, the Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. It is a difficult book to summarize. It is rich, detailed, and nuanced, employing diverse methodologies and theories. The peculiarities of the four countries are

recognized and detailed. But the book lacks a single overall argument or even a coherent testing of its more important arguments. It reads like a first draft, though containing impressive parts. There is a fine ethnographic account of a Russian family in Estonia, interesting survey data on the four countries, and a high level of sensitivity to the varied local positions of Russians. There are compelling discussions of identity, language choices, and rational choice models. The bias in both his qualitative and quantitative data is toward individual actors rather than broader social structures. But Laitin is so multi-faceted that he also recognizes many of the more structural points that I make below. The problem is that this book does not bring the various levels of explanation into a coherent whole.

Laitin believes that some ethnic identities are relatively deep (as primordialists say), but others are culturally and more contingently constructed. Indeed, there is normally fluid competition between them. Thus Russians abroad might largely assimilate to the local titular nationality, they might adopt a new ‘conglomerate’ identity, or they might design what would be a new ‘Russian’ identity (for Laitin interestingly explains that Russian-speakers in the near-abroad had not been traditionally included in the designation ‘Russian’). Indeed, all these identities are being embraced, though to differing degrees, in all the four countries analyzed. Yet most of the book narrows down one aspect of ethnic identity, language choice: whether Russians learn and have their children educated in the titular language of the country. Largely ignored is the rest of the potential ethno-nationalist baggage – historical and folk myths and culture, claims to a sacred and organic statehood, and severe negative stereotypes of other groups. Here language is mostly denuded of sacred elements and becomes instrumental, relevant to obtaining education and jobs.

In this relatively instrumental terrain, Laitin appropriately deploys a rational choice model. His model centres on three aspects. Using the Kazakh example, these are the economic pay-off for Russians if they use Kazakh, the degree of in-group scorn evinced by one’s fellow-Russians for learning Kazakh, and the degree of out-group acceptance of Russians by Kazakhs. Laitin’s central model is the ‘tipping game’ or ‘cascade’, taking the form of an S-shaped curve lying on its side. Typically, the initial combination of little pay-off, high ingroup scorn, and low outgroup acceptance means that few Russians learn Kazakh. But, if one or more of these factors begins to change, more Russians will learn Kazakh. The pay-off for learning Kazakh increases and that for Russian declines. At some point the S-curves of the expected returns from each language cross. This becomes a ‘tipping-point’ and a ‘cascade’ then begins toward everyone learning Kazakh. Alternatively, if changes occur in the opposite direction, there might be a cascade toward flight and emigration. This cascade ‘will begin as soon as a critical number of Russians believe that a critical number of Russians believe that a critical number of Russians will leave’. This is a parsimonious and plausible model, though one based heavily on aggregating individual-level choices.

Laitin then mobilizes an interview survey in the four countries, containing a battery of variables to measure these three factors plus other background factors. He measures the percentages of both groups speaking the two languages, the religious and linguistic distance of the titular group from the Russians, the desirability and linguistic requirements of jobs held by Russians and titulars, and the attitudes of both groups toward each other, each other’s languages and toward intermarriage. In general the factors which help explain the degree of assimilation of Russians remain prosaic and instrumental. They are clearly amenable to being fitted into some kind of rational choice model based on individuals. Yet they do not much

support the particular model he started with. Overall population proportions and the degree of difficulty in learning the titular language seem to explain more of the openness to assimilation than do its likely economic returns. Laitin concedes this, briefly attempts to explain the anomaly, and then abandons tipping models altogether. They are barely mentioned in the last third of the book. Nor does he seek a revised rational choice model, though presumably he could have done so. Indeed, the book's final conclusions are a mass of details concerning the present and future prospects for assimilation in the four countries. All four cases differ, and Laitin's discussion is suitably complex, allowing for alternative outcomes. This seems eminently reasonable, if rather an anti-climax.

Laitin does accept that he must go beyond a level of analysis based only on individuals. He acknowledges that important decisions are taken above the level of the individual, especially by the local titular state. In the last chapter he also briefly discusses the other important state actor involved in the story, the Russian Federation. But I would weight this factor much more strongly than he does. The moderation of the Russian state has probably been the greatest contributor in the comparative peace of the near abroad. In all of the 14 relevant former Soviet republics, Russia has been very restrained on the language issue. In 13 of them Russia has not intervened in any serious way to 'protect' fellow Russians in the near-abroad. The exception has been Moldova, where elements of the Russian army (unofficially) moved in to 'protect' ethnic Russians, escalating ethnic tensions into large-scale fighting.

