THE GRANDEUR AND THE FALL OF EMPIRES

You can do anything with a bayonet except sit on it.
—Talleyrand

IN THE FIRST CENTURY B.C., the formation of a professional army and the resulting decline of the system of universal military service for free peasants undermined the republican institutions of ancient Rome and prepared the way for a regime in which the army served the ruler in power. The new state structure was called an empire (the term comes from the Latin *imperium,* power). Since Rome's power in those days extended over most of the known world, another meaning of the word developed: in Europe "empire" came to mean a multiethnic state created through conquest. After the fall of the western Roman Empire, its mores and traditions continued to influence what happened in the territories that had been part of the empire and were geographically close to the metropolis. These same influences were reflected in the ensuing course of European history.

Modern Economic Growth and the Era of Empires

The idea of empire—a powerful, authoritarian, multiethnic state, uniting numerous peoples, like the Christian Church—is part of the legacy inherited by medieval Europe from antiquity. James Bryce, a well-known scholar of the Holy Roman Empire, wrote: "Dying antiquity willed two ideas to later centuries: the idea of a universal monarchy and the idea of universal religion."[1] Aphorisms usually oversimplify. That is the case here. The influence of the institutions and Roman law was much more significant for European development than the idea of universal monarchy. However, the connection of the imperial ideal with Roman tradition is indisputable.

Many rulers tried to acquire the title of emperor. But through the centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire, only Byzantium was perceived by other European states as the heir to the Roman imperial tradition.[2] Byzantium referred to both the eastern and western parts of the Roman Empire. The rulers of Byzantium believed that they had only temporarily lost control over part of the empire's territory. When Charlemagne was crowned in 800 as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, gaining recognition by the Byzantine authorities was a serious problem for him.[3]

The gradual weakening of Byzantium made its pretensions to the imperial title over the post-Roman space ever less convincing. After the Turks took Constantinople, the question of who held those rights became an issue again. The pretensions of the Russians to Moscow's role as the Third Rome, heir to the traditions of the Roman and Byzantine Empires, was in the spirit of the period, the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. However, Russia was too far from the center of development to be taken seriously by Europe.

By the late fifteenth century, the Holy Roman Empire, which had been transformed many times in the ninth through fourteenth centuries and was in many ways ephemeral, was perceived by European royal courts as the only state with the legal right to call itself an empire. However, the idea of empire lives on and even today continues to exert an influence on European events.

Philip II sometimes called himself Emperor of India. We can see in the political polemics of the late sixteenth century the ideas of Spain's predestination as an empire and its holy mission to rule Europe. The Castilian elite in the late fifteenth century regarded the Roman Empire as a model to emulate and itself as its heirs. They were part of the chosen whose holy mission was to recreate a world empire.[4] Outside that context, it is difficult to understand why the Spanish kings needed to spend vast human and financial resources on wars in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, trying to expand Spain's dominance in the world.

By the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the economic and military growth of Europe and its supremacy over surrounding countries was indisputable. European nations began expanding to other continents. A powerful stimulus was the hope to replenish supplies of precious metals, a resource that permitted financing wars. It was only when the path to America's precious metals was laid that the continent became valuable for Spain.

That was the start of the European empires. It was a period of mercantile trade policies. States limited the import of refined and manufactured goods and stimulated the export of domestic products. Ownership of colonies expanded the controlled customs zone. Conquered countries could not regu-

late access to the products from the metropolis. The metropolis could have a limited trade policy toward its colonies. The expansion of colonial territories occurred simultaneously with a fierce struggle among empires, the redivision of holdings, and competition among trading companies that dealt with the colonies.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, China, Japan, and the Ottoman Porte (also known as the Sublime Porte) were not formally European colonies; however, after an agreement between Britain and Turkey on January 5, 1809, the opium wars of 1840–42, and the arrival of Commander Perry's squadron in Japan in 1853, the policy of low import tariffs was imposed on those countries as well.[5]

Even apologists for empires admit that the use of administrative force over conquered nations in that era was intended to support industrial development in the metropolis. In 1813 the textile and silk industry of India could have sold its products profitably on the British market at prices 50 to 60 percent lower than those commanded by English goods. But the customs duties (70 to 80 percent of the price) or direct bans of imported goods from India made it impossible. Had India been independent, it could have introduced prohibitive tariffs on British goods in response. India was the birthplace of the textile industry, which had existed there for six thousand years. Millions of people were employed in it. After it was colonized, hundreds of thousands of people lost work, people whose families had been weavers for generations. Cities such as Dacca and Mushirabad, formerly centers of the textile industry, went into decline. Sir Charles Trevelyan reported to a parliamentary committee that the population of Dacca shrank from 150,000 to between 30,000 and 40,000 over the twenty-year period 1813–33. Between 1814 and 1835, exports of British textiles into India grew from 1 million yards to 51 million yards annually. In that same period, Indian textile exports were reduced by approximately 400 percent, and by 1844 by another 500 percent.[6]

The start of simultaneous economic growth at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries increased the economic, financial, and military gap between Europe and the rest of the world (with the exception of European immigrant colonies in the United States, Canada, Australia, and some other countries). The defeat of Russia, one of the largest agrarian powers in the world and close to Europe, in the Crimean War was visible proof of that.

The world in the middle of the nineteenth century was a harsh one, with no room for sentimentality. A rule known by the Romans operated here: *Vae víctis,* woe to the vanquished. The treatment of vanquished peoples could not be called gentle by any stretch. In order to prove that, it is not necessary to cite

the catastrophic population loss of the Americas after the Spanish conquest or the annihilation of the North American native Indians. We can recall the existence in the liberal British Empire of a ban on Indian nationals in government service.

The creation and collapse of the European empires is a component part of the process of unprecedented economic growth and socioeconomic change that began in northwestern Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Those changes opened the way to the economic, financial, and military expansion of the metropolis and the extension of its territorial control. Simultaneously, new connections increased the risk that the bases of any state's economic and political power could be undermined in a changing world.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the leading European countries, especially Britain, had no equals in using military power thousands of kilometers from their own borders. That ability is the basis for the formation of imperial policies. The British prime minister and leader of the Liberal Party William Gladstone wrote: "The imperial feeling is innate in every Englishman. It is part of our legacy, which appears with us and dies only after our death."[7]

By 1914, England controlled territory with approximately one-fourth of the world's population.[8] Its empire, backed by long-standing tradition, seemed indestructible to most contemporaries. But the preconditions for its collapse had been formed by the late nineteenth century in the new world order. Simultaneous economic growth and the large-scale concomitant changes in the relationships of economic power among nations made it inevitable.

