

The experimental variable -

It has long been assumed that communism was to blame for the political and economic failures of the Soviet Union. In the great social experiment which Russia became, evidence points to communism as the culprit, the experimental “variable” added to the mix by the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917.

There are two problems with this assumption: First, the actual experimental outcome, the economic shortcomings of the Soviet Union, is a comparison with an ideal, almost imaginary, result. The Soviet Union, as it actually was, has been compared to what it is believed it would have become had it chosen democracy and a free market system. Second, it has been assumed that because communism was a new ingredient, it was the only variable involved. In focusing exclusively on socialist ideology, factors such as climate, population, terrain, and geographical size have largely been overlooked or discounted.

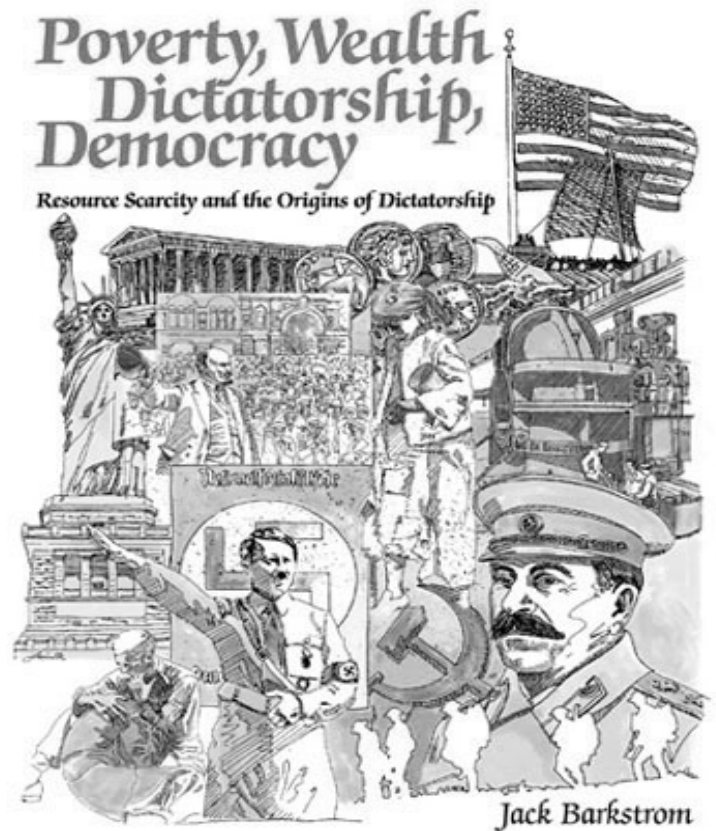
The difference between Russia and the United States, in geographical size alone, is striking. The continental U.S. falls within just four time zones. Russia extends across eleven. And geography represents just one possible variable.

The question most often asked in discussions of the Soviet Union has been:

“What caused communism?”

Perhaps the question should be:

“Was communism the cause?”



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