Why the restraint elsewhere? Probably because most Russians inside the Federation do not live amid other locally entrenched ethnicities. Russian politics mostly concern other issues – the economy, criminality, democracy and regional issues rarely seen in ethnic terms. Nor would a major resurgence of 'nationalism' inside the Russian Federation likely be a direct response to local ethnic issues. More likely it would be a response to resentment at foreign geopolitical pressures or an attempt to displace other domestic social tensions on to ethnic and border issues. So far, neither has happened to a significant extent, except in Chechnya.

All this means that the Russians in the near-abroad have been left 'unprotected'. They have insufficient power to claim their own state or even regional autonomy or consociational powers within the existing titular republic. Nor does emigration to an impoverished and disorganized Russia look very attractive to many of them (unless under great pressure). With these alternatives closed off, Laitin shows that most Russians abroad accommodate pragmatically to the titular nation and state. Only in parts of the Ukraine are extremists among the titular nationality powerful enough to close off this option. Accommodation predominates, reinforcing political stability. The rational calculation of alternatives is much easier than in more turbulent situations. That is why almost all the factors Laitin identifies as affecting the degree of assimilation are pragmatic in nature, and why rational choice models are here relatively appropriate.

The cases of much higher levels of conflict between non-Russian rival ethnicities (listed at the beginning of this review) do not centre on the language/jobs nexus. Ethnic warfare has resulted where there are contested state boundaries or concentrated minorities claiming their own state or membership of a neighbouring state dominated by its co-ethnics (the so-called 'homeland' state). Christian or secular versus Muslim clashes also exacerbate tensions in some countries, on occasion making the language issue a sacred as well as an instrumental matter.

Much would change if a future Russian regime espoused a more aggressive nationalism. However, it is unlikely this would centre on language or jobs per se. More likely, it would

concern imperial revisionism for territory or ‘respect’ (i.e. subordination) from the small states of the near-abroad. Then the Russians abroad would confront a different reality. Some would be presumably emboldened by apparent support from Russia into making greater demands on their titular state and into embracing a broader ethno-nationalism. Some of those living near the border with Russia would probably support the creation of a Greater Russia involving territorial revisionism. Others, especially those living further away in more vulnerable conditions, would become more frightened of alienating the titular nation. The titular nation would probably be also divided. But if the international tension mounted, it is likely that the issue would be decided less by freely expressed individual choices (about schooling, in voting, etc.) than by violence – both within each of the ethnic communities and also between them.

All this would make formidable demands on any rational choice model. It would have to be capable of dealing not only with the economic-instrumental aspects of alternative choices, but also with the sacred/emotional and violent aspects of mobilizing ethno-nationalism. When ethnic conflict becomes serious, it characteristically throws up three main issues: ‘jobs, flags and guns’. These involve, respectively: who has access to employment, especially public employment, and to the main qualifying route, education; which symbols will be flaunted, like flags, anthems, marches, and other public manifestations; and who will staff the police and army, and what will happen to the paramilitaries. These are diverse issues. But we also need to weight the significance of individual and group choices according to the degree of power they actually possess – ideological (i.e. emotional-moral commitment to their cause), economic, military and political. This will also give us multiple and changing collective actors – not just the stable ‘ethnic groups’, ‘elites’ and ‘ethnic individuals’ so prevalent in the rational choice literature. And we must also add foreign states and social movements as significant potential actors – in this case not just Russia and the surrounding republics, but also perhaps the resented United States or the pan-Islamic or pan-Turkic movements.

With so many actors interacting, the environment in which each might be making their choices might now be far more uncertain and changeable. No convincing rational choice models of this have yet appeared. The main problem is to identify the actors and their relative powers in the first place, rather than to calculate their rational strategies once formed. Finally, when ethnic tensions escalate into disaster, we usually find that no-one pre-meditated it and no-one benefits. Yugoslavia, the Lebanon, Nagorno-Karabagh, and Chechnya are laid waste. In the end even the great provocateur Milosevic remains trapped, while even the great murderers like Arkan plus a third (so far) of the other Serb paramilitary leaders themselves lie murdered.

