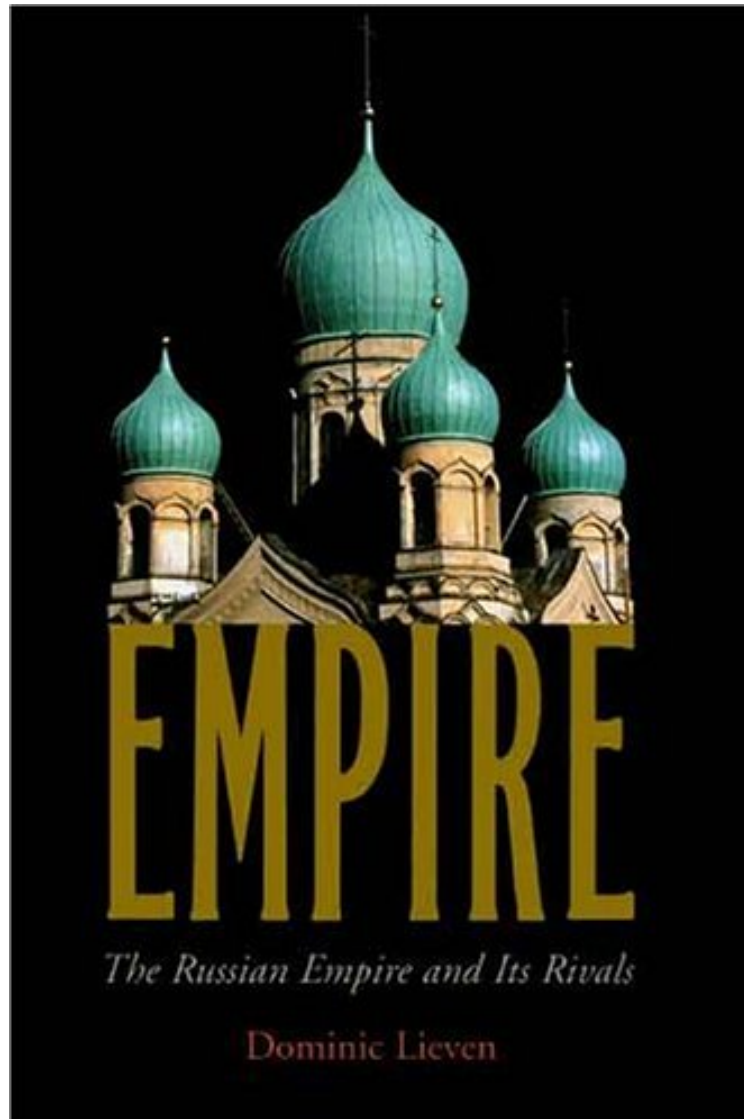


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Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals

Dominic Lieven

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Dominic Lieven : Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Empire: The Russian Empire and Its Rivals:

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Within an inch of truthBy Milos TominLieven's book is a rare animal among the industry of histories explaining Russia and post-Soviet Russia. By putting his main subject within a historical span of several thousand years through including chapters on China and Rome, Lieven throws light on some universal aspects which were common to all empires and those that were unique.That said this book tells more about

traditional land based empires (Russia, China, Rome) than examples of emporocratic ones like Britain and Netherlands in the broadest sense. Chapters on "After Empire" show the legacy of Soviet policy towards minority nations and why they failed, this is also interesting in view of break up of communist Yugoslavia which is commented upon in several chapters. Lieven also makes interesting comparisons between Ottoman and Austrohungarian empires. As an overview of what makes an empire an "Empire" and how this idea relates to current European political trends this book is indispensable. Suggested as supplement reading of a thorough historical analysis from an altogether different perspective on imperial idea is Julius Evola's *Revolt Against the Modern World*. 9 of 17 people found the following review helpful. Hits and Misses in History Writing By Ralph Schwegman If history writing is facts, dates, figures, this book is a winner. It contains a sufficient number of insights to make it a useful history. But it is more pedestrian in analysis, surprisingly self-referential in its style (and perhaps the style of thinking,) and turgid in organization, jumping backwards and forwards in time and topic. Its writing style is tedious, plodding, unimaginative, clumsy, almost as if Lieven were writing in a language other than his own. That begins on page vii of the Preface when the author says about himself, "the historian found little difficulty orientating (sic) himself." Where was his editor? Where were John Murray or Yale University Press? Where was his English teacher? I'd be glad to compare editing notes in gruesome detail.

