

# Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia

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*Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* is a 2014 book by Karen Dawisha. Published by Simon & Schuster, it chronicles the rise of Vladimir Putin during his time in Saint Petersburg in the 1990s. In the book, Dawisha exposes how Putin's friends and coworkers from his formative years have accumulated mass amounts of wealth and power. Although Putin was elected with promises to rein in the oligarchs who had emerged in the 1990s, Dawisha writes that Putin transformed "an oligarchy independent of, and more powerful than, the state into a corporatist structure in which oligarchs served at the pleasure of state officials, who themselves gained and exercised economic control... both for the state and for themselves." As a result, 110 individuals control 35% of Russia's wealth, according to Dawisha. Whereas scholars have traditionally viewed Putin's Russia as a democracy in the process of failing, Dawisha argues that "from the beginning Putin and his circle sought to create an authoritarian regime ruled by a close-knit cabal... who used democracy for decoration rather than direction."

## Putin's Palace

2021. Retrieved 30 January 2021. \* Dawisha, Karen (2015). *Putin's kleptocracy : who owns Russia?*. New York: Simon & Schuster. pp. XII. ISBN 978-1-4767-9520-1

"Putin's Palace" (Russian: "Дворец Путина", romanized: "Dvorets Putina") is an Italianate palace complex located on the Black Sea coast near Gelendzhik, Krasnodar Krai, Russia.

The complex first came to public attention in 2010 after whistleblower Sergei Kolesnikov published an open letter to Russian president Dmitry Medvedev exposing the construction of the palace. Kolesnikov also stated that the undertaking was run by Nikolai Shamalov who was acting on behalf of Vladimir Putin. Alexander Ponomarenko was later reported to have ownership.

The complex drew wider public attention in 2021, when Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's Anti Corruption Foundation (FBK) released an investigative documentary film about it which detailed a corruption scheme allegedly headed by Putin and claimed that the palace was built for the president's personal use. The FBK investigation estimated the cost of the build to be over 100 billion rubles (US\$956 million) at 2022 prices. Putin denied that the palace belonged to him, with the Kremlin saying that it is a private venture owned by various businessmen whose names cannot be revealed by the state. Following the release of the film, Arkady Rotenberg, who has close ties to Putin, claimed ownership of the palace.

In 2024, the Russian outlet Proekt reported that parts of the Palace have been reconverted, reconfiguring various entertainment rooms – such as a casino, pole-dancing room and room for miniature railroads – into lounging rooms and a chapel with a dedication to Saint Vladimir.

## Kleptocracy

(2014). *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?*. Simon & Schuster. ISBN 978-1476795195. Luke Harding (January 1, 2010). "WikiLeaks cables condemn Russia as mafia

Kleptocracy (from Greek κλέπτω, "thief", or κλέπτω, "I steal", and -κρατία from κράτος, "power, rule"), also referred to as thievocracy, is a government whose corrupt leaders (kleptocrats) use political power to expropriate the wealth of the people and land they govern, typically by embezzling or

misappropriating government funds at the expense of the wider population. One feature of political-based socioeconomic thievery is that there is often no public announcement explaining or apologizing for misappropriations, nor any legal charges or punishment levied against the offenders.

Kleptocracy is different from plutocracy (rule by the richest) and oligarchy (rule by a small elite). In a kleptocracy, corrupt politicians enrich themselves secretly outside the rule of law, through kickbacks, bribes, and special favors from lobbyists and corporations, or they simply direct state funds to themselves and their associates. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the first use in English occurs in the publication *Indicator* of 1819: "Titular ornaments, common to Spanish kleptocracy."

#### Russia under Vladimir Putin

2014). *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?*. Simon and Schuster. p. 8. ISBN 978-1476795218. Retrieved 3 October 2015. Anna Politkovskaya. *A Russian Diary*

Since 1999, Vladimir Putin has continuously served as either president (acting president from 1999 to 2000; two terms 2000–2008, three terms 2012–present) or Prime Minister of Russia (three months in 1999, full term 2008–2012).

During his presidency, he has been a member of the Unity party and the United Russia party. He is also affiliated with the People's Front, a group of supporters that Putin organized in 2011 to help improve the public's perception of United Russia. His political ideology, priorities and policies are sometimes referred to as Putinism.