What regularities can we perceive in the more serious cases of murderous ethnic cleansing? Most do not concern matters of language policy, jobs, or other ‘economic returns’, at least not directly. If I had to make generalizations, they would mainly be at the macro-structural level. First, murderous ethnic cleansing most commonly ensues where social movements forming inside two ethnic groups can make a plausible claim to their own state overall or part of the same territory. ‘Plausibility’ means they believe they have ideological legitimacy for such a state (for sacred reasons or because they did have such a state in past history) and the military capacity to achieve it (one because it is the majority ethnicity, the other because it controls the army or is aided by a neighbouring, often a ‘homeland’, state). The Russians in the near-abroad do not yet have such a plausible claim and so their conflict with the titular nation does not reach into the serious ‘danger zone’.

Second, such ‘danger zones’ also involve a destabilization and then a radicalization of

states themselves. In more normal times – as in all four of these post-Soviet states – ethnic tensions are compromised or suppressed by state institutions fulfilling routinized public order functions. It is when states start to weaken, often amid geopolitical pressures coming from abroad, that public order institutions also decay, that ethno-nationalist radicals arm themselves and some may seize and radicalize the state. Amid this process of destabilization, the identities, conceptions of interests and preferred choices of both individuals and organized power groupings change rapidly and involve higher and higher doses of collective emotion and violence, and less capacity for the employment of more narrowly instrumental reason.

Those deploying a rational choice theory to explain these serious cases respond by identifying two general escalatory processes at work: the extremists on both sides engage in ‘competitive outbidding’ of their own group’s moderates, and/or a ‘security dilemma’ leads each to take defensive measures which increases the insecurity of the other – and leads it to increase its own ‘defensive measures’ etc. etc. But these models are only made to look plausible by sampling on the dependent variable. They study the cases of actual ethnic war. They do not study the cases of serious ethnic tension which get successfully defused. Laitin himself has on occasion made this criticism. But his book is limited by a similar problem. Since it does not contrast these four cases with others which have descended into more serious conflict, it is not well-suited to explain either ethnic peace or ethnic war. Yet comparative analysis seems to reveal that if ethnicity is defined as concerning language policy, and this is primarily a matter of economic returns, violent conflict is unlikely. If it becomes mixed in with the ideological, military, and political dimensions of ethno-nationalism, then things might change rather rapidly. Thus models based on economic returns cannot *explain* relative ethnic peace – they are its *product*. Laitin gives a good ‘thick description’ of the plight of Russians in these four republics, and he offers numerous more theoretical insights. But he does not offer a more general explanation, because of the nature of his cases and the weight he gives to the micro- and individual-level analysis within them.

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Sasaki Takeshi, *Seiji Kaikaku: 1800 nichi no Shinjitsu* (Political Reform: The Record of the 1800 Days), Tokyo: Kodansha, 1999.

Gerald Curtis, *The Logic of Japanese Politics, Leaders, Institutions, and the Limits of Change*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

T. J. Pempel, *Regime Shift, Comparative Dynamics of the Japanese Political Economy*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998.

The political turmoil of the 1990s in Japan has prompted the writing of books by three of the most prominent observers of Japanese politics, Sasaki Takeshi of Tokyo University, Gerald Curtis of Columbia University, and T. J. Pempel of the University of Washington. Their books differ significantly in terms of explanations, methods, and assumptions, and each serves quite a different audience and purpose.

All three books explain why Japanese politics changed in the 1990s, specifically why the

LDP lost power in 1993. Their approach to answering this question, however, differs in the balancing of description and detail against an analytical framework built on political science theory and cross-national comparisons. Sasaki's book emphasizes detail, omitting significant analysis of why these events occurred. Curtis also emphasizes detail, but he filters the details in his presentation of a coherent analytical structure to explain not only political change in Japan but also past political stability. Pempel continues in this direction broadening his analytical focus in two important ways, to connect economic and political change and to present the Japanese case as but an example of the process of change in any of a number of similarly situated countries.

