



## Book Reviews

### Jörg Mathias Book Reviews Editor

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and Catalonia. Wales, which is an associated member of the four motors initiative, is similarly analysed. Each of the authors succeeds in combining theory with praxis in an efficient manner. The origins of the four motors initiative are explored, as are its institutional frameworks, objectives and areas of success. The initiative itself is located firmly within the endeavour to breathe life into the idea of the Europe of the Regions. The various contributors are to be congratulated for their sober assessment of just how successful both the four motors initiative has been, and what it tells us about the chances of creating a Europe of the Regions endowed with effective supranational policy-making structures. Incidentally, the general prognosis is that although some measure of success has been achieved, a huge amount still needs to be done.

If anything, the individual chapters that deal with each of the regions associated with the four motors project constitute the most informative section of the book. They form a valuable source of information for two types of reader. First of all they are useful for students of inter-regional cooperation within and indeed without the European Union. Secondly, they are valuable to the student of sub-national government in Europe. Each of these chapters adopts a flexible but clearly recognizable comparative framework. We are introduced to the history, economy, population structures, and politics of each of the regions. The powers of the regions are delimited and their administrative structures are outlined. Inevitably, given that each of the contributors is a German-speaker, Germany and its variant of federalism provides the yardstick against which all the regions under consideration are measured. This, however, is no bad thing. Klaus-Jürgen Nagel deserves to be singled out for special praise by virtue of his analysis of Catalonia's relationship with the rest of Spain, and for pointing out that Spain is not a federal state. In so doing he provides us with a necessary corrective to the intellectual laziness that sometimes leads to Spain being wrongly categorized as a federal state. Each of the authors in this section also deserves praise for the skilful way in which the sometimes rather complex electoral arrangements and division of powers between the various layers of sub-national government are disentangled and explained.

This volume is full of useful information, and the editors are to be congratulated for their efforts. Not only for their individual contributions, but also because of the way that they managed to stitch everything together in such away that thematic and intellectual integrity is maintained throughout the volume. The book also contains some useful maps and charts. Given the erudite nature of the book, and the fog of ignorance that still envelops much of the English-speaking world with regard to the issues dealt with here, it is to be hoped that the editors can arrange for the publication of an English language edition.

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*Die Regionen Russlands als neue politische Kraft. Chancen und Gefahren des Regionalisms für Russland.* By Jeronim Perovic. Bern, Berlin and Brussels: Peter Lang, 2001. Pp.351. SFr 49.00 (paperback). ISBN 3 906767 29 9.

Discussing political region-building, promoted by elite-led regionalist movements and fuelled by strong economic and social ambitions as well as an equally strong determination to avoid the perceived shortcomings displayed by central governments past and present, most West European researchers would not normally think of Russia as an obvious example: too strong, one suspects, were the differences in the political

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system throughout most of the twentieth century, too vast the gulf between West European and Russian examples in so many key geographic, economic and social indicators. Perovic's book is an invitation to re-evaluate these perceptions. Initially, the reader may be surprised to note the virtual absence of references to the current Anglo-Saxon, French and Spanish literature in the theoretical chapter: no multi-level governance, no regional mobilization, and only rather small hints at the issues of constitutional federalism, asymmetric government and centre-periphery relations. Instead, the author chooses to follow his own approach, loosely based on interdisciplinary analytical approaches developed by the Russian academia (*Politische Regionalistik*, e.g. Gel'man), and recent works on Russian regional problems by German-speaking researchers (Segbers, Kappeler, and others). The author offers two fairly convincing justifications. Firstly, regionalism in Russia is by and large to be understood as a reaction to weaknesses of the central state (p.24), and secondly, that all regional actor behaviour is to a very large extent utilitarian, resulting from strong and urgent economic and social interests (p.25). Thus, Perovic offers a working definition of regionalism as 'all politically relevant movements and actions resulting from the specific interests of a region's population or groups within that population, whereby the region is regarded as a framework of reference, being a basically homogenous part of a sphere of political power' (p.35).

