

An Analysis into the Rise and Fall of Empires
and the Longevity of the World's Oldest Companies

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Abstract

Objective: To examine how large human organizations fail and how small organizations have the potential to last much longer, ranging from large empires in human histories to small family businesses.

Method: The history of a selected list of empires and some of the oldest businesses in the world will be analyzed. The history of the empires came from various sources specializing of a specified empire. The history of the businesses came from the businesses directly. The businesses were sent a list of questions via email and the businesses replied with their answers.

Results: The empires have an interesting history that affected many people across the world. The businesses analyzed are not well known and have no significant impact on large populations, but each has existed for over a thousand years.

Conclusion: Large human organizations increase in complexity and eventually collapse on their own even if there is no strong external force to harm them. Small organizations are not complex and due to their size have greater flexibility to fix any internal problems.

Key words: Empires, companies, longevity, rise, fall

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1. Introduction

1.1. Aim of the Study

Human organizations have the purpose of managing members of the human species to produce something, either goods, services, or some sort of desired outcome. As a general rule, the larger the organization, the more capacity it has to produce what it wants; however, larger organizations are more difficult to control. Therefore, larger organizations tend to need more control mechanisms. However, large organizations also tend to overstretch themselves, decline, and eventually fall apart (Lin, 2010). Yet many human organizations seek to expand, whether it be private companies, public corporations or countries. A human organization may find a stable size in which it does not need to grow neither will it collapse; a point at which it find equilibrium. The aim of the thesis is to investigate how human organizations grow, become large and then an eventual downfall, possibly because they have grown too fast and are too large. This analysis will hopefully aid in understanding how human organizations are stable at a certain size and lose control after they go beyond a critical point, when organizational control mechanisms cannot handle the situation anymore.

This is an analysis into the expansion of all human organizations, including and especially empires. All human empires that have ever existed fell, and all for more or less the same reasons, as human nature dictates similar behavior regardless of culture. Most commonly, the reasons of collapse may be attributed to economic degradation and uncertainty, political instability, corruption, religious and ethnic divides, and invasions. An empire, just as all other human organizations, faces particular difficulty during expansion. The larger the organization, the more capacity it has to grow, and then it peaks. However, peaks can only last for so long before a downturn begins. This has happened many times before to so many empires, yet humans continue to build empires all the same. In this manner, one may recall the two sayings by Edmund Burke, who once said “Those who don’t learn from history are doomed to repeat it.” The other one is “The definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results”. Hopefully human organizations will eventually learn from history and not be

insane, as the current thesis will try to argue. The thesis will not only focus on why a particular empire fell, but why *all* empires fall, irrespective of culture. All humans are bound together by the same biology, psychology, and human nature.

To a certain degree, these organizations even behave like organisms. Small organizations eventually grow into large ones if given the right resources and the right environment. As the saying goes, the bigger they are, the harder they fall. Species such as the saber tooth tiger and the mammoth have been driven to extinction because, though they are large and powerful, they are not flexible and can be wiped out by a large enough impact or change to their environment. Yet, smaller and simpler of hymenoptera species are plentiful and have been around for eons. At an individual level, smaller organisms have a smaller impact than large mammals, yet collectively smaller organisms can have a greater impact than larger organisms, and may even be more essential than the larger organisms in the ecosystem; they may even be keystone species. Bees, for example, are necessary for the pollination process and in essence the sexual reproduction of many plant species, thus bees are a crucial component of the biosphere.

In a way, human organizations may be looked at like organisms. The planet as an environment has allowed different human organizations to develop in different ways, to thrive and grow in the way best suited for the given environment and available resources. Some have difficulty growing large but have found a sustainable equilibrium, others have thrived, and fallen. Each human organization, whether it be a large metropolitan area, a country, or a tribe, can be a smaller organization inside a larger system.

Large organizations are almost always more complex, they are more powerful and can have a greater impact, but smaller organizations are more flexible. They can reach stability and last for a long time if they maintain a certain size, suitable to creating an equilibrium. Similarly, a large organization cannot function without the individuals that it is made up of. A country would not exist without the towns and cities that help to keep its economy and bureaucratic institutions alive. Towns and cities would cease to exist if the individuals, households, and small businesses of their makeup died off or left.

The current thesis will cover several human organizations that became too large, starting from their rise and ending with their downfall. It will describe several well-

known large empires in human history: the Tang dynasty of China; the Roman Empire; the British Empire; and finally, the Soviet Union. Then, the thesis will analyze smaller human organizations of companies, some of which have outlived the described empires.

2. Method

The study analyzes a selected list of empires and some of the oldest businesses in the world. The method has a qualitative approach. It uses various sources to study the respective histories of empires, such as books specialized in the history of the empires in question, and encyclopedia websites. After reviewing the history of the empires, they will be analyzed as to what made them successful, and also as to what led them to their eventual downfall. The business were contacted through email, and a list of questions were sent to the businesses. The businesses then returned with the answers by replying to the emails. A total of four businesses were contacted and three of the four replied.

3. Analysis of Empires

3.1. Example of the Tang Dynasty of China

The Tang dynasty reigned from 618-907 A.D. (Benn, 2002), and has been known as the golden age of China. This time period in Chinese history saw a significant development of literature, art, and science. The rise and fall of this Chinese dynasty can demonstrate the importance of a support system for the management of humans and resources. An empire is, in essence, a system that humans have created to manage people and resources. The Tang dynasty was just one of many organizations that had as its purpose managing people and resources that produced goods and services. The Tang empire produced not only food to feed itself, but also other goods and services for everyone in the land. The excess allowed the people of the empire to trade their specialty with people from other lands. Hence, the Silk Road existed, one of the most famous trade routes in history, which received its name for the silk trade from East Asia, traded for other goods

with other nations. However, the empire could not have functioned without all its support systems, nor would this large organization have existed if there were no people or resources for it to manage.

3.1.1. History

In the late days of the Sui Dynasty (581-618 A.D.), the Li family were nobilities that commanded part of the imperial family's military (Benn, 2002). The Sui Dynasty had been wasteful with the country's resources, especially on the count of three consecutive failed military campaigns trying to conquer the Korean Peninsula. Faced with rebellions, the imperial family abandoned the capital, Luoyang, and fled to the south to the city of Yangzhou. Seeing an opportunity, the Duke of Tang, Li Yuan (also known as Gaozu), raised an army and marched southwest to take the southern capital, Chang'an. In 618 A.D., Li took the throne and declared Chang'an to be his capital (Benn, 2002).

In the late days of Sui and the early days of Tang, the nation was dealing with Eastern Turkish invasions coming in from the west. In those times, it was estimated that more than a million Chinese were kidnapped, surrendered, or were displaced. This ended in 638 A.D., when the Turks were beaten. The court send an envoy with gold and silk to have 80,000 people return to the country (Benn, 2002).

Li Yuan made significant bureaucratic changes when he took the throne, with some more changes made after him. He appointed three secretariats to pass on decrees and give him recommendations. He had a censorial agency that spied on officials to tackle corruption. He even had people tasked with the specific job of informing him his faults and mistakes. In the new lands he added to his empire, he restructured local governments to have prefectures ruling counties, on top of reopening schools, reestablishing examination systems for civil servants. He posted a third of his army around the capital and had it in training during autumn and winter (non-farming seasons). Soldiers enjoyed the benefits of tax exemptions. The throne redistributed land into equal shares to peasants, collecting census every three years for redistribution, giving land from elders of 60 to young adults of 17 (Benn, 2002).

The Tang Dynasty period was also unique in having the only female empress ever in Chinese history, briefly interrupting Tang (Dai & Gong, 2005). When Emperor Gaozong, the third emperor of Tang, passed, Empress Wu took advantage of the time and disposed her first son, leaving one of her younger sons Ruizong to be emperor while she ruled as a regent. She later removed him from the throne and established her own short-lived dynasty, Zhou (690-705 A.D.) (Benn, 2002; Dai & Gong, 2005).

Emperor Xuanzong was the longest reigning Emperor of the dynasty; he reigned for 44 years (712-755 A.D.), and what he had created would be known in Chinese history as the golden age. To show the people he was willing to fight corruption, he banned jewelry to be worn by women in the palace (Benn, 2002). He stopped tax evasion by wealthy families by banning them from establishing buddhist temples. He re-registered families that had fled south from invaders (during Empress Wu's reign), and balanced the budget. The government bought grain when the price was low and sold it below the market price when times were hard, an action that was previously only done in the capital but he had it spread nationwide. He secured the country making travel safer and thus increasing trade. He also kept inflation low (Benn, 2002). He distributed land to the poor and gave them tax exemptions, as well as he expanded health and education systems.