Developing nations that embarked on the process of economic growth after England can use what A. Gerschenkron called the "advantages of backwardness."[9] In terms of population they often surpass states that began modern economic growth before them; and as they move along the path of industrialization, they can mobilize financial and human resources to form powerful armed forces. The economic, financial, and military rise of Germany and Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are telling examples.

In my book *Long Time,* I focused on the fact that, for the past century and a half, Russia has lagged approximately half a century, or two generations, behind the most highly developed countries that are leaders of modern economic growth.[10] In discussing Russia's problems today, it is useful to remember that the era of decline for world empires began approximately half a century ago.

All the countries that called themselves empires at the start of the twentieth century have rid themselves of their colonies, voluntarily or by force, and

given them freedom. This would be difficult to explain as a coincidence. This experience is important for Russia. If Russia learns from it, it may be able to avoid repeating the mistakes that led to political defeat.

In the early twentieth century, contradictions between the harsh structure of control over territories that formed during British financial and military-naval hegemony in the nineteenth century, and the growing economic and military might of countries that had been left out when the world was being divided up, became an important factor in international politics. Peaceful regulation of this problem was not easy. Solving it by force would mean starting a chain of bloody wars. And that is what came to pass from 1914 to 1945.[11]

Crisis and the Dismantling of Overseas Empires

The empires of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are the product of the rise of Europe, the modern economic growth that created an asymmetry for decades in the financial, economic, and military forces in the world. But they were fragile formations that had difficulty adjusting to other concepts of rational political structure, to another system of forming armies, and to new forms of using force.

Over the course of the twentieth century, the world became a different place. The dominant ideology, within which the "white man's burden" was a given, was replaced by a picture of the world in which the separation of nations into masters and slaves is unacceptable. The relations between the metropolis and colonies that were organic for the nineteenth century became untenable in the mid-twentieth century. In the intellectual atmosphere of the 1940s to the 1960s it was impossible to explain why Britain should rule India and its other colonies.

Over time, ideas about what the metropolis can do to preserve its supremacy were transformed. The harsh world of the early nineteenth century had no sympathy for the weak. But the changing sociopolitical reality of the twentieth century dictated new rules of behavior. When Britain used harsh measures in Malaya in the early 1950s to suppress rebellion—taking hostages, destroying crops in intransigent villages—these practices were condemned in parliament and called crimes against humanity. What was acceptable in the early nineteenth century was no longer tolerated in the middle of the twentieth.

Russia was the only territorially integrated empire to survive World War I. After World War II, overseas empires began to fall, one after another—British, French, Dutch, Belgian, and Portuguese. At the start of the 1990s the

last territorially integrated empire—the Soviet Union—collapsed, and so did Yugoslavia, a country that was not an empire in the literal sense of the word but that faced problems similar to those that bring about the collapse of territorially integrated empires.

The crisis of 1914–45 radically changed the world. The myth of the invincibility of Europeans, deeply rooted in the public mind in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but undermined by the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05,[12] was completely discredited by the collapse of the European colonial empires in Southeast Asia during World War II. Europeans could no longer hope that their conquered peoples would continue to believe in the divine right of their conquerors to rule them.[13]

From the late 1940s to the early 1950s the very words "empire" and "imperialism" became unfashionable. In 1947, Clement Attlee, prime minister of England, said, "If at the present time imperialism, by which I mean the subjugation of some nations to the political and economic mastery of others, does exist somewhere, then such imperialism definitely does not exist in the British Commonwealth of Nations."[14]

A characteristic trait of empires is the lack of universal suffrage for its subjects.[15] Adam Smith wrote about the wisdom of offering the vote to the North American colonies. It did not become a topic of serious discussion among British politicians. But "no taxation without representation" was a key slogan of the American Revolution.

In the Hungarian part of Austria-Hungary, of the almost 11 million people over the age of 21, only 1.2 million could vote. The question of whether soldiers mobilized during World War I from non-Hungarian parts of the kingdom should be allowed to vote was hotly debated. The government was unable to make a decision. The Hungarian prime minister, Count Istvan Tisza, categorically refused to give the right to vote to soldiers who were not Hungarian. Attempts to federalize Austria-Hungary in order to save the monarchy came up against the stubborn refusal of the Hungarian political elite to make any concessions to Slavic peoples.[16] World experience shows that empire and political freedom—that is, the real democratic right to vote for all subjects—are incompatible.[17]

In the early 1950s, when France considered Algeria to be one of its departments, France refused to give Algerians a vote equal to that of Europeans. With voting controlled by two different electoral colleges, it took eight Muslim votes to equal one European vote. In 1954–58, the position of the French authorities changed. They recognized at last the inevitability of granting universal suffrage, understanding that they would not be able to hold on to Alge-

ria without it. By then, however, nothing less than total independence was acceptable to the leaders of the liberation movement.[18]

Limiting suffrage in colonies was in line with the realities of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when European empires were forming, and of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the conditions for modern economic growth were being established. However, it contradicts the perceptions of rational state order characteristic of the second half of the twentieth century. By that time, the conviction was entrenched that a regime that was not formed on the basis of universal suffrage and fair competition among political forces was illegitimate. The metropolis trying to save its colonies and the colonial elites was aware of that. There was only one way to preserve an empire: force the people living in the colonies to accept the regime as a given. But the empires kept confronting the problem that the statesman Talleyrand expressed to Napoleon in the following way: *You can do anything with a bayonet except sit on it.*

In the second half of the twentieth century the political rhetoric of those who favored maintaining colonies stressed not the advantages for the metropolis but the benefits to the colonies, arguing that the metropolis helped them create a legal system and a developed infrastructure. What also changed was the financial context of an empire's functioning. Before the end of World War I, the generally accepted perception was that the colonies should support themselves and pay for the colonial administration. Under the influence of the changing intellectual atmosphere in developed countries, that tradition had become obsolete by the 1920s. In the new paradigm, the metropolis had to expend financial resources to hasten the economic development of the colonies.[19] The authorities who wanted to prove that the empire was beneficial for its subjects had to invest even more in infrastructure and social programs in its territories.[20] This was done at the expense of metropolis taxpayers, who were dubious about this practice. The upkeep of the empire cost them more every year. Societies became convinced that solutions to many problems were being postponed in order to help the colonies. By the second half of the twentieth century, the elites and the public in empires realized that empires were too expensive to sustain. The moment that the political elites of the metropolis and the colonies stop believing that the situation is a given, the empire's fate is sealed. The only question is the form and time frame of its dismantling.

