

# The Academy of Political Science

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**Elections without Order: Russia's Challenge to Vladimir Putin** by Richard Rose and Neil Munro. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 262 pp. Cloth, \$60.00; paper, \$22.00.

Richard Rose and Neil Munro have written an informative account of developments in post-Soviet Russia that will appeal to country experts and Russia novices alike. Despite the title, however, this is not primarily a book about elections. Instead, the title is the authors' answer to the question, "What has Russia become?" or "Is Russia a democracy?"

Their central argument is that Russia has become an "electoralist" regime where citizens select their leaders in relatively free elections even though the rule of law has yet to take hold (p. 59). Once elected, leaders are not restrained by the rule of law, nor can they use the rule of law to ensure that their edicts are carried out by either state or society. The results can be as wide ranging as an inability to collect taxes, a proliferation of corruption, the abuse of state power, or problems providing routine services for citizens. Overall, life lacks *order*, which is based on "things being in their expected place, so that people can go about their daily lives without unexpected or unpleasant surprises" (p. 2). Russia is now a country with elections, but without order.

The book is organized chronologically. The first chapter, covering the tsarist and Soviet periods, clearly emphasizes that Russia has long been a land that lacks order. As the book progresses, however, it takes on more of a historical narrative tone, describing in a very concise manner most of the major political and economic developments in post-Soviet Russia. While this has the benefit of making the book a valuable introductory text, it becomes less clear how this narrative supports the central theme.

What distinguishes this book from other narratives is the authors' extensive use of survey data to allow the voices of the Russian masses to be heard. In addition to improving the scope of the narrative—we learn about citizens' preferences, concerns, and experiences, in addition to standard elite developments—the survey data also lead to conclusions that run counter to the received wisdom. For example, more Russians have become prosperous during the transition than destitute, the average Russian wants the country to be more democratic, and TV did not play a large role in informing Russians during the 1999 elections. Perhaps most surprising is that in June 2001 optimists outnumbered pessimists in predicting the future results of reforms across a range of issue areas.

My criticisms of the book focus not on what the authors have done, but rather on what they chose not to do. Despite access to a treasure trove of survey data (the University of Strathclyde's New Russia Barometer surveys), the authors use their data primarily to augment the narrative by reporting marginals and the occasional crosstab. While the book is informative and useful, it is disappointing that the authors did not focus more explicitly on hypothesis testing concerning the behavior of Russian citizens. Similarly, their overall

claim regarding viable elections and a lack of order would have been strengthened by addressing *a priori* how to falsify the claim, the type of evidence that would support the claim, and how that evidence would be presented. These concerns notwithstanding, this is a valuable book for anyone interested in both understanding recent Russian political development and gaining important insights as to where the nation may be headed in the years to come.

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**Beyond Tiananmen: The Politics of U.S.-China Relations 1989–2000** by Robert L. Suettinger. Washington, DC, Brookings Institution Press, 2003. 556 pp. \$39.95.

This well-written account is likely to remain for some time to come the definitive assessment of U.S.–China relations in the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen incident. Historians and other scholars will take many years to come up with data and insights to match Suettinger’s richly nuanced review of American and Chinese policy making. The premier U.S. government intelligence and policy analyst on China, Suettinger had a unique vantage point as the China specialist on the National Security Council staff and the senior U.S. intelligence officer interacting with U.S.–China policy decision makers.

The assessment focuses on top-level U.S. decision making in the executive branch. The author’s first-hand experience, careful interviews, and balanced and detached treatment of issues and individuals provide greater depth and detail than earlier accounts. They greatly enrich our understanding of the many factors at play in the various key decisions made by U.S. policy makers in dealing with China during this tumultuous period. The decisions often were misguided or went wrong. Pressures from competing U.S. bureaucratic interests, congressional activism, wide ranging U.S. interest groups, the media, and others all affected the U.S. decision-making process. The leanings and interests of individual decision makers, especially members of the senior foreign policy team headed by the National Security Adviser, are noted in some detail and generally without prejudice.

The narrative in the book is chronological, and the broad outlines of U.S.–China relations are consistent with earlier analyses. Thus, the initial U.S. reaction to the Tiananmen incident saw President George H. W. Bush fighting a rear-guard action to preserve an important international relationship in the face of heavy pressure from Congress, the media, and public opinion for a tougher policy. The drift in U.S.–China policy in the first term of the Clinton administration led to a major crisis prompted by the Taiwan President’s 1995 visit to the United States and China’s provocative military demonstrations in the Taiwan area. The author’s account is particularly strong in explaining senior U.S. government decision making that led to the crisis and the thinking