goal that Albee failed to achieve in The Man Who Had Three Arms. It manages to justify the ways of "deviant" man to God. Racine did a similar thing in Phèdre when he set out to evoke sympathy, and generate pity and terror, out of a passionate woman's "criminal" love for her stepson. That Albee realizes this through the agency of a smoothly produced and sharply directed (by David Esbjornson) Broadway way comedy makes his achievement all the more impressive. The Goat is far from a great play. But it is a play that sneaks up on you, shakes you by the shoulders, and demands your reluctant respect.

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A tour through the wreckage of the Soviet empire.

Trashcanistan

By Stephen Kotkin

I

In Washington, the tenth anniversary of the Soviet collapse in December 1991 passed virtually unobserved. Once upon a time, like almost yesterday, Moscow served as the organizing framework of American foreign policy, and even of American domestic politics. Yet today's Russia has come to seem utterly peripheral—distracting for its nukes and poison gas, but supposedly ignorable, with a GDP (estimated at $350 billion) that is no more than the total fraud in the American health care system (and considerably less than the latest proposed Pentagon budget). True, the tragic rediscovery of the outside world by the accidental president—the media handle Bush's non-gravitas the way they handled Roosevelt's legs—induced the pundits to crow, again, about American "partnership" with Russia. But Washington under this administration hardly pays any mind to its formal allies. Partner with an ostensible basket case such as Russia, when NATO does not merit a single mention in the State of the Union address?

Yet consider that Washington has already fulfilled a long-held Kremlina fantasy of ejecting the Taliban and re-installing in Kabul the bulk of the Northern Alliance (whose multiple divisions manipulative neighbors find enticing). At a minimum, this turnout means a rise in obscenely profitable transit "taxes" on the shipment of opium and heroin across Russia. And there is more. The revived American pipe dream of developing and shipping Turkmenistan's gas across Afghanistan remains a non-starter—no more feasible now than under the Taliban; but the United States might well go after Saddam Hussein, and the sooner the superhawks topple him and re-open Iraq for outsiders (at zero cost to the Russians), the bigger will be the smiles of the cynically protesting Vladimir Putin and the independently powerful Russian energy lobby.

Russia's current trade with Saddam's regime is a pittance, stuck in the twilight zone of sanctions. But Kremlin vaults hold large contracts with Baghdad—they were inked in the late Soviet era—for the development of Iraqi oil reserves, not to mention promises for an $8 billion Iraqi debt to Moscow, all presumably valid under a successor regime, courtesy of the Americans. Back in Soviet times, apparatchiks used to joke when queried about American subversion: who needs the CIA to sabotage the Soviet economy when you have the State Planning Commission? Kremlin wags now have a new one: who needs the Russian FSB (the successor to the KGB) when you have Paul Wolfowitz?

Is this the new new world order? A unilateralist American administration fig-leaving itself with a simulated "coalition" against terrorism, and a shrewd Russian administration reaping the collateral benefits? Yes and no. Putin found common cause with the United States on terrorism, pointedly declaring his support for "the West," but he often means Europe and especially Germany (big-time consumers of Russian oil and gas), and his "Western" strategic orientation came without renunciation of Russian commercial interests in Iran (or China, India, and the Korean peninsula). Our pundits heard what they wanted to hear. They also remain masters of the sideshow—perhaps the silliest aspect of their interminable debate about NATO expansion is the idea that such expansion matters, either for Eastern European security or for U.S.-Russian relations, which will pivot (or not) on economics.

On that score, Putin and his circle are waiting for the American administration to live up to its free-market fundamentalism. Moscow expects that Russian companies will be permitted to sell their substantially less expensive military hardware to an eager South Korea and to new NATO members, sales that thus far have not exactly been encouraged by the Bushies. Moscow further hopes that the American government will award Russian companies windfall contracts in the chimerical pursuit of a missile shield. And the Putinies seek Chinese-style access to the American domestic market, and thus an end to tariffs and the White House's manipulation of anti-dumping laws that shield American businesses against Russian competition in steel and ship (fertilizer).

So far, though, nothing's doing. Putin and much of Russia's elite are all bienes: for them, national greatness derives not from territory and tanks but from GDP. But they face obstacles, albeit misunderstood ones. The mammoth Soviet-era defense and security complex inherited by Russia is still jammed full: the empire vanished, but every pre-1991 office is occupied by a general or an admiral busy subverting desperately needed military reforms even as he ruefully condemns the American seizure of the initiative in re-arranging the strategic map of Inner Asia. Putin has not pressed for what no Kremlin leader could readily pull off—a radical overhaul of the military and security apparatus; and so he watches it decay (which is one type of long-term "reform"), and promotes mediocrity and pits them against each other, while using their loud stomping of sour grapes to demonstrate his own "reasonableness." More troublesome is the contradiction that he and his impressive (by contrast) east of economic modernizers face between the need to promote political stability, for the sake of a predictable business climate and their own maintenance of power, and the need to deepen structural reforms against powerful interests, which can foil changes and provoke instability.

As for the Bushies, they know that Russia is an energy Goliath, with a transformed oil industry already capable of substituting for Saudi Arabia—on top of being the world's superstar for doomsday weapons. Yet White House politicians do not know how long they can or want to sustain the current global campaign in which
Russia has been acknowledged as (temporarily) useful. Such a moment of unrealized opportunities—with half the Kremlin begging for business and arms deals while the other half mourns imperial "loss," and with Washington stumbling in search of a "homeland" defense that is somehow not encompassed by "national" security—seems a fitting time to take inventory of the entire post-Soviet space. And so I invite readers to a tardy tenth-anniversary-of-the-collapse "package tour," a comprehensive circuit by means of selected books. What emerges from such a tour is the outline of a subtle strategic shift, thus far independent of American policies.

**I.**

**First, Some Preliminaries.** The Soviet Union was congenitally libidinal, plagued with divide-and-rule malignancies and guilty of crimes that few other states could rival; but the post-Soviet Union has been, for most ordinary people, one step forward and two steps back. The Soviet empire's crack-up was not an overseas decolonization. Seventy million people (one in four) resided outside their national "homeland," if they had one at all; and countless families woke up to find that their relatives, and sometimes their own children, lived not some distance away but abroad, making separation permanent unless one pulled off a tricky apartment barter with others who were similarly blindsided, or gave up everything to start over as an immigrant.