Putin has enjoyed high domestic approval ratings throughout the majority of his presidency, with the exception of 2011–2013 which is likely due to the 2011–2013 Russian protests. In 2007, he was *Time* magazine's Person of the Year. In 2015, he was designated No. 1 in *Time* 100, *Time* magazine's list of the top 100 most influential people in the world. From 2013 to 2016, he was designated No. 1 on the *Forbes* list of The World's Most Powerful People. The Russian economy and standard of living grew rapidly during the early period of Putin's regime, fueled largely by a boom in the oil industry. However, lower oil prices and sanctions for Russia's annexation of Crimea led to recession and stagnation in 2015 that has persisted into the present day. Political freedoms have been sharply curtailed, leading to widespread condemnation from human rights groups, as well as Putin being described as a dictator since his second presidency beginning in 2012.

#### Maria Vorontsova

(2014). *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?*. Simon & Schuster. ISBN 978-1-4767-9519-5. Pietsch, Irene (2001). *Heikle Freundschaften: Mit den Putins Russland*

Maria Vladimirovna Vorontsova (Russian: Мария Владимировна Воронцова, née Putina, Путина; born 28 April 1985), also referred to as Maria Faassen, is a Russian pediatric endocrinologist. She is the eldest child of Russian president Vladimir Putin.

#### Russian mafia

*Russian*). 2015. Archived from the original on 25 April 2015. Retrieved 29 November 2023. Dawisha, Karen (2014). *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?*

The Russian mafia (Russian: мафия, romanized: *russkaya mafiya* [ˈruskəjə ˈmafʲijə] or российская мафия [rʲosʲijskəjə ˈmafʲijə]), also known as *Bratva* (братва, *Bratva* [brʲatˈva]; lit. 'brothers' clique) less as *Obshchak* (общак) or *Brigades* (бригады), is a collective of various organized crime related elements originating or/and operating in Russia.

In December 2009, Timur Lakhonin, the head of the National Central Bureau of Interpol within Russia, stated that "Certainly, there is crime involving our former compatriots abroad, but there is no data suggesting that an organized structure of criminal groups comprising former Russians exists abroad" on the topic of international Russian criminal gangs. In August 2010, Alain Bauer, a criminologist from France, said that the Russian mafia "is one of the best structured criminal organizations in Europe, with a quasi-military operation" in their international activities.

The Russian mafia, according to Mark Galeotti, an expert in modern Russia, is a highly organized and global criminal network that emerged and expanded significantly after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. During this time, Russian criminals sought to establish themselves on the international stage, anticipating political instability and economic collapse in Russia. Their activities initially focused on the illicit trade of goods, such as Afghan heroin, which they transported across Europe to sell to local gangs rather than directly selling on the streets. Over the years, Russian gangsters evolved into skilled intermediaries, working alongside other major criminal organizations, adapting to local markets and focusing on providing services rather than attempting to control entire territories. While the Russian mafia remains focused on making money, their relationships with the state have evolved over time. The Russian government has used criminal networks as a geopolitical tool, leveraging their capabilities for state interests. However, Galeotti emphasizes that the connection between the Russian government and organized crime is not one of direct control, but rather a pragmatic approach where the state sets boundaries for these groups and occasionally enlists their services. This reflects a broader shift from the 1990s, when the political elite and organized crime were more intertwined, to the present day, where the state is attempting to distance itself from direct associations with criminal groups while still utilizing them when necessary.

## Putinism

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Putinism (Russian: ????????, romanized: putinizm) is the social, political, and economic system of Russia formed during the political leadership of Vladimir Putin. There are three stages of Putinism; Classical Putinism (1999–2008), Tandem-Phase (2008–2012) and Developed Putinism (2012–present). It is characterized by the concentration of political and financial powers in the hands of "siloviks", current and former "people with shoulder marks", coming from a total of 22 governmental enforcement agencies, the majority of them being the Federal Security Service (FSB), Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia, Armed Forces of Russia, and National Guard of Russia. According to Arnold Beichman, "Putinism in the 21st century has become as significant a watchword as Stalinism was in the 20th."

The "Chekist takeover" of the Russian state and economic assets has been allegedly accomplished by a clique of Putin's close associates and friends who gradually became a leading group of Russian oligarchs and who "seized control over the financial, media and administrative resources of the Russian state", and restricted democratic freedoms and human rights. According to Julie Anderson, Russia has been transformed to an "FSB state". Mass de-politicization has been described as an important element of Putinism's social course. Mass social involvement being discouraged, politics are reduced to "pure management" left to those who are in power, free from interference by the masses. In foreign affairs, Putinism has been described as nationalist and neo-imperialist.

Putinism was first used in the article by Andrey Piontkovsky published on 11 January 2000 in Sovetskaya Rossiya, and placed on the Yabloko website on the same day. He characterized Putinism as "the highest and final stage of bandit capitalism in Russia, the stage where, as one half-forgotten classic said, the bourgeoisie throws the flag of the democratic freedoms and the human rights overboard; and also as a war, 'consolidation' of the nation on the ground of hatred against some ethnic group, attack on freedom of speech and information brainwashing, isolation from the outside world and further economic degradation".