These different perspectives will serve different audiences equally well. The political scientist will appreciate and recognize Pempel's efforts to build theory and predictive power. The Japan specialist and political scientists interested in Japan will be grateful to Curtis for his detailed explanations of the Japanese case and his keen intuitions and insights into the specific functions of the LDP committees and Diet procedures. The original researcher will appreciate Sasaki adopting as one of his main goals preserving a record of the events of this period and the extreme detail of the record that Sasaki and his collaborators have created.

An obvious omission in this series of books is a rational choice account of these events. Some might even claim that all three books are not good scholarship because they each lack the rigor, precision, and analytical clarity that a rational choice analysis would bring to the questions of political change in Japan or any other country. These three books, however, point to a contrary conclusion: the importance and usefulness of diverse perspectives. There is a continuum of scholarship with the rational choice perspective having great appeal to those desiring a theoretical and parsimonious explanation of events; however, it would be a mistake to ignore the usefulness of other research approaches that produce less parsimonious explanations or emphasize different theoretical traditions.

Pempel's book is the closest to the expectations of the rational choice perspective. He adds to his impressive published record of theoretical and comparative research in this latest book, *Regime Shift, Comparative Dynamics of the Japanese Political Economy*. He presents a typology of change that designates the degree of change by examining changes in three crucial areas: alliances, policies, and institutions. Pempel's strengths lie in (1) his analysis of the complex relationship between each of these components and (2) the creation of an analytical framework in which complex changes can be unbundled and examined in a comparative perspective.

Pempel also takes on the complex question of the interrelation between political and economic change. In fact, his framework is built on the assumption that the two changes are of necessity interrelated and change in one cannot be understood without examining changes in the other. To this daunting analytical task he adds the burdens of explaining past and present Japanese change or the lack thereof and a comparative analysis of change in countries such as Sweden, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

In his historical explanation of the creation and stability of the postwar Japanese political and economic system, Pempel cites the usual cast of explanatory factors, using the term 'embedded mercantilism' which captures his emphasis on the marriage of political and economic factors. The LDP succeeded politically and Japan succeeded economically because of an egalitarian society, weak labor sector, low military expenses, small social welfare state, and aggressive government protection of Japanese industry. In addition, the initial postwar influence of the United States and the strength of the Japanese bureaucracy at that time helped

to create stable conservative rule. The dual nature of the LDP, where some politicians were policy experts from a bureaucratic background and some were traditional politicians adept at vote gathering, gave the party expertise in both crucial areas of governing.

Change came in the 1990s because the foundation that supported the concept of embedded mercantilism came apart. Specifically, the large interest groups such as business and agriculture split into smaller special interest groups. The public and public officials were no longer united on the ultimate priority of economic growth as a national goal. The government had turned from the protector of advancing industries to the defender of declining sectors. The economy was fully integrated into newly globalized financial markets. The bureaucracy had lost its sheen.

Pempel's explanations are persuasive, and he deftly manages the potential conflict between having sufficient evidence and detail but also having a structure and theory to organize ideas. He presents the important argument that it was precisely the LDP's adaptability that led to the diversification and change that ultimately changed the system of embedded mercantilism. The LDP managed to stay in power for so long because of its adaptability, but this very same trait ultimately led to changes in alliances, policies, and institutions, that under Pempel's typology constitute a regime shift.

Pempel's work, however, raises two interesting issues that haunt any analysis of Japanese politics. The first is the Midas syndrome. In the 1970s and 1980s, it seemed that Japan could do no wrong. Its policies of that period are credited for its astounding economic growth. It is as if Japan were the country equivalent of King Midas; all that it touched turned to gold. In contrast, in the 1990s, Japan has become the country that could do no right. Pempel's analysis is surely a repudiation of such a simplistic characterization of Japan, but his analysis still retains a most mild version of this syndrome. The important and cited characteristics of Japan during its period of success and stability are positive, in contrast to more recent characterizations which are negative. Though such an analysis is expected as an explanation of relative success or failure, it ignores the deficiencies of the past Japanese system and the strengths of the current system. Including these countervailing attributes would certainly contribute to our full understanding of Japan and regime change.

A second problem is the enduring question of why the voters matter so little in Japan. Pempel's analysis is representative of many analyses in which the voters are ignored or are at best a group to be manipulated. Pempel's emphasis on the broad consensus behind embedded mercantilism at least recognizes the lesser role that voters play in Japan in contrast to other advanced industrial democracies, but the question lingers in his and others analyses as to why the Japanese electorate plays such a lesser role.