After World War II, an important factor in the dismantling of the colonial system was the opposition of the Soviet Union and its satellites on one side and NATO headed by the United States on the other. The Soviet Union, itself an empire, had reason to give financial, political, and military support to nationalist movements against traditional empires of European states. The

United States, as the leader of the military alliance against the Soviet Union, often treated Latin American countries the way European powers treated their colonies, but it never declared itself an empire or sent its representatives on a permanent basis to run dependent states.

For different reasons, neither the United States nor the Soviet Union liked traditional empires. At least they were not prepared to support them. Sometimes they directly encouraged their dismantling. That alone made maintaining empires impossible.[21] During the Suez Crisis of 1956, the British and French assumed that they could invade Egypt and restore control over the canal on their own without consulting the United States or the Soviet Union. They were wrong. They had to retreat and accept the fact that the canal would remain under Egyptian control.

A process is under way in the postwar world similar to one seen many times in history: a quick dissemination of military technology by wealthy states among their neighbors and potential enemies, giving them broad mastery of partisan warfare. Enormous human and financial resources are required for the metropolis to stand up to this challenge.

In the sixteenth century, for example, with Europe's obvious superiority in military technology, it took only several hundred conquistadores to conquer America. In the second half of the twentieth century, 400,000 French soldiers sent to Algeria were not enough to suppress a rebellion of 20,000 people who had the support of the civilian population. Likewise, Portugal's defense spending, which in 1971 constituted 43 percent of its budget, was untenable for the country. In the period from 1961 to 1974, 110,000 young Portuguese emigrated to avoid the draft. A 1967 decree increased the mandatory military service to four years. Unable to graduate enough officers from their military schools, the Portuguese authorities were forced to recruit junior officers who were promoted upon graduation from military departments in civilian universities. They became the nucleus of the movement that prepared the way for the overthrow of the authoritarian regime and the end of the colonial war.[22] And although Vietnam had never been a U.S. colony, America was pulled into the Vietnam War against the background of the collapse of the French colonial empire and the Cold War. By the time the United States was actively involved in the war, it was clear that controlling the territory and fighting off the partisans would require ten times their number in soldiers. The socioeconomic and political price for maintaining the colony was too high.

National pride is one of the most powerful tools for political mobilization in societies that do not have democratic traditions. Konstantin Leontiev knew very well that a feeling of national solidarity was a threat to an empire: "The

idea of nationalities . . . in the form that it appears in the nineteenth century is an idea . . . with a lot of destructive force and nothing constructive."[23]

Appealing to the juxtaposition of the white exploiters and the abused and humiliated indigenous inhabitants of the colonies is an effective political ploy. When the myth of European invincibility was demolished, violent forms of struggle against colonialism became widespread. The participants could count on financial and military support from the Soviet bloc. The nascent independent states were a dependable rearguard for the partisans in countries that were still European colonies.

After World War II, the inevitability of the disintegration of colonial empires became self-evident. The only question was which metropolis would be quicker to realize it and manage to make the decolonialization process easier and less painful.

The British elite, unlike the French, did not survive the capitulation of 1940. Great Britain, which emerged as one of the victors in war, was prepared for the crisis that came with the disintegration of its empire. In 1945, England was one of the three world powers with an army of 4.5 million and held overseas territories scattered over many continents. The sun never set on the empire. But by the end of 1961 there was practically nothing left of it. Nevertheless, the British government, unlike the Russian one, does not see the loss of its empire as a geopolitical catastrophe. In most of the works devoted to the dissolution of colonial empires, England, which understood how the world worked in the second half of the twentieth century, is considered a model to emulate.[24]

The India Councils Act of 1909, even though it did not create radical changes in the organization of imperial rule, was an important milestone on the road to Indian independent statehood.[25] The decision on Indian independence was made during World War II, which in fact marked the end of the history of the British Empire. Further developments were merely an extended postscript. However, in the early 1950s the exploitation of nostalgia for empire was a strong political move, at least by the supporters of the Conservative Party, which identified itself with imperial grandeur. Discussion of the traditions of the past, the significance of empire for England, the inability to give it up, and the "treacherous policies" of the Laborites who were ready to dissolve it were important political components of conservative propaganda. The ideological basis for that policy was Churchill's statement of November 10, 1942: "We intend to hold on to our property. . . . I did not become the King's First Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire."[26] He frequently expressed similar thoughts after his return to government in 1951.

Themes relating to the necessity of preserving the empire, the malign intentions of those who wished to dismantle it, and appeals to post-imperial nostalgia and anti-Americanism predominated in the policies of the Conservative Party in the early 1950s.[27] Many British politicians of the period saw the United States, not the Soviet Union, as their country's main foe. In 1951 it would have been impossible to explain to the majority of the Conservative Party, which had just won the election, that the empire's days were numbered.[28] But time has a way of putting things in perspective. The failure of the Suez campaign in 1956 and the efforts required to retain control on Cyprus in 1956 demonstrated that the dreams of maintaining the empire were romantic and unrealistic. In 1959 the Conservative government, which had sworn fidelity to the imperial ideal just a few years earlier, began forcing the dismantling of the empire. Iain Macleod, minister of colonial affairs, characterized the situation this way: "It has been said that after I became Colonial Secretary there was a deliberate speeding up of the movement towards independence. I agree, there was. And in my view any other policy would have led to terrible bloodshed in Africa. This is the heart of the agreement."[29]

In letting go of its empire, Britain had to deal with a decades-long and difficult terrorist war with Northern Ireland. The parallels with Russia, which in 1991 gave up the next-largest empire without bloodshed and then encountered the difficult Chechen problem, are obvious. No one has ever decolonialized painlessly.