One more unusual thing was the practice of capital punishment at the time. They were limited in numbers and could only happen if Emperor Xuanzong personally approved of them. Eventually in 747, executions were banned altogether (Benn, 2002).

During Emperor Xuanzong's reign, China did not have an expansionist policy and favored diplomacy over conflict, bringing good relations with neighbors and peace (Benn, 2002).

After decades of peace came turmoil for the middle kingdom, starting in 756 A.D. An insurgency (the An Lushan Rebellion) started by An Lushan brought on a series of defensive blows to the country, which caused internal chaos and invasions. On top of getting Emperor Xuanzong's heir killed, the borders of the nation were severely disrupted, allowing Tibetans and Uighurs to move eastward, and even Persian and Arab pirates to take Canton (today's Guangzhou). This called for new administrative regions to be redrawn and militarization of the empire. This however, did not stop rampant

corruption and decentralization of the country from the capital. Without an adequate army, the throne could not control its provinces and was soon faced with an insufficient tax revenue. The previous system of taxes had fallen apart, the throne had instead installed a new system of collecting taxes every other year, with a household tax based on the size of the family and their land. The other important income of the government was their salt monopoly, bringing in half the income in 780 A.D. Continuous conflicts did not end until 785 A.D.

Real recovery came with the coronation of Emperor Xianzong in 805 A.D. With a well- trained army under his direct control and lack of monetary challenges, he secured the economy by a reformed tax system, stemming from the changes made in the 780s A.D. This allowed the emperor to send his army on military campaigns and reassured central authority.

Trouble reemerged when Emperor Wuzong ascended to the throne in 840 A.D. As a taoist, he despised other religions enough to persecute them, including Buddhism and Christianity, and closed down places of worship (Dai & Gong, 2005). It is believed that one of the reasons was to rob them, as financial problems began to loom. This oppression was continued after his death in 846 A.D. (Dai & Gong, 2005), but the other religions did manage to recover (Benn, 2002).

Larger problems for China emerged when rebellions started in 859 A.D. The southern parts of the country had been increasingly dissatisfied with their tax burdens, and the first conflicts broke out around the southeast of the Yangtze River. The Nanzhou kingdom in the south also invaded the country. In response, soldiers from the north were sent to the south. They rebelled and took control of the mouths of the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers, looting along the way. In 878 A.D., a man by the name of Huang Chao took charge of the rebels and headed south to Canton, leaving a path of destruction in his wake and killed about 200,000 people in the city. He later went back north to recruit more soldiers, as many of his had died from malaria (Benn, 2002). He took the capital in 881 A.D., as the then Emperor Xizong fled to the city of Chengdu, allowing him to end the Tang dynasty and bring about the period of Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (Dai & Gong, 2005).

3.1.2. Accomplishments of Tang Dynasty China

Printing, an ancient Chinese invention, one of which that changed the world in terms of spreading information and communication, starting in China. The oldest known printed book is a copy of *The Diamond Sutra*, dated 868 A.D. and currently held in the British Library (British Library, 2018). As such, the Tang period made books cheaper and saw the spread of literacy in different economic classes (Schirokauer, 1978). As literacy was needed for holding office, the spread of books allowed the less fortunate to move up the ladder to become public officials, ensuring greater financial security for their families.

One important scholarly individual of this time was the monk Yi Xing. Not only was Yi Xing a monk, but he was also an astronomer and an engineer (Dai & Gong, 2005). He created the Da Yan Calendar which calculated movements of the sun and the moon. It predicted eclipses and length of days. Yi Xing also created a clock powered by a water wheel.

Poetry was particularly important during this era of Chinese history. Of the thousands of poems from that time, around 300 are more commonly known today and still studied. They are translated into English, the latest version being by Peter Harris (Harris, 2009).

3.1.3. Support Infrastructure of Tang Dynasty China

The Tang Dynasty, just as the Chinese dynasties, saw its share of death and destruction that plagued the land. However, it saw prosperity like no other. In that time, the population rose from 50 million to 80 million (Fairbank & Goldman, 2006). During this time, trade, literature and science flourished, hence making the dynasty a golden age in Chinese history.

The empire was supported by good infrastructure and bureaucracy that assisted in trade, moved troops and maintained order. The capital Chang'an was home to an estimated population of 2 million at its height, the most populous city in the world during that time (Benn, 2002). The Grand Canal, which connects major rivers together and was the biggest civil engineering project before the Industrial Revolution, is over

2000 km long (UNESCO, 2016), it links the country together and controls water flow, even today. Construction started in the dynasty before Tang, and it proved useful in trade and communication. Cities along the Grand Canal provide important goods like salt, sugar, copper, silk and furniture. Canton in the south provided important imports from Southeast Asians, Persians and Arabs, who brought in drugs, jewelry, dyes and other goods. Chengdu was a center of production of paper and books (Benn, 2002). The empire was connected by internal roads stretching 13,500 miles long, littered with posts to assist in communication. The Silk Road in particular, stretched from Chang'an to northern Kashmir. Tang laws also regulated city traffic, with fines and punishment for speeding and killed or injured persons or domesticated animals. Gold bird guards patrolled the streets of cities, even at night, and had posts at city gates and intersections. All cities also had government offices for officials to work and keep prisoners.

3.1.4 Analysis

During the Tang dynasty, China was stable for perhaps a multitude of reasons, it was a good time period for the Chinese civilization and the Chinese people. China, not just as a country but as a civilization, has experienced plentiful of ups and downs. With so much diversity and resources, it is hard to control both the human capital and the resources. It should be noted that the Tang dynasty itself rose from a failing Sui Dynasty. When the new dynasty was established, Li Yuan brought about reforms that stabilized the empire to assist in the recovery process from prior conflicts. He rebuilt an education system, redistributed land, and tackled corruption. The stability allowed people to strive and brought opportunities for changes, for better or worse. It might have been this peace that fostered the environment for making possible the rise of Imperial China's only empress, rising from a consort (Dai & Gong, 2005). While her reign suffered from mild chaos and opened the opportunity for invaders to attack, the strength of the system of her predecessors allowed the empire to recover. This may be attributed to a stable governmental and bureaucratic system that allowed the empire to prosper.

The empire arguably peaked during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong. He prevented tax evasion of the rich, gave tax exemptions to the poor, stored grain to prevent famines,

made the country safe, and improved the education and health systems. All of these factors helped the country to prosper, and life was good for its people. During the Tang dynasty, the country was able to produce goods and had a good enough economy that even attracted traders from as far as the Middle East. Law and order were so well maintained that the emperor even deemed it acceptable to get rid of capital punishment. Combined with good infrastructure, the empire was stable. Stability meant that the citizens did not have to worry about conflicts or political upheaval to interfere with their lives or their pursuit of happiness. However, the reign of Emperor Xuanzong was the peak, and no empire can peak forever. Perhaps it had ran out of room to grow, which caused discontent among the elite. The country had become used to peace, and a sudden, unexpected conflict may have meant that the leadership lacked the experience to handle it. Thus, with the An Lushan Rebellion, the country fell into chaos, allowing the opportunity for invaders to strike. The system that previously had met all needs and handled all situations had failed, creating turmoil. When the agents and supports of the system, such as border control, began to fail, it brought along a domino effect. With the country vulnerable to invasion, all of its internal support systems began to collapse. The empire had a rise, a peak, and a downfall.

Traditionally, China's leader has strong reliance on kinship; a new leader from a different kin has to establish a new dynasty. A dynasty's longevity varies; a switch in family name may cause conflicts, but it does not seem to result in permanent fracturing of the nation. The Chinese people had worshipped an emperor who ruled the land, but in extension, also the idea of a certain family being in charge.

3.2. Example of the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire

The Roman Empire ruled much of the European continent and most of the Mediterranean area, and had a significant influence on European culture, visible still today. This section will be discussing both the Western Roman Empire, starting from the beginning of the empire in 27 B.C., to its eventual collapse in 476 A.D. (Hadas, 1962). It will also briefly describe significant historical events in the years of the Roman Republic, from 509 B.C. to 27 B.C., and the Roman Empire that came after, with less

emphasis on the eastern area after the empire faced an east and west divide. (The author will not be focusing on the Eastern Roman Empire.) The empire covered much of Europe and stretched into Northern Africa and Asia Minor, and had trade that went as far east as China (Alcock, 2010). Latin is the origin of several modern languages of Europe and the world today, such as Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Romanian. Our modern day calendar was also invented in ancient Rome. Those are just some of the legacies of the empire. It had a thriving economy, plenty of infrastructure, and technological advancements. Just as the Tang dynasty of China, The Roman Empire was a man-made system created to manage people and resources. The result is also the production of goods and services, which the people could enjoy or exchange.

3.2.1. History

Legend has it that Rome was founded by the twins Romulus and Remus, whose parents were Mars, the god of war, and Rhea Silvia, a human woman raped by him (Alcock, 2010). The boys were supposedly raised by a wolf. When the brothers grew up, they gained enough followers to found a city. The twins could not agree on who should govern the city and who the city should be named after. The quarrel resulted in the death of Remus, thus, the city was named after Romulus, and he became its leader. Romulus was said to have died around 716 B.C., or legend has it that he was taken away by his father Mars (Alcock, 2010). Before his departure, however, he decreed that “Rome shall be the capital of the world” (Alcock, 2010).

Before Rome was an empire, it consisted of a series of self governing towns and cities around the Italian peninsula and the Mediterranean coast. These cities were subjected to attacks from both land and sea. Constant attacks forced the city of Rome to increase its defenses and strengthen the walls that protected the city. Rome grew, as more people had turned to the city for trade and protection. As Roman control widened, the diversity of Rome’s enemies also increased. When its control spread into Sicily, it made contact with the Carthaginian Empire. Rome was able to defeat the Carthaginians, and in the process, the Romans created a navy that controlled the Mediterranean and added Africa to be a new Roman province. The empire continued its conquest into Gaul territories, Greece, Asia, and other parts of North Africa (Alcock, 2010).

Before Julius was killed in 44 B.C., he restored the Senate House, the republican forum and the speaker's platform, and he changed the structure and rule of government for the empire for future years. When Augustus (Caesar's heir) defeated Mark Anthony, he restored infrastructure damaged in previous conflicts and built new ones, including places of worship. In the city of Rome proper, he divided the capital into 14 different districts, each with elected representatives. Augustus's successors continued to improve the city's infrastructure. After a fire that swept through part of the city, the Romans took the lesson to heart and updated their building techniques. Roads were widened, buildings had height limits, and stone was used as building material instead of wood.

At its height, the Roman Empire stretched from modern day Great Britain to Syria (Alcock, 2010). Hadrian's Wall in the northwest of the empire was built by order of Emperor Hadrian, who wanted to secure the empire's borders; its infrastructure is still visible today. It has become a major tourist destination as well as a UNESCO heritage site (Hadrian's wall: A big history, 2018). Roman architecture in the Middle East also survived into the modern ages; the ancient Roman city of Palmyra was recently destroyed in the Syrian war (McKernan, 2017). As the empire expanded and aged, different emperors added more infrastructure, temples and monuments, through both peaceful and turbulent times.

The empire arguably started to decline with the death of Emperor Alexander Severus in 235 A.D., the last Roman emperor of the Severan dynasty. Tribes from modern day Germany invaded Rome, and other parts of the empire was being attacked by other invaders. In 291 A.D., Diocletian divided the empire into east and west; he himself ruled in the east and appointed Maximian to take care of the west (Alcock, 2010). However, he renounced his title and forced Maximian to follow. Maximian's son later took Rome, and the city was thereafter conquered by Constantine. Constantine later moved to the city which today is Istanbul, and named the city after himself, Constantinople. From then on, all powers and influence left the city of Rome for good. As Emperor Constantine had converted to Christianity, Rome remained an important center of influence for this religion in the years to come.

3.2.2. Accomplishments of Ancient Rome

The Romans had a system of roads and canals to move their goods and troops around the empire. The Romans were so famous for their roads that a saying still goes “all roads lead to Rome”. Much of the infrastructure was built by the military who had the best engineers (Alcock, 2010). They built roads, bridges, temples, and aqueducts. They had simple technology such as water wheels and screw presses to assist them with their work. Many citizens had some form of trade or craft by which they could provide for a living, and goods, such as glass, were made in households or workshops. Manual labor work was basically taken care of by slaves.

The Romans were good farmers and had developed techniques such as crop rotation, and also the use of manure as fertilizers. They also had a wide variety of crops to choose from. Most farms were small in scale, and landlords tended to prefer to have multiple farms and crop diversity so they would not have all their eggs in one basket (Alcock, 2010). Farmers paid the state by either paying money or providing food to the army, thus helping the empire expand. Food transportation was important for the empire as soldiers on the fronts need food; it was, usually transported to them when they were far away on the well-functioning roads. Rome also was the most populous city in the world and it needed food from as far as Egypt to function. The Roman trade expanded to places outside of the empire, ranging from northern Europe even to China. They traded for silk, spices, ivory, pearls, and oysters. Some Romans, however, did not like trading with the east, as it was seen to be corrupting the Roman values (Alcock, 2010).

3.2.3. Support Infrastructure of Ancient Rome

Romans were famous for the roads they built throughout the empire, which allowed the fast movement of troops, traders, and messengers (Alcock, 2010). Anyone was allowed to use the roads without having to pay a toll. Roads were sometimes built by the army to keep them occupied when they were not needed for battle. It should be noted that along their roads, the Romans even had milestones to tell travelers how far they were from the closest city. The road system they built also had arched bridges and tunnels, with one

even being seven kilometers long (Alcock, 2010). In order to keep the roads safe, Augustus had bandits executed. With the network of roads, postal services were created, with chariots to deliver messages across the empire.

Narrow city streets also had complicated rules to regulate traffic, such as one way roads, and residents were required to clean the streets in front of their homes. Streets had raised stepping stones that allowed people to cross the road (like crossings today) and also points where drivers had to slow down.

Water transport was important to the ancient Romans. While most goods were transported by mules and donkeys on land, water transport was cheaper. The Tiber River was used to transport grain to the capital. Canals were also built to redirect water for easier transport. Travel and transport in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea was more hazardous as the Romans did not have compasses or sextants. There was also the threats of pirates and bad weather. They lessened the dangers by staying close to the coast, and they built lighthouses.

The ancient Romans had a very structured social class system and legal codes. During the times of the late republic, Romans gave citizenships to the men of the lands they conquered, sometimes even to an entire town at once (Alcock, 2010). When the Romans conquered a land, they accepted local cultures, customs and religions as long as they did not violate Roman law, especially matters regarding public order and taxes. As citizens, free men had certain rights and obligations. They could vote, be elected to magistrate positions, have the right to stand trial, but they also had obligations to join the army and pay taxes. The state monitored the citizens' wealth every four to five years, and different classes paid different amounts in tax.

The Roman social class system was divided into patricians, plebeians, freemen, and slaves. Patricians were elite men whose fathers also were patricians, like senators, or equestrians. Marriage to lower classes were discouraged. Plebeians were lower than patricians and they consisted of craftsmen, merchants, and others commoners of ancient Rome. Plebeians were allowed to take up positions in the magistrates and they could become wealthy through their trade, allowing them to move up the social ladder. The government and the administrative structure allowed plebeian men to move up the magistrates to higher and more important positions, both appointed or elected ones.

While the Romans had a form of a democratic system, it was not universal, and it was open to being corrupted by the wealthy (Alcock, 2010). The alternate route to moving up the social ladder was trade. Trade was often seen as risky for the elites, so it was taken up by lower classes, and it was a way for them to gain wealth.

3.2.4. Analysis

The Roman Empire, like the Chinese Tang, was a huge country covering a large landmass inhabited by many. While they shared some similarities, they also showed significantly noticeable differences.

As the Roman Empire expanded, it was supplied with increased resources and also an increased workforce, such as soldiers, farmers, and slaves. According to the Roman inheritance system, the eldest son received the biggest share of land. Thus, the younger children had to find either more land, go into other trades, or join the army. This provided the empire with a steady supply of men that were willing to join the army and fight for the empire. If the men served for twenty-five years, they would be awarded land of their own. Rome provided infrastructure services for its citizens to raise their living standards, such as aqueducts to bring water to urban centers, and roads to travel and trade on. Political upheaval of the patricians did not necessarily mean change for the classes below them, for better or worse.

The Roman republic and the empire of western Rome lasted for much longer than a single dynasty of China. There was even a term coined to describe Rome's long period of stability, *Pax Romana*, Latin for "Roman Peace" (Wasson, 2015). Unfortunately, and eventually, it collapsed just as the Tang rule did. Significant differences may be noticed, such as that China for most of its history was a monarchy, with an emperor as the head of state. Today, it is a one party system, with tight controls over many political aspects of its citizens (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). Rome, on the other hand, was a longer lasting empire, with many dictators and emperors mixed in with certain aspects of democracy. However, a significant different legacy between the civilization in East Asia and the one that dominated Europe and the Mediterranean coast is that China is still one country, after all its dynasties and the imperial family have disappeared. The Roman

Empire, on the other hand, split apart and stayed apart after that. Remnants of the physical infrastructure of Rome are still visible today (Alcock, 2010). Languages that originated from Latin flourish, and the letters the Empire provided (the so called Roman letters) make up the alphabet for most European languages today, where they spread in association with the Christian religion. The Cyrillic letters (a reminding system) originated in East Rome, and they in turn spread to countries where the people speak Slavic languages such as Russian, Serbian, Bulgarian, and Ukrainian, in association with the Greek orthodox version of Christianity.