Gerald Curtis's book *The Logic of Japanese Politics, Leaders, Institutions, and the Limits of Change* shares many of the strengths and insights of Pempel's work. Curtis focuses more on the actual events of the 1990s and the explanations for those events. Though there is little attempt to put his analysis in a comparative framework, Curtis does use a theoretical framework that change is best explained by looking at the institutions, structures, and the role of individuals. These ideas are applied to Japan in Curtis's designation of the 'four pillars' that have supported a stable Japanese political system. These pillars are a prestigious bureaucracy, public support of priority given to economic growth, LDP political dominance, and large, unified interest groups. Predictably, the changes in the 1990s have occurred because each one of these pillars has changed, no longer supporting the postwar political system.

Curtis accounts for these changes in part by analyzing structures and institutions. This analysis is also historical as the structures and institutions are dependent on past events. Such an analysis is neither innovative nor surprising, but Curtis's excellent knowledge of Japanese politics shows through in his identifications of crucial institutions to the process of political change. For example, he discusses the relevance of formal Diet grouping of parties (*kaiha*) and the role that they played in the changing coalitions in 1994. He also identifies how the lack of an interparty coordinating institution during the Hosokawa coalition government hindered decision making and coalition cohesion for that group. These are important institutions that have not been identified or discussed in the existing literature, and Curtis breaks ground with his analysis.

Curtis's second contribution is his consistent emphasis on the importance of the individual in explaining events. In this sense his analysis is an English-language face on a traditional Japanese approach to political analysis, one that emphasizes individual political actors and the relationships between them. Curtis makes a persuasive argument that structures and institutions constrain the choices of actors but that, within a certain range, the individual choice dominates. He also claims that these choices can be idiosyncratic; that miscalculations can be made or decisions affected by the hubris or insensitivity of a particular actor. Curtis directly repudiates a rational choice perspective which would posit clear preferences for individual actors and then predict their behavior from those posited preferences. In essence, Curtis makes a strong case for the ultimate unpredictability of the behavior of a specific individual except to say that there are bounds into which the behavior must fall.

Sasaki Takeshi's edited book *Seiji Kaikaku, 1800 nichi no Shinjitsu* shares Curtis's emphasis on detail and the importance of individuals. Unlike Curtis or Pempel, there is very little theory or analysis of events. With the exception of Sasaki's introductory chapter, most of the book is extensive detail as to who said what to whom, who belonged to which group, and the details of each of many specific reform proposals. Sasaki, however, presents some fascinating insights into the process of political reform in Japan. He emphasizes history and events such as the end of the Cold War to help explain the upheaval of the 1990s. His most insightful contribution is his discussion of the conflict between individuals and parties for dominance in the Japanese system. Sasaki weighs in clearly in favor of a restructured political system in which parties have greater power over their individual members, and he designates this as the most important remaining task for reformers in Japan.

Sasaki's observations are interesting not only for highlighting a facet of conflict that is often ignored in other analyses of Japan but also for giving some insight into the intellectual underpinnings of the entire reform movement in Japan. Sasaki was not an impartial observer of the political reform process; he was an active participant in the reform process from its inception. His discussion of what was accomplished and his identification of what still needs to be done is a fascinating window into the objectives that were possibly shared by other reformers in Japan.

The weakness of the book, though, is its lack of a theoretical framework or even a rudimentary organizing principle. This weakness, however, will be of little concern for those who use this book as a source of detailed information. Each chapter author has gone to great lengths to compile the relevant data about that topic, topics such as the roles of the opposition parties or labor or the media in reform. Anyone wanting to do research on reform itself or on

the role of one of the actors covered in a chapter would be well served to use this excellent collection of crucial data about political reform in Japan.

Sasaki's focus on description and data collection will seem odd to someone trained in the expectations of rigorous political science research as it is practiced in the United States. However, in Japan, such a collection of information is necessary because so much crucial information is not readily available to the public. Journalists in Japan are often privy to much more information than they are able to publish at the time of a significant political event. These journalists serve an important role later when they pull together their information and publish an account of those events. Often, their account is the only reliable account of the events. Sasaki's book is part of this tradition of making public important political information, and it serves an important purpose in the Japanese setting where accurate information of events is not easily obtained. The book will be a disappointment to a political scientist looking for strong theory and analysis, but it will be a boon to the researcher who simply wants an accurate and detailed account of events.