An orderly, planned dismantling of empires corresponding to the metropolis's strategic plans is the exception, not the rule.[30] More often we see situations where the metropolis, unprepared to send soldiers to defend imperial holdings, finds itself in a political crisis, unable to elaborate a policy for the peaceful restructuring of its relations with former colonies. Here Portugal is a striking example: after the revolution of April 25, 1974, the army sent to the colonies lost all desire to fight, and the soldiers and junior officers could think of nothing but getting home quickly. In such a situation, long and complex negotiations about the transfer of power are beyond the government's capabilities.[31]

In France, because of the heavy legacy of its loss in 1940, the public adaptation to the new reality was slower than in England, and nostalgia for empire was stronger. The French political elite were certain that only their empire would allow the country to retain its status as a major power in the world.[32] The number of people who died in the fight for this was greater than in other European metropolises. But their struggle did not change the result, the dismantling of the empire.

As the European empires declined, the crisis of universal military service unfolded.[33] France expended the greatest effort to hold on to its colonies in the late 1940s and early 1950s; it spent more money and lost more lives. In Indochina between 1945 and 1954, 92,000 soldiers and officers of the expeditionary corps were killed, 140,000 wounded, and 30,000 captured. The war ended in defeat. Nevertheless, the French government did not send a single conscript from France to Indochina. It was politically impossible. French families were totally opposed to sending their sons to die in Indochina.

After the capitulation of the French at Dien Bien Phu, when 10,000 soldiers and officers surrounded them, the majority of the military leaders preferred to blame the civilian politicians for stabbing the army in the back. The loss in Southeast Asia, caused in part by France's refusal to send conscripts there, was an enormous factor in the independence movement in other French colonies, especially in Algeria. If the metropolis could not keep its territories in Asia, what guarantee was there that it could do so in northern Africa?

One of history's paradoxes is that the prime minister of France who concluded the war in Indochina with Ho Chi Minh in 1954 also initiated the large-scale increase of French forces in Algeria—Pierre Mendes-France. During parliamentary debates on November 12, 1954, he said, "Let no one expect any compromises from us, we will not compromise when it is a question of defending internal peace and the integrity of the republic. The departments of Algeria are part of the republic and have been France for an extended period of time. No separation is possible between Algeria and the main territory of France. Neither France nor any parliament nor any government will ever give up this fundamental principle."[34] The minister of internal affairs, later president of France, François Mitterrand, was just as adamant. He said, "Algeria is France."[35]

The number of Algerian rebels was smaller than the partisan forces in Vietnam. Algeria is geographically closer to France. More than a million French colonials lived there. They had an influential lobby in the metropolis. The country had significant oil and gas resources.

In May 1955, the French government took a step that the cabinets of ministers who were responsible for running the war in Indochina had not dared to take. They called in 8,000 reservists and announced their plans to extend the tour of duty of 100,000 recruits. In August of that year, they limited the allowable reasons for exemptions from the draft. In 1955, the number of French troops in France almost doubled, from 75,000 in January to 180,000 in December. In the fall of 1956, one-third of the French army was located in northern Africa. By the end of 1956, there were 400,000 French troops there.

Most of the young men drafted in accordance with the decree of August 22, 1952, were older than 23; many were married with children and embarking on careers. In 1914, when large numbers of middle-aged men had been drafted, it was done in an organized way without public resistance. The homeland was in danger; people understood that. In the mid-1950s, the French public and the world saw the war with Algeria as colonial and unjust. Never before had a conscript army been sent to fight such a war during peacetime. In September 1955, recruits being sent to Algeria started to riot. Mass protests took place in Vincennes, Nantes, and Marseilles.

Recruits as a rule did not take part in military action. That was done by the Foreign Legion and military professionals. The basic task of the recruited contingent was to protect the farms of the French colonists. Nevertheless, once recruits were sent to Algeria, public opinion about the war changed in France. Citizens of a democratic country, even those feeling nostalgic for former grandeur, did not want to send their children to fight for the phantom of empire. In 1960–61, polls showed that two-thirds of the French supported the independence of Algeria. In a referendum on January 8, 1961, 75.2 percent of the population voted to give the country's leadership freedom of action in solving questions of its implementation.[36]

In fact, neither France in 1960–61 nor Portugal in 1973–74, both of which had sent large contingents of drafted soldiers to their colonies, was confronted with the threat of direct military defeat. There was nothing like Dien Bien Phu in 1954 in the offing. The decision to dismantle their empires had other causes. Those included the domestic consequences of a long, expensive, and bloody war, the reason for which was becoming less apparent to the public. In the second half of the twentieth century, empires fell out of fashion. Modern society did not deem it necessary to die or to send its children to war in order to preserve the attributes of former grandeur.

The decision to reject the empire, supported by more than two-thirds of the voters, was not easy even in France with its long-standing democratic traditions. The minority, made up of former French colonials and professional soldiers who had fought in the war and felt betrayed by the civilian authorities, posed a serious threat to the stability of French democratic institutions in the period 1958–62. When in 1958 radical nationalists took control of Corsica, an official of the Ministry of Defense was asked if France intended to restore order through the use of force. "What force?" he replied, making it clear that the civilian authorities had no armed forces that could stop a rebellion.[37]

The fact that France managed to retain democratic institutions in the metropolis after the collapse of its empire was the result of several factors: the high

level of development that makes authoritarian regimes that ignore the will of the majority seem archaic; the plans for European integration, in which France participated fully; and the authority and will of General de Gaulle, a man who could dissolve an empire and maintain control over the army and police.

In 1960–62, when the question of ending the war and granting independence to Algeria was being discussed, many observers expected a long period of political instability and disorder. They were disappointed. The country's continued dynamic economic growth and European integration removed the potential for a dangerous post-imperial syndrome. In France, as in Russia today, the peak of the post-imperial syndrome occurred in the years when the economy was booming. Experience shows that the illness can be cured.

Problems of Dissolving Territorially Integrated Empires

In agrarian states, many of which were not ethnically homogeneous, national differences were usually unimportant. What was fundamental was the division of society into the peasant majority and the privileged minority, specializing in force, state administration, and religion. The Habsburg monarchy in the middle of the sixteenth century included not only Castile and Austria but also such disparate components as Hungary, Czechia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Croatia, the Netherlands, Burgundy, and the Spanish colonies in America. The ethnic diversity of Russia, which had declared itself an empire in the early eighteenth century, needs no commentary here. Linguistic issues make it hard to determine whether the Ottoman Porte called itself an empire, but at the very least, European contemporaries referred to it as one.

