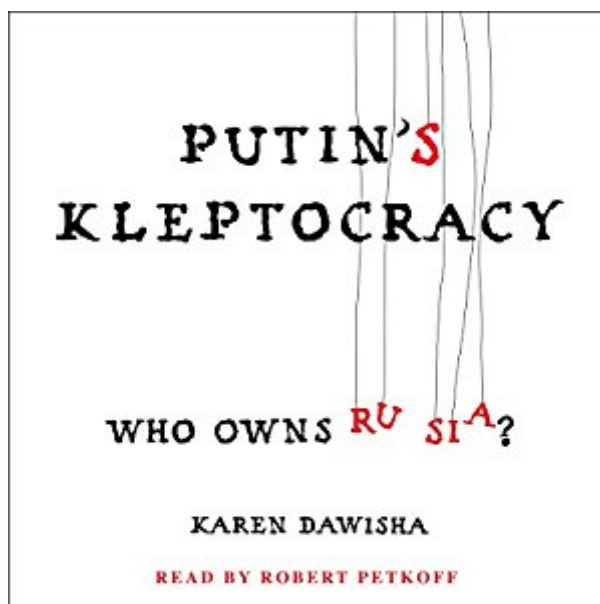


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# Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?



## Synopsis

The raging question in the world today is who is the real Vladimir Putin and what are his intentions. Karen Dawisha's brilliant *Putin's Kleptocracy* provides an answer, describing how Putin got to power, the cabal he brought with him, the billions they have looted, and his plan to restore the Greater Russia. Russian scholar Dawisha describes and exposes the origins of Putin's kleptocratic regime. She presents extensive new evidence about the Putin circle's use of public positions for personal gain even before Putin became president in 2000. She documents the establishment of Bank Rossiya, now sanctioned by the US; the rise of the Ozero cooperative, founded by Putin and others who are now subject to visa bans and asset freezes; the links between Putin, Petromed, and "Putin's Palace" near Sochi; and the role of security officials from Putin's KGB days in Leningrad and Dresden, many of whom have maintained their contacts with Russian organized crime. Putin's Kleptocracy is the result of years of research into the KGB and the various thriving Russian crime syndicates. Dawisha's sources include Stasi archives; Russian insiders; investigative journalists in the US, Britain, Germany, Finland, France, and Italy; and Western officials who served in Moscow. Russian journalists wrote part of this story when the Russian media was still free. "Many of them died for this story, and their work has largely been scrubbed from the Internet, and even from Russian libraries," Dawisha says. "But some of that work remains."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Earlier this year, I read that Cambridge Press refused to publish this book for fear of a libel lawsuit.