Is there any merit to the claim that all three works are less valuable explanations of Japanese politics because their analysis is not conducted from an explicitly rational choice perspective? After all, the rational choice perspective of politics is ascendent not only in the discipline of political science but also in the subfield of comparative politics. On the contrary, these works stand as excellent reminder of the variety of forms that good political research can take despite the battles over methodology and assumptions that convulse the discipline of political science and its subfield of comparative politics. They also remind us of the different purposes of research and the different audiences, serving as a warning against a certain type of orthodoxy that would dictate exclusive approaches or limit political inquiry to only certain types of questions.

The irony is perhaps the shallowness of the gulf that divides these works from the rational choice works on Japan. Curtis's explicit attack on a rational choice explanation of defections from the LDP is interesting because his alternative explanation relies upon an analysis of the same individual incentives that are common in rational choice works. His point is better taken not as an attack on the importance of incentives or the motivations of individuals, but merely as an attack on oversimplified versions of events promoted in some rational choice works. A more descriptive and hence less parsimonious account of events, even if from an explicitly rational choice perspective would not be so radically different from Curtis's or either of the other two authors' analyses.

Diversity is necessary for good and useful political science. After reading Sasaki's book, one develops a craving for a more theoretical or parsimonious approach. Pempel's comparative perspective will satisfy those who desire something beyond Curtis's exclusive focus on Japan. Similarly, a reader of an extremely parsimonious rational choice analysis will welcome all three books as a healthy antidote, appreciating their common acknowledgment of the complexities surrounding political reform in Japan.

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Akira Koba, *Seiii no Seiritsu (The Genesis of Politics)*, Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1997.

The right place to look for a prototype of political life is in the ancient city states. Historiographers have confirmed that the art of politics came into existence in the *polis* when the Greeks recognized that humans lack self-sufficiency and therefore need a state. By the fifth century BC, in some independent cities, even a democratic mode of decision-taking began to develop. Despite its importance, however, little has been known about how practical politics evolved in ancient Greece. What has been most critically missing in our intellectual endeavor is an effort to investigate the definitive elements giving birth to the political manner of thinking that necessarily precedes political action. Koba's major achievement in this work lies in his wide-ranging search for such cognitive moments.

Inspired by the humanist (as opposed to modern scientific) reading of history, Koba combines anthropological methodology with genealogical inquiry and applies both to a diverse selection of Greek discourses, ranging from the Iliad and Odyssey to the poems of Hesiod. On the basis of early Greek literature, Koba attempts to reconstruct the social background in which the political phenomenon first took form. In his view, political consciousness derives from, and is a reflection of, social structure. Koba is not a political theorist or a political scientist, but he rather seems to enjoy the benefit of being an 'outsider (to politics)' in his probing of various materials.

The core concept in this work is *paradeigma*, a term meaning a social norm or usage to be followed by the population. He uses the original Greek term in order to avoid an inaccurate translation. The widely accepted norm labeled *paradeigma*, Koba asserts, is usually transmitted by language and often preserved through a myth. The concept stands for an abstract set of rules, and must be made tangible for the common population with the help of a simplified *version* or a narration of the norm. This, of course, implies that the accepted norm is susceptible to different versions. *Paradeigma* are so called not in spite of but due to the existence of plural, even mutually contradictory, interpretations thereof.

Koba emphasizes that the emergence of political awareness was not a linear process. In general terms, the initial conditions to be met are as follows. Each human organization in the territory sets up its own *version* of the truth and develops strategies for monopolizing the narration of the truth. Competing entities, each of which is referred to as an articulation (term deliberately chosen by Koba to signify an irreducible whole), contribute to an overall system composed of horizontally, not hierarchically, interrelated parts. While living in one of the partial and autonomous entities, the whole population is prepared to act collectively in case of need. As a result, lively debates can take place in peacetime, and the population comes to realize the merits of preserving competing opinions.