Some agrarian monarchies had consistent policies of national unification. During the early Middle Ages, England and France were ethnically diverse countries. It took several centuries for each to create a single national identity. But the Austro-Hungarian Empire had subjects from very different language groups, and this strategy was not feasible.[38]

The beginning of modern economic growth and the radical changes it brought transformed society. New employment structures and higher educational attainment became entrenched. The bases of legitimacy for traditional political regimes were being eroded. Multiethnic, territorially integrated empires encountered more complex problems.

The spirit of the rising national consciousness in the early nineteenth century was nicely expressed by Johann Gottfried Herder, who wrote, "Providence has divided people by forests and mountains, seas and deserts, rivers and climatic zones, but first of all it divided people by language, tendencies,

and character. . . . Nature brings up people in families, and the most natural state is one in which a single nation with one national character lives. . . . Thus it appears that nothing is as antithetical to the very goals of ruling as the natural growth of the state, the chaotic mix of various human breeds and tribes under one scepter. . . . Such kingdoms . . . are like the symbols of monarchy in the prophet's vision: lion's head, dragon's tail, eagle's wings, and bear's paws."[39] The rise of national consciousness and the demands for federalization based on nationality made the situation of territorially integrated empires particularly difficult.

An overseas empire created with the help of cannon can be abandoned. Problems remain with settlers who have to repatriated, but they touch only a narrow segment of society. One of the most serious complications for France in liquidating its overseas empire was the fate of a million French settlers in Algeria. Yet that was only some 2 percent of the population of France.

When the Portuguese empire was dissolved in the mid-1970s, the repatriated settlers in the metropolis made up approximately 10 percent of the total population, more than in any other overseas empire.[40] But the arrival of those outsiders did not become an explosive issue for the young Portuguese democracy and did not interfere with stabilization. In territorially integrated and multiethnic empires the issues relating to the resettlement of ethnic groups in the course of the empire's disintegration are more acute. This was seen in the empires that collapsed during World War I: the Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman. Arming millions of peasants who were not necessarily loyal to the empire and sending them into the trenches for years without explaining why war was necessary made retaining the empire difficult. Military defeat, the collapse of the old order, and territorial disintegration were related processes.

The picture of anarchy born of the collapse of territorially integrated empires is well known from books and films about the Civil War in Russia (1918–20). But it is not a specifically Russian phenomenon. Here is a contemporary account of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire: "The green units (bands of deserters) have turned into bands of robbers. They took villages, castles, and railroad stations by storm and robbed them. They destroyed railway tracks. They kept trains in queues in order to rob them. The police and armed forces either joined the robbers or were unable to stop them. The new-found freedom rose in the smoke of burned houses and villages."[41] The most important argument for capitulation in the declaration by the State Council of Austria-Hungary was the fact that the army was multiethnic and its units, being neither Austrian nor Hungarian, were not prepared to fight for the empire.

The experience of dismantling empires after World War I is important for understanding the problems faced by the world in the late twentieth century. After the collapse of an authoritarian regime, a political and social vacuum forms. The policeman of the old regime is gone, and the new one has not yet arrived. Those who want power have no legitimizing tradition behind them, and there are no generally accepted rules of the political game. Conditions characteristic of great revolutions take shape: a weak government that is unable to collect taxes and pay people on the state payroll, maintain order, or guarantee that contractual obligations will be met.[42]

In those circumstances the exploitation of the simplest social instincts is a sure path to political success. Talking about national grandeur, about the injustices suffered by one's own ethnic group in history, or about territorial demands by neighbors will guarantee political success.[43] With weak democratic traditions and political parties, dependable weapons in the power struggle are radical nationalism, appeals to national self-identification and national injuries, and seeking out ethnic enemies. Austria-Hungary in 1918 provides a classic example of the use of such political tools by the leaders of the empire's ethnic elites.

Even on the eve of the empire's collapse, pan-Germanic circles in Austria were categorically opposed to its transformation into a federation. The *Neue Freie Presse,* which expressed their views, wrote a few days before the regime fell: "Germans in Austria will never permit the state to be pulled apart like an artichoke."[44]

The Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz wrote a century before its collapse that the Austro-Hungarian Empire had 34 million inhabitants, of which only 6 million were Germans who kept the remaining 28 million in subjugation. In 1830 the Austrian poet Franz Grillparzer noted that if the world were to confront unexpected trials, only Austria would fall into pieces as a result. The Austro-Hungarian elite understood the fragility of the empire and tried to protect it by engendering contradictions among the peoples it controlled, creating a situation in which the Hungarians hated the Czechs, the Czechs hated the Germans, and the Italians hated all of them. When collapse was inevitable, the mutual hostility made national problems in the successor states difficult to regulate.[45]

The attempts made by metropolis elites to make national identity the basis of statehood in multiethnic empires of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries actually radicalized anti-imperialist feelings among the national minorities. A leading Russian demographer, Professor Anatoly Vishnevsky, wrote:

> Ukrainian separatism in its argument with more moderate federalism had the same strong ally as the other separatists in the Russian empire—imperial

great-power centralism. Its harsh unitarist position, which permitted no deviation, constantly encouraged equally harsh demands from Ukrainian nationalists. Ukrainian nationalism objectively was incited by a sense of the subordinate position on the imperial economic and political stage of the new Ukrainian elite and generally of the stratum of the Ukrainian populace that had joined the movement. When Russian patriots, who recognized Ukrainians as part of the Russian people, refused to hear anything about the Ukrainian language, they were signing on to impose that disadvantaged and second-class position forever.[46]

One of the most important themes of Hungarian political propaganda in 1918 was the danger of losing privileged-nation status in Austria-Hungary. The main subject of Croatian propaganda was the unacceptability of Hungarian dominance and its territorial pretensions toward Croatia. For Austrian Germans the greatest problem at that time was the fate of the part of Czechoslovakia settled by Sudeten Germans, and for Czechoslovakia it was the preservation of territorial integrity.

These conflicts are hard to resolve rationally. From the point of view of reason it is difficult to explain which is more important—the preservation of Bohemia's integrity or the right of Sudeten Germans to join Germany. What should be done with Hungarian minorities in Yugoslavia and Romania? The occupation by Entente troops of the territories in question played an important part in the relatively peaceful resolution of these issues. But still there were armed conflicts. Things were much bloodier when other territorially integrated empires collapsed.