Economic interdependence meant that even potentially profitable enterprises nose-dived when they were suddenly cut off from suppliers and customers in what became foreign countries, with different currencies and convoluted rules, or non-rules, for foreign exchange. Politically, independence has often resulted in still more arbitrary rule. When the Soviet Union was dissolved, it was replaced by ... the Soviet Union, only with more border guards, more customs posts, more "tax" collectors, more state "inspectors"—in short, more greasy palms outstretched. Estonia stands out as the great bright spot (approaching the level of Slovenia, the star in East-Central Europe). But elsewhere around the former Soviet Union, we see a dreadful checkerboard of parasitic states and statelets, government-led extortion racket and gangs in power, mass refugee camps, and shadow economies. Welcome to Transcaucasia.

Let us be clear. Readers should look elsewhere for yet another wrongheaded slam of the market. What brought about today's widespread poverty was not "reform," but the near complete absence of the neo-liberal reforms, and behind that the long-drawn-out planned economy, which in addition to a non-market incentive structure and corruption produced powerful social constituencies and other facts on the ground that were utterly inimical to reform. But another cause of the ongoing misery, I think, is the idolatry of "national" self-determination—usually attributed to Wilson, but equally attributable to Lenin—which continues to wreak havoc across the globe, as it did throughout the Cold War. Although each case for a nation-state may appear just, and although those who have already achieved statehood may seem in no position to deny the same to others, "national" self-determination is too often a recipe for Trashcanstafor systemic malfeance and economic involution, with convenient cover for the worst political scoundrels and their legions of apologists ("Sure it is a criminal regime, but it is our criminal regime"). By contrast, self-government within an existing entity—or, better yet, an enlarged entity—where citizenship trumps ethnicity constitutes an altogether different proposition, especially when borders are open and markets are greatly broadened. What the European Union has been struggling mightily to transcend, the newly independent states of the dismembered Soviet Union have inflicted upon themselves.

The ironies here are exceptionally rich, for among the many causes of the Soviet state's demise, the most widely cited—I mean nationalism—was one of the least salient. If deep-seated nationalism brought down the multinational Soviet Union, as the analytical herd asserts, then what accounts for the profound post-1991 weakness of the nations and the nationalisms in almost all the successor states? A part of the answer is that they, too, are multinational. And equally important, of course, was the circumstance that when the Communist Party, which alone held the federal union together, underwent "reform" and disintegrated, the Soviet Union's internal Leninist nation-states became perfect vehicles for elite self-preservation and self-aggrandizement.

Consider further that despite the analysts' long-standing repudiation of the existence of a "Soviet nation," something funny confronts a traveler crisscrossing the former empire today: he encounters Sovietness at almost every turn. (Analysts had scoffed at the notion of a genuine East German identity, too, until post-reunification showed otherwise.) What should have been apparent from the Russian-speaking Jews who left the Soviet Union for Brighton Beach—transporting and freezing a 1970s moment of Soviet culture—is no less clear from today's Russian-speaking populations in most of the newly independent states, as well as the self-declared additional Trashcanstans within them: the various post-Soviet nations emerged deeply Soviet.

**II.**

**Martha Brill Olcott’s important book on the new Central Asian states covers a vast amount of ground, most of it barren. It remains the best succinct overview of the "stans," focusing on foreign policies and showing that independence arrived like a natural disaster. "Up until the last minute," Olcott writes of the twist of 1991, Central Asian elites pursued greater power but not responsibility, and "were willing to compromise continually with Moscow" to salvage the Union. When they were "effectively chucked out of the USSR," these newly independent states found themselves, like most of their brethren, with provincial elites, few of whom had ever been abroad. Key KGB
records were in Moscow, Olcott further explains, leaving Central Asian states no way to check who among them was, or is, a spy. (One deputy prime minister for newly independent Kazakhstan served a year in that post, resigned on a Friday, and on Monday surfaced in Moscow as a deputy prime minister for Russia.)

Amid such uncertainty, Central Asia's native elites quickly rediscovered a very Soviet appreciation for plebiscite dictatorship and plunderable state-controlled economies. Their repression and their looting failed to impress most foreign analysts, who continued to cheer on nonexistent "democratization" and market "reforms." In fact, only tiny, rural Kyrgyzstan implemented liberalization; but that remote country found its textbook policies trumped by a poor institutional inheritance and a worse neighborhood. Liberalization dangerously reduced Kyrgyzstan's state capacity, rendering the authorities unable to interdict armed Islamists (incubated by the Americans, the Saudis, and the Pakistanis in Afghan-

Geopolitically, most outsiders and even many insiders initially assumed that Central Asia's dual Turkic and Persian heritage, and its proximity to East Asia, would bring about a shift; and indeed formal separation from Russia did attract other meddling foreigners, sometimes government representatives, often just freelance adventurers. But as Olcott explains, "fifty years of [czarist] Russian rule, followed by seventy years of Soviet domination, decisively isolated the Central Asians from Turkey and Persia." Turks and Iranians seeking to "build a bridge" to the region gave up, finding local business practices too corrupt. A Korean conglomerate built a major auto plant, but China became the biggest of the new trading partners, even though fears of Chinese "imperialism" have kept Central Asians wary. Attempts by the "stans" to play an "Islamic card" came up blank: seven decades of Soviet rule went a long way toward extirpating religious Islam among the masses, and Saudi Arabia showed little interest in having its pockets picked by Sovietized secular elites who did not want mass re-Islamification.

Who then? Russia! The devil-we-know re-emerged as the region's key economic partner and, in Olcott's words, "the only predictable ally," vital for regional security. The "common heritage" with Russia proved to be not only the most recent layer of the region's experience, but also the strongest. When different Central Asians gather, Russian is the language that they speak, and Soviet officers of Slavic descent still occupy many command positions in the "national" armies. Even the telephone system used by Central Asian governments remains the Soviet one. Olcott further demonstrates that regional energy resources cannot be developed without cooperation from Moscow and the big private Russian companies (which in turn rely for technical assistance on the big Western firms).

Regional worries over the narrow pockets of underground Islamism—here is where Saudi money did turn up—has ensured Russia a further foothold, but readers poised for a warning about Russian neo-expansionism are in for a surprise. Olcott does see an expansionist threat, but from Uzbekistan, the most populous "stan" (with 25 million people, most of them young), which has co-nationals and covets territory in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan. Uzbekistan's leadership, she argues, has defined the "Islamist threat"—which had emanated from Afghanistan but is rooted in local injustice and repression—very broadly as a rationale for authoritarianism and "defensive" expansionism. (The principle of maintaining current borders, however artificial, is a must for the entire former Soviet space.)
Elsewhere Olcott has written that radical Islam will persist even though the bases in Afghanistan have been uprooted, because recruitment for the Islamist movement is guaranteed by Uzbekistan's refusal to countenance any organized Muslim piety (and thereby be in a position to regulate its finances). Although estimates of Uzbekistan's political prisoners generally exceed the number of radical Islamists by ten to one, Olcott notes that there are fewer and fewer "moderate" mullahs. And when Uzbekistan's secular Soviet-era generation of police and security forces retires, it remains to be seen what the mentality of their new-generation replacements will be. Thus, Uzbekistan's perversely promotion of Islamism by means of persecution poses a threat not only to its own people but also to the entire region. In the meantime, the basing of a small contingent of American forces has been perceived by the Uzbek regime—which resembles the Soviet-style Afghan regime that the United States helped to overthrow—as a unique opportunity to modernize its military quickly and at someone else's expense.

