examined: What has been the actual role of Sufism in past and present Caucasian wars? In discussing the upheavals of the 1990s, he states that "the tradition of Sufi brotherhoods was one of the most important elements in maintaining morale and a sense of ethnic identity." (p. 154) In a recent Encyclopedia of Islam entry, Alexander Knysh concludes that while Shamil’s movement clearly focused on promoting Islamic belief and practice, it had only loose ties to the Naqshbandi Sufi order, in contrast to Moshe Gammer and Anna Zelkina, who portray Shamil as a Naqshbandi master. Scholarly uncertainty about Shamil’s Sufi affiliations suggests the need to be more cautious in drawing parallels between the 1840s and the 1990s based principally on any enduring “Sufi” allegiances.

Allah’s Mountains is more comprehensive than many other recent works by journalists on Chechnya, particularly because of its discussion of the region’s history and culture. It is also livelier than most scholarly books about the war. Perhaps Anatol Lieven’s Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power (1998) is the recent work most comparable to it. Lieven’s work, in my opinion, is somewhat better than Smith’s, because Lieven presents his argument more systematically and places Chechnya more convincingly in the broader Russian context of the 1990s. However, Lieven’s work is denser and less accessible than Smith’s—therefore less appealing to the general reader. Smith’s latest edition also has the merit of at least mentioning the ongoing situation with Putin. It will no doubt need to be updated again as the situation unfolds. The Caucasus has long been viewed mostly as a Russian problem area, but the recent deployment of U.S. troops to Georgia may soon alter that perception.

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There have been numerous calls for those studying politics in the post-communist states of Europe to give greater attention to matters of theory. While the response has been uneven, political science analysis over the course of the last decade has been gradually moving in that direction. Timothy Colton’s Transitional Citizens and Steven Smith and Thomas Remington’s The Politics of Institutional Choice are at once an elegant expression of the commitment to theory while at the same time a challenge to engage theory more rigorously. Indeed, both contributions are notable for the consistency and sophistication with which they test political science theory in the new Russia. Despite differences in subject matter, each engages in a careful review of the relevant literature from which a set of hypotheses is deduced and then tested.

While the subject matter and findings in both books should prove interesting for readers across a broad range of disciplines, the explicit commitment to a political science approach to the analysis of a problem set will make them somewhat less accessible and at-
tractive for those outside of the discipline. Indeed, the primary audience for both books appears to be the broader discipline of political science. Colton’s discussion and use of multinominal logit regression will present a barrier to those lacking a familiarity with the sophisticated statistical methods employed in the social sciences. The subsequent chapters should nonetheless prove accessible. However, Smith and Remington’s discussion of new institutionalism in the first chapter will be quite difficult for the uninitiated and at points unintelligible to those with no training in rational choice theories. Despite these limitations, both books will contribute to better integrating post-communist studies into mainstream political science.

Each book addresses issues within the broader realm of democratic consolidation, the major research agenda of comparative politics. The respective approaches, however, are quite different. Transitional Citizens adopts a behavioralist focus, attempting to explain the voting behavior of Russian citizens using a broad set of attitudinal and demographic factors, some of which are influenced by historical or cultural conditions. In contrast, The Politics of Institutional Choice is clearly situated within the new institutionalism, seeking to explain elite choices of legislative institutions on the basis of the self-interests of the deputies, whether those interests be defined by a desire to be re-elected (electoral interests), to control policy outcomes (policy interests), or to strengthen their respective party or legislative faction (partisan interests).

Colton proposes to test the large number of hypotheses explaining how Russian citizens vote. He argues that efforts to do so generally fail to discern the primary factor from among the various causes that are offered. To correct for this, he uses multinominal logit regression, a procedure that permits him to identify the causal factor with the greatest weight. After he makes the case in chapter two that voting is the primary means of citizen participation in post-communist Russia, he tests the competing hypotheses in several arenas, including demographic characteristics and social factors, subjective evaluations of political and economic conditions, policy preferences and partisanship, evaluation of leaders, and subjective evaluations of parties. In the concluding chapter he tests for the primary factors across all arenas. His most important finding is that Russian citizens are influenced by their Soviet past as well as their present assessments; however, ethnicity and religiosity are not central. Further, citizen evaluations of the qualities of leaders are not a very important determinant in electoral choices. Instead, age, subjective evaluation of the overall Russian economy (versus one’s personal financial situation), evaluation of the job performance of the president (versus that of the government under the prime minister), and perhaps most importantly the success of democratization, were the most crucial factors in determining a citizen’s vote. However, overall partisanship is the single most important factor in both the party-list elections to the Duma and the first-round of presidential elections.

Colton’s use of survey data drawn from a panel of respondents (the same individuals) over a period covering the legislative elections to the Duma in late 1995 to the presidential elections of spring 1996 strengthens his analysis. However, the generalizability of his findings is weakened by the fact that the panel responses do not permit him to consider elections to the upper legislative chamber (the Federation Council) as well as one-half of the seats in the lower house (State Duma) determined in single mandate districts. He admits, however, that generalizability in a transitional state is necessarily problematic. In-