Chinese writing is still similar to what it was in ancient times, and ancient architecture is still existing today. However, efforts to unite European countries have not seen the success of Rome again. One of the closest unification was the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy in the twentieth century had resulted in short lived occupation of stretching from Norway in Europe to Egypt in Northern Africa that did not even last 10 years (Royde-Smith & Hughes 2018).

An attempt to unify the continent is currently being done through peaceful means in the form of the European Union (EU). The Union is made up of twenty-eight countries (European Union, 2018). The EU has institutions that are available to all member countries, such as a parliament to which members can send their representatives. Most countries use a single currency, the euro, and citizens of respective countries can move, work, and trade freely within the union. Although the union has lasted for seven decades, it is showing a first sign of possible fracturing, as Great Britain has voted to leave the union (European Commission, 2016).

The question of why Rome was never able to unite as one nation again, but China could remain as one country and civilization, may be attributed to several possible reasons. One might be the structure of government. Rome was mostly ruled by an upper class (with possibilities of lower classes moving up), but to a certain degree, citizens could choose to elect representation. The leader of Rome was not necessarily a blood heir of the predecessor, and it was not always one family in charge for several generations. One could assassinate an emperor and replace him. The citizens may have had difficulties in being loyal to different leaders of various backgrounds, if they succeeded each other too rapidly. Another problem might be an issue of identity.

Because of Rome's lust for expansion, the country needed citizens to contribute to its growth and thus may have handed out citizenship too easily. Since communities were allowed to keep local traditions, there may have been problems with their identity of being Roman.

3.3. Example of the British Empire

The British Empire was the largest one in human history: at its peak, it covered 35.5 million km², almost one quarter of the world's landmass, and it ruled a quarter of the world's population (British Empire, 2018) (Taagepera, 1997) (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). The empire stretched so far that it gave rise to the phrase "the sun never sets on the Union Jack." Different from the Romans and the Tang Chinese, the British Empire's expansion was not due to land armies invading surrounding regions, but it occurred rather through ships which brought armies and settlers to faraway lands to conquer and colonize. One thing particularly missing from this empire was the lack of a common identity for all its peoples. They were not connected with roads, and the conquerors and the conquered did not relate to one another as equals. It was an empire of colonization. Trading was done both on land and sea, but trade itself seems insufficient to bring different peoples to take pride in the same nation.

The years of the beginning of the empire and when exactly it ended are under debate. It could be argued that the empire began in 1541, when it expanded into Ireland, or the settlement of Jamestown in 1607 (British Empire, 2016; 2018). The end of the empire could also be debated, as it still holds a small amount of the land it gained during its rise. It could be argued that it ended in 1997, with the handover of Hong Kong to China (British Empire, 2016; 2018).

3.3.1. History

The empire started with the westward exploration to the new world in the 15- and 1600s. Britain claimed territories as far south as Jamaica and as north as Canada. In part, the growth of the empire was a reaction to other European powers also claiming territories, and Britain was competing to have dominance in trade and territorial expansion. Trade

grew wherever the empire had a foothold. The Hudson's Bay Company established trade in Canada (British Empire, 2018). The British East India Company created trading post across the Indian subcontinent, and expanded trade through other parts of Asia (British Empire, 2016).

In North America, Jamestown became the first permanent overseas settlement of Britain, and it would later grow into thirteen colonies. In the America and the Caribbean region, the British claimed lands producing sugar, tobacco and cotton, driven by the transatlantic slave trade with slaves being brought to the American colonies from Africa. Unfortunately for the Empire, the thirteen colonies in North America rebelled, as the settlers were unhappy with British rule (Wallace, 2018), and in the ensuing American Revolution (1775–1783), the colonies established themselves to be the United States of America. Canada stayed British and experienced a surge of immigration in the aftermath of the revolution (British Empire, 2018). To balance the loss of land, Australia was discovered in 1788 and provided a new destination for British immigrants.

In India, the British East India Company expanded and ruled the Indian subcontinent and its surrounding areas for a century (British Empire, 2016). It was first granted a Royal Charter by Queen Elizabeth I in 1600, as a means to have trade privileges in India. The company had its own private army and acted as a government with governmental functions. The company also was in charge of the Opium trade in China, which in later years led to the subsequent Opium Wars (between 1834 and 1860), resulting in China losing and surrendering Hong Kong to be a British colony (British Empire, 2016). With the decline of the Mughal Empire, and the other rajas of India fighting with each other, the British had an advantage with its more advanced army. In time, all of India including today's Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Burma (Myanmar) became British. Rebellion against the rule of the East India Company started in the 1850s. One particular incident which may be considered as the straw that broke the camel's back was the use of the new Pattern 1853 Enfield rifles. The rifle came with paper cartridges that held the gunpowder soldiers need to use to reload their guns. The paper cartridges were lubricated with animal fat, and to open them, the soldiers need to bite it before they pour it in the muzzle of a gun. This caused a problem, as muslims are not allowed to eat pork and hindus were not allowed to eat cow, and both religions made

up significant portions of the army. While the company claimed that neither of those fats were used, the soldiers did not believe their commanders and refused to use their weapons. A rebellion, the Great Mutiny, broke out in 1857 (British Empire, 2016). The Indians, unlike the Americans, did not initially end imperial rule, but they did manage to end the company's rule (British Empire, 2016).

In Ancient Rome, *Pax Romana* was used to describe the Roman dominance; the British Empire also had enough dominance to claim the existence of a *Pax Britannica*. Britain was the first country in the world to enter the industrial revolution (Industrial Revolution, 2018), and having colonies to provide resources to growing demands, Britain had a head start. However, it faced competition when other western economies also went through their industrialization. This led to the breakdown of *Pax Britannica* (British Empire, 2016).

As European powers looked for new lands to expand into, they turned to Africa. While the empire initially stayed out of the continent, they eventually joined in the conquering of African lands. Britain took Egypt to control the Suez Canal in 1882, to secure trading with the east, but eventually spread to taking Sudan as well in 1899 (British Empire, 2018). Along the way, several countries were conquered, including modern day Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Malawi, and Zambia.

In 1914, when the First World War started in Europe, the colonies were dragged into the war as well. When it ended four years later in 1918, with the subsequent fall of the Ottoman Empire, Britain had the opportunity to gain more land, including Iraq and Palestine, Namibia, and New Guinea. Also, as a result of the end of the Great War, some of the colonies wanted recognition of special status known as dominions in the British Commonwealth. The Commonwealth countries consisted of Australia, Canada, Newfoundland, New Zealand, and South Africa, who had greater freedom in determining their foreign policy and could even join the League of Nations as equal members alongside Britain (British Empire, 2016; 2018). As such, when the Second World War was declared, the dominions made their own declarations of war individually. The end of the First World War not only meant the deaths of millions, but also forced the empire to liquidate its assets, build up debt, and left staffing in the colonies to be spread thin. Combined with discontent from native populations of

imperial rule, the weaknesses of the empire became more visible. In the onset of the Second World War, Japan was able to take over European colonies, including British ones like Hong Kong, and thus exposed their vulnerabilities. When the war was over in 1945, the empire had been stretched too thin and weakened in its political and financial position to continue running as an empire. In 1947, Prime Minister Clement Attlee and the labor party had given up on holding all of Britain's colonies, marking the beginning of decolonization (British Empire, 2016). The same year, India managed to declare its independence from British rule, and many more of their colonies around the world followed suit. Burma gained its independence in 1948, and the Gold Coast (Ghana) broke away in 1957 (British Empire, 2018). By the 1990s, most countries and territories had broken away from the British Empire. In 1997, the last major British colony of Hong Kong was handed over to China under the Sino-British Joint Declaration that had previously been agreed between China and Britain (Joint Declaration, 1984). With the exception of small territories like the Falklands (which the British won back from Argentina in 1982 after a short occupation and the Falklands War) (British Empire, 2016) and Gibraltar, most of the land once owned by the British Empire have evolved into self-governing sovereign states. There are just fourteen overseas territories that are claimed by the United Kingdom today (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, 2008).