Of course, I was intrigued and curious about its contents. It is a no holds barred expose about the deeply ingrained and rampant corruption permeating Russia since the fall of the USSR. Ms Dawisha lays out in great details based on primary sources, Wikileaks and extensive research of public documents - the machinations and illegal predatory schemes perpetrated by Putin and his inner circle, beginning from 1990 to the present. The author exposes Putin's rise to power from his early days as a KGB officer in East Germany to his stint in St. Petersburg, where he was embroiled with the local Mafia, ex-KGB apparatchiks and bureaucrats in several shady financial schemes involving the diversion of municipal funds, illegal arms shipments, the food shortage scandal of 1991, local gambling industry and money laundering for the Cali drug cartel through the Real Estate Board of St. Petersburg. Putin "was a thug and a crook from the very beginning, and the people of St. Petersburg knew it." As head of the FSB and with the support of a close knit cabal, Putin rapidly rose to power and by 2005 was elected (fraudulently according to the book and others) as President of Russia. By the end of the USSR, the KGB secreted about \$300 billion in currency and gold outside the country. Funds that they then used to purchase industries and banks in the new Russia. According to Credit Suisse, today there are about 110 billionaires in Russia where the median personal income is only \$871 per month. A cabal of oligarchs, Mafiosos and ex-KGB and FSB cronies run the state through Putin, by usurping all the levers of power, production, commerce and finance. Dawisha writes, "Putin and KGB sought from the beginning to establish an authoritarian regime in Russia, not perhaps for its own sake but because controlling the political and economic development of the country was for them a greater ambition than building any democracy." In the Introduction, the author writes, "when Putin was declared the winner of the 2012 presidential elections, increased targeted repressions began again .... non-violent demonstrators were once again sentenced to either prison or indefinite psychiatric treatment. According to Transparency International, the rampant corruption costs over \$300 billion per year; and over \$325 billion has been secreted out of Russia since 2005. Putin nationalized risk and privatized rewards (to his supporters). The author names a rogues gallery of characters besides Putin; Berezovsky, Kalugin, Smirnov, Zolotov, Petrov, Malacheff et al., and describes their associations and malfeasance. The establishment of offshore havens in Ossetia, Abkhazia and Transnistria to hide assets, launder money and counterfeit currencies is exposed. The reader is left with many questions to ponder. Why did Yeltsin endorse and support Putin? Is Putin an independent power-hungry dictator or is he the puppet of a large and powerful secret junta? Is he now controlling and eliminating the hold of his inner circle? How much and what did the US know? Are sanctions against individuals (the oligarchs of the inner circle) affecting Putin's administration? A good start to get some answers is to follow the

money. This is a well documented scholarly book, written in clear concise language. Chapters are well organized and the writing flows evenly. It should be required reading for students, members of government and academics, and anyone who wants to understand the new Russia. Ms. Dawisha has established Website where she has posted the entire bibliography for this book: (<http://miamioh.edu/cas/academics/centers/havighurst/cultural-academic-resources/putins-russia/>)

This is only part of the story of how a country was robbed of its wealth by a few connected businessman/bureaucrat/criminals, assembled from myriad public sources, most tellingly in the public transcripts of court cases in England, and yet it is enough to indicate the massive iceberg of corruption beneath. Dawisha relentlessly follows the money and it is a gripping and terrible story. Must reading for those interested in Russia.

Agonizing to read only because it is so painful to see the curtain pulled aside. We want to deny where Putin is taking this sad nation and the rest of the world. A well researched and significant book.

This was recommended as the best book on the topic from several specialists

Extremely well researched. So much detailed information with references that if you're a student of post-Communist Russia, or want to learn how Putin stole wealth and wrested power from the state and people of Russia, you cannot beat this book.

This book was written masterfully. The research and Intel that went into putting this book together is superior to most of the literature currently available. It is a shame however that this book is a call to arms for the opposition movement. At points I found myself questioning the "objectivity" that this book was supposed to offer. It is still a must read, and I encourage you to do so.

I would call myself a friend of Russia. I've been there several times and have studied the language and history for decades. But this book has caused me to rethink many of my views. Even with experience in this field, I need to reread the first few chapters and diagram names and organizations. The book presents a complex batch of evidence which, when woven together, creates a tapestry of unparalleled corruption in modern government. If you talk to ordinary Russians,

they know their government is corrupt, and that people only get rich through corruption. But this book shows clearly how the fish rots from the head. The winners and losers were picked early on after the fall of the Soviet Union. And now, from Putin on down, Russian oligarchs, the former KGB (now FSB), political figures at all levels, the military, and even organized crime bosses work together to ensure that their selfish needs are met at the expense of decent Russian people. They deserve better. I hope the author translates this into Russian. No wonder the uprising in the Ukraine is of grave concern to the Russian elite.

This is. A very scary book. If the writer is to be believed, Russia's president is a kleptomaniac who will stop at nothing to get what he wants. The book gains credibility when its list of Putin's accomplices is mirrored in the list of those Russians sanctioned by the West since the seizure of Crimea. This means that Western governments have known about this sordid story for a long time. Perhaps that is why they have been so hesitant in their response to Russia's aggression in Ukraine - they know they are facing...

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