With a wary eye on Uzbekistan, Olcott argues, tiny Kyrgyzstan and gigantic Kazakhstan have sought to stabilize relations with Russia, which for its part prefers to reap regional resources without again being burdened with responsibility for local government and social welfare. "In many ways," Olcott concludes, "Moscow's new rulers treat the Central Asians more harshly than did Soviet rulers of the recent past." Instead of subsidies or set-asides for Central Asians in Russian universities, the locals get hard-currency bills and periodic reminders of who wields the strategic leverage. Most Central Asian states have "coordinated" their foreign policies as well as their militaries with Moscow, while struggling to extract benefits in exchange.

Future Central Asian elites are likely to be less Russified, Olcott points out, but they will still be neighbors of Russia, and the United States cannot do much about that—a conclusion that she reached before September 11. Yet if, as seems evident, the Americans do not intend to take the place of the approximately twenty thousand Russian Federation soldiers (mostly ethnic Tajiks, by the way) who are guarding Tajikistan's rugged borders and enforcing a delicate peace among warlords, or of Russia's Slavic troops guarding Turkmenistan's borders, and if—as seems probable—the Central Asians will continue to distrust each other, then any American role is likely to be complementary to Russia's role, despite the zero-sum hysterics. That goes doubly for the development of Caspian oil and gas, however much ultimately proves recoverable (think something closer to the North Sea than the Persian Gulf). So this is point number one: Russia remains, and will remain, a major presence in Central Asia—and indeed, as we shall see, throughout the former Soviet lands.

III.

TALK OF RUSSIA'S southern reach and of an Islamist threat invariably touches upon the Caucasus. Yo'av Karmy's highly original book is the most engaging of all the works under review in this essay. It is also the saddest. Karmy spends the bulk of his time in the southern mountains of the Russian Federation, in the North Caucasus. "This is a book about the spirit of mountain dwellers," he romantically suggests, but really it proves to be about their squalor. He calls the highlanders "unyielding practitioners of liberty," but most of his stories revolve around aggressive ignorance, a persecution complex, maliciously manipulated "memory," hostage-taking, smuggling, and the "tradition" of inter-generational blood retribution. In 1918, during the chaos of the Russian empire's collapse, some idealists formed the Mountainous Republic of the Caucasus, uniting people on the basis not of religion or ethnicity but habitat and way of life; but this fledgling republic, which sent a "delegation" to the Paris Peace Conference, quickly collapsed. In 1990, as Karmy writes, efforts to try to resurrect it "went nowhere." He tries to offer hope, suggesting that "some form of regional unity may yet be the destiny of the Caucasus." Alas, the book offers evidence to the contrary.

In some ways Karmy has written another account of the Chechens, whose "tale," he notes, "more than any other, inspired me to write this book." An accomplished Israeli journalist sensitive to tendentious portrayals of Muslims, and a person who sympathizes with the peoples whose plight he comes to know, Karmy agonizes a good deal, writing that the Chechen war "has taken so many ugly, bloody, and cruel turns as to exasperate even the most devoted friends of the Chechen cause," but also that "the astonishing courage and audacity that this small nation displayed, and the improbable, unprecedented victory that they scored in 1996, have left me in awe time and again."

He never directly addresses the question of why Moscow feels compelled to uphold its right under international law to defend its sovereign territory—in a criminally veneful and self-defeating way—but he answers the question anyway, quoting the first Chechen president, Jokar Dudayev:

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I need this situation [the war] more than Russia does.... What would I do if the Russians suddenly pulled out? I've got 300,000 men, aged 17 to 50, homeless, jobless, embittered and with nothing to do. All they can do is fight. I need a little war and an enemy to send them to battle against.

Chechen warlords, who issue their official documents in Soviet-inflected Russian, get their weapons mostly from the Russian army—pervasive sales stemming from the destitution of Russia's conscripts as well as from the corruption of Russia's higher command.

Regarding the truce and the three years of de facto independence between 1996 and 1999 that brought additional misery to Chechen civilians (as well as to international aid workers), Karny retells the old saw of the “good” revolution “hijacked” by outside agitators—in this case, Arab militants (financed by Saudi money), whom he also blames for a return to war. In fact, a handful of militants did take advantage of Chechnya’s anarchy, but political gangsterism was widespread well before 1996, and it was a status-cringing Chechen warlord who, in the summer of 1999, did precisely what Dudaev and others had long vowed to do: press forward into Russia and ignite a wider war. This they got, along with further pointless death, refugees, and Russian atrocities. Deciding that the Chechens “need some constructive criticism of their own flaws,” Karny blusters out to one of them: “For two centuries you have been dying and dying and dying. Hasn’t the time come to start living?”

So this is point number two: armed “struggles” for “national liberation” can be seductive, but they turn out to be vastly less charming on firsthand inspection, and even when they are “victorious” they fail miserably.


Having written, partly against his own inclinations, perhaps the most devastating portrait of the Chechen “cause”—complementing the more numerous deserved indictments of Russian responsibility and conduct—Karny pushes onward to some of the least visited parts of the Caucasus. He relates stories of the “Circassians,” a much spread out, su-divided, linguistically related group of peoples who are “united,” as it were, in his empathetic travels. The vignettes, mixed with historical background, are deeply humanizing.

Yet the many peoples whom Karny classifies as Circassians cannot communicate with each other except in Russian, and they speak with nostalgia for the Soviet Union. Karny, by contrast, declares that “there is no single group in the Caucasus that does not deserve its place in the sun.” Here we have the archetypal Trashtakistan logic, and a formula for ceaseless manipulative warfare in a region rendered extremely diverse precisely by the highlands, which impeded the sausage-making of national “simplification,” and by the Soviet political reification of nationality.

Visiting Kabardino-Balkaria, an “autonomous” republic inside Russia—which he aptly describes as “the same backwater satrapy that its Soviet predecessor was”—Karny reports that some Balkars want to secede. “An outsider could be forgiven for thinking that the Caucasus has gone out of its mind,” he admits. “One might wonder: Who needs a Balkar republic on top of this ethnic mélange? Well, the Balkars may need one.” Oh, really? Which Balkars, exactly? The ordinary people? And what kind of “republic” might they get? A Balkar republic was indeed proclaimed, but it was forgotten. So here is point number three: attaining “nation-statehood” can be among the foremost obstacles to a people’s exercise of genuine self-determination and to its economic well-being. Self-determination needs to be reconceived in terms of effective self-government.

