

tical study, unwittingly strengthened the Malthusian argument that the poor were a breed apart. Mayhew, a journalist, playwright, and literary jack-of-all-trades, professed to discuss all of London's poor; in fact, he dwelt only on those who couldn't or wouldn't work. His vignettes of criminals and street people, whose colorful and often violent behavior lent an exotic touch to his data, gave dramatic force to the notion that the world of poverty was a separate, alien culture.

The contribution of 19th-century novelists to the poverty debate was perhaps an ambiguous one, as Himmelfarb shows in her discussion of Charles Dickens (1812–70). There is no question that the great novelist endowed the down-and-out in his works with a complexity of character and situation previously reserved, in fiction, only for the rich. Yet the case of Dickens shows that what authors intend is not always what readers see. Though he tried to emphasize moral rather than social distinctions, his characters were cited—and still are—as typical examples of the rich and poor. Try as a novelist might to depict the poor sympathetically, more often than not it was the picturesque criminal, not the dutiful laborer, who remained in the reader's mind. Even if the novelist sought to uphold a more generous social vision (such as that of Adam Smith), he sometimes ended up reinforcing the Malthusian picture of the poor as a separate race.

Himmelfarb's even-handed presentation of all points of view, her ability to plumb each writer's position and to uncover its core assumptions about human nature, and her magisterial synthesis of Enlightenment and Victorian thought make this book an invaluable guide to England's path from the Elizabethan Poor Laws to the Welfare State. Her greatest accomplishment, however, is as an advocate—not of one point of view or another, but of the argument that *ideas* can and do shape the course of history. Without straining to do so, she also sheds light on the many sides of our own contemporary debates over the causes and cures of poverty.

—Helen Nader

**THE GRAND STRATEGY  
OF THE SOVIET UNION**

by Edward N. Luttwak  
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One school of American Kremlinologists has long held that the behavior of the Soviet Union abroad, and particularly its use of force, is largely *defensive*, a repeated response to Western challenges. That view, argues Luttwak, a Fellow at Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies, is not only blurred but ostrich-like—and he offers an historical overview of Russian foreign policy to discredit it.

Since the time of Stalin, Luttwak insists, Marxist-Leninist ideology and the revolutionary vision of international communism have been cynically exploited by Soviet leaders to justify Russian imperial ambitions. Indeed, the Soviet Union has become a classic military empire, using, as did the Romans, a network of "client-states, nominally independent and

charged with the administrative and political governance of lands effectively dominated by the empire but not annexed."

Why this turn to expansionism, particularly in countries that border on or are close to the Soviet Union? Luttwak answers that the failure of the Soviets to prove the superiority of their economic system—and, thus, the efficacy of their ideology—has driven them to develop their military strength and to seek respect by becoming the world's Number One superpower. Increased pessimism about the long-range future of their regime will make Soviet leaders even less hesitant to employ this strength. Comparable sentiments, he claims, underlay Japan's decision to attack Pearl Harbor in 1941. I find the parallel shaky. But Luttwak is persuasive when he argues that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is totally irreconcilable with the apologists' model of a defensive and prudent Soviet Union.

Not surprisingly, Luttwak believes that the only hope for containing the Russian empire is an alert, unyielding United States, unequivocal in its military support of Western Europe and Japan. One can agree with the prescription without fully accepting the diagnosis, however. Characterizing the Soviet Union as "the Russian military empire" may illuminate certain aspects of Soviet behavior, but, in the end, it distorts reality (and history) for the sake of coherence. Among other things, Luttwak largely ignores the fact that the Soviet Union's military growth has been influenced as much by fear, justified or not, of external threats as by internal economic failures.

Luttwak is certainly correct in observing that "the military strength of the empire of the Russians is still most strongly felt on land, where there is direct territorial contiguity." But imperial aggrandizement has not traditionally been the only, or even the main, reason for Russia's dependence upon land forces; the need to defend its vulnerable borders has been at least as strong a factor. The problem here, as elsewhere, is that Luttwak's knowledge of Russian history is spotty. Russian expansion, he claims, has taken place at the expense of weaker powers with only three exceptions: Russia's encounters with the Ottoman Empire in the late 17th century, with Napoleon in 1812, and with Germany between 1941 and '45. Yet he fails to mention the Russians' 200-year struggle (from roughly 1540 to 1740) with Sweden, which was then surely the stronger power.

Luttwak is an astute analyst of contemporary military affairs, but he is not really a Soviet expert. Were he one, he would not write that "today Soviet rulers are themselves almost all Russians (or Byelorussians)," a statement that mysteriously disposes of the many Ukrainians in key leadership positions, including Politburo members Konstantin Chernenko and Vladimir Shcherbitskiy. Luttwak has performed a valuable service by showing the weak points of one Western theory of Soviet foreign policy behavior. But his scholarship is insufficient to sustain the model that he offers in its stead. Unintentionally, his book serves to remind us of the answers that we still need.

—*Jiri Valenta*