gional economic development. Third, the authors argue that for the latter years of the 1990s, budget policy effectively paid little attention to any process of equalization.

We have already emphasized that it is difficult to understate the importance of regional finances as a component for understanding the development of the Russian economy. Whether it be public finances, regional development issues or more generally movement of capital and labor among the regions, this research serves a very important purpose in its preliminary analysis of a newly emerging budgetary scene in Russia. For those who use budgetary data but who do not consider themselves primary researchers in this area, a disappointment of this work is the absence of any references. This lack of any connections to the rapidly emerging literature on the Russian budgetary system is a disappointment and reduces the potential impact of this volume. At the same time, this is an important work and provides an excellent entry point for understanding the contemporary Russian budgetary system, and the sorts of issues that are rapidly assuming center stage in subsequent analyses of the Russian budget system.

Robert C. Stuart

Rutgers University


The collapse of the Soviet Union brought to the fore major gaps in our understanding of Russian politics. Most poignantly, relatively little was known of the political dynamics with the regions that compose contemporary Russia. Regional Polities in Russia, edited by Cameron Ross, makes a substantial contribution toward filling this gap. The majority of the chapters focus on the relative success of democratization within Russia’s regions and republics. Among the authors are numerous established experts from the United Kingdom, the United States and Russia.

Five of the twelve chapters deal with general trends in Russian regional democratization. In the first chapter, Richard Sakwa provides a brief, but thoughtful analysis of the evolution of center-periphery relations in Russia. He emphasizes that the asymmetrical federalism that emerged under President Yeltsin was inherently flawed. Not only did it entail an erosion of constitutional principles; it disguised the tendency of regional leaders to violate individual rights. Thus Sakwa appears to agree with Putin’s belief that recentralization is not necessarily defederalization, and may even be beneficial for the development of democracy in Russia. In the book’s final chapter Elizabeth Teague offers a compatible perspective. She contends that Putin’s recentralization has been largely successful and has cleared away many barriers to economic liberalization. In a methodologically innovative chapter, Matthew Wyman, Stephen White, Ian McAllister and Sarah Oates demonstrate that there is a regional effect on voting in Russia that goes beyond that which would be expected purely on the basis of their social and economic differences. In the subsequent chapter Cameron Ross provides ample data that with the limited exception of the communist party and transitive
pro-government parties, Russia has no national parties. Wyman et. al. further argue that without the consolidation of a nationwide party system there will be no consolidation of democracy in Russia. While parties may not be influential, Danielle Lussier's chapter persuasively demonstrates that Russia's governors were influential in the 1999-2000 elections and provides ample quantitative and qualitative evidence to show that governors influence the election results in their regions. (The extent to which this influence was democratic is addressed in other chapters.) Nonetheless, she contends that President Putin has an adequate array of tools to control the governors.

The remaining chapters deal with the state of democratization in specific Russian regions and republics. There is a little more coordination among these chapters, and a few of them employ the same theoretical referents. Grigorii Golosov and Vadim Gongcharov conclude that the continuing decline of political parties in St. Petersburg largely results from the lack of national incentives for party politics. A recent and worrisome trend they see is the rise of political consulting firms, which in St. Petersburg are usurping some of the functions of political parties, while providing none of the system-wide benefits. Jeffrey Hahn also sees a tie between institutional developments in Russia's regions and their level of democratization. Using Guillermo O'Donnell's notion of delegative democracy, Hahn analyzes developments in Primorskii Krai, Khabarovsky Krai, and Sakhalin Oblast'. He concludes that all three regions have created a form of delegative democracy, but warns that under these conditions the continuation of democracy rests heavily on the intentions of the electoral winners, and thus it becomes unlikely that democracy will be fully institutionalized. Using a similar theoretical approach, James Alexander argues that while Komi underwent a meaningful democratization in the first half of the 1990s, it has failed to consolidate its democracy. Thus he warns us that Komi and many other regions are in real danger of backsliding into authoritarianism. Jörn Grävingholt argues that Bashkortostan does not rise even to the level of delegative democracy and is best characterized as simple authoritarianism. Similarly, Mikhat Faruhkshin argues that Tatarstan's democracy is merely a front for a "syndrome of authoritarianism." He thus applauds Putin's movement toward a unitary state as the only feasible route to democracy in Tatarstan. Nicolai N. Petro's chapter is laudably unique in addressing the questions, what went right and why? Petro finds that because of an elite consensus carefully buttressed by an appropriate legal framework, Novgorod has democratized more fully than most other republics and regions.

Together the chapters on specific regions offer a fascinating comparative assessment of the development of democracy in nine of Russia's eighty-nine components. The authors also provide varied insights on why democracy has failed or succeeded in their respective regions. Missing from this book, however, is a summary chapter that considers the similarities of some findings, and the contradictory nature of others. Why, for example, is the center to blame for the failure of democratization in some regions, while the success of others is largely attributed to local factors? If overcentralization reinforced the Soviet Union's authoritarian nature, and if federalism brought democracy to some regions, why is recentralization the likely solution to Russia's democratic failings? Much of Putin's recentralization has taken power away from locally elected leaders and placed it in the hands of federally appointed officials.