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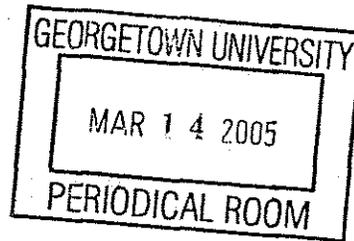
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Federalism, Democratization, and the Rule of Law in Russia. By Jeffrey Kahn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. xii, 326 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$70.00, hard bound.

Jeffrey Kahn brings an exemplary combination of academic expertise to this meticulously researched and comprehensive analysis of the three overarching themes of Russian political development encapsulated in the title of his book. He has a PhD in Political Science from Oxford University as well as an LLD from the University of Michigan. Kahn draws on both disciplines to produce a compelling—and sobering—account of Russia's transition from the totalitarianism-authoritarianism of the Soviet era to today's fledgling democracy under Vladimir Putin's proclaimed "dictatorship of law." The book's level of analysis is appropriate to both specialists in Russian politics and law and informed readers curious about the Russian experience.

The volume consists of nine chapters, beginning with an introductory overview of fundamental features of Russian federalism and continuing through an explication of federalist theory and detailed longitudinal analyses of institutional change and political and legal reforms from Soviet times to the Putin regime. Kahn utilizes a composite methodological approach that draws on comparative politics, federal theory, law, post-Soviet area studies, and dynamic analytical features inherent in "new institutionalism." He eschews a limited case study in favor of "examination of an entire tier of the Russian federal structure—the republics. . . . Study of the apex of Russia's federal hierarchy allows both generalizable conclusions about the Russian Federation as a whole and sufficient detail to shed light on some of the problems of individual republics, notably their difficult (and largely incomplete) transitions from authoritarian rule" (15).

Kahn denies that federal structures under the former Soviet Union constituted a genuine federal system because the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's dictatorial powers precluded a meaningful division of legal authority between the political center and its constituent parts. Nonetheless, Soviet-era "federalism" ultimately mattered because it established the basis for "a strong path-dependency of the development of the new Russian federation out of Soviet institutions" (3). A fundamental feature of Soviet-era federalism was its territorial basis in diverse ethnic groups. As Kahn pervasively argues, this legacy of "nationalization" reinforced "the institutionalized dominance of titular ethnic groups in state regional structures" (72). A fateful outcome was the advent of centrifugal forces of ethnic nationalism, which were unleashed as an unintended consequence of Mikhail Gorbachev's reform policies and ultimately led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union into fifteen independent republics and, within the Russian Federation itself, a plethora of autonomous republics, oblasts, *kraia*, and federal cities.

This fusion of ethnic nationalism and federalist structures in postcommunist Russia poses formidable challenges to both the maintenance of a working balance of power between the center and its various peripheries and the establishment of a viable system of democracy congruent with a "rule of law" state that guarantees the protection of civil liberties and minority rights. Boris El'tsin attempted to placate the various provinces and districts within the federation by endorsing successive phases of a "Parade of Sovereignities" (in which he exhorted subordinate units to "take as much sovereignty as you can swallow"), the adoption of a federation treaty in 1992, and a finally a "Parade of [some 47 bilateral] Treaties" intended to regulate institutional and legal relations between the federation and most of its autonomous republics and other territorial units. Kahn severely chastises El'tsin's "new federalism" for causing widespread political confusion, deepening constitutional asymmetry within the Russian Federation, prompting a "war of laws" between the center and its peripheries, and eroding "conceptions of a federal civic identity, a unified legal space, and fiscal burden-sharing" (188).

Vladimir Putin's election has dramatically changed the legal and substantive nature of Russian federalism. During the 2000 presidential campaign, Putin proclaimed the necessity of a "dictatorship of law," which he categorically equated with democracy as opposed to "those placed in an official position to defend that law" (238). He has subsequently acted on this premise by strengthening vertical executive powers, centralizing federal authority over the provinces, and reforming the Federal Council. In the process, as Kahn as-

serts, Putin has fundamentally "reshaped the geographic space of federal politics" (239). The long-term effects of Putin's redefinition of Russian federalism on civic culture and democracy remain to be seen.

Kahn's final chapter is a somewhat disappointing summary of his principal findings rather than a genuine conclusion (much less a conditional forecast of possible future political developments). Political scientists would welcome greater attention to Russian electoral politics and the inclusion of relevant survey findings. But these are minor quibbles given the larger achievement of a highly informative exploration of Russian federalism in both its historical and contemporary contexts. The editors at Oxford University Press would be well advised to establish a web site linked to the book that would enable Kahn to extend his analysis to include continuing territorial challenges to Russian federalism, Putin's reelection, and his assault on bureaucrats as his next reform initiative.

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The Dynamics of Russian Politics: Putin's Reform of Federal-Regional Relations. Ed. Peter Reddaway and Robert W. Ortung. Vol. 1. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004. xii, 332 pp. Appendix. Notes. Index. Tables. Maps. \$75.00, hard bound. \$29.95, paper.

As Vladimir Putin enters his second term as Russian president, the moment is apt to assess the impact of major reforms enacted during his first. Concerned by the perceived fragmentation of the Russian Federation, within days of his inauguration in May 2000 Putin proposed apparently sweeping reforms to the administrative structure of the Russian Federation. Most notably, these involved the creation of seven overarching federal districts (*okruga*), each with a presidential envoy to oversee the implementation of federal policy across the eighty-nine constituent subjects of the Federation, and the replacement of governors and regional legislature speakers in the Federation Council (the upper parliamentary chamber) with appointees. Other reforms implemented at this time involved less high-profile but equally significant changes: increased power to the federal authorities to remove governors and disband regional legislatures, the creation of a consultative State Council involving regional governors, and a financial redistribution of resources in favor of the federal government.

Peter Reddaway and Robert Ortung's book—the first of two volumes on the subject—seeks to provide a "midterm assessment" (21) of these changes and their impact upon the governance of the Russian Federation, bringing together a distinguished group of authors to discuss the effect of the federal reforms. The book has an elegant structure: the opening chapters give historical and contextual information on the federal configuration of Russia; the middle seven chapters, written mainly (but not exclusively) by native experts, examine the results of the reforms in each of the newly created federal districts; and the final chapter, penned by the editors, seeks to draw these individual assessments together to form some provisional thematic conclusions about the success of the reforms.

The chapters on the seven districts are written in a broadly comparative manner, each examining the effect that the envoys and their staff have had on federal-regional relations, intraregional relations, and horizontal and vertical economic coordination. Each chapter also provides some analysis of the envoys' political influence and impact. What emerges is a picture of a country that remains fairly diverse at the regional level. Although contending that the governors of the eighty-nine regions enjoy less power vis-à-vis the center than previously, most of the authors highlight the relative impotence of the presidential envoys, who do not enjoy sufficient financial or staff resources to become powerful independent political actors and in some cases have become reliant on big business.

Moreover, the success of the envoys in putting pressure on individual regions to conform to federal norms has met with mixed results and has largely depended on the political strength of the regions in question. Tatarstan, for example, made some concessions to the center in terms of removing some of the more objectionable (to the federal authorities) clauses from its constitution and relinquishing substantial tax revenues. In exchange,