ethnic, nationalist lines. Why hasn't the region gone the bloody way of Yugoslavia, as many in 1992 feared it would?

"Soviet totalitarian rule (which under Lenin and Stalin at least was vastly more thorough and ruthless than anything attempted by Tito in Yugoslavia) destroyed or greatly weakened" the Orthodox Church and the nobility in Russia, as well as nascent civil institutions that had emerged in the final decades of tsarist rule, explains Lieven, a Research Fellow at London's International Institute for Strategic Studies. While this devastated condition has been "a grave weakness for contemporary democracy in Russia and most of the other former Soviet republics," it also has made for relative peace, despite "the extreme economic hardship and psychological and cultural dislocation" experienced by the populace.

Fortunately for Russia, its neighbors, and the West, Lieven says, "Russian national identity in recent centuries . . . has been focused on non-ethnic allegiances." The Soviet state was explicitly founded not on nationalism but on a communist ideology that "contained genuine and important elements of 'internationalism.'" While the Soviets exploited Russian national symbols and traditions during and after World War II, they drained them of almost all meaning other than the "imposed Soviet one." Before the Soviet Union was formed, Lieven says, the Russian Empire, "though much more clearly a Russian state," stressed "loyalty to the Tsar and the Orthodox faith," not ethnicity.

Unlike many other nationalisms, Russian nationalism, as shaped by Soviet rule, conceived of the Russian nation "not as a separate ethnos but as the leader of other nations," Lieven says. The absence of a strong sense of Russian ethnic identity, he notes, also "reflected historical and demographic reality. . . . From the 15th century, Russia conquered and absorbed many other ethnic groups." Hostility exhibited at times toward particular ethnic groups, such as Jews or Caucasians, he says, was "a *focused* hostility . . . for particular reasons, usually economic."

Russians outside Russia have rarely come under physical attack in this decade. Russian president Boris Yeltsin's government stated more than once that it would use force, if necessary, to protect the Russians in the Baltics and elsewhere. Though Estonia and Latvia, after gaining their independence, moved to restrict the rights of their Russian minorities, they did so peacefully, by legislative or administrative means, and most of the local Russians reacted calmly "and did not join the hard-line Soviet loyalist movements which opposed Baltic independence," Lieven notes. In Ukraine and Kazakhstan, the governments did not take any measures against their Russian minorities. And—despite the bluster of ultranationalist political figures such as Vladimir Zhirinovsky—the Russian government, Lieven says, for the most part has not encouraged Russian secession movements in the other republics.

But "as Russia loses its role and its self-perception as the leader of other nations," Lieven fears, it could "develop a new form of patriotism which is not pluralist and multi-ethnic but one which is resentful, closed, and ethnically-based." If that happens, he warns, it could well prove "a disaster for the whole region."

The Unwelcome Wedding Guest

"Dowry Deaths in India" by Paul Mandelbaum, in *Commonweal* (Oct. 8, 1999), 475 Riverside Dr., Rm. 405, New York, N.Y. 10115.

Every year in India, some 6,000 newly wed brides—and perhaps as many as 15,000—are murdered or driven to suicide in disputes over their dowries, reports Mandelbaum, a journalist and novelist. Modernization, far from reducing the toll of "dowry deaths," seems to be pushing it higher.

As in the past, most Indian marriages today are arranged by parents seeking "a suitable match within an appropriate range of subcastes," Mandelbaum reports. But with more Indians migrating to the cities or abroad in search of opportunity, the families involved in a match are less likely to have known each other previously. Increasingly, the marital arrangements are made blindly, through brokers, classified ads, and Internet services. And, in a corruption of ancient Hindu customs, Mandelbaum says, the brides and their families now "feel compelled to buy their

way into a marriage alliance with 'gifts' of cash, jewels, and consumer goods" for the in-laws, with the amount often rising with the groom's apparent prospects. A groom who works for the privileged government bureaucracy, for instance, may be able to command a dowry worth $100,000 or more.

In a typical dowry death, Mandelbaum says, a new bride is harassed by her husband and in-laws, who insist that the goods promised or delivered are insufficient. Often, it is the status they confer rather than the goods themselves that the husband and his family crave; sometimes, the conflicts are really not about the dowry at all but about underlying problems in the marriage too intimate for open discussion. Eventually, the harassment leads to the young woman's death, often disguised as an accident.

In the mid-1980s, in response to pressure from feminist groups and the news media, Parliament altered the criminal code, Mandelbaum writes, "plac[ing] the burden of proof on the accused in any situation where a bride dies unnaturally during the first seven years of marriage, if a history of dowry harassment can be shown."

Yet dowry deaths have spread. Once "mostly confined to the corridor connecting Punjab, traditionally a very patriarchal and violent part of northwest India, to Delhi and, further east, Uttar Pradesh," areas with a high incidence of such murders are now found in half the country, Mandelbaum notes.

Many Indians view divorce with alarm, and Hindu parents tell their married daughters not to return home. In a typical case of dowry death, Veena Das, a sociologist at Delhi University, told Mandelbaum, "The girl has gone to her parents repeatedly and says she wants to come back, but the parents refuse to take responsibility for her."

Africa's 'Soft Authoritarianism'

"Africa" by Marina Ottaway, in *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1999), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1779 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

A new generation of leaders has begun to emerge in Africa, but its members are not committed to democracy. Indeed, they are "extremely suspicious of popular participation and even more so of party politics," writes Ottaway, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Instead, she says, these new leaders—including Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni, Eritrean president Isaias Afwerki, Ethiopian prime minister Meles Zenawi, and Rwandan vice president Paul Kagame, all of whom came to power by winning a civil war—are intent upon building a strong government, maintaining security and stability, and promoting economic development.

They believe, she says, "in a mixture of strong political control, limited popular participation, and economic liberalization that allows for a strong state role in regulating the market—South Korea, Taiwan, and even Singapore are viewed as models to be emulated." In other words, what used to be described as "soft authoritarianism."

The instability of Africa today, argues Ottaway, results from the weakness of the independent states left behind by the European colonial powers, exacerbated in recent years by economic decline. "The authoritarianism of many African governments, coupled with their incapacity to project power throughout their [own] countries, has provided a fertile breeding ground for armed opposition movements" in such places as Angola, Somalia, Burundi, Chad, and Senegal.

It is appealing to think that the failed African states could revive themselves by embracing democracy and the free market, says Ottaway, but it is also unrealistic. "Elections and economic reform do not cause domestic armed movements to disappear, nor do they prevent conflicts in decaying neighboring states from spilling over borders."

With the Cold War over and French influence in Africa waning, the political order imposed by the colonial powers is truly at an end, Ottaway observes. Determining a new balance of power among the states, one that can be sustained without outside intervention, will probably entail conflicts. "Conflict is probably an intrinsic part of an African renaissance and not necessarily a sign of the so-called coming anarchy."