To claim that a political realm has been formed requires one at least to be able to observe the sort of dialectical relationships described above throughout the territory. Briefly, Koba identifies the birth of the political world with the formation of a self-regulating system, including some mechanism with which to settle social conflicts without recourse to force. Here one can trace Koba's legalist mind infusing his analysis, a mind oriented towards a peaceful reconciliation of conflicting parties. Based on such conceptualizations, Koba reexamines the evolution of ancient Greek society. In the *polis*, it is told, accepted narratives were never immune to critical examinations. Some Greek city states, as reported in the texts of Homer and

Hesiod, achieved a dialectical type of forum in the archaic age, which would be fully realized about three centuries later.

At the heart of a territory, Koba explains, was located a city where most of the articulations had occasion to meet with each other. The city was equally expected to perform a religious function: the *agora* and temples were reserved for diverse rituals held regularly to remind the population of their communal identity. Also of great interest is Koba's explanation of the *agora*'s economic role. The *agora* was to serve as an exchange market and financial center accessible to all. Through economic transactions the population came to have a sense of reciprocity and interdependence. As a result, the Greeks discovered a recurring pattern and a harmonious balance in interpersonal interaction. At this stage, political reflection began to operate.

Koba challenges the standard interpretation of Greek political history by placing less weight on Plato and Aristotle, long equated with the earliest systematic political theories, and putting more weight on Homer, who formulated a dialectical, though rudimentary, manner of thinking. This shift of emphasis leads Koba to a revisionist conclusion that the system of politics dates back not to the Periclean era, but to as early as the eighth century BC, when a drastic social mutation enabled some articulations to become independent.

It is difficult to judge the relative merits of Koba's argument and historical documentation, because he fails to relate his own narratives to discussion of such conventional subjects in political science as power, authority, and sovereignty. Yet it is worth noting that Koba does define the political, though in an implicit way. His genealogical project is driven by his belief that the preservation of free debate makes the political world sustainable. In other words, he is deeply committed to the fundamental query about what a good political regime should be. In this sense, Koba's entire endeavor is normative in its origin.

It is tempting to associate Koba's pluralistic notion of politics with, for example, Robert Dahl's renowned concept of *polyarchy*. But, as an expert in Roman law, Koba seems rather to admire a democratic mode of settlement based in social antagonism. This is clearly seen in his reconstruction of the whole of Greek history. For Koba, a rivalry of at least two articulations is synonymous with politics. This peculiar inclination towards pluralism is also evident when he suggests that political involvement was regarded by the Greeks as merely one phase of human activity. Politics remained a simple means, according to Koba, a means through which to protect the non-political realm from interference wielded in the name of social authority.

By defining the nature of politics in that manner, Koba evidently intends to contest the common understanding of how politics was born. The implication of his criticism is twofold. First, Koba does not follow the republican thesis associated with classical thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle and Cicero who assert that *res publica*, or public goods, must be a pivotal ideal around which political theory is constructed. For Koba, action to achieve a common goal does not constitute political activity. Second, Koba considers neither specialization of governmental functions nor the centralization of enforceable authority as a major factor facilitating the advent of a political space. In the Greek context, political awareness is first framed by perceiving the complex interplay among social actors. Fortunately, Greek social relations never suffered the kind of brutal integration which would later characterize the modern state.

From Koba's perspective, Athens almost incidentally created a dialectical debating forum and thereby took a decisive step towards establishing a political system. Thus, not every society necessarily has the opportunity to obtain a political space. Some readers will find this

conclusion at odds with our most conventional understanding in which power, and therefore politics, are thought to be omnipresent.

Taking the work as a whole, Koba certainly provides a potential alternative to conventional political philosophy; his work has shown a brilliant insight into how people may obtain an essential grasp on the nature of politics. However, Koba will likely counter criticisms from both the advocates of Realpolitik and those theorists in the republican tradition. On the one hand, he has yet to present a convincing case for the superiority of his genealogical approach to the currently preeminent focus on power and authority as the essence of politics. On the other hand, his reduction of politics to social interplay is likely to be opposed by those who make the point of distinguishing *civil* societies from societies in general and discuss their role in promoting democratic form of governments, as they evolved in the city-states of ancient Greece.

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Robert C. Hsu, *The MIT Encyclopedia of the Japanese Economy*, second edition, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999.

This is a comprehensive encyclopedia about the Japanese economy, including 180 items of detailed explanations and 145 items of definitional descriptions. I congratulate the author for his extensive research in collecting data and conducting personal interviews with experts. I admire the effort by this author in putting together, while residing outside of Japan, such a thorough encyclopedia, which serves as an extremely useful guidebook for those interested in the Japanese economy. There is a tremendous gap between Japan's economic power and the level of international recognition about that power, due partly to the shortage of information available in English. This book will help fill this gap and should be credited accordingly.