Guseln Abuyev, a Russified Lak in Dagestan, tells Karny that whereas bright students of the North Caucasus used to gain admission to the top universities in Moscow and St. Petersburg, lately many locals have been studying, if at all, at religious schools in Pakistan. Islamist schools have also cropped up locally, but Karny seems not to have visited institutions of higher learning. Nor did he make it to independent Georgia. A once relatively prosperous Soviet republic comprising dozzes of (mostly assimilated) nationalities, Georgia is now bankrupted and de facto sunned by provoked and unresolved armed conflicts in North Ossetia and Abkhazia (where Chechen fighters first cut their teeth as mercenaries), while its ancient capital of Tbilisi is overrun by war refugees, poemarked from gangland violence among state ministers, and lacking electricity—for ten years now!—save for a few hours a day.

Karny did make it to still more catastrophic Armenia, where he found that the “victory” by Karabakh—a primarily Armenian enclave of one hundred fifty thousand that defeated Azerbaijan in war and then separated from it—has led not to Armenia’s annexation of Karabakh but to Karabakh’s annexation of Armenia, in the form of militarized paranoid politics. Faced with rigged “elections,” assassinations on the floor of the parliament, and almost no economy whatsoever (besides questionable American aid), eight hundred thousand Armenians (out of fewer than four million) have voted with their feet, emigrating to Russia and the United States. As for Azerbaijan, which Karny also briefly visited, he writes that it could one day become a Kuwait on the Caspian. Maybe at least partially: perched astride exaggerated reserves of oil and gas, Azerbaijan is beset by partition and nearly one million war-displaced homeless, but it also has in its president, the former Soviet Politburo member Heydar Aliev, and in his son Ilham, the makings of a would-be dynastic tyranny.

ON TO MOLDOVA. It is a small place, just one-third the size of Indiana, but it tells a very big story. Its sudden independence, like Central Asia’s, resulted from forces beyond its control; but unlike Central Asia, Moldova enjoys the advantage of being located in Europe. And yet this pauperized, criminalized republic’s prospects for integration into the European Union are nil—and the likelihood of its achieving its own integrity is not much greater.

Following a brief civil war in the early 1990s, an internationally unrecognized statelet broke away from the republic. Thus, during the short car ride from Ukraine to Romania, a traveler crossing Moldova first encounters “Transnistria,” where it is necessary to pay “state” customs duty, ecological “tax,” international auto “insurance,” and personal “insurance,” the coverage that one already possesses notwithstanding. Then one encounters a “blue-helmeted” DMZ (manned by Russian Federation troops) and finally enters Moldova proper, where it becomes necessary again to pay for environmental “protection” and “insurance.”

Choked by official mouthes to feed, Moldova lacks the wherewithal to do so. A decade after independence, its GDP stands at one-third of its 1989 level, the worst drop-off among former Soviet republics. (The dismal average hovers around one-half.) Its forests have been reduced to stumpy meadows by desperate hacking for winter fuel. Its people, too, are gone. The size of its population, 4.3 million at the last census in 1989, is currently unknown, because upwards of seven hundred fifty thousand people, fully one-third of the able-bodied workforce, have fled, illegally taking up residence in Portugal, Italy, Greece, and especially Romania and Russia, for jobs, education, and often just food.

Moldova used to supply the Soviet Union with bountiful farm products and wines. But after independence it became
the European Union's top foreign supplier of low-priced female bodies, particularly underage girls, despite stiff competition from other post-Communist exporters. In short, Moldova is quintessential Trashcanistan. How it came to be so forms the subject of Charles King's splendid book The Moldovans, which draws on research in half a dozen languages.

Like the man-made disasters of Abkhazia, Karabakh, and Chechnya, Transnistria derives from both Soviet colonial malignancies and post-Soviet criminality. The Soviet Moldovan republic had been formed from historic Bessarabia—which was dominated by speakers of Romanian but belonged to Russia (under czar and commissar)—and from a small chunk of Ukraine across the Dniester River. Political power in the republic fell to the latter, the tiny, heavily industrialized region east of the river, whose elites were Russian-speaking. Speakers of Romanian (that is, Moldovan), sixty percent of the republic's total population and overwhelmingly rural, chafed, until the advent of Gorbachev.

With glasnost, King shows, the same intellectuals who in the 1960s and 1970s had toed Moscow's line against Bucharest, denying Moldova's affinities with Romania, suddenly became zealous pan-Romanians. Not only were these people entranced by the possibility of a powerful Greater Romania, but only Moldovan-speakers (among Moldovans) could be "true" Romanians. What is politics if not vision? Is the construction of..." are chocking university libraries, but in The Moldovans King has spotlighted one of the numerous national constructions that failed. According to prevailing theories, Moldova should have been a textbook case for national formation. King rightly notes that all nations are fundamentally artificial. Eighty years ago in these lands, a largely illiterate peasant population stood primed to be "Moldovanized" by the introduction of universal education, conscription, and other familiar aspects of state-sponsored nation-building projects. But even now Moldova is not close to becoming an ethnic nation, let alone a civic one.

Today's Moldovan-speakers resolutely do not consider themselves Romanians (the sentiment is mutual). In fact, post-Soviet Moldovan-speakers, who have a very high level of bilingualism in Russian, a high degree of inter-ethnic tolerance.
From foreign policy to feminism, the essays range across deep anxieties about Ukrainian "national" identity. Ilya Prizel, in a lament born of crushed naïveté, sets the book's tone, writing that "the independence of Ukraine was a conservative rather than a revolutionary move ... an effort to preserve the existing order," which proved successful, even though elites embraced the cause of independence only in 1990, or for some in 1991. Evhen Holovakha, characterizing Ukraine as "a post-Communist hybrid" that preserved all but the ideology, risks offending Ukrainian sensibilities by aptly comparing the country to Belarus, a ten-million-person "collective farm" run by a former collective-farm chairman, President Alexander Lukashenko. Volodymyr Zvigiya-nich, writing of Ukraine's "as if" democracy and "as if" market, points out that "a remarkable paradox emerges: the lower the level of market value of the enterprises, the wealthier the bureaucracy becomes," and concludes presciently that "such a system could exist for an unlimited time."

