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## Chapter 16 Response

Russia today has not recovered from the collapse of the Soviet Union, and is currently engaged in a war of aggression with Ukraine that will only accelerate what appears to be a death spiral of the Russian nation. Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, there was hope that it would become a functional democracy with thriving capitalist policies, but instead it has become a kleptocracy with an autocrat at the helm. The Russian people have suffered greatly under Putin, and the Russian economy has been in a state of decline for years. While this cannot be solely blamed on geography, it plays a notable part.

First and foremost, the Eastern part of Russia is almost entirely uninhabited. This is due to the fact that much of it is a *frozen wasteland*, filled with beautiful natural landscapes, but not much else. The sole exception to this is the quantities of oil and natural gas that Russia has been blessed with - this has become a double-edged sword though, as there has been little incentive for Russia to become anything but a petrostate. While Russia might be able to survive on oil and gas for a while, it is not a sustainable economic model, and oil and gas don't do economic growth in any meaningful way in comparison to technology or innovation.

Secondly, the oligarchic nature of Russian politics has meant that widescale civil repression has become the norm, with near total state control of media and suppression of political opponents that might be harmful to Putin or his backers. No great state has ever been built on these foundations, though plenty have been destroyed by them - while the propaganda efforts of Putin's regime have led to high popularity in Russia, this popularity is built on fragile pillars that are corroding under the mobilization of the population and economy for war. Putin's gamble that Ukraine would fold under the pressure of Russian aggression has failed, and mobilization for total-war against a country puny in comparison has been a black-mark on Russian theoretical power in the geopolitical sphere.

In conclusion, Russia has entered a steady decline that will only accelerate as the world moves away from fossil fuels and the Russian economy is forced to adapt to a changing world. It is unlikely that Russia will truly maintain the first-class-power status it inherited from the Soviet Union. While it is possible that Russia will be able to maintain its current status quo for a while, it is unlikely that it will be able to do so for long, and the Russian people will suffer for it.