By 1870, on most of the territory of the future Bulgarian state, the Orthodox Bulgarians were almost outnumbered by Muslims, Turks, Bulgarian-speaking Pomaks, and the Crimean Tatars and Cherkessians who had moved there from Russia. Several million Turks from Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Trakia moved into Western Anatolia during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth. By 1888 the percentage of Muslims in Bulgaria had shrunk to approximately 25 percent, and by 1920 it was only 14 percent. Similar processes took place in 1912–24 in Macedonia and Western Trakia.[47]

The final dismantling of the Ottoman Empire came with its defeat in World War I. In January 1920, the leaders of the Turkish nationalists were forced to acknowledge the right to self-determination of the territories of the empire where the Arab population predominated. But they insisted on preserving the integrity of the Turkish metropolis. The Greco-Turkish War fol-

lowed the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. It resulted from disagreements over the borders of states forming in the post-imperial space. Victory in the war was a significant factor in the legitimization of the new Turkish state and made liquidation of the Muslim caliphate in 1924 relatively painless. However, even then, with the first attempts at democracy in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the legal opposition immediately exploited nostalgic feelings for the caliphate, Muslim values, and the lost empire.[48]

The imperial mission in Asia was a critical element in Russia's self-identification in the nineteenth century. Dostoevsky wrote: "In Europe we are spongers and slaves, but we will arrive in Asia as masters. In Europe we were Tatars, but in Asia we too are Europeans. Our mission as civilizers in Asia will entice our spirit and take us there, as soon as the movement starts. . . . A Russia would be created that would revive the old one and with time would resurrect and define its own paths."[49] But territorial expansion, the annexation of territories inhabited by peoples with fundamentally different traditions and languages, created risks at the first sign of a crisis in the regime.

The Civil War in Russia was not purely nationalistic; it had powerful ideological and social components. The question of land and *prodrazverstka,* the seizure of food from peasants for redistribution by the state, played no less a role than the nationality factor. Nevertheless, the nationality issue in Russian history from 1917 to 1921 must not be underestimated.[50]

Alain Besançon noted that the Russian Empire before World War I had a good chance of regulating social contradictions and problems of economic development, but it could not solve the nationalities question. This circumstance severely constrained the regime's evolution. The liberal, democratic, and modernizing alternative—the key to solving the issues of sociopolitical development—increased the probability of the empire's collapse.[51]

Russia is unique in restoring a failed empire, which it did in the period 1918–22. This required an unprecedented use of force and violence. But that was not the only factor in the Bolsheviks' success. Messianic Communist ideology shifted the center of political conflict from a confrontation between ethnic groups to a struggle among social classes. That struggle garnered support from people in the non-Russian regions, who fought for a new social order that would open the way to a brilliant future, and played a large role in forming the Soviet Union within borders resembling those of the Russian Empire. Russia succeeded owing to a unique combination of circumstances. No one else in the twentieth century managed to do it.

Austrian socialists, forced to adjust to the realities of political competition in a multiethnic empire, understood the potential of the national question for

destabilizing the regime and saw that the active exploitation of ethnic issues was a bomb that could destroy its foundations.[52] V. I. Lenin's thesis of the right to self-determination to the point of secession radicalized the logic of the Austrian social democrats, who had wanted to undermine the imperial regime in order to restructure it as a federation.

After World War I, the European establishment accepted the idea that nations had the right to self-determination, and the principle was incorporated into the Treaty of Versailles. It was a way of dismantling the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman Empires. The document's authors had clearly not considered the long-term consequences of the propaganda associated with its ideas for other European empires.

In October 1914, Lenin spoke in Zurich to a social democratic audience on "war and social democracy," comparing the situation of Ukrainians in Russia and in Austro-Hungary. He said, "Ukraine has become for Russia what Ireland was for England; it was ruthlessly exploited, getting nothing in return." Lenin felt that the interests of the Russian and international proletariat required Ukraine to win state independence.[53]

He did not reject the principle of self-determination with the right to secession even after seizing power, when much of what he had preached before the revolution (freedom of speech, convening a National Assembly) had been forgotten. Why this remained part of Lenin's political catechism is the subject of much debate and will probably never be resolved completely. Probably the key is that he always regarded events in Russia in the context of preparation for world socialist revolution and understood what a powerful means of destabilization radical nationalism could be.[54]

I have already spoken of the most important difference between the collapse of territorially integrated empires and overseas empires: in the latter, colonial settlers can return to the metropolis, and the ensuing problems can usually be solved in a civilized manner.

The situation was more complex in territorially integrated empires. There the people were not colonial settlers who moved to the overseas colonies a generation or two earlier, but people whose ancestors had lived in the same place, next to other ethnic groups, for centuries. These were millions of people who considered themselves to be at the least equal citizens of the country and occasionally even the privileged stratum. When an empire collapses, the representatives of the metropolis sometimes become the ethnic minority and are discriminated against. More than 3 million Hungarians found themselves to be a minority in neighboring successor states: 1.7 million in Transylvania, which had seceded from Romania; around 1 million in Slovakia and trans-

Carpathian Russia, which joined Czechoslovakia; and approximately half a million in Vojvodina, which joined Yugoslavia. Almost 5 million Germans went from being representatives of the ruling nation in the Austrian half of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy and a number of eastern regions of the German Empire to being the ethnic minority in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Italy.[55]

Questions inevitably arise: should it be possible for arbitrarily created borders of imperial regions to become the natural borders of new independent states? Should ethnic minorities have a say about where they live, as new states form after empires fall? The concept of self-determination has no answers for these questions. Understandably. It was created not to solve questions related to the fall of multiethnic empires but as a bomb to place beneath their foundations. Its creators were not particularly worried about what would happen once the socialist revolution came to pass. But these questions became real and often bloody.

The basis of the political ideology of movements for national independence and the destruction of empires is often hostility toward the formerly dominant ethnic group. That is not a political construction from which to expect political correctness toward the formerly privileged nation. This explains the support for radical nationalism among minorities, once representatives of the metropolis, in newly independent countries.