The seemingly unusual reference to 'sphere of political power' rather than simply 'state' or 'political region' is later explained by the fact that we still find legacies of the Soviet past, where power used to be a political currency utilized by individuals and not just an abstract expression of state sovereignty. At present, this results in a situation where regional élites tend to gravitate into executive rather than legislative positions, and are still able to command extensive socio-economic fiefdoms. The functional borders of these are often shifting and translucent, and may bear little resemblance to formally established territorial units of government. This problem is further compounded by the fact that within the vast geographical scope of Russia we find a multitude of such territorial units: according to the 1993 Constitution, there are 89 'subjects' (member units) of the Russian Federation, in five categories: Republics, Kraia (administrative regions), Oblasti (administrative districts), Autonomous Districts and Autonomous Areas. These 89 units are grouped into seven Federal Districts. All these units enjoy different degrees of autonomy – asymmetric government running rampart. Yet this is only half the story: these political classifications only partially coincide with the economic classification, where we find formally established 11 Economic Regions, which, apart from the Far East, do not match the eight Interregional Associations for Economic Cooperation formed by agreement among the political 'subjects' of the Federation (pp.16–18 and 30–31).

The historical part of the book provides an interesting and useful background to the current debates analysed in the main empirical section. Perovic shows that the earliest attempts at decentralization in Russia date back to the late Tsarist period, while the Soviet era was dominated by the 'nationalities' debate – still a major issue in the ethnically defined territorial units – and the establishment of power hierarchies rather than straightforward centralization.

The main empirical part outlines key strategies employed by regional elites to develop their political and economic power base, now that federal governments have shown a considerable degree of weakness, defined as partly an apparent inability and partly deliberate reluctance to maintain a strict control over the various regions. While federal authorities, and in particular Putin, have repeatedly resorted to employing the criminal justice system to maintain a minimum degree of compliance with federal law

by leading members of regional elites (p.148), these efforts were so far only partially successful.

In conclusion, Perovic speaks of little more than 'hope' (p.312) in terms of Russia's chances of developing functioning federal structures. Four developments nevertheless might in the long run amount to discernible democratic progress: a further development of elected local and regional government, overcoming the political apathy still prevalent in large sections of the population; a proliferation of relevant regional political actors which will be forced to cooperate with each other in order to succeed, thus limiting the freedom of manoeuvre of executive office holders; a strengthening of market forces in the economy; and finally an increased embeddedness of Russia's regions in international and indeed global economic structures (pp.313–4).

The book makes fascinating reading for both the specialist and the interested student; its descriptive sections are insightful and very accessible, while its theoretical and methodological framework offer interesting points for further debate. An English-language edition would certainly be welcome.

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*Governing European Diversity*. Edited by Montserrat Guibernau. London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi: Sage 2001. Pp.x + 293. £50.00 (hardback); £16.99 (paperback). ISBN 0 7619 5464 3 and 0 7619 5465 1.

*Governing European Diversity*, published in association with the Open University, Milton Keynes, represents yet another multi-authored effort aimed at providing students of European integration with a textbook analysis of questions of European identity and governance. The book consists of nine chapters, each one looking into a specific area of socio-economic relations in Western Europe. The chapters are organized in a reader-friendly way, each featuring several sub-headings dealing with specific questions, which are often illustrated with charts, photographs and accessible summaries located at the end of each sub-section. Overall, from a technical point of view, the book is certainly a well-organized and well-edited publication.

However, like many other multi-authored books, this one also suffers from a certain discontinuity between its individual parts, some of which represent valuable contributions in their specific fields but less so as parts of a single book. The rather disjointed nature of the book becomes evident already in the introduction, which extensively discusses historical and cultural themes in European identity, whilst the rest of the collection concentrates on issues of European governance and in particular on its socio-economic aspects.

Guibernau's analysis of European identity focuses on issues of inclusion and exclusion which are discussed along the themes of geography, culture, religion, secularism and the industrial revolution. The key argument here is that the roots of European identity are less to be found in the Christian heritage and more in post-enlightenment secularism. To support this thesis the author cites the religious wars in Europe and the fact that religious arguments have never been used by the EU in its policy towards the non-Christian nations wishing to join the EU.

Despite the argument's originality, it appears that in her analysis Guibernau fails to distinguish between the political and cultural aspects of Europe's Christian heritage. For example, it remains perfectly conceivable that whilst in the past inter-Christian wars divided Europe politically, today the cultural aspect of Christian heritage may