Since these essays were written, economic, financial, and legal reforms have continued to be announced and have continued not to take place. President Leonid Kuchma, re-elected in 1999 by intimidation and fraud, failed to show Ukraine in the direction of "super-presidentialism"; Ukraine's parliament still wields greater power than Russia's Duma. But Kuchma and Co. managed to outdo their counterparts in Moldova by establishing (without tank fire) their own undeclared Transnistria right inside the executive branch of the Ukrainian state. It comprises an apparent dirty-tricks squad (the "Eagles") in the Interior Ministry, the central tax inspectorate, the national election commission, fixer "consultants" (some hired from Russia), the successor agency to the KGB, the procurator general's office, and the Central Committee-like presidential administration.

This machinery—beyond a mafia don's wildest dream—embezzles colossal sums of money that it launders abroad, manipulates voting outcomes, forcibly expropriates businesses, destroys even the pathetically semi-independent media, methodically blackmails and frames critics or rivals, covers up the criminal acts committed by itself and those whom it favors—and, if already partially corroded secret tapes (made and smuggled out by a former top-level security officer) are to be credited, engages in the decapitation of its enemies. Ousting Kuchma alone may not solve much. Far from being a one-man operation, the gangsterization of the Ukrainian executive has been broad-based, and it follows a very lengthy run of rampant malfeasance, from capital to regions. (George Soros has remarked that Ukraine gives corruption a bad name.)

Like Moldova, Ukraine is a Soviet-era confection. Not only were its national identity and its statehood consolidated within the Soviet Union, but Ukraine exists in the expansive form in which it does today only thanks to Stalin's unilateral annexation of eastern Poland, which became western Ukraine—a turnabout that Ukrainians call "unification." (Another chunk of territory was bitten off from Slovakia.) Further wartime and postwar events included the expulsion of Poles and the extermination of Jews. To the south, Crimea (formerly Tatar and later Russian) was capriciously transferred from the Russian republic to Ukraine in 1954, to commemorate the three hundredth anniversary of the Ukrainian-Russian "union" (which most Ukrainophone nationalists refuse to acknowledge, though their protest falls short of offering to return the commemorative gift).

As a result of immigration, too, Ukraine, like Moldova, contains citizens who mostly do not speak the "state" language, including nine to ten million Russians massed in industrial eastern Ukraine as well as in Crimea (where they form a majority). But just as in Moldova, today's Ukrainians, most of whom were born in Ukrainian territory, do not identify with the Russian Federation; they are products of a Soviet educational curriculum, Soviet military service, and an imperial Russian-language media (still largely intact). Even more than in Moldova, the "titular nation" in Ukraine has been Russified—to the point that, as Victor Basiuk notes, half or more of the ethnically Ukrainian population speaks Russian at home.

In fact, most ethnic Ukrainians, whether or not they speak much Ukrainian, are indistinguishable from Russians. Many ethnic Russians have re-registered as "Ukrainians" without knowledge of the language. Other ethnic Russians have been recategorized as "Russian-speakers," as have other Soviet nationalities living in Ukraine—Moldovans, or Armenians, or Tatars, or those of mixed parentage. Ukrainian electoral politics are less ethnic than regional. So this is point number six: wrapping an executive-branch syndicate in the "legitimacy" of the nation may be the essence of Trashistan, but national or ethnic distinctions do not carry the mass political weight that is regularly attributed to them.

Emphasizing the "vast ethnic tolerance" of ordinary people—surely the upside of the contradictory Soviet imperial legacy—Gregory Nemtsova observes that "Ukraine's regional diversity is ultimately a source of..."
strength.” A refreshing perspective, but can it be made tangible? Ukraine’s ballyhooed strategy for “demonstrating” independence, a foreign policy of “opting for Europe,” remains devoid of substance—other than the self-delusion that Ukraine is “indispensable” as a “counterweight” to Russia, which the Europeans do not believe and are sick of hearing as the response to inquiries about still-nonexistent structural reforms. Western Ukraine, once a multinational, cosmopolitan province of the Hapsburgs and then of Poland, is now a self-enclosed, chauvinistic backwater, isolated even from Kiev, let alone from its Western neighbors.

Paul Goble observes that “many Ukrainian industries can function if and only if they receive supplies and raw materials from the Russian Federation. Everyone recognizes this unhappy fact.” But other essays indulge the paranoid charges of Russian “subversion” that are characteristic of Ukrainian apologists. If Russia “demands” that Ukraine pay for billions of dollars’ worth of oil and gas supplies, this is “blackmail” endangering Ukraine’s sovereignty—never mind that in 1997 Moscow signed a comprehensive treaty with Kiev recognizing current borders, and that it is Ukrainian elites who are looting the public purse and rendering the state incapable of paying its bills. (Ukraine has also owed Turkmenistan more than $1 billion for gas.) While the Russian government relinquished challenges to Ukrainian sovereignty, thereby removing Ukraine as a hindrance in Russian relations with Europe, both private and state-owned Russian businesses have vigorously pursued extensive economic re-integration with Ukraine from a position of advantage. It is a classic postcolonial pattern.

To be sure, there is a threat to the undesirable subversion of Ukraine: the one posed by the maleficiousness of its own “leaders.” According to polls, a majority of Ukrainians have turned against independence. Even though the Ukrainian economy is far larger than official statistics indicate—much of the economy is underground—new flags, new street names, and new national textbooks have not resulted in investment in infrastructure, informative media, the rule of law, or a political system that inspires anything but shame. Young Ukrainians are decidedly Western in orientation, but when traveling east they discover Moscow to be more “Western” and wealthier than Kiev. Meanwhile, intellectuals’ tormented search for a “national” identity works against policies that could take better advantage of Ukraine’s diverse makeup and crossroads location, as well as the attainment of self-government worth having. Ukraine has gotten its state and is eating it, too.

**VI.**

**Tiny Estonia commends itself as the grand exception. It underwent successful shock therapy (rapid institutionalization of the market), leading analysts to trumpet this republic of 1.4 million people as proof of shock therapy’s transcendent rightfulness. Of course, several countries decreed shock therapy, such as Moldova, though only a few tried to implement it, such as Kyrgyzstan; but they failed hideously. Thus, the deeper question is how Estonia proved able to achieve not just basic measures such as liberalizing trade, eliminating subsidies, and making the new currency convertible and stable (with a currency board), but also guaranteeing property rights, establishing reliable credit systems, and attracting direct foreign investment (rather than just “aid”).**

It is highly telling that Estonia got the politics right, too. Rather than the usual post-Soviet autocratic and ineffectual “presidential” system, Estonia emerged with a strong parliament and a weak presidency, and with governments based on elected legislative majorities rather than on presidential whim. Also, Soviet-era cadres did not come to dominate independent Estonia’s elite. New people, particularly of the younger generation, gained prominent places in public life. In short, a miracle.