## Corruption in Russia

*Russia's Crony Capitalism: The Path from Market Economy to Kleptocracy* by Anders Aslund. Yale University Press. May 21, 2019 *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who*

Corruption in Russia is considered a very serious problem, impacting various aspects of life, including the economy, business, politics, public administration, law enforcement, healthcare, and education. It hinders economic development, contributes to inequality, and undermines democracy and human rights. The phenomenon of corruption is strongly established in the historical model of public governance, and attributed to the general weakness of the rule of law in the country. Transparency International stated in 2022, "Corruption is endemic in Russia", and assigned it the lowest score of any European country in their Corruption Perceptions Index for 2021. It has, under the regime of Vladimir Putin, been variously characterized as a kleptocracy, an oligarchy, and a plutocracy; owing to its crony capitalism economic system.

### 1999 Russian apartment bombings

*Amy Knight, The Times Literary supplement, 3 August 2016 Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?, By Karen Dawisha, 2014, Simon & Schuster, page 222. Timothy*

In September 1999, a series of explosions hit four apartment blocks in the Russian cities of Buynaksk, Moscow, and Volgograd, killing more than 300, injuring more than 1,000, and spreading a wave of fear across the country. The bombings, together with the Invasion of Dagestan, triggered the Second Chechen War. The handling of the crisis by Vladimir Putin, who was prime minister at the time, boosted his popularity greatly and helped him attain the presidency within a few months.

The blasts hit Buynaksk on 4 September and Moscow on 9 and 13 September. Another bombing happened in Volgograd on 16 September. Chechen militants were blamed for the bombings, but denied responsibility, along with Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov.

A suspicious device resembling those used in the bombings was found and defused in an apartment block in the Russian city of Ryazan on 22 September. On 23 September, Vladimir Putin even praised the vigilance of the inhabitants of Ryazan and ordered the air bombing of Grozny, which marked the beginning of the Second Chechen War. Three Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) agents who had planted the devices at Ryazan were arrested by the local police. The next day, FSB director Nikolai Patrushev announced that the incident in Ryazan had been an anti-terror drill and the device found there contained only sugar, and freed the FSB agents involved.

The official investigation of the Buynaksk bombing was completed in 2001, while the investigations of the Moscow and Volgograd bombings were completed in 2002. In 2000, seven people were convicted of perpetrating the Buynaksk attack. According to the court ruling on the Moscow and Volgograd bombings, which was announced in 2004, the attacks were organized and led by Achemez Gochiyaev, who remains at large. All bombings, the court ruled, were ordered by Islamist warlords Ibn Al-Khattab and Abu Omar al-Saif, who have been killed. Five other suspects have been killed and six have been convicted by Russian courts on terrorism-related charges.

Attempts at an independent investigation faced obstruction from the Russian government. State Duma deputy Yuri Shchekochikhin filed two motions for a parliamentary investigation of the events, but the motions were rejected by the State Duma in March 2000. An independent public commission to investigate the bombings was chaired by Duma deputy Sergei Kovalev. The commission was rendered ineffective because of the government's refusal to respond to its inquiries. Two key members of the Kovalev Commission, Sergei Yushenkov and Yuri Shchekochikhin, have since died in apparent assassinations. The commission's lawyer and investigator Mikhail Trepashkin was arrested and served four years in prison "for revealing state secrets".

Although the bombings were widely blamed on Chechen terrorists, their guilt was never conclusively proven. A number of historians and investigative journalists have instead called the bombings a false flag attack perpetrated by Russian state security services to win public support for a new war in Chechnya and to boost the popularity of Vladimir Putin prior to the upcoming presidential elections. Former FSB agent Alexander Litvinenko, who blamed the FSB for the bombings and was a critic of Putin, was assassinated in London in 2006. A British inquiry later determined that Litvinenko's murder was "probably" carried out with the approval of Vladimir Putin and Nikolai Patrushev. Others argue that there is insufficient evidence to assign responsibility for the attacks.

Ozero

2012. Retrieved 19 February 2016. Dawisha, Karen (2014). *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?*. Simon & Schuster. pp. 97, 98, 165, 338. ISBN 978-1-4767-9519-5

Ozero (Russian: «озеро», lit. lake) (full name: «Озеро Озеро» «озеро», Dacha consumer cooperative "Ozero") is a dacha cooperative in northwest Russia associated with Vladimir Putin's inner circle.

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