

some useful points about the ways in which binaries and the problem of scale are important when trying to integrate anthropological and put of the science analyses. This final chapter raises many very useful points, but does so in a rather telegraphic manner. The body of the book is followed by an extensive bibliography and both name and subject indices.

The material in *Anthropology and Political Science: A Convergent Approach* pulls together and summarizes the authors' decades-long work and thinking in this area. To some extent, this is reflected in the fact that many of the topics considered in the volume would be viewed as dated by anthropologists, for example, the discussions of substantivism versus formalism in economic anthropology. A person encountering the challenge of integrating anthropology and political science for the first time will find the book engaging and informative. It is a book that could profitably be used as an adjunct text in methods classes or theory classes in both anthropology and political science. Despite its shortcomings, *Anthropology and Political Science: A Convergent Approach* is a welcome addition to the conversation between these two disciplines.

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**Can Russia Modernise? Sistema, Power Networks and Informal Governance** by Aleva V. Ledeneva. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2013. 372 pp. Paper, \$32.00.

Much English-language analysis of Russian politics reveals more about what interests commentators—rooting out corruption, developing rule of law, establishing secure property rights, and other ways in which Russians might improve their society—than about how contemporary Russia actually works. This is not the case with Aleva Ledeneva's latest book. Apart from a few gestures toward possible paths of change, this book does not suffer from a pedagogical tone: while Ledeneva has chosen "modernization" to frame her argument, she is not in the business of evaluating either how state and business elites in the Russian Federation do their jobs, or how Russian publics should respond to them. Instead, she seeks to make sense of how Russia's network-based governance system, known as *sistema*, really functions. Ledeneva takes politics, economics, and society in contemporary Russia on their own terms. The result is a book that shows how actors in a highly complex web of formal rules and informal practices manage to keep a ship of state afloat.

Ledeneva's previous work traced late-Soviet horizontal exchange networks and identified and explicated informal practices that were central to Russian political development in the post-Soviet period. In this latest work, she turns her keen analytic lens away from ordinary people to focus on the higher echelons of power—namely, on what she terms power networks, or the relationships among the elites who set the terms for governing the country.

A signature and strength of Ledeneva's work is her emphasis on concepts that are commonly used in Russian politics and society. Rather than stretch or transpose concepts from American or British political science traditions to explain how Russian politics works, Ledeneva draws upon local vocabularies to develop experience-near concepts that resonate in the contemporary Russian context and illuminate otherwise-obscured processes of political and economic change. These concepts (in addition to *sistema*, Ledeneva also brings her readers “werewolves in epaulets,” “telephone justice,” and other staples of Putin-era political discourse) communicate key aspects of Russian politics that terms such as “authoritarianism” simply cannot.

Although the book is firmly and exclusively rooted in Russian politics, Ledeneva sets her hard-won, deeply contextual material in a theoretical framework that should invite comparative analysis. In particular, scholars of other places where informal practices are central to governance will find much to think about in this book. Further, Ledeneva provides thoughtful attention to diachronic comparison, considering how *sistema* today compares with Soviet-era iterations of *sistema*, where the ruptures and differences were, and why that might be so.

Studying *sistema* poses some obvious difficulties for the researcher, not the least of which is the fact that *sistema* is constituted in large part by unwritten rules and directives. Ledeneva bases her findings and interpretations on a creatively assembled and carefully analyzed combination of original and published interviews, sociological surveys, court records, and, interestingly, material culture. In particular, Ledeneva's account of the transition from Soviet-era elite phone systems (*vertushka*) to modern luxury mobile lines (Vertu) as a favored vehicle for ‘telephone justice’—and thus a constitutive feature of contemporary politics—is one of the highlights of the book.

Finally, one of the virtues of this book is that Ledeneva calls our attention away from a focus on the person of the President and toward the complexity and flexibility of *sistema*—as well as toward the broad cast of characters whose participation makes it work. Although leaders influence the shape and breadth of *sistema*, they do not command it. There are clear implications for this vision

of politics: in contemporary Russia, those who think a mere change of head of state will result in major transformation are probably mistaken.

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**The Logic and Limits of Political Reform in China** by Joseph Fewsmith. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2013. 232 pp. Paper, \$27.99.

China's meteoric rise as an economic powerhouse has many China watchers wondering about its potential for political reform. Will China democratize? If so, how and when? Joseph Fewsmith warns against such optimistic hopes for political reform by carefully analyzing several key examples of political experimentation in recent years, none of which have become permanently institutionalized. According to Fewsmith, the greatest challenge to political liberalization lies in the contradiction between the Communist Party's centralized control over cadres and efforts to monitor the behavior of local officials. So long as power, including the right to promote, remains concentrated in the hands of a few members of the Party, any attempts to draw a clear line between state and society will produce limited results.

The real gems in this volume are the case studies that Fewsmith uses to show why political reform remains stunted, especially at the local levels. Fewsmith draws on existing research and theories to locate some of the most likely places in which to find the seeds of political reform in China. Sichuan province, a relatively poor area in the southwest, saw frequent clashes between impoverished peasants and local cadres over taxes and land requisitions. Limited economic growth made room for political innovation, and the development of "inner-party democracy" allowed for diverse opinions within the Party and even from outside the Party. However, even in Sichuan, where the economic stakes were low, the Party's recurring fears of social instability ultimately placed power back in the hands of the Party organization.

Wenzhou, a wealthy area known for its well-established private businesses, was also a candidate for political reform. It was a probable hotbed for business associations and other forms of civil society that could contribute to the emergence of a "deliberative democracy." Yet Fewsmith finds no signs of the type of pressure groups that would organize to demand less corruption or better policies from the government. Instead, Wenzhou's entrepreneurs, like Chinese entrepreneurs elsewhere, still prefer to cultivate private relations and tolerate distortions in public policy in order to pursue short-term profits and political protection.