How do we explain it? Return to the Western World: Cultural and Political Perspectives on the Estonian Post-Communist Transition contains superbly researched interdisciplinary essays, but it might be more valuable for propagating myths that contributed to Estonia’s success. Several of the authors write poetically of the country’s triumphal “return to Europe.” The book itself is the culmination of a joint Swedish-Estonian project launched in the early 1990s, and is published by Estonia’s Swedish-founded Tartu University, renewing ties that had been blocked by Communist restrictions. It is co-edited by Marju Lauristin, a new-era Estonian political figure. In one of her contributions, she enlists Samuel Huntington’s “theory” of the clash of civilizations to avow that “Western-Christian” Estonia lies across a civilization divide from Byzantine Russia, adding poignancy to the vision of a “return” to the West. Crowning the mythmaking, Lauristin credits herself and comrades with bringing down the Soviet Union.

The book is no less remarkable, however, for contradicting all of these myths. Peter Vihiielem recalls how the lands of today’s Estonia successively endured the harsh boot of German occupation (1227-1561) and Swedish occupation (1561-1710) well before they fell beneath imperial Russian domination (1710-1918). Helmut Piirimae explains that in the sixteenth-century bloodbath leading to Estonia’s forced incorporation into Sweden, “about half or even more of the population of Estonia . . . perished.” Swedes then expropriated the nobles’ mansions and ensorcel the local peasantry, and famine and further war followed. When czarist Russia lost its grip on Estonia in the disintegrating dénouement of World War I, the fledgling state sent emissaries to Sweden to beg for recognition, and the Swedes refused it.

Historically speaking, then, the Estonian exit from the Soviet orbit is not a “return” to the West—unless one overlooks the fact that Estonia had been a subjugated pawn of the West. As for the great civilizational divide, two Swedish scholars, Karl Erik Rosengren and Lennart Weibull, report greater differences in value systems between today’s Estonians and the “Western-Christian” Latvians or Lithuanians than between Estonians and “Eastern Orthodox” Russians living in Estonia.

Equally dubious is the assertion that Estonia toppled the Soviet behemoth. Prior to Gorbachev, Lauristin herself writes, the republic had “no strongly political opposition worth mentioning,” while “the number of political dissidents . . . was small and their activities had no extensive social response.” As the daughter of a leading Estonian Communist—who died in 1941 fleeing the Nazi occupation, which was far less oppressive here than elsewhere—Lauristin neglects to add that all the perestroika-era Popular Fronts (officially “popular fronts for the support of perestroika”) were created with assistance from the Communist Party and the KGB to outflank local hard-liner resistance to the Moscow-instigated reforms. Anyway, it was not the street demonstrations in Estonia—which was fully occupied by loyal Soviet troops—but Yeltsin and the Russian republic’s shattering 1990 sovereignty drive against the Kremlin, and Gorbachev’s momentous decision to let Eastern Europe go, that opened the way to Estonian independence.

And yet Estonia’s mythification of its independence movement has carried enormous political weight, rather like de Gaulle’s grand invention that the French resisted the Nazis and then liberated themselves. Similarly, the idea of Estonia having had a place in the West that it has now regained has served as a very effective strategy for national consolidation, while the malarkey about civilizational divide has provided additional reinforcement. Finally, one must include the fable of Estonia’s “return” to its independent interwar “democratic” republic. Vihiielem, underscoring interwar Estonia’s
authoritarianism, observes that in the 1990s the old constitution was rejected as an unsuitable model.

No matter. The myth of reconnecting to an earlier democratic republic also partly explains the willingness of Estonians to endure the terrible sacrifices of real reform. Neither Lauristin nor her co-authors say as much. Quite the contrary: they present these myths as straightforward history. “To forget and—I will venture to say—to get one’s history wrong,” Renan once wrote, “are essential factors in the making of a nation.” So here is point number seven: all national myths are “false,” but what really matters is whether they are benign or malignant, and effective or ineffective; and exceptional cases such as Estonia (mostly effective and mostly benign) mislead us to see legitimacy in any nation-state or national movement.

Yet potent myths, despite their importance, cannot alone account for Estonia’s trajectory. Other material presented non-systematically in this volume, when combined with the work of R.A. Panagiotou, deepens the explanatory picture. Soviet-era Estonia enjoyed unobstructed Finnish (that is, Western) television from the 1960s onward—almost two decades before glasnost. Partly as a result, increasing numbers of Estonians reported Finnish as their second language, while the country’s relatively low level of Russian-language competency declined further. (Levels of Russian among neighboring Soviet republics increased over the same period.)

Equally significant, there was far less Soviet-era investment in industry. This might have looked like a disadvantage at the time, but it meant that independent Estonia emerged with far fewer white-elephant factories, and also with vastly less of the social constituency rooted in planned-economy structures and hostile to the market reforms that never happened in, say, Ukraine. Estonia also benefited from being an experimental laboratory for many of the Soviet-era reforms that became Union-wide during perestroika, and as a result it got more quickly beyond the dead-end “reform” of planning to its complete elimination.

After 1991, Estonia capitalized on its Finnish connections to re-orient its trade very rapidly toward the West and thus to firms operating according to market incentives. Tallinn, Estonia’s capital, which contains one-third of the country’s population, is on its way to becoming the southern outskirts of Helsinki across the water. Estonia even has its own oil shale, so it is less dependent on Russia for energy. In sum, the republic bootstrapped itself westward thanks to its cultural affinities with and enormous help from Finland, a process in which Moscow was both inadvertently and deliberately complicit. So here is point number eight: the path that a republic traced after 1991 was to a great extent the path that it had been on before the unforeseen advent of independence.

Estonia’s painful initial push toward the market and parliamentary politics, begun before 1991, was crucially assisted by Finland, but it still might have unraveled. Yet the lure of EU accession, which mandates institutional “harmonization,” provided strong additional impetus for continued far-reaching structural change and endurance of hardship. In 1999, the European Union advanced Estonia to the front of the accession line, calling it a “shining star” and the only “functioning market economy” in the Baltics.

Still, Estonians will tell you that they are not a Baltic country, but a Scandinavian country, and that they are right. Lithuania and Latvia had the same Western-Christian traditions, the same living memories of an independent interwar republic, and the same truncated Soviet history. They also made the same declarations about a “return” to the West and the advisability of shock therapy, and they, too, have had the lure of joining the EU. But Lithuania and especially Latvia are mired in mostly playacting reform. What they lack is Estonia’s very different Brezhnev-era history—its relative lack of Sovietness and its closeness to an interested partner (such as Finland). These were the historical conditions that gave force to the myths about a return to Western civilization. So point number nine: if you strive to become institutionally like (and to join) Europe, it pays to be smack on the EU border already, and to have a neighbor willing to help pull you across.

