

CHAPTER ONE

HOME SCHOOLING

As a young political journalist in London in the late 1970s, I encountered an extraordinary economic reformer-leader: Margaret Thatcher. At the time I was *The Economist's* junior political correspondent covering Westminster. Thatcher was the controversial leader of the opposition, feared more than admired for her hard-line views. She faced, however, a failing Labour government that by 1978 was beset by strikes and chronic economic difficulties. Although Labour seemed likely to lose the election due in 1979, only a handful of Thatcher's faithful would have predicted that she was about to launch the country on a thirty-year path of reform and economic success.

What Mrs. Thatcher was able to do for Britain demonstrated to me the impact that strong national leadership can have as well as its limits. Thatcher's Britain was not an island—it needed the rest of the world. She was no enthusiast for the state, which she always considered too big, but she was also a great British patriot. She believed in Britain the nation. That latter conviction would have made her despise the second half of my central proposition: that if we are to have much-reduced states, we will have to compensate with global government arrangements.

As opposition leader, Thatcher would talk to the Westminster press corps once a week on so-called lobby terms. The lobby was the stone-flagged hallway, adjacent to the House of Commons, where members of the press had traditionally been allowed to accost members of Parliament as they had entered or left the chamber. It was a rule of the House that all such exchanges were off the record. This meant that as a journalist you could not attribute what you heard to a specific politician. The rule had stayed, even as the briefings themselves had moved to a formal briefing room up in the roof of the rabbit warren of the Parliament buildings.

Normally the politicians who briefed us, protected by the nonattributable nature of the sessions, would trade waspish tidbits of gossip and talk tactics. But Margaret Thatcher relentlessly sought to educate us in grand strategy. Each week she would assault us with the advantages of privatizing state companies, selling public housing, and liberating enterprise by lowering taxes. My British journalist colleagues, who considered their skepticism a vital barrier against conviction or co-optation, would visibly squirm when we were subjected to these humorless broadsides. It was not how it was supposed to be done. We were there to trade information, they sniffed, not to be lectured.

While I relished Thatcher's conviction in the face of their limp cynicism, I nevertheless too found her impossibly strident. That stridency, along with her refusal to play by the clubbish rules of Westminster, or engage in the bitchy gossip of her male colleagues, would, I suspected, leave her as no more than an interesting footnote in British political history.

The 1979 election, however, followed a winter of trade union challenges to the Labour government that made her victory almost certain. The garbage had piled up, public transport had ground to a halt, and all sorts of other indignities had been visited on the British public. For middle-class voters, Labour had lost its rationale—the

ability to manage workers' expectations in a way that kept the country going. The trade unions had brought a divided country to a halt, and Labour had clearly lost the authority to stop them. Many Britons thought it was time to give the Tories a go. Thatcher's victory was therefore more a vote against Prime Minister Jim Callaghan's Labour government than a vote for her reform agenda. Indeed, she took care not to distract attention from Labour's failure by producing too many detailed, let alone radical, proposals.

Her victory was a relatively narrow one given the circumstances, yet remarkably she turned it into a mandate to revolutionize Britain. Many would argue that her triumph in the Falklands War and her second election victory really empowered her: like George W. Bush before 9/11, at points in her first term she looked more like an accidental leader than a lasting one.

The Economist, by 1979, was equipped with first-generation word-processing equipment that allowed journalists to directly input copy. But in a clear example of why Britain needed Mrs. Thatcher, restrictive working policies prevented journalists from making proper use of the equipment. We would input, then print out the copy, which would then be re-inputted on identical machines by members of the printers' union. This kind of costly, uncompetitive behavior desperately needed to be stripped out of the British economy.

In 1979 Election Day, a Thursday, was as usual press day for *The Economist*. We needed to prepare two advance versions of our lead article for the Britain section of the magazine, as the laborious double print-setting process would not allow us to wait for the results. One version, written by the political editor, praised her victory; the other long-shot insurance option, assigned to me as the junior reporter, described why she had lost.

She was too suburban, too tart, too intolerant, and too narrow, ran my thesis. For good measure I added that she did not like foreigners much, when Britain needed to find its place in the world again.

Other, more emollient internationalist types would surely pick up on her prescriptions and implement them in a softer style. Britain was not ready for her.

But Britain was in danger of not working anymore, as the Tory campaign advertising cleverly warned. That previous winter Britain had looked failure in the face, and Margaret Thatcher's time had come. My boss's article was the one that ran.

Watching her come to power gave me an abiding respect for conviction in politics. I was almost as uncomfortable with conviction as my fellow lobby journalists were, but I saw that it enabled Margaret Thatcher to end a failing system of economic management and governance that had allowed Britain to fall steadily behind. She taught me, and many others, a very un-Conservative lesson: you do not enter politics just to govern—you go into it to make fundamental changes. She was a revolutionary, and Britain needed her. I concluded that many other countries also needed leaders like her.

My second conclusion was much less Thatcherite. Domestic reform, admirable as it was, was not enough to recapture Britain's former prosperity. Events had cast the country from the center of the global trading system that was essential to its economic strength. Britain's ambitions and values had also narrowed. Thatcher in some ways remained impervious to this second point. She saw the power of global free trade but was impatient with the idea of building the multilateralist system needed to sustain it. To open up to this latter point, Britain would have to wait until Tony Blair, also a conviction politician.

Under her rule Thatcher did, however, allow her Trade and Industry secretary, Leon Brittan, to break up the clubbish old-boy network (a target for her whether it was in the law or any of the professions) in the City of London. But the consequences went way beyond domestic liberation. As Brittan, a favorite lunch companion of mine when I was a lobby journalist, had anticipated, his "Big Bang" reforms

of 1986 made London over the next twenty years once more the financial capital of the world. His program was a dramatic liberalization and deregulation of the rules under which London operated as a financial center. Out went all the restrictive practices that favored the old City cartel, as well as the bowler hats and the long, lazy, soporific lunches that London's City establishment was known for. Soon cohorts of thrusting young American bankers, followed by those of many other nationalities, invaded its sleepy, protected environs. Before long London became the preferred global home for international financial services.

Reform might be painful, but if it led to getting a foot into a global market, the rewards were obvious. Margaret Thatcher showed the country it could come back.

My British childhood before that was an education in equally how quickly a country can lose its way. I learned early on that national success can be ephemeral and that in many ways the relative fortunes of states are played out on a great global Chutes and Ladders game board. When I was a child, Ghana and Bangladesh were richer than South Korea, and Britain was precariously perched astride an empire. The extent of Britain's relative economic decline remained largely hidden. Then during my adolescence in the late 1960s its economic and political failure was graphically exposed, even as a new popular cultural anglo empire of the Beatles and Rolling Stones was established. Then in my late twenties, Margaret Thatcher led Britain to a remarkable comeback, demonstrating that countries and leaders do not have to give up. There are second chances.

I was nine in 1962 when Dean Acheson, a former U.S. secretary of state and an admirer of Britain, famously observed that "Great Britain has lost an empire and not yet found a role." Needless to say I missed this rebuke at the time although a postwar British childhood

was in its own way a lesson in national decline. In the school library and in the history classroom, Britain's empire still seemed very present. Kipling, Henty, and Buchan, enthusiastic scribes of empire, were still on the library shelves, and boarding school culture was still deeply imbued with the values that sent generations of schoolboys before me off to run corners of the empire.

But the England in which I grew up was one of self-consciously diminished circumstances. By the mid-1960s, it had precious little empire left to run: a few dejected islands here and there. Born in 1953, I got one of the last postwar ration cards. The early 1950s were followed by a period of recovering affluence that with Labor in power touched more lives than in the past but it was accompanied by eroding international standing and economic competitiveness. Britain's fabled manufacturing sector, which had once made Manchester as central to global manufacturing as Shanghai is today, had lost its way. Harold Macmillan, the Tory prime minister from 1957 to 1963, complacently claimed, "You've never had it so good," words that became an ironic epitaph for the period. Maybe he was right, if you looked in the larder or garage once rationing was behind us, but not if you looked at the world. You've never got it so wrong, the Labour opposition of the day essentially replied.

The ration card, still in existence a full eight years after the war was over, said it all. Britain had been economically exhausted by the war, and as I grew up, it had to watch its defeated rival West Germany sprint past. By 1950 Western Europe was back to prewar levels of output and grew strongly from there. But Britain's share of global trade and manufacturing approximately halved over my childhood. By the 1970s both West Germany and France had higher per capita incomes.

At the time it seemed a British problem. The extraordinary contraction of the U.K.'s role began with India's and Pakistan's postwar independence and in the 1960s moved to an equally rapid exit from

African and other colonies. That would have left any society rattled, preoccupied with adjustment to newly reduced circumstances, and engaged in an obsessive discussion of its role and status in the world.

As the Second World War came to an end, Churchill had shaken his major allies by insisting that he did not mean to live to see an end of the British Empire. His American and Soviet partners thought dismantling the British and French colonies, to create a stable world, was an important postwar objective. Colonies had provoked enough crises and were a dangerous out-of-date construction. I recall the British public broadly accepting the inevitability of decolonization and being relieved that Britain had been able to extricate itself from empire relatively painlessly. Rebellions against colonial rule in Malaya (now Malaysia) and Kenya had brought home how badly the process might still go if Britain hung on. Instead, the political argument was not over whether to leave the colonies, but rather over two opposing visions of Britain's future. The progressive vision hoped that, through participation in the United Nations and multilateralism more generally, the U.K. could become a force for nuclear disarmament and world peace. The other, more defensive vision perceived that Britain, stripped of empire, was now more exposed in a dangerous bipolar world where the forces of international Communism were on the offensive. The threat of succumbing to Soviet domination must be offset by putting the country as directly as possible under American protection.

Would joining Europe be a useful supplement to multilateralism or a way of balancing dependence on America? Many felt that to go back as supplicants into a Europe that we had left as conquerors in 1945 would be humiliating. Joining would mean becoming a junior member of a Europe whose leadership was now in French and German hands. It became a debate about island pride and history.

At the time this predicament seemed to me peculiarly British. Who else, after all, had ever won a war and lost an empire in quite

such a spectacularly compressed time frame? Only later did I understand a more universal truth. Not just Britain but the world was to be roiled by changes in comparative status between countries. Within countries, economic change would be more rapid and produce more instability than ever in human history. This has been the global condition during my lifetime. Everything changes. Countries rise and fall. A seemingly formidable ideology, Communism, crumbled from within. Social and gender mobility reached revolutionary rates as old class systems withered and women entered the workforce, politics, the priesthood, and the boardroom at unprecedented levels. Population size in many parts of the world exploded. Some of these changes were heralded, but others crept up on us. Many of them got a dress rehearsal in the Britain of my youth.

Traditional life often seems unaffected, even as beneath the surface things are moving dramatically. Every morning, as Britain was falling behind its peers, my mother and I would drop my father at a local train station, where he took his place among the bowler-hatted men in dark suits and overcoats awaiting their commuter trains to London. As a South African in a status-conscious U.K., my father could never personally, I was relieved to see, bring himself to wear a bowler hat.

The local grocery store Evershed and Cripps still had my mother's account, as it had her mother's before her. Mr. Cripps presided over a busy staff that laboriously filled our orders individually as we stood at the counter. Supermarket aisles and checkouts were still something I was familiar with only from American movies, not that I got to see many of them, as the small black and white television that crouched in a corner of our living room was, until I was about twelve, forbidden territory except for the weekly episode of *The Lone Ranger*, an American western. My grandparents still had their own pew in church.

And then in the 1960s change raced through British life. The bowler hat, many of the train stations, and the local full-service gro-

cery store disappeared. Churches were emptying. Dramatic changes in the social order and in every aspect of people's lifeways, from sex to consumerism, faith, and work, swept Britain. As the teenaged son of a now-widowed mother dividing my time between boarding school and home, I was both excited and a little unnerved by the changed world I would be entering.

Whatever else one might say about the process, it was cathartic. Britain has gotten over empire. During the Battle of Britain in 1940, as waves of German bombers lacerated the capital night after night, Londoners, mostly white and London-born, had descended companionably into the bomb shelters. When the terrorists struck London in 2005, politicians and commentators were quick to invoke the spirit of the Battle of Britain and recall the city's phlegmatic response. Londoners just carry on, they said, however great the adversity. In 2005 the city's demographics had changed: almost a third of Londoners were not originally from Britain. But the values remained, as again Londoners behaved with great calm and decency amid violence and tragedy. New arrivals were among the victims. Perhaps it takes an expat Brit who has spent much of his working life abroad to appreciate fully one of Britain's most significant assets—the liberal tolerance that allows such cohesion. Yet unlike America, however, Britain's terrorists were home-grown. This was the dark side of British tolerance in the name of multiculturalism; spurning the melting pot sometimes allowed differences to metastasize into deadly grievance.

In the continuous up-and-down of global fortunes, exiles and refugees from failed countries like dictator Idi Amin's Uganda or apartheid-ruled South Africa contributed their talents and energies to Britain's revival. London, declining in my early childhood, is now the wealthy, booming center of much of the global private equity and hedge fund industry. Its shops and restaurants have few equals—perhaps the most remarkable change, given British gastronomic history. And even faith is making a comeback of sorts, not perhaps in Anglican churches, which

are still linked to state and empire in their structure, hymns, and ceremonies, but in new, less-established, less-hierarchical congregations as well as in temples, mosques, and synagogues. And Britain's leadership of popular culture continues. In the cultural hierarchy it has moved up from a hub for music and style and design to the home of museums like the Tate Modern and live complexes like the South Bank with its rich mixture of theater, classical music, and the visual arts.

Growing up in Britain, I was exposed to the stresses and strains of modernization—the sudden swings of the political pendulum, the agony of those dislocated by economic reform, and the sometimes-obscene financial rewards of those who benefited. I watched my grandfather's small shipping company, which had plied the seas for years, be bought by a speculator off the cheap credit of a boom-and-bust era of the 1970s, then be quickly broken up and destroyed. Like my whole generation, I watched British coal miners struggle to weather change and “city slickers” enrich themselves in a 1970s financial sector boom of unsustainably cheap credit. Economic progress seemed to bring winners and losers, with little social justice.

From the first postwar Labour government onward, Britons had been concerned that, in throwing out its past, Britain might also be throwing out more abiding values. Aneurin Bevan, one of the great twentieth-century Labour leaders, grumbled to his last Labour Party conference in 1959: “It is a vulgar society. It is a meretricious society. It is a society in which priorities have gone all wrong . . . Consumerism is rapidly dissolving traditional community ties: self-assertion, both by individuals and by groups, is coming to replace collective solidarity and class loyalty.” Labour politicians must have thought the electorate unappreciative, as Labour's postwar government had established the modern welfare state. It had established the National Health Service and had also addressed public pensions and education. The state's role in the economy expanded dramatically with the nationalization of coal, iron, steel, electricity, gas, rail-

ways, canals, road transportation, and aviation. Whitehall's wartime planners had a last hurrah as they placed a large part of the civilian economy in state hands.

With the welfare state Labour had responded to long-standing past social needs, but once it met them it was missing the future. People wanted more. Time and again I was to watch governments around the world bravely respond to a first reform agenda, only to be tripped up by the consequences of their success—a new middle class that wanted still more.

The other warning that postwar Britain equipped me with was the limits of state or central capacity. Taking a first-class school or hospital from a Whitehall planner's mind and successfully implementing it seems almost as hard as taking a plan from a World Bank or UN's program officer's mind and making it a functioning success on the ground thousands of miles away.

From my early teens I read as much as I could about economic and political change in Africa and Asia. Economic historians and political scientists replaced Buchan and Henty on my reading list. Britain had exported its model of high taxes and high public spending to fund ambitious public services, together with a big state role in the economy, to its former colonies. It was Britain's last and near-fatal gift, as many of those countries struggled through the same economic quagmire as a consequence. Vast and creaky public sectors grew up, financed increasingly, as tax systems failed, by debt and aid. These programs were an exhausting burden on national economies and yet proved utterly unable to deliver decent services. Seeing this economic model's impact later, I became so allergic to it that the author of a recent history of UNDP entitled the chapter about my time as its chief: "Fabian Socialists Need Not Apply." In Tanzania I saw how this kind of advice led the first postcolonial president, Julius Nyerere, down a path of economic ruin. Heavily influenced by Britain to introduce the welfare state, Tanzanians had a utopian expectation that

that system could be replicated in a poor country lacking the necessary financial and human capital.

To be sure, the difficulties that Tanzania faced were not due solely to the failure of a particular brand of economics. By the 1970s, as center-left governments in Latin America failed to produce the incomes, services, and lifestyles that people wanted, new governments were taking an often violent step to the authoritarian right. In Africa, the breakdown of postcolonial governments was caused by much more than the bad advice of some British Fabians: pro-market African governments did no better. Kenya had avoided the socialism of its Tanzanian neighbor and instead allowed a chaotic and corrupt market economy of sorts to operate. Tanzanian socialists criticized Kenya as a man-eat-man society; Kenyans responded that Tanzania had become a man-eat-dog society. Kenya, despite its economic advantages such as skilled African and white Kenyan manpower, did little better by its people than its Tanzanian neighbor.

Both countries, as I discovered in 1971, had fallen far in the few short years since decolonization. In that year a school friend named Peter Carey and I, both eighteen, traveled together from the Cape to Cairo over some six months, hitchhiking or in speeding overcrowded taxis or ramshackle buses. For an English schoolboy, after this trip there was no looking back. It was the world's problems, not Britain's, that fascinated me now. In Tanzania, I saw the dilemma: a fine president, Julius Nyerere, aimed to put the country's assets in its people's hands, but the country needed economic growth, which was less likely to come, in the short term at least, from African smallholders than from large white-owned commercial farms.

In his eagerness to control the commanding heights of the economy, Nyerere quite literally seized a mountain. He repossessed the astonishingly fertile white farms in the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro and redistributed the land to African farmers. We tagged along with a white farmer to an angry town meeting where the farmers warned of

the likely damage to the land's productivity. Many of the white farmers had come to Tanzania after the Second World War and built farming paradises of breathtaking views and astonishing agricultural productivity from what they remembered as uncultivated scrub; for them, the redistribution was a terrible end to their dreams. But for local African families it meant the recovery of a smallholder subsistence-farming idyll that the invasion of big white farms had pushed aside. For both groups, futures and precious ways of life were at stake.

Then as now, I was torn between the white farmer's prediction that much less would be grown and my strong conviction that returning the farms to African hands, while giving proper compensation to the former owners, would ultimately serve justice and political stability. The white farmers may have been right on the productivity point, but it was hard to sympathize with their angry condemnation of the aspirations of newly independent African governments and their blind belief that nobody had farmed the land before them. Today in Tanzania, thirty years later, the smallholders have failed to overcome hurdles of product transportation, investment, and land management, but the story has taken a further twist. A progressive but pro-market government is now in power; a developer has bought part of the Mount Kilimanjaro land and is apparently planning to build a polo club to attract rich Westerners to build vacation homes on the ruins of Tanzania's grain basket.

On a roadside in Zambia the chairman of the national grain marketing board picked Peter and myself up. As we raced along in his Peugeot, he explained that the government purchased grain and stored it in warehouses. His job was to protect it, but it was a losing battle. Thieves were continuously stealing the grain to supply an active black market because government prices were artificially low. The warehouses were infested and damp, and he did not have government funding to fix it. He was on his way to inspect another warehouse in hopes of preserving its contents. He gripped the steering wheel as he

drove, his shoulders tense, and we bucked our way across unmaintained pot-holed roads. The situation epitomized the African dilemma, the postcolonial lack of capacity and capital, and certainly put Britain's adjustment difficulties in context. Countries everywhere were having difficulty making things work.

Back from Africa, I immersed myself in the study of history, economics, and politics, first at Cambridge University and then at the University of Michigan. Two things were becoming clearer to me. First, in order to prosper, countries, whatever their political complexion, had to focus on improving their flexibility and competitiveness against others. Having found a niche or a comparative advantage, they had to attend to labor flexibility and productivity and the cost of capital; they had to find ways to build and hold an edge in innovation. That was the lesson from parts of Europe and Asia. The second truth that dawned on me was that some regions were hopelessly handicapped in global competition, given the way the world was organized. These nations were either too far away from transportation, lacked sources of capital, or were crippled by disease and geography. To be landlocked and in a malarial belt of Africa was a poor hand to be played.

To study history for an undergraduate degree at Cambridge is to be cured of easy assumptions about the causes and consequences of anything. We did mental gymnastics to answer questions such as: Did Chinese peasants know who Mao was? Did they really understand that he was a Communist committed to change, or did they just assume he was another emperor in far-off Beijing? In the 1970s Cambridge's heroes of economic history that we studied were not just illustrious public figures and Cambridge men themselves like John Maynard Keynes but were also entrepreneurs like the eighteenth-century Josiah Wedgwood, who by predicting coming trends in manufacturing, transportation, marketing, and consumer fashion was able

to build a global pottery empire. Britain's industrial revolution rested on the shoulders of entrepreneurs and their interplaying efforts to build steam engines and railways, seek out new markets, and create a modern consumer. Broad economic changes, such as the shift of population from the land to the cities and into a cash economy, mattered. In my three years of studying British and world history, I started to understand how long-term trends interacted with personal vision and leadership. And as I immersed myself in Africa's past through a lingering fascination with imperial history, I constantly hankered after Africa's present. During my months of trekking around the continent, I had hesitated to go home to university. There seemed so much to do.

After Cambridge, I went off to the University of Michigan to pursue a M.A. in political science. There I began my lifelong love affair with America, the country where later I met my wife, Trish, and where we have for the most part raised our four children. As a young graduate student, I found, after the cramped life of the U.K., that everything seemed bigger in the United States. My first surprise was the enormous car a fellow British scholar, who was a year ahead of me, came to meet me in. This was the good life.

I also discovered the puckish Ali Mazrui, a former professor at Makerere University in Uganda. Forced to leave during the Idi Amin dictatorship, he now lived in rather ill-fitting exile amid the winter snows of Michigan, with only a limited African-studies program around him. But he was a celebrity academic, opining mischievously that ethnicity counted more than class, and that women should run Africa because they were better at keeping the peace, would reduce defense spending, and already ran the farms and markets. The still heavily Marxist American academics took offense, but since then his views have worn rather better than their orthodoxies. I relished Ali's heresies; so did another student who would turn up thirty years later as a talented head of policy planning at the State Department; so did another who later became a bishop in Tanzania.

My university years provided me with a compass of sorts for what lay ahead. Some things did seem pretty much beyond dispute. How people moved from rural to urban employment was important, and so was whether they left behind a viable agricultural sector that could efficiently feed a growing urban workforce while freeing labor and capital for the latter. Similarly, free trade seemed a sound idea: it had played a dynamic role in British imperial history, and wherever I looked, economic success appeared to be export-led.

By contrast, the countries that sheltered behind import barriers cut sorry figures. The Soviet Union had made a great leap in output in the 1950s but had slowed dramatically when nobody wanted to buy its shoddy consumer goods. What was worse for most failing countries, change in the global economic league was no longer an incremental affair: rapid overall rates of economic growth and decline made the stakes very high. And as the Cold War receded and newly independent countries demanded a say in the world economy, the track records of success and failure were exposed for all to see.

The Cold War was a dangerous time of nuclear confrontation and political repression, and political tragedy was never more than a step away. Another lesson I learned in these years overshadowed my intellectual development: In the name of national security, governments lied and covered up. The Westerners excused their support for bad governments by saying they were a necessary front against Communism; the Communists excused their fat military budgets by saying that weapons mattered more than their people's standard of living. Both excuses looked increasingly thin. Students on both sides were asking persistently: What are we fighting or sacrificing for? Surely government must be about offering people opportunities for a better, freer life. East and West, governments could not postpone this question indefinitely, while they pursued a deadly global competition. It cost too much, both at home and abroad.

One day during my school years a grim-faced schoolmaster came

into a classroom, where we all sat at rows of wooden desks that bore the carved initials of children generations before us, and announced that President John F. Kennedy had been assassinated. It shook our little world. What else lay beneath America's glamorous surface? Then we learned about the murders of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. Nor was prosperous Western Europe, intent on making itself into a comfortable middle class, at peace. The student protests of 1968 seemed an innocent, almost frivolous, affair, but small terrorist groups in Germany and Italy spoke to something darker and more dangerous, seeming to threaten the bourgeois order that had so successfully reestablished itself in postwar continental Europe.

We were also becoming aware of the brutal toll that the arms race was taking on the living standards of Soviet citizens. Friends who had visited the USSR as students or as journalists painted a very different picture from the official one. Soviet rulers and Western official spokesmen seemed to have a convenient common interest in pumping up their accounts of a formidable Soviet war machine; on both sides, military budgets depended on it. The Soviets had to persuade a skeptical public that even if their civilian economy did not work, they were at least masters of military performance, able to send a man to the moon or hold their own in combat with the United States. The United States, and Western governments generally, seem to have been guilty of allowing tales of Soviet prowess to remain unchallenged so as to justify their own defense budgets.

During the Cold War years governments lied a lot—about missiles, spies, economics, human rights, each other's actions. We grew up fearing war but also suspecting governments' claims. Whose side you were on seemed to matter more than what you did. Claims about allies' economic prowess were mostly unqualified by concerns about poverty and human rights violations. President Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire and other long-running African dictators were praised as pa-

triotis and reformers while their corruption and government failure were overlooked.

Coming of age in this era left me with a sense of a governmental order that was artificially propped up by the Cold War's threat of conflict. When the Cold War finally came to an end, sure enough the pieces came tumbling down. The state everywhere suddenly seemed not all it was cracked up to be.