backwards in voter support. For example, the authors argue that ill-gotten administrative resources alone did not lead the pro-Putin Edinstvo party to win the most seats in the 1999 Duma election; in fact, Edinstvo candidates were skilled campaigners and coalition-builders with a positive image, and this made a huge difference in their electoral success. They rightly point out that “parties of power” have not always succeeded in Russia. It was not merely the infamous smear campaigns against Otechestvo-Vsia Rossiia (OVR), but also campaign bungling that led the party to fall behind among voters after an early lead. OVR had no message, a tired apparatchik image, and relied too much on regional governors who later switched allegiances. In turn, the factions among Communists failed to unify and reformulate their message to suit current problems; they sat idle and relied on outdated campaign techniques, expecting success to fall in their laps.

Yet the authors do not apply the same campaign-oriented framework in their assessment of the liberal parties in Russia. The liberals largely united under the Soiuz pravykh sil (SPS) in a well-organized Duma campaign (although a major party, Yabloko, failed to join), “finally putting collective above personal interests” (p. 142). The liberal parties are somehow different from other electoral players in Russia in that they have well-designed, state-of-the-art campaigns; yet even when most of them finally managed to unite forces in 1999-2000, they failed to win many votes or seats simply because there is little public support for liberal values in Russia. Thus, even when liberals do everything right in their campaigns, they cannot increase their share of the vote beyond 15-20 percent.

Overall, this book is an excellent resource for scholars and students of Russia generally and post-Soviet elections in particular, presenting a rich, complex treatment of the factors and factions influencing the processes and outcomes of the 1999-2000 elections. It builds on analysis of earlier post-Communist Russian elections. Let us hope that future elections will be competitive enough to render this analysis part of a continuing trend rather than a temporary snapshot from a brief era of meaningful election campaigns.

Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom
University of British Columbia


While all political phenomena are to some extent “moving targets” that the researcher must attempt to analyze as accurately as possible in the midst of constantly changing circumstances, studying the dynamics of Russian federalism in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union must be among the most challenging tasks of all. Not only does the Russian Federation encompass extreme economic, geographic, and ethnic diversity within its 88 units (89 if Chechnya is counted), there is very little clarity or agreement about the binding authority of the various legal documents competing to govern Russia’s post-Soviet federal relationships. These include at a minimum the 1992 Federation Treaty, the 1993 Federal Constitution, numerous Constitutional
Court rulings, the series of bilateral treaties that President Yeltsin signed with nearly fifty of the member units from 1994-98, and President Putin’s “federal package” of reforms aimed at recentralizing federal relations after the centrifugal Yelstin era.

Faced with this nearly overwhelming complexity, only a few brave authors, including Daniel Treisman and Jeffrey Kahn, have attempted a large-N, macro analysis of Russia’s federal processes, with most instead attempting to generate more universal insights by focusing on a micro case study involving a much smaller number of federal units. Elizabeth Pascal, author of Defining Russian Federalism, has chosen such a strategy, providing a minutely detailed case study of three territorial-administrative oblasts (as opposed to ethnic national republics) located in European Russia, Samara, Bryansk, and Vologda. More precisely, Pascal aims to illuminate some of the processes governing contemporary Russian federalism during the Yeltsin era by focusing on the bilateral negotiations between these three oblasts and the federal center in the narrow realm of fiscal federalism, especially from 1993-98. Her reasoning is that by focusing on fiscal federalism, which she calls the “power map” to and “defining feature” of all federal relations, she can help determine what Soviet-era institutions and practices continue to influence federal developments, what new features have emerged to structure center-regional relations, and what we might expect from the future for Russian federalism.

After a useful discussion of the Yeltsin administration’s decision to pursue bilateralism, in which she argues that the center viewed these treaties as the least costly (though by no means cost-less) way to stabilize and strengthen the federation during a time of flux, Pascal turns to the heart of her study. In introducing her case studies, Pascal helpfully notes that the “complex bureaucratic structure” within which the center and regions would try to hammer out new bilateral “contracts” governing federal relations in the mid-1990s “had hardly changed at all since the Soviet collapse” (p. 76). As such, the two variables that had determined a region’s position during the previous era – the power, durability and effectiveness of the local executive and the status of the region as an economically-healthy “donor region” or an economically-weak dependent region – continued to shape the process of federal bargaining during the new era. In practice, this meant well-off Samara, also blessed with a powerful governor who was able to convince the center of the essential competence of his regional administration, was able to change the very “rulebook” of Russian federalism in its favor with its bilateral treaty, according to which it gained increased economic autonomy, including the right to conduct foreign economic affairs largely on its own. By contrast, depressed Bryansk, with its outdated defense plants and unlucky location near Chernobyl, furthermore lacking strong and creative executive leadership, saw more utility in seeking to change only the “pocketbook” of Russian federalism, by securing increased funding and administrative support from the federal center in its bilateral treaty. Vologda, located somewhere between these two extremes in terms of both its economic health and executive competence, instead chose as its bargaining strategy to focus on getting the center to “assure the implementation of its federal promises,” hoping to decrease gradually its dependence on the center (pp. 108-109).

In her concluding chapter, Pascal argues that despite Putin’s energetic attempts to reform the “hodgepodge” of different legal and fiscal arrangements created during