More specifically, this encyclopedia has the following merits. First, the selection of topics covered is broad, ranging from economic indicators such as business cycles and savings, to institutions including government organizations and the central bank, to major industries such as electronics and automobiles. In this sense, this encyclopedia will provide a basic survey not only for academics but also for business professionals interested in the Japanese economy.

Second, the encyclopedia is balanced in introducing conflicting opinions about basic features of the Japanese economy, including some major differences between the views originating in Japan and those abroad. 'Administrative guidance', for example, is generally regarded outside of Japan as the unilateral intervention that the government engages in against the will of Japanese private firms. In this encyclopedia, however, it is emphasized, correctly, that, prior to the actual interventions, the government and business firms engage in sufficient information exchange so that the administrative guidance can work for the benefit of the private sector. Similarly, the author of this encyclopedia provides a fair description of the Japanese distribution system. In foreign counties, some analysts critically argue that the complex distribution system has thus far insulated Japan's retail industries from the competitive world market. Such a view leads to the criticism that the distribution structure acts as a non-tariff barrier against the importation of foreign products. In contrast, scholars in

Japan often argue that Japan's segmented distribution system is in response to the segmented demands of Japanese consumers and that it plays the role of efficient information sharing. They also counterargue that non-tariff barriers exist elsewhere as well, and that the above view is simply a 'myth', given the difficulty involved in measuring such barriers statistically. The author summarizes both of these arguments in a balanced manner.

Third, this encyclopedia provides a detailed list of relevant citations and organizational information. At the end of each topic, ample English references are attached, together with the addresses, telephone numbers of governmental and private organizations related to that topic. For those researchers outside of Japan interested in pursuing that topic further, such a list of information is extremely useful. It might perhaps be even better if the author could have also provided the English language homepages of those organizations.

Having noted some positive points, let me now turn to some problematic aspects of this encyclopedia. The first problem concerns the author's treatment of Japanese exports. In the section on 'consumption', for example, it is explained that in Japan households' saving rate is high, which turns into investments and trade surplus. However, it is only after the 1970s that Japan recorded trade surpluses consistently, while the saving rate had been high since the 1960s. Furthermore, it is misleading to overemphasize the highness of the saving rate in Japan. The saving rates of East Asian countries that have experienced high economic growth are higher than that of Japan. During the period from 1990 to 1998, the saving/GDP ratio of Japan was 31.6 per cent, whereas that of South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia was 35.8 per cent, 48.9 per cent, 34.7 per cent, and 39.3 per cent respectively. Not all these countries, however, recorded chronic trade surpluses. Saving rate alone cannot explain the trade imbalance.

The second problem concerns export–import pricing. Under the section 'pricing practices', the author rephrases the criticisms persistent outside of Japan that the appreciation of the yen does not necessarily result in a drop in export price, because of Japan's 'pricing-to-market' practice. Although the author does also cite counterarguments from the Japanese side on this point, what is problematic is that the author seems to take it for granted that the 'cost-plus pricing' is the most appropriate pricing practice. A price, however, should be determined by the market, not by producers. It is natural that Japanese firms try to minimize the rise in the dollar-denominated price due to the yen–dollar exchange rate, which affects only the overseas competitiveness of the Japanese products.

Finally, the encyclopedia's treatment on trade policy is problematic. Under 'trade policy', the author notes that Japan's trade imbalance resulted from the success of protective policy during the 1970s and 1980s, an argument conventionally accepted outside of Japan. Japan's protectionist policy ended in the 1960s, however, and as a general trend the trade accounts were more or less balanced until then. It was only after the 1970s that Japan began recording trade surpluses, and this was after the liberalization of trade and investment. Japan's trade balance is determined more by macroeconomic conditions, such as the growth rate and the exchange rate, than by policy. In addition, in the 1990s, the Japanese government has been pursuing the policy of promoting imports, including favorable tax incentives. It is perhaps only Japan in the world that has established a policy of aggressive importation. The encyclopedia, unfortunately, does not deal at all with this aspect of Japan's trade policy.

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