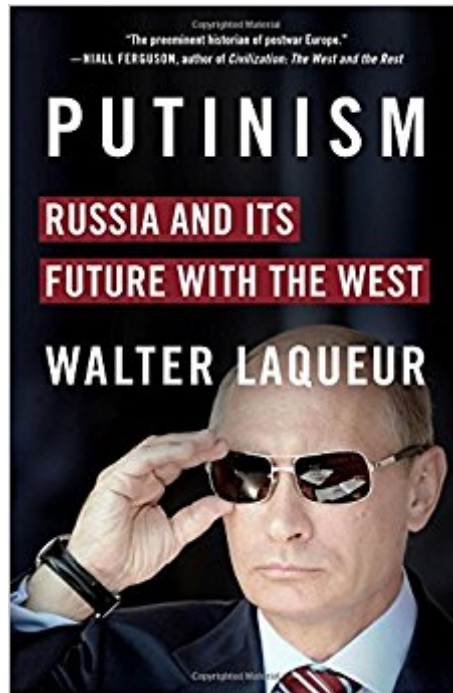


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Putinism: Russia And Its Future With The West



Synopsis

There is no question that tensions between Russia and America are on the rise. The forced annexation of Crimea, the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight 17, and the Russian government's treatment of homosexuals have created diplomatic standoffs and led to a volley of economic sanctions. In America, much of the blame for Russia's recent hostility has fallen on steely-eyed President Vladimir Putin and many have begun to wonder if they are witnessing the rebirth of Cold War-style dictatorship. Not so fast, argues veteran historian Walter Laqueur. For two decades, Laqueur has been ahead of the curve, predicting events in post-Soviet Russia with uncanny accuracy. In *Putinism*, he deftly demonstrates how three long-standing pillars of Russian ideology—a strong belief in the Orthodox Church, a sense of Eurasian "manifest destiny," and a fear of foreign enemies—continue to exert a powerful influence on the Russian populous. In fact, today's Russians have more in common with their counterparts from 1904 than 1954 and Putin is much more a servant of his people than we might think. Topical and provocative, *Putinism* contains much more than historical analysis. Looking to the future, Laqueur explains how America's tendency to see Russia as a Cold War relic is dangerous and premature. Russia can and will challenge the West and it is in our best interest to figure out exactly who we are facing—and what they want—before it is too late.

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Customer Reviews

“An aptly timed and much needed look at the mercurial master of the Kremlin”
Peter Baker, New York Times
“An erudite and unsettling but convincing argument that the new Russia is a dictatorship ‘approved by the majority as long as the going is good,’ and if Putin were to vanish today, his successor would make few changes.”
Kirkus Reviews (starred review)
“Laqueur is grimly convincing in lowering expectations that Russia will become genuinely democratic any time soon. This thorough examination of all aspects of modern Russian society and culture makes an excellent addition to recent literature on Putin-era Russia.”
Publishers Weekly
“Big-picture analysis is always good, and Walter Laqueur, dean of American Russia watchers, excels at it.”
James S. Denton, World Affairs

WALTER LAQUEUR was the director of the Institute of Contemporary History in London for 30 years. Concurrently, he served as chairman of the International Research Council of CSIS in Washington, DC. He was also a professor at Georgetown University and is the author of more than 25 books including *After the Fall* (2012) and *The Last Days of Europe* (2007). He has had articles published in THE NEW YORK TIMES, THE WASHINGTON POST, and countless other newspapers worldwide.

This is a great mess of a book that by no means should be anyone's first book on Russia. One should approach this book knowing something about Alexander Dugin, Ivan Ilyan and Nikolai Berdyaev, look them up on Wikipedia. It is a very interesting book, maddening at times mainly due to the organization. As is the case with previous books, Laqueur's focus is Russia right wing. In light of the events in the US presidential election, the mad concerns about the search for an organic Russian idea, drawing on dubious ethnographic research by Anna Akhmatova's son Lev Gumilev, these theorists might appear positively sane by comparison. In the end, there seems to be a rejection of the west, an attempt to excise the multicultural character that is Russia. This is a book, well worth reading, exposing the western reader to current intellectual thought in Russia. The chapter headings are so divorced from reality however, that the contents are frequently a source of surprise.

This book is not a biography for Vladimir Putin. This book is in fact a very detailed analysis of the circumstances that have impacted President Putin's perspective, and have led to the development of his administration's methodology for crisis management. I recommend this book because I believe it is more important to understand the country than it is to understand the man, and I believe

Vladimir Putin would agree that true resolution can only be had by understanding the geopolitics of the multiple regions Russia must coexist with to survive.

Walter Laqueur's sharp analysis is right on target - again. He examines Vladimir Putin's objectives, as much as we know about them, and presents us with a future of relations with Russia that will often be difficult to navigate. Putin would like to have an orderly world in which he can focus on dealing with the West, and specifically the US. The problem is not Putin, but how we deal with Putin as he deals with his world.

Interesting, but really most of the book relates to an historical perspective of how Russia got to where it was in the 1990's. Today and expectations for tomorrow are really treated more as an afterthought.

Review: Walter Laqueur's *Putinism Deconstructs Putin and Russia* By. Jordan Schulte
What is Putinism? Walter Laqueur, who has worked in the field of Soviet studies since 1954, has spent much of the last 15 years since Putin arrived on the scene trying to devise an accurate definition for the West and himself. After 117 pages of squirming around the complicated nature of the ending of the Soviet Union and the rise of Vladimir Putin, we are given a clearly expressed dictionary.com like definition. "Putinism is state capitalism, a liberal economic policy, but also a great amount of state intervention and almost total interference when important issues are concerned." After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the first president of the newly named Russian Federation was Boris Yeltsin. Elected by popular vote, Yeltsin preached the need for Russia to transition to a market capitalist driven economy instead of its past socialist economy. After nationwide privatization, Russia was left with a dramatic economic shift. Formerly all property and wealth was held in public hands, but now instead the majority of wealth and property was held by a small number of oligarchs. Yeltsin believed privatization would create new enterprises, but instead Russia was transformed into a plutocracy. In 1999, Yeltsin stepped down after nearly a decade of economic collapse, corruption, and inflation. As the Yeltsin rule crept closer to its end, oligarchs who ruled the country were afraid that the state would slowly crumble into anarchy. A leading oligarch, Boris Berezovsky believed more so than his fellow oligarchs that this meant the state would either be captured once again by a strong central state apparatus or the military. Preferring the secret service to the military, Berezovsky recommended Vladimir Putin. Berezovsky was formally one of the country's finest mathematicians before making his

fortunes, first by secondhand car dealing and later by investing in oil and gas during the privatization period following the fall of the Soviet Union and its socialist economy. In this same time period he supported Yeltsin financially while he ran for a second term as president in 1996. Yeltsin's final two years in office may as well have been Berezovsky himself due to the fact that no important appointment was made and no position was filled without his input and confirmation. During this period Putin was resting in a villa in Spain, a villa owned by Berezovsky. Putin was aware of the poor scenario his beloved country was in and all the prime ministers that failed in past history. Berezovsky knew that Putin had no economic experience, so he believed Putin would not interrupt his financial affairs. However, Putin being a former K.G.B. officer who loved his country and respected its tradition; Berezovsky thought Putin would be the perfect nationalist symbol that Russia needed at the present time to halt its fall into anarchy. In theory perhaps a flawