

# **Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Union**

“Layers and Connections of the Political”  
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## Abstract

In 1945 the Soviet Union controlled half of Europe and was a founding member of the United Nations. By 1991, it had a four-million strong army, five thousand nuclear-tipped missiles, and was the second biggest producer of oil in the world. But soon afterwards the union sank into an economic crisis and was torn apart by nationalist separatism. Its collapse was one of the seismic shifts of the twentieth century. Thirty years on, Vladislav Zubok offers a major reinterpretation of the final years of the USSR, refuting the notion that the breakup of the Soviet order was inevitable. Instead, Zubok reveals how Gorbachev's misguided reforms, intended to modernise and democratise the Soviet Union, deprived the government of resources and empowered separatism. Collapse sheds new light on Russian democratic populism, the Baltic struggle for independence, the crisis of Soviet finances – and the fragility of authoritarian state power.

## Author information

**Vladislav M. Zubok**, Professor of International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science. His books include *A Failed Empire: the Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Belknap Press, 2009), and *The Idea of Russia. The Life and Work of Dmitry of Likhachev* (I.B. Tauris, 2017). His next book *Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Union* will be published in October 2021 by the Yale University Press.

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**Friday, 25 June** - Session 15 – **9,00-10,30 CET (Webex)** – Keynote speech – *Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Union*

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