The Yugoslav Tragedy

In the late twentieth century, Yugoslavia became one of the states that illustrate the problems of dismantling a territorially integrated empire.[56] It fell apart almost simultaneously with the Soviet Union. What happened there is important for understanding the developments in the USSR in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Yugoslavia, naturally, was not a great power or empire in the classic sense of the word. But some features of the country's state structure, beginning with its creation in 1918, made it resemble an empire. Both under the Karageorgevic dynasty and under Communist rule, it was a state with an authoritarian regime composed of ethnically heterogeneous but territorially integrated parts.

The idea of creating Yugoslavia as a commonwealth of Southern Slavic nations was first discussed in the late 1830s and early 1840s.[57] After World War I, both the southern Slavic national leaders and the heads of Entente countries concluded that the way to guarantee stability in the Balkans and prevent local wars was to create a state based on the Serbian monarchy.[58] The fragile balance of the national interests of the peoples living in Yugoslavia was

destroyed in 1929 by political changes that limited the rights of non-Serbs and turned the country into a Serbian micro-empire.[59]

After World War II, Yugoslavia was reestablished. It had a relatively mild authoritarian Communist regime with an unusual construction. The Serbs were the largest ethnic group. The country's capital was also the Serbian capital. This led to the inevitable dominance of Serbs in the government and the army. For decades the head of the country was a Croatian who understood the need to struggle against Serbian nationalism in order to retain stability in a multiethnic country. He incorporated the struggle against Serbian nationalism into the constitution, appreciating that the preservation of the state's integrity depended on the reality of the federative structure.

Josip Tito's policy was directed at minimizing the risks of attempts to transform Yugoslavia into a Serbian empire. The authority and will of the leader who stood up to Hitler in 1941–45 and to Stalin in 1948–53 was needed to ensure this construction. S. L. Woodward, a perceptive scholar of the Yugoslavian crisis, wrote: "Yugoslav society was not held together by Tito's charisma, political dictatorship, or repression of national sentiments but by a complex balancing act at the international level and an extensive system of rights and of overlapping sovereignties. Far from being repressed, national identity and rights were institutionalized—by the federal system, which granted near statehood to the republics, and by the multiple rights of national self-determination for individuals."[60] This is true, but it is not all. This system could have worked only under strict control over any manifestation of political dissent. A crisis of legitimacy of the authoritarian regime would make the construction impossible.

As soon as the linchpin vanished—that is, the central authority's willingness to use whatever force was necessary to preserve power and the state's territorial integrity—Yugoslavia became ungovernable. The restraints that would have worked in a strong authoritarian regime, including the purely formal veto power of the republics and autonomous regions over decisions made by the federal government, never used under Tito, were unacceptable for running the country with a weakened government.

External problems added to the domestic ills. The most important element in Yugoslavia's stability after 1945 was the guarantee in the Yalta Agreement that it would not be under the control of either the Soviet Union or the West. Tito deftly used the advantages this conferred. After the reestablishment of relations between Moscow and Belgrade, which had been suspended during a conflict in the late 1940s and early 1950s, access to the Soviet and East European market and a clearing agreement with the Comecon countries helped boost the Yugoslav economy. At that time Yugoslavia was able to secure low-

interest loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. Yugoslavia's foreign policy is best described by the old Russian proverb: "A gentle calf can suckle two cows."

Beginning in the late 1940s, Yugoslavia's national defense was based on using the conflict between the two military and political blocs in Europe. The Yugoslav leadership understood that they would not win a war if attacked by NATO or Warsaw Pact forces. However, by organizing partisan resistance, they could create problems for the attacking side and use the support of the opposing bloc. This led to military training for reservists as part of the plan to have an armed populace as the basis of national defense, which played a big role in the development of the Yugoslav crisis.

In 1989, informed analysts regarded Yugoslavia as a socialist country with the highest level of readiness to create a full-fledged market economy. In 1949 the Yugoslav leadership began consulting the IMF and implemented reforms designed to shape a "socialist" market economy. In 1955 it opened its borders to foreign travel by its citizens and to relatively free foreign trade. By 1965 negotiations were completed for the conditions of Yugoslavia's membership in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The country had a cooperation agreement with the European Community and with the European Zone of Free Trade before other socialist states even began discussing the possibility of concluding such agreements.

Even after the difficult decade of 1979–89, Yugoslavia's high living standard, the people's ability to work abroad, and its cultural pluralism seemed to make it the obvious leader (among states that had gone through a period of socialist development) to join the club of wealthy European states. The collapse of the Soviet Empire in Eastern Europe, which began in 1989, meant a shakeup in its unique position in the balance of power in the Balkans. Added to this was the erosion of communism as the basis for a legitimate regime.

Mikhail Gorbachev's policies, the end of the Cold War, and the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and Comecon in the late 1980s changed Yugoslav foreign policy and the economic basis for Yugoslavia's existence. It lost its advantages as a state in a key region that was independent of both the Soviet Union and NATO. The collapse of the clearing trade within Comecon, into which it was integrated, was a blow to the Yugoslav economy. Another challenge was the loss of privileged-borrower status in international financial markets: it could no longer get inexpensive loans for political reasons. And domestic economic problems led to an economic crisis. Economic problems grew after the late 1970s. The rate of inflation increased and the rate of GDP growth fell (see table 1-1).

TABLE 1-1. GDP Growth Rate, Inflation, and Unemployment in
Yugoslavia, 1978–90
Percent

Year	GDP growth rate	Rate of inflation	Share of unemployed in the workforce
1978	9.0	14.1	12.0
1979	4.9	20.5	11.9
1980	2.3	30.3	11.9
1981	1.4	40.6	11.9
1982	0.5	31.8	12.4
1983	−1.4	40.8	12.8
1984	1.5	53.3	13.3
1985	1.0	73.5	13.8
1986	4.1	89.1	14.1
1987	1.9	120.3	13.6
1988	−1.8	194.6	14.1
1989	1.5	1,258.4	14.9
1990	…	580.6	16.4

Source: UN Statistics Division (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/cdb); B. R. Mitchell *International Historical Statistics. Europe 1750–1993* (London: Macmillan Reference, 1998).

It was becoming clear that the Yugoslav model of market socialism, based on labor self-management, did not work well in industrialized societies, and the well-known economic arguments against its viability reflected real problems in the Yugoslav economy.[61] Tito's death paralyzed the decisionmaking process related to taxes, the budget, and foreign trade. But the accumulated problems, including the growing foreign debt, demanded action from the federal authorities, who assumed the republics would agree to share the burden of adapting to worsening foreign economic conditions. But the republics could not agree on which belts to tighten or how much.