3.3.2. Accomplishments of the British Empire

The British Empire spread so far across the world, that its influence can be seen everywhere. So far, it is the largest empire in human history. The British Empire gave birth to the United States of America, a nation that in itself would continue to significantly influence affairs around the world in an empire-like manner. In a sense, the empire of the U.S.A. can be regarded as a direct successor of the British empire. As a consequence of the British Empire one quarter of the world's population speaks English (Crystal, 2006). Today, fifty three member nations make up the Commonwealth across the world, all of which were former British colonies (The Commonwealth, 2018), with the combined population of 2.4 billion people. The organization is non-governmental and focuses on issues such as human rights, trade, and policy. Today, sixteen nations

are still part of the Commonwealth Realm, in which Queen Elizabeth II is the head or state (British Monarchist Foundation, 2018). Take Canada as an example: while the people of Canada elect their Prime Minister, the executive power is constitutionally held by Queen Elizabeth II, who is represented by the governor general (The Government General of Canada, 2018). The legal system used by the British, the British parliamentary system, and English common law form the legal basis of several countries today (Ferguson, 2008). The British education system is also very widespread, as well as Christianity, sports, left side driving, and even British names of places. In Hong Kong for example, there is a Victoria Peak, and a Victoria Harbor (Leung, 2016). On Hong Kong Island, there is also a Victoria Park, and in it a statue to commemorate Queen Victoria, a British Monarch of the empire (Leisure and Cultural Services Department, 2014).

The empire also had scientific advances that pushed humanity forward with the rise of the industrial revolution, whereby production could be more efficient with the help of machinery leading to mass production (Industrial Revolution, 2018). It gave rise to the steam engine, electrical power and brought forth other inventions. These include automobiles, trains, radios and other inventions crucial to human lives today. The industrial movement was soon followed up by other nations like Germany and the United States. The industrial revolution, could be the one of the most important shifts made in human history, affecting how humans live today.

3.3.3. Support Infrastructure of the British Empire

The British Empire was quite unlike the Tang Empire or ancient Rome in regard to its geography. The Tang and Roman empires expanded via conquest with land armies, gaining control of neighboring territories, and incorporating them through some common ground of culture or perhaps sense of pride to be part of something great, to the extent that the people were willing to join the army and fight for the empire, though with economic benefits. The Romans and the Tang China were connected via roads, and one could travel to another part of the country on horse or even on foot if needs be. Britain, on the other hand, was on an island, so to expand, the British needed to do so via the

oceans. Travel to other parts of the empire was difficult, and dependent on others who had the means to cross oceans. An average person from the Thirteen Colonies or Australia was not likely to see the British Isles where the power of the empire was derived from.

Even with ships, the majority of their expansion was not on the European continent, but in places all around the world. Admitted, while the British army lacked in terms of manpower, their deficiencies were more than made up for by military technology which gave them the advantage needed for supremacy. One very clear instance of this was the Battle of Rorke's Drift on January 22nd to 23rd of 1879, during the Anglo-Zulu Wars (1879). The Zulus had up to four thousands soldiers on their side while the British had only 174, 35 of whom were in the hospital (Raugh, 2011). The Zulus still were defeated and lost about 10% of their men (400) while the British lost the same percentage of just 17 soldiers.

During the time of the British Empire, Britain became the first nation in the world to enter the Industrial Revolution, which gave them an upper hand in production in comparison with all other nations (Industrial Revolution, 2018). The empire also had access to a wide variety of natural resources that could fuel their production.

3.3.4. Analysis

It appears to have been economic factors that primarily kept the empire together. The population of the United States of America, originating from the first colonies of the British Empire, with Jamestown being the first successful and permanent settlement in the New World (British Empire, 2016), was made up largely of immigrants from the British Isles. However, they did not feel connected enough to the British Empire to stay in it, and the Thirteen Colonies were the first to successfully break free from the empire. Unlike the Romans and the Tang Chinese, there seems to have been a lack of unified cultural identity within the British Empire. It was driven by economics and supported by technological advances that were ahead of other nations. However, it was not held together by a sense of identity. It is possible that each sector of the empire was too far from the capital, London, and the different peoples each had their own sense of identity

and unique culture, far too different from the British for them to feel that they wanted to belong to the empire. Just as the Americans did not enjoy the lack of representation in the British parliament, the Indians did not enjoy being ruled over by a company. Yet in spite of a lack of a common identity, the empire survived for centuries.

Each colony benefited the empire in different ways and at different times. While the colonies in the Americas provided sugar, tobacco and cotton, the British East India Company provided tea and spices, and Hong Kong was a foothold for the opium trade in China after China lost the First Opium War (British Empire, 2016). With so many people spread so far apart, it was difficult for all the different peoples of these lands to take pride in being part of the same empire. The British mostly conquered lands with people far different from them in terms of culture, they worshipped different gods and deities, ate very different foods, and spoke languages from different language families.

The decline of the empire could be attributed to the rise of nationalism in the colonies for independence, and the aftermath of the Second World War. The Second World War exposed the weaknesses of the empire, and it had put too much pressure on its financial resources and manpower. On top of that, the Second World War victory was achieved with the help of above all the Soviet Union's victory over the Germans on the eastern front but also very much by American intervention on the western front, putting the United States on top as the new superpower and successor of the British Empire (British Empire, 2016). Eventually, almost all of the acquired territories acquired left the empire, thus dismantling the largest empire in human history.

3.4. Example of the Soviet Union

The Soviet Union, or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), was a collection of states that spanned across Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The Soviet Union was established on December 30, 1922, following the end of the revolution against the rule of Tsars in 1917 (Dewdney, 2018). Although the empire started with Russian lands, it was later forcefully joined by Eastern European and Central Asian states. At its peak, the Soviet Union was regarded as a superpower driven by a communist ideology and ruled

with a one party system. The USSR was at odds with the other superpower during the Cold War era, the United States, a capitalist nation with a two-party democracy. The two superpowers competed on a number of fronts, such as the space race and the nuclear arms race. Each of the nations also tried to spread its ideology to different countries around the world, supporting different regimes. At times, the two opposite superpowers were also able to put aside their differences and negotiate. Into the 1980s and 1990s, the Soviet Union's command economy was moving in the direction of being replaced by a market driven one (Dewdney, 2018). Eventually, different states broke away from Moscow's centralized rule, and the Soviet Union officially disintegrated in 1991.

3.4.1. History

Prior to the Soviet Union, the Russian Empire was under the rule of Tsars. A Tsar's rule in the country was absolute and not restricted by any institutions. A revolution took place in 1905 as the Russian people had become displeased with their monarch. The revolution peaked in October 1905, and as a result, Tsar Nicholas II issued the October Manifesto, establishing a constitution, the promise of a parliament, civil liberties, and an end to censorship (Dewdney, 2018). The country was able to experience some economic benefits, and it became the world's largest grain and petroleum exporter. However, when the First World War broke out, Russia was dealt military defeats (despite being on the winning side), and rising food prices plus a harsh winter in 1916 and early 1917 made the monarchy still more unpopular. The anger of the people materialized into the February Revolution in 1917, that managed to force Nicholas II to abdicate (the Tsar and his family were finally assassinated in 1922); a provisional government took over, lead by Prince Georgy Lvov. The rule of the new government was however weak with soldiers deserting the military, and riots broke out across all Russia. The new government resulted in a dual power that Vladimir Lenin saw as unstable, although it was aligned with the Bolsheviks. When the government tried to arrest the Bolsheviks, they were able to portray this as an attack and had support for peacefully taking over the government.

The Bolsheviks believed in nationalizing all private property and establishing a command economy, communism. During this time period, the currency inflated 100 million times (from 1913 to 1923). Farmers did not want to sell their grain with an ever-depreciating currency, so Lenin forced them to give it up. This made the Bolsheviks unpopular. Lenin's response to that was to have the monarch and his family (who were held in prison) executed and bring on the Red Terror, whereby up to one hundred and forty thousand political opponents were executed (Dewdney, 2018). The state also enforced socialization, which ruined the economy. There were millions of premature deaths, due to violence and starving (fourteen million since 1914), on top of two millions killed in the First World War, and another two million who fled the country due to the revolution (Dewdney, 2018).

This era prior to 1922 also saw the Russian Civil War, with the White Army fighting the Red Army. Ultimately, the Red Army won back most of the territory of the Russian Empire by 1921 and on December 29, 1922, the USSR was established consisting of the Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republics (later joined by other Asian states). The country, however, was also faced with starvation, and by 1921, five million had starved to death (Dewdney, 2018). This forced Lenin to launch the New Economic Policy (NEP) and allow limited capitalism to take place in Russia. The NEP helped the country to recover its agriculture, but not other industrial sectors.

In December 1922, the same month the USSR was formed, Lenin had a stroke. Joseph Stalin, whom had worked under Lenin replaced him as the party's general secretary. Lenin died in 1924, and Stalin stayed on as the general secretary (Dewdney, 2018). Renowned individuals in the USSR like Leon Trotsky tried to stand up against Stalin's rule, but Trotsky was ultimately exiled in 1927. He was assassinated in Mexico in 1940.

Stalin tried to build a socialist economy by making plans in five year time slots, as the NEP was thought of as a temporary measure. The state took control of the empire's industries, enterprises, and agriculture, now organized in the form of collectivized farmlands. Taking farmland from the people became another class war known as "the liquidation of the kulak as a class" (Dewdney, 2018). This forceful land collectivization not only displaced an estimated ten million people, but could have also been responsible

for the deaths of two million. By 1930, seventy million people were on collective farms. Agriculture output fell under the forced socialized economy, and famines hit many areas of the union.

In spite of the disasters the country faced, the USSR was to become a major industrial power by the time the Second World War broke out. While the empire failed to meet any of the targets set by Stalin's five year plans, the industry grew at about 3.5% per year. Many restrictions had been put in place which limited the growth of industry, such as no freedom of movement of laborers, and the shrinking of real wages (Dewdney, 2018). To hide the failures of the state, propaganda was directed to lie to the people about how well things were going, and Stalin silenced political dissidents via incarcerations and executions; many died in labor camps, where the survival rate was less than 10% (Dewdney, 2018). Stalin's purge could have cost as many as five million lives.

The Soviet Union did not join the League of Nations until 1934, almost two decades after the rest of the countries who won the First World War. When the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, the empire supported the opponents of Francisco Franco who in turn were supported by Germany and Italy. Unfortunately for the Soviet Union, Franco won. With the rise of Hitler in Germany, other European powers soon sought for the support of the Soviet Union, even with a degree of disagreement. The Soviet Union and Nazi Germany signed the Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact on August 23rd, 1939. When Germany invaded Poland on September 1st just nine days later, the empire followed and invaded Poland from the east on September 17th, and later on other European states. While Finland was able to deal defeats to the Soviet Union and stop a full scale invasion, other countries were not as successful (Dewdney, 2018). While much of Europe was falling into German conquest, Stalin felt that an invasion into the empire was only a matter of time. On June 22nd 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union. The German army managed to put Leningrad under blockade and take over Kiev. The German conquest also resulted in the Soviet Union losing most of its industrial production, leading to a weapon shortage and reliance on the eastern part of the country. Despite the Soviet hardships, the Germans fell short of taking Moscow and were pushed back by December. The offensives later launched by both sides had their failures. The

last one launched by Germany was in July 1943, ending in Soviet victory, the decisive blow to the German army was the fight at Stalingrad. The Soviet Union was able to push back the Nazis from the east and made it to Berlin by 1945. By the end of the war, the Soviet death toll was over twenty million, with eight to nine million of them being soldiers. The victors of the war had split Germany in half, with the Soviet Union taking the Eastern and United States, France and Britain taking the western part (the capital Berlin was met with the same fate of getting divided, and later saw the construction of the Berlin Wall).

The end of the Second World War unfortunately marked a new war for the empire: the Cold War. While the Soviet forces liberated Eastern European states from Nazi occupation, the newly liberated states were forced into Soviet dominance. Communism became the primary ideology for the new satellite states. The other victorious country from the Second World War, the US had a prevailing ideology of capitalism. In 1946, the British Prime Minister coined the term “iron curtain”, which would be used to describe the war border drawn between the communist states from the rest of Europe. The Marshall Plan that helped to rebuild Europe proved successful for the economy of the continent (Cold War, 2017). Stalin continued to purge dissidents in his nation, and once again imposed a centralized economy that had now expanded into the new communist states.

Stalin’s death in 1953 and Khrushchev’s new leadership brought about a change in policy. Khrushchev de-Stalinized the empire by losing up control, especially in terms of economics and censorship. His foreign policy was also shifted as his ties with China soured. Significant advances were made, as the Soviet Union was the first country to put a man in space (Dewdney, 2018). What is perhaps the most significant event of his era was the Cuban Missile Crisis. Nuclear missiles were going to be installed in Cuba, threatening the US. The two countries were on the brink of a nuclear war, but the two leaders were able to set aside their differences with no nuclear missiles placed in Cuba. While not attacking the US may have saved the world, Khrushchev had to face domestic lot criticism, and eventually he lost his position.

In the years to follow, the empire’s various institutions were starting to fail, and states like Czechoslovakia and Poland started to move towards independence. Economic

policies to revive the country's economy had failed. The Berlin wall fell in 1989 (Berlin Wall, 2018), and the Iron Curtain that Churchill referred to disintegrated, reuniting East Germany with the West. Other states in the empire soon followed suit. Most other European and Central Asian states left in 1990 and the empire officially ended in December 26, 1991.

3.4.2. Accomplishments of the Soviet Union

The Soviet Union brought about the end to the reign of Tsars in Russia. However, with the fall of the Russian Empire, the country was inherited by the Soviet Union and expanded from there. The empire installed a communist centralized economic system, which in the end appears to have bankrupted the empire. Although various economic reforms were made during the latter part of Soviet period, they appear to have been insufficient to save the empire. The impact of the Soviet Union is not recognizable only at community and societal levels, but also on the environment, even visible out in space. The Aral Sea was once the world's fourth largest inland lake, but due to poor water and economic management during the Soviet times, the lake was severely drained and has lost most of its area. However the empire had some significant accomplishments, such as being the first country in the world to put humans in space. The empire also had the largest nuclear arsenal in the world; the remnants of empire, Russia, still has the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons today, numbering at over 7000 (Kristensen, 2016). However, the most defining factor of the empire, a communist economy to stand up against a capitalist economy, no longer exists to the same scale that it had before. With the exceptions of North Korea and Cuba, which still have a centralized communist economies (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018), the rest of the world has embraced market forces and capitalism in some form (although China and Vietnam still are ruled by single, communist parties). While not exactly created by the empire directly, NATO, a military alliance that was founded in response to stop the spreading of communism, still exists today.

3.4.3 Support Infrastructure of the Soviet Union

The Soviet Union inherited the area which once was the Russian Empire after the monarch was dethroned. The empire had a very good agricultural sector, and was able to export its excess food and feed much of the inhabitants of the empire, despite being so far from the equator (having extreme seasonal variation). The empire was also able to develop a powerful industrial sector that was able to supply weaponry to the empire, sufficient enough to defeat Germany and its allies in both World War I and World War II. The empire had plenty of resources to invest into research, development, and weapons. With the ability to put satellites and humans into space, and having the largest nuclear arsenal in the world, the largest landmass in the world (after the British Empire started to shrink following the Second World War), it is undeniable that the Soviet Union was a superpower that was on a par, if not more powerful, than its competitor, the United States. Unlike the British Empire, the Soviet Union was one connected landmass. Cities and towns were connected by roads and rail. While the country was connected, still its people's movements and economic activities were restricted.

As the empire was a one-party state, the leader was chosen by the party. The empire was a multiethnic state, trying to establish equality between all citizens into a classless society. However, full equality did not materialize, various classes developed anyway, on basis of party membership and other factors. This organization resulted in uprisings throughout the empire's lifespan.

3.4.4. Analysis

The lifespan of this particular empire was shorter than that of the others. The primary unifying factor holding this empire together was the ideology. The empire had plenty of area which gave it an advantage in power, a large landmass, many natural resources, an advanced science and technology, and a large population. However, it met with constant turmoil, famine, suppression of economic activity and censorship of speech; thus, the empire did not appear to have a promising future. If the empire had been able to provide a higher living standard, then perhaps there would have been more tolerance for a proletarian dictatorship. However, the empire was not able to produce enough funds to

sustain itself. From the beginning until the end, the life standard for the citizens of this empire did not rise as quickly as among the surrounding world population. This fact created dissatisfaction, since although the inhabitants of the Soviet empire were not allowed to travel, they still received enough information about life in the so called free world to realize that they had a disadvantaged life. Therefore, in retrospect, it is obvious that the Soviet Empire was doomed to become a failed social experiment.

The three previous empires discussed did all grow for a period of time, then faced some downfall. The USSR's collapse was the fastest and, when it happened, it was very unexpected. It was also an empire that did not significantly grow in its time, it remained stable and then, suddenly, it disintegrated.

The USSR did not depend on a conquest of new lands in the same way as the others empires. The Eastern European countries that the Soviet army liberated from Nazi rule during the end of WWII were incorporated into the East bloc and fell behind the so called iron curtain, but they did not become parts of the Soviet Union as such.

While the ideology was the one unifying factor for the empire, the economics of the empire was mismanaged. The failure to manage the economy is probably the reason why this empire existed for a shorter period than the other empires discussed in this context.

One only needs to take a look at a world map to realize that Russia, the largest state of the former USSR, is still to its area the largest country in the world today. In other words, the backbone of the empire is still standing and will continue to develop and evolve. Today, Russia is a less multi-ethnic state and largely composed of ethnic Russians, who make up 77.7 % of the country's population (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). They still hold the greatest nuclear arsenal (Kristensen, 2016). Regarding their economy, while they have the 7th largest economy in the world, they have a negative GDP growth and a negative population growth rate (Central Intelligence Agency, 2018). As such, they have the potential to grow and develop their economy, with non-centralized market forces that the USSR spent much of its existence fighting.

4. Comparison of All the Empires

None of the four empires discussed above exists any longer. The first three had leaders that went out and conquered lands to add to their empire, and only the USSR mostly inherited its landmass. As with many animals, humans have advantages of being in numbers. Some predators are pack hunters and work together to survive, while many herbivores stick together to have safety in numbers. Humans, who are omnivores, have come together for both reasons, and have even developed specializations in skills. A community that stays together can produce more food and a surplus of other items, not perhaps necessary for survival, like pottery or art. Such developments formed the basis for specialized cultural characteristics, including arts, music, sciences, and literature. It seems that the more that a society or culture achieves, the more it wants to achieve further, and this feeds a desire for expansion.

One way to look at a society is looking at it as an economic system. It manages the factors of production (land, labor, capital, and entrepreneurship) to produce goods and services to help a society thrive. Thus, as an empire expands, it can acquire more land and more people to produce more goods and services. In order to survive and thrive, a society needs to manage both its resources and the people. The empires examined had either covered a significant portion of the world's landmass or were ruling over a significant percentage of the world's population, or both. However, they all collapsed, even the British Empire and the USSR both ended just a few years before the new millennium; they could not make it to year 2000, but people born in the 1980s and 1990s still have memories of them. Those who witnessed the last major British colony – Hong Kong – to break away from the empire are still alive. One individual to mention in particular is Prince Charles, the next in line for the British Throne, who was in Hong Kong for the handover ceremony of the colony to China (Vine, 2017).

The question raised is why would even the largest empire fall? It could be a question of them not having enough room to expand. To get a better understanding of the various empires' size, one can measure them in square megameter (Mm^2). One Mm is 1000 km; therefore one Mm^2 is 10^6 km^2 (Taagepera, 1997). The total land area of the world is about 133 Mm^2 . In the time of the Tang Dynasty at its height, the empire covered an area

of 5.4 Mm² (Taagepera, 1997), the Roman Empire covered slightly less, a total of 5 Mm² (Taagepera, 1979). The British Empire on the other hand covered an area of over 35 Mm², and the Soviet Union covered 22.8 Mm². With the Eastern European communist countries included, the area must have exceeded 30 Mm².

First, once can look at how empires peaked. As the Tang Empire reached a plateau after its growth, it experienced a time period of peace, prosperity, and stability. Things in the Tang Empire were going so well that capital punishment was abolished at one point, a punishment that is even permitted today in modern China. The first signs of weakness for the empire was the An Lushan Rebellion. Rome also expanded slowly over the years and it was able to provide infrastructure that bettered the lives of the people, such as roads and aqueducts.

Romans also saw the start of their downfall when they were not invading but were in turn being invaded. Internal politics and corruption were weaknesses that the empire suffered from, and gave a chance for smaller nations and tribes to invade them. Eventually, Constantine moved their capital away from Rome to Constantinople, and the empire soon became divided and started to shrink in the years that followed. Another likely reason for the decline was the new religion, Christianity, also introduced by Constantine: It accepted both free men and slaves, which led to the abolishment of slavery. The Roman Empire had to a great extent been relying on slaves as a free work force which did not receive any salary. When slavery was abolished, it was a major blow for the production of goods and services.

The British Empire was the one that grew the most. With the exception of the American Revolution, the empire never saw a major loss of land when rising to its peak. Its weakness of being overstretched was fully exposed in the Second World War, and soon afterwards it was faced with a wave of decolonization. However, in the years between the two World Wars, the empire had ran out of room to grow.

Besides overstretching, another reason for the downfall of the British Empire was probably the increasingly negative attitude towards colonization which swept over the world after WWII. The colonies started to demand independence, and it became too costly for the British to have an army big enough to keep them in line. The British themselves came to realize that it was not worth the trouble.

Finally, the USSR is the empire that had the shortest lifespan on the list of empires analyzed here, and it had the most sudden collapse of all. Communism was a great social and economic experiment, which turned out to be unsuccessful. It spent too much of its tax money and resources on producing weapons and keeping up a large army. Perhaps if it had allocated less resources on creating weapons, and had not centralized so many aspects of its peoples' lives, or taxed the fruits of their labor, it could have lasted longer. One distinct aspect of this empire was that it never really grew in size. It stayed more or less the same size until its end.

The empires all peaked and fell. Even the best systems seem to fail over time. The Tang empire weakened as its military weakened. The Romans saw an increase in invasions as it weakened internally. The British overstretched their resources and grew into an empire that was too large to handle. The USSR ran out of resources to redistribute and failed to produce more. None of the empires were sustainable in the long run.

The most flexible model was the one of the British Empire's, as it ran on trade and economic ties, and not so much on the similarity of a group of people, unlike the Romans and Tang Chinese. It actually had a very diverse landscape that comprised of many cultures and peoples. The people's opinion about the colonizers, and the prejudice or oppression they faced were indifferent to the leadership in London for much of the time; all that mattered for the colonizers was that the trade would continue. A change had to come when the colonized people realized that an uprising leading to independence was possible. The British had focused too much on trade, and ignored the will of the different peoples they subordinated. This fact led to the British Empire's downfall. In a sense, both the Roman and the British Empires were built on oppression of large groups of people: the Romans of the slaves and the people in the occupied regions, and the British on the colonized people, which they disdained. The American Revolution began because the Thirteen Colonies were unhappy with the lack of representation in parliament (Wallace, 2018), and became the first to breakaway from the empire. On the subcontinent of India when the pressure of the British East India Company's disrespect became too much for the people to accept. While that rebellion was crushed and the company dismantled, the second incident that was too much for the

Indians was the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919, an incident that was believed to have turned even the moderate Indians against British rule (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2014). India's independence in 1947 had a snowball effect for the empire, and shortly after, in the period after WWII, almost all of its colonies were leaving one by one, with Hong Kong being the last larger area to leave. Some small colonies still exist.

The Soviet Union's system seems to have focused too much on the ideology of communism. The ideology of forcefully implementing a centralized economy does not seem to work. Primarily, the Soviet system disabled entrepreneurship, a key factor of production. The state played a key role in dictating how the different factors of production should be managed. It appears that the combination of centralizing the economy and ignoring the wishes of the people failed the empire and ultimately led to its sudden collapse.

The circumstances and the systems that ran the four empires all differed. The Tang Empire inherited and fixed the already existing land that was left by the previous dynasty, Sui. In short, the new dynasty took over the remains of the old one, and brought peace and stability to the land. That dynasty lasted for 289 years. The Romans started in modern day Italy and went on to conquer other lands. They did not inherit anything, and their empire was built with one single city as its starting point. The Roman Republic lasted for 482 years, and the Roman empire that followed it lasted for 502 years. The British Empire, whereby Britain went out and conquered much of the world, lasted for 390 years. The Soviet Empire, inheriting what was once the Russian Empire, lasted only for a mere 69 years.

It appears that an empire's lifespan is determined by the governmental system it has, the economic system that runs it, and the landmass (including resources in terms of workforce and natural resources) that it covers. Yet none of the mentioned empires have survived to this day. The empires, no matter how well they were run by the leadership, did not last forever, be it a republic, a dictatorship, or a monarchy. They all seem to have overstretched themselves; they are prone to corruption and rebellion in one form or another, and eventually they collapsed. The larger an empire becomes, the more complex it becomes. Eventually it would be so complex that one individual would have difficulty understanding the entire system of the empire. Even if these empires do find

an equilibrium, a system that is best suited for the circumstances of the landscape at a specific time, it cannot last forever, as the world is constantly changing. The sources of income an empire depends on may run out. Technology may evolve and shift the balance of power, corruption may build up over time, and oppressed masses of people may demand their freedom. If a large extent of the citizens are unhappy with their conditions, the empire is doomed. Even flexible empires are not flexible enough to survive changes that are too big.

One may hypothesizes that smaller systems, while having a much smaller impact on the world, are more flexible and are more adaptable to change. Certain smaller human organizations, with limited resources and limited growth, may somehow have found an equilibrium within their environment, and some of them may in fact out live the large empires. In the next section, the longest lasting businesses in the world will be analyzed.

5. World's Oldest Businesses

This section will explain where some of the oldest businesses in the world are located, what they do for profit, as well as it will provide a brief history of them. All of these businesses have been around for over a millennium, and they have outlived the largest empires in the world. An analysis of them would provide a greater understanding about how such organizations maintain their longevity.

5.1. Staffelter Hof

Staffelter Hof Wineries was established in 862 A.D. in Kröv, Germany. The Winery started as a donation to the monastery of Stavelot (Klein, 2018). Thus, the winery is named after Stavelot, Hof meaning the winery of Stavelot. It is believed that the winery existed well before the documented year, and it could date back to the third or fourth century A.D., as Roman tiles and glass artifacts from that time have been uncovered. The current foundation of the main building is of a Roman origin. However, no records date back before the year 862 A.D. It is know that the property was donated to the

monastery of Stavelot by King Lothair II (835-869 A.D.) of Lotharingia in 862 A.D. The winery provided wine for the king, but it was also able to sell wine for profit. The monastery that founded the company were in charge of the business for the coming centuries. It was finally secularized by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1805, who bought the establishment from the French government.

While it has been a long running business, the last three generations have not had any intention of keeping Staffelter Hof as a family business. Over the last three generations, there also have been some changes, namely that the business has moved from purely wholesale to more retail, abandoning the agricultural side of the production and growing more for selling the ready product, wine (Klein, 2018). It has started to export wine, and it has established a guesthouse. Lately, the business has had to modernize, such as redecorating the guesthouse and buying machinery to help with the wine production.

5.2. Sean's Bar

Sean's Bar is located in the town of Athlone, Ireland, and it has been recognized as the oldest pub in the world by the Guinness Book of Records ("History of the Ireland's oldest pub", 2018). Around 900 A.D., a man called Luain Mac Luighdeach started an inn in the region. Others soon settled around this inn, they started their businesses there and formed the town of Athlone. Sean's Bar has been documented to date back to 900 A.D., and coins have been found at the site dating back to the ninth century. The walls are made of materials that also go back to the ninth century. Little is known about the specific history of the pub and its founders, as the pub had many different owners and employees over the years. It is not a family business and other than its age, it runs and functions like any other pub in Ireland with no special status. Small changes have been made as far as the current management is aware of, but nothing too significant, with overall pub functions staying the same. Small changes include following and modifying drinking trends, a smoking ban, updating of music, making a presence on social media, and expanding toilets for women (Delaney, 2018). In recent years, the bar has been visited by various celebrities like Larry Hagman, Nathan Carter and John C. Reilly. Currently, the business plans to expand the business into exporting their whisky.

5.3. Hōshi Ryokan

Hoshi Ryokan is one of the world's oldest businesses, and it is located in Komatsu, Japan. The ryokan (a traditional Japanese inn, which includes a Japanese hot bath) has been around for over thirteen hundred years and it has been visited by members of the imperial family. The business was established in 718 A.D. by a man called Daisuke Yasumi (Hoshi, 2018). The owner took an interest in herbs and hot springs, and he was a devoted buddhist. These interests led him to establish a hot spring and inn for travellers. Being a monk, he could not get married and have children of his own, but he could adopt. His adopted children had descendants, which continued to run the business. Currently Hoshi Ryokan is a family business in the 46th generation. The children of the current owners likely to continue with the business. Many employees in the past also worked for the ryokan for a long time, some maybe even for life. Over the history of the business and the history of Japan, the ryokan industry has changed, and so has Hoshi Ryokan. The fastest years of change came after the Second World War. Most of the changes are updates relating to modern technology, especially IT-related technology. One concern for the business currently is the fact that many ryokans in Japan at the moment are going out of business due to competition from modern hotels. Even with the competition, the business does not have plans to make any significant changes in the near future (Hoshi, 2018). Ryokans are an important part of Japanese culture and they seem to have a niche of their own. Foreign tourists enjoy staying at ryokans. Hoshi Ryokan is one of the oldest inns in the world. Still, the business has no special status, and get no benefits from the government.

5.4. Analysis

All of the businesses that have been analyzed can be dated back to the first millennium A.D., and they have well outlived the empires previously described. These businesses share some characteristics. They are all small businesses, not exceptionally well known and they never were large businesses. They provide simple services and products. At

least one of them is a well-documented family business. The businesses, unlike the empires, are not ambitious or overly eager to expand. They have changed little over the years and adapted to whatever changes in society that are occurring, and updating their organization to meet the demands of society and the market to keep their business afloat. They have survived political and social upheavals, and, unless something drastic happens to their industry or their community, they can be expected to continue to exist and adapt to whatever the future holds. Small businesses, unlike larger human organizations, have fewer people and fewer resources to manage, and the lack of excessive bureaucracy brings flexibility. Size and flexibility seem to be the two key factors that affect an organization's chances of survival. Perhaps just like organisms in nature, human organizations are not different. While dinosaurs once ruled the earth, it was the larger species that were wiped out by an asteroid, while smaller organisms were able to survive to this day. Even the closest relatives of dinosaurs, birds, are not nearly as large as most of the dinosaurs. Therefore, one could argue that there is a natural selection not just for species, but for human organizations as well; if an organization does not adapt to change, it may be wiped out regardless of how large and mighty it appears to be at present.

Not much is known about small businesses, as they have not been studied as extensively as large businesses, such as Fortune 500 companies, or empires that affect the lives of many. In some cases, the current owners of the world's oldest businesses themselves are unsure of their own history. What should be learned from them is that the true secret to longevity is not to be overly ambitious to expand, not to become excessively large but to be flexible and adaptive to change. One also need to have a product that people will needs, always, regardless of technological, societal or political change. One needs as little bureaucracy as possible, as in a family business. If businesses fail to find their equilibrium, they will not last.

6. Conclusion

All the businesses discussed above still exist, and all of them have over one thousand years of history. Although their existence arguably had no significant impact on the world, they still manage to outlive the empires previously discussed. They have found an equilibrium that allows them to exist in the face of all the never-ending, ongoing changes in the world.

The empires were systems that managed millions of people across a large landmass. Yet, in spite of all the resources, influence and support they had, they could not create a system that could last. The empires expanded, and they required a high level of complexity to exist. A system needs rules and regulations to manage people and resources. While individuals may not like bureaucracy, and may find rules and regulations restrictive, rules are needed to manage the different issues that arise from managing a large number of people and resources. It must be determined who acquires or own what resources and under what conditions, and a system for conflict resolution, in case any disagreement should occur. Without such rules, the system would not function, it would not be able to produce, and it would cease to exist.

Over time, in one way or another, systems will falter, be it corruption, rebellion or bankruptcy, and the large organizations that had so much influence on the world have collapsed. One could argue they had become too complex, they could not manage themselves any longer, which lead to their respective downfalls.

The small businesses on the other hand, are not large systems, and they have no significant influence on the world as the empires did. The businesses analyzed had no special protection or privileges from governments, and they were receiving no benefits. They were all exposed to the changes of the world and survived them, while others did not. The winery Staffelter Hof was not decimated by war or economic and political and social changes in Europe over the past millennia, and the inn Hoshi Ryokan survived dynasty changes in feudal Japan and was fortunate enough not to be in the one of the cities destroyed in the Second World War.

A lesson that may be learned from the businesses compared to the empires is that rapid and constant expansion, fueled by the desire for expansion cannot last forever. A

system that needs constant growth eventually falters. A system that fails to see changes and adapt to them will be destroyed by them. One can always speculate about what would have happened had something along a specific empire's history been different. Had the British Empire given parliamentary representation for example, perhaps the thirteen colonies would not have rebelled, and the United States of America would not have been founded, or, perhaps the colonies were too far away from the British Isles and a rebellion was bound to happen anyway. Regardless, all of the empires had risen, peaked and declined.

The world's oldest businesses on the other hand had limited resources and limited people to manage. They are small systems, and they have not had ambitious plans to expand. They provide services and products in a limited scope. A small system, like a small family business, is much easier to handle. If there are any faults in their systems, they are easy to amend without much trouble. Unlike an empire or maybe even a multinational corporation, small businesses can implement changes with greater ease due to the lack of extensive bureaucracy. They just need to, and so far have succeeded, adapt to the changes that the world has to offer. Thus, the world may change over time, but if a group of people can come together and form a small system that finds equilibrium, history shows that some seem to have found the key to longevity.

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