How does one empire differ from another? Why do empires rise and fall? What has made empires flourish in some eras and regions of the world but not in others? In this broad and ambitious book, Dominic Lieven explores the place and meaning of empire from ancient Rome to the present. The central focus of the book is Russia and the rise and fall of the Tsarist and the Soviet Empires. The overwhelming majority of works on empire concentrate on the European maritime powers. Lieven's comparative approach highlights the important role played by Russia in the expansion of Europe and its rise to global dominance. The book contrasts the nature, strategies, and fate of empire in Russia with that of its major rivals, the Habsburg, Ottoman, and British empires, and considers a broad range of other cases from ancient China and Rome to the present-day United States, Indonesia, India, and the European Union. Many of the dilemmas of empire persist in today's world, and Lieven throws new light on some of the most intractable current examples, including the crisis in the former Soviet Union, the troubles in Ulster, and ethnic cleansing in the Balkans. This major examination of the imperial experience presents history on the grandest scale, combining formidable erudition with stimulating readability.

From Publishers Weekly Lieven's compelling assessment of the forces behind the decline of political imperialism tend to sink from view in his dense, far-reaching historical investigation. The first chapter's discussion of the shifting definitions of empire, though at times taxing to the reader's attention, is astute and evenhanded. With the czarist and Soviet empires as his primary focus, Lieven (*Russia's Rulers Under the Old Regime*) bolsters his study with treatments of various empires, beginning with ancient China and Rome. His expertise on czarist Russia informs the book's outstanding section on this period. Lieven, professor at the London School of Economics, argues that the Russian empire was stronger than the declining Ottoman and Hapsburg empires and, in the 19th century, exerted power comparable to that of the British Empire. He explicates the role of World War I in the downfall of the czarist regime cleanly and convincingly: wartime preoccupation and weakening of Russian elites and of capitalist Europe precluded significant counterrevolution. And while a variety of external and domestic forces contributed to the demise of the Soviet empire, Lieven attributes much to the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev. In the end, he says, the U.S.S.R. was likely the last empire in the strict sense of the word: "The lesson of Soviet history is that empire does not pay in today's world, even in terms of its own narrow priorities of power." The book's broad, scholarly worldview will appeal to a readership of academics and lay historians. (Mar.) Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal British author Lieven, a Russian scholar who has written a biography of Nicholas II and other works on pre-Soviet Russia, here offers an ambitious, even groundbreaking book. After a review of Rome and Byzantium, a glance at China, and a rejection of the notion of a U.S. empire, Lieven zeroes in on four historical exemplars: the British, Ottoman, Habsburg, and Russian (both tsarist and Soviet) empires. The two Russian ones engage the lion's share of his attention. He is defensive about the difficulties in defining his subject, but his fears that he will be criticized as "a poor Russianist" for his audacity are unwarranted. He has in fact done a very impressive job, using shrewd judgments to draw upon an extensive bibliography. His final section, "After Empire," is particularly timely, offering much food for thought. For public and academic libraries. Robert H. Johnston, McMaster Univ., Hamilton, ON Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. "A book which is provocative and wise . . . a very great intellectual achievement" -- John Lloyd, *Financial Times* "[A] far-reaching historical investigation. Astute and evenhanded." -- Publishers Weekly "[A]n ambitious study This is a much-needed volume, and it is a genuine pleasure to read." -- Steven Merritt Miner, *New York Times Book* "[A]n artful argument about the nature of the Russian empire. . . . [A]n impressive piece of English intellectual showmanship, full of insight." -- Robert G. Kaiser, *Washington Post Book World* "[A] fascinating and sweeping study that straddles the disciplines of history and political science. . . . Highly recommended. -- Choice [A] work of majestic sweep. . . . Heavy with erudition, Lieven's work brims with grand judgements. -- Stephen Kotkin,