In 1989 the Ante Markovic government attempted to implement a package of economic reforms focused on an institutional transformation of the Yugoslav economy and on financial and monetary stabilization. An element of this program intended to integrate the Yugoslav market was the plan to repeal limitations on property rights for foreigners and on the right to repatriate income. On January 19, 1989, the premier introduced a bill in parliament that would liquidate the property rights system inherited from socialism. It did away with limits on the size of landholdings and their sale and expanded the rights of managers in hiring and firing workers. The Union of Communists of Yugoslavia lost the prerogative of approving the appointment of enter-

prise directors. The inflation rate, which in December 1989 was 50 percent a month, fell to almost zero by May 1990.[62]

The concentration of power on the federal level was a necessary prerequisite of this program. However, Tito's federal construction, which was intended to prevent Yugoslavia from turning into a Serbian empire, did not allow this to happen. The ability of the federal authorities to impose their decisions on the republics was minimized by the constitution.

Although intended to deal with the harsh economic reality and to save the country, the actions of the Markovic government led to the political crisis that brought about Yugoslavia's collapse. Two years later the country no longer existed. Its territory became a bloody battlefield of ethnic wars that took tens of thousands of lives and created millions of refugees. In the conflict between Serbia and Croatia, 20,000 people died, 200,000 became refugees, and 350,000 received displaced-person status. During the Bosnian war 70,000 died and 2 million became refugees or were resettled.[63]

The history of the 1990s Yugoslav crisis is well documented and is not the subject of this book.[64] I use it to demonstrate that in the collapse of an authoritarian regime in a multiethnic country, the topic of nationalism, both in the metropolis and in the parts of the federation that consider themselves oppressed, becomes predominant.

After the Balkan wars of 1912–13, there was an informal moral ban on discussing territorial claims. This taboo was violated only in the years preceding World War II. In an authoritarian regime, this ban was often strengthened by harsh political sanctions.[65] The liberalization of the regime and the democratic elections to the republican parliaments of 1990 made use of that weapon inevitable. It is too effective to ignore if one wants votes.

The Serbian leadership was the most important participant in the political process that exploited the ideas of radical nationalism. The Serbian Communist Party was led by Slobodan Milosevic: talented, charismatic, well educated, and with experience in market economics. Since Communist ideals no longer attracted voters, his only hope to retain control over the political situation in Serbia was to exploit the theme of Serbian nationalism, the oppressed situation of Serbs in Yugoslavia, and the problems of the Serbian minority in Kosovo, Bosnia, and Croatia.[66] It was not difficult then to garner political capital in Belgrade by talking about the artificiality of the republic's borders established by the Croatian Tito and the need to unite all Serbs in a single, territorially integrated state.

A draft document prepared by the Serbian Academy of Sciences in 1986 dwelled on the suppression of Serbs in Yugoslavia and set forth principles that

could be used by politicians in a multiethnic country undergoing a crisis in its authoritarian regime. Excerpts, under the title "The Situation of Serbia and the Serbian People," appeared in the Belgrade newspaper *Evening News* in September 1986. The article's authors noted even then that this was a collection of ideas that would lead to a "fratricidal war and new bloodshed."[67] Appeals to national grandeur and national oppression are fuel for an atomic bomb in the political process of a country where the old regime is fading but there is a developed system of democratic institutions.[68]

The problem of young democracies that arise in multiethnic countries is that the slogans that are easiest to sell to unsophisticated voters are dangerous if implemented. It was a losing position politically in Belgrade in the late 1980s not to agree that "Serbia must be great" and "that we will not permit Serbs to be beaten anywhere." It was easy to sell the idea on the political market that Serbia was and would be great and that the leadership would never allow Serbs to be hurt in the other republics and autonomous structures. If a Serbian leader did not fill that niche, some other politician would do so to serve his own interests. In May 1989 the Serbian parliament elected Milosevic president. A referendum in December of that year showed 86 percent of the voters supported him.[69]

It would not have been difficult to predict that politicians in Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Sarajevo would latch on to those slogans enthusiastically, merely substituting "Croat," "Slovene," and "Bosnian Muslim" for "Serb." The moment the Serbian leadership agreed to accept the program of exploiting Serbian nationalism as a political ideology, the fate of Yugoslavia was sealed. In making territorial claims on their neighbors, the Serbian leaders opened the way to victory by nationalist leaders in the other republics who used the fear of Serbian domination and territorial expansion. Wars with Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo were inevitable. A process was set in motion that would cost tens of thousands of lives and lead to the forced resettlement of millions of people.

Political agitation based on pitting against one another people who had once lived together within borders arbitrarily imposed by a nondemocratic regime was the prologue to a bloody conflict. Twenty-five percent of Serbs in Yugoslavia lived outside Serbia. The propaganda of Serbian greatness influenced the treatment of Serbs in the republics where they were the minority. The response to the rhetoric and territorial claims on Croatia was repression of the Serbs living in that republic. The response to the repression was military action by the Yugoslav National Army (most of the junior officers were Serbs) to protect the Serbian minority. After that came war.

The political processes involved in the disintegration of an authoritarian regime affected the quality of economic policy. The democratic elections that began in the 1990s in the republics gave rise to what Rudi Dornbusch and Sebastian Edwards called economic populism.[70] Rival parties competed to promise the voters the best economic future, leading to the erosion of federal control over the budget and monetary policy. The inflation that had been stopped by spring 1990 took off again that fall. Of course, in view of the growing political chaos, this was a secondary factor.

The dissolution of empires in the twentieth century is a component of the process of global change that is called modern economic growth. That does not make it any easier for people caught in the mill of history. Appealing to their emotions is a powerful political tool. Think of Stalin's address to his "brothers and sisters." Coming from a man who killed millions of his fellow citizens, the words were blasphemous. And yet it was an astute political move, just like exploiting the problems of Russians who found themselves beyond the borders of Russia or appealing to post-imperial consciousness.

Historians and writers who incite radical nationalism and hostility toward neighboring peoples and who rehash long-ago injuries must realize that they are setting the stage for ethnic cleansing and the suffering of millions. Unfortunately, people rarely learn from their own experiences and almost never from the experiences of others. But if we do not draw lessons from what happened to our country and to other twentieth-century empires, we may become a threat to the world. That is the worst thing that could happen to Russia.