For all its relative success, Estonia’s standard of living remains terribly depressed by Western standards. It also suffers from destabilizing inequality and political graft. If you arrive from just across the border in provincial Russia, Estonia looks prosperous, but not if you fly in from Sweden (or from Moscow). Estonians’ rising interest in Sweden is being met by a declining interest in Estonia on the part of Swedes.

Crucially, though, Estonia’s “Russian-speaking” population is optimistic about the future, and does not identify with the Russian republic. Local Russians do not see themselves as a threat to Estonia, but Estonian-speakers do: the Russophone population faces discrimination and restrictive citizen laws, though they pay taxes, perform military service, and push

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Visit our website at www.haverhills.com
their children to learn Estonian. Fittingly, the cover of Return to the Western World depicts Jonah escaping from a red whale. And although the Russian embassy remains the largest one in Estonia, Estonia's ethnic Russian population, too, has escaped to the West, albeit to its lowest rung. Admittedly, the closer Estonia gets to actual EU accession and a partial surrender of sovereignty, the bigger the drop in poll support for joining (now under fifty percent). But that, too, is a very European story.

VII.

To recap: The six former Soviet republics stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine) and the eight others located on either side of the Caspian Sea (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) share a Soviet imperial heritage with each other and with Russia, though not to the same degree. Today, all but Estonia, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan are semi-dependent on Russia for energy or markets or security: unavoidable realities that need to be turned into reciprocal opportunities and made the most of.

In the south, even those states that do not border Russia are not far removed from Moscow's influence. In the west, all but one of the six states border directly on Russia, and the exception, Moldova, owing to Transnistria and its own impoverishment, is susceptible to Russian machinations (though not to the same degree as Belarus). By contrast, Russia and Ukraine have achieved a stable relationship politically and economically. Most important, despite the circumstance of six million ethnic Ukrainians and twenty-five million ethnic Russians (thirty-six million, if one counts "Russian-speakers") living outside "their" new states, Ukraine's and Russia's elites have not pursued the suicidal wars that engulfed Yugoslavia.

Central Asian elites, too, their authoritarianism and their looting notwithstanding, have mostly not incited their populations to the brink. (Tajikistan's war is the exception.) But the same cannot be said of Transcaucasia, the site of five of the seven post-Soviet civil wars: Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Ingushetia/North Ossetia, Karabakh, and Chechnya. As a tangle of the worst divide-and-rule legacies, homegrown political gangsters (dressed in ethnic garb), and huge internally displaced or refugee populations, the Caucasus gives Trashestanistan a bad name.

A general conclusion appears inescapable: nation-statism has proven instrumental for consolidating and even extending the illiberal hyper-executive branches and shadow economies inherited from Soviet times. But rather than citing the nation-state framework or the Soviet inheritance, explanation for the ills of the newly independent Trashestanists—and of Russia itself—usually adduce neoliberal reforms (which mostly did not take place) and Russian "imperialism."

Whether the Kremlin finds the courage and wherewithal to facilitate a resolution for Transnistria in Moldova and Abkhazia in Georgia, and to negotiate an end to its domestic Chechen calamity, remains to be seen. Institutionally, Russia has managed more structural reform in the past two years than in the previous eight years, as stake-holding oligarchs and other swells moved from rip-offs to increasing value. But Russia still lacks a banking system, and it has yet to fully confront its retrograde military and security establishment. That said, wars and all, Russia leads every other former Soviet republic—except Estonia—on most key political and economic indicators.

So here is bonus point eleven: Russia has already gained the most from the end of the Soviet Union—a result not fully grasped in Moscow, but predictable from earlier European decolonization, whereby former colonizers reluctantly discovered that despite their "loss of prestige" they reaped greater benefits at lower costs from former colonies thanks to the end of formal empire.

VIII.

DOMINIC LIEVEN'S HISTORY of empire is a work of majestic sweep. It presents history as great power politics, and great power politics, in turn, as the state's ability to mobilize men and resources. Its realism seeks to remove some of the pejorative connotations of empire. Lieven usefully points out that not until the 1860s did "empire" come to mean overseas possessions, adding that "empires have existed since ancient times" and "are one of the most common forms of state in history," so that "to write the history of empire would be close to writing the history of mankind."

Understandably forgoing the task of writing an encyclopedia, Lieven selects case studies based upon a four-part definition of empire: a very great power, a conglomeration of territories and peoples, an undemocratic political system, and a sense of itself as a civilization. He takes us from ancient Rome and imperial China through the modern British, Hapsburg, Ottoman, and especially Russian empires, ending with suggestive reflections on the Soviet demise. "This book is certainly not an apologia for empire," he explains, "but even an attempt to understand an empire's dilemmas and to compare some of its achievements will raise hackles."

Heavy with erudition, Lieven's work brims with grand judgments. He believes, for example, that the American civil war was a turning point in world history. "Even more than the British, the Americans disliked geopolitics and prefer it sweetened and well wrapped in tales of moral certainty," he observes, adding however that the 1860s "emergence on North American soil of a nation rooted in populist racialism and ruled by a semi-agrarian aristocracy might well have changed the whole balance of geopolitical and ideological forces in the world." This would have likely precluded the post-1890s Anglo-American alliance, which Lieven sees as the foundation of our modern world system.

A second theme is the secession of Germany and Russia: when one has been up, the other has generally been down. Lieven perceives more of a threat in a down-at-the-knee Russia than in a resurgent Germany, since Germany is transformed and securely within the European Union, which he regards as a welcome competitor to the United States. Unusual for a British conservative, Lieven combines an unwavering commitment to the transatlantic "special relationship" with a deep veneration of the Continent.

His third theme is what he sees as the continental precursor of the European Union—the Hapsburgs. He argues that "to a unique extent Austria-Hungary by 1900 was beginning to transcend the historical definition of empire and was moving in the direction of a democratic multi-national federation, able to offer its peoples the economic benefits of a huge market, legally protected equality in status, and the security that was empire's traditional boon." But he also admits that in 1914 the monarchy could neither annex nor crush independent Serbia—and still the Hapsburg ruling circles issued the Serbs an ultimatum, as if the prospect of world war were an aristocratic duel. Lieven might also have noted that the monarchs and the generals who sent millions of able-bodied men to death emboldened revolutionaries such as Lenin to shed blood for a "legitimate" cause, and in this way made Lenin's deadly message far more appealing.

ARGUABLY PRE-WORLD WAR I in temperament, Lieven's project proves less illuminating for the grisly twentieth century. The Soviet Union, which refused to call itself an empire, responded to the nation-state "triumphs" ushered in by World War I by recognizing national homelands and joining them into a supranational federation of sorts. The resulting Union of Soviet Socialist
Repubhcs, which was formed in 1922, was partly meant to counter the British and French overseas empires: the USSR offered subject peoples something akin to an “empire of nations,” that is, many nations got their own “states” (or republics).

Lieven tends to downplay these modern efforts to confront, however hamfistedly, the contradictions between empire and nation. He only briefly mentions a third competing twentieth-century model of empire—one of codified racial hierarchy and economic autarky—carried out by the Nazi “New Order” in Europe and the Japanese “Co-Prosperity Sphere” in East Asia, each of which imitated the British and the French while seeking to outdo them. Lieven also barely touches upon a fourth model—that of the United States, which opposed empire, but which, through a combination of destruction or displacement of native peoples and assimilation of all others (blacks less so), became a grand “nation of nations” pursuing a quasi-imperial world economy that it could dominate.

Lieven could have extended the analysis. The competing twentieth-century models—an empire based upon a conquering master race (Germany and Japan), an overseas empire without citizenship for natives (Britain and France), an empire of nations possessing states within a nominal federation (the Soviet Union), and a “free trade” nation of nations (the United States)—clashed in World War II, with the latter three arrayed against the first. Defeated, Germany and Japan turned to the American-style approach of democratic nationhood, finding problematical the assimilation of indispensable immigrant laborers but enjoying great economic weight in relations with other countries, including former colonies. Britain and France soon did the same.

Thus, as a consequence of World War II, every major power fell in line with the American “nation of nations” model—except the Soviet “empire of nations,” until it, too, was dissolved. It is notable that no empire has ever been converted into a stable and democratic federation. In sum, formal empire has not worked, owing to its inability to figure out how to deal with “nation,” and owing also to the example and the power exerted by the United States. China, almost uniquely, represents a still intact imperial contraption (encompassing Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet) that by demographic excess and coercion has transformed itself into a nation-state; but China is autocratic and thus ultimately unstable. Across southern Eurasia, India stands out as a democratic nation-state, showing that the key to success, like the key to failure, is not ethnic homogeneity—which India obviously does not have—but liberal politics and workable institutions.

In Lieven’s eyes, empires struggled to manage multi-ethnicity in “civilized” fashion. He acknowledges that they also pursued expansion and glorified their militaries, but he urges that condemnation “is much too simple” because “in its time empire was often a force for peace, prosperity and the exchange of ideas across much of the globe. It sustained great cultures and civilizations.” Of course, whatever empire might have done for the multitudes, it always existed to serve the few—royal family and nobility, general secretary and nomenklatura; and in any case it invariably undermined itself. Even so, Lieven is on to something. Empire as he imagines it would be a better idea.

And Lieven is not alone. People of all ages, from Kyrgyzstan to Belarus, recall or are aware of the many absurdities of Soviet life, but they also see that past refracted through the false promises and the ugly realities of their “nation-states.” They want private property but also ethnic-intermingling instead of ethnic cleansing, and family resorts rather than war zones. In the case of the European Union, the hard road to federal re-integration has gone through the consolidation of democratic nation-states, above all in the core country of Germany (the smallest yet economically most powerful unified German state in history). In economically interdependent East Asia, a similar role has been played by Japan. Indeed, for all the hot air about globalization, the world today consists of three regionally based loci of power and prosperity—Germany (the old Nazi New Order), Japan (the old Co-Prosperity Sphere), and the United States, which together account for close to three-fifths of world national income. The successful “empire” is the anti-empire.

**January 21**

Art is that which can be interrupted. John Cage said according to David Shapiro in Instant Message mode his son is taking Advanced Biology (we called it Sex) how sweet, as a harlot said to Baudelaire I asked how he said “not sure,” as Wittgenstein said about the presence of rhinos in his room” and Cage praised silence than which nothing could be more theatrical except maybe the evening sun that never goes down “layered in light like leaves” and on the day he (Cage) died the kids said to me the guy you’re always quoting is dead I said who who who the guy you’re quoting is always dead

David Lehman
which both strategic countries would have to undergo deeper structural reforms to qualify, a worthy process even if its success remains distant. Near-term entry into the World Trade Organization will be hard but also helpful, both as process and result. (An eternally elusive breakthrough in Russo-Japanese relations, trapped in territorial disputes over four rocks in the Pacific, could bring multilateral benefits, too, to which the belated opening of the large-scale Sakhalin energy project attests.)

Facilitating cooperation in Caspian and especially Russian energy development should have been a no-brainer even before America's dependence on Saudi Arabia came into question. Opening the American domestic market more to Russia as well as Ukraine, the way it has been opened wide for Communist-led China, is a long-term strategy for promoting change and mutual benefit. And rather than stroke Russia or contrive some Russian relationship with a manifestly obsolete NATO, which neither side truly wants, the United States should transform existing bilateral programs for destroying and managing weapons of mass destruction into a formal strategic alliance with Moscow on non-proliferation. This is not a matter of "partnership" or "friendship." It is a matter of raw mutual interest. Skeptics and emotional Russophobes take note: no other country has Russia's capacity to counterbalance Saudi Arabia's role in Western energy supply. And no other country has Russia's capacity to arm rogue actors with weapons of mass destruction, by design or accident, and generally to play the role of spoiler simultaneously in Europe, Inner Asia, and East Asia—except, of course, the United States.

The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern
by Carla Hesse
(Princeton University Press, 233 pp., $35)

ooming high above the rooftops of the Left Bank sits a lugubrious monument of the French Republic: the Pantheon, final resting place of the "great men of the patrie." Its oppressively severe classicism, an exaggerated evocation of republican Rome, betrays the anxieties of its eighteenth-century architects, and recalls Heine's line about the "great men of the learning, in which their subordination was clearly prescribed. The realm in which women achieved autonomy, Hesse contends, was the realm of literature. It was less valued by the male mandarins of the Pantheon and the nearby Ecole Normale, and consequently more open to women's participation. The central chapters of Hesse's book illustrate how women of the revolutionary era not only found an outlet for their ambitions in the writing of novels, but also used their novels to criticize, if sometimes obliquely, the cultural order that the Revolution brought into being. Hesse briefly traces out a female canon of authors who continued this tradition, from Germaine de Stael through George Sand and Colette to Simone de Beauvoir.

This bold and imaginative interpretation unfortunately gets off to a shaky start, in an introductory chapter given to overreaching generalizations. In Old Regime France, Hesse asserts, it was women who defined the extremes of unacceptable forms of speech: on the one hand the vulgar slang of Paris fishwives, on the other hand the pretentious patter of aristocratic précieuses. Yet much evidence suggests that the fishwives and the précieuses figured among a great many groups who all symbolized uncouth language in their ways, including patois-speaking peasants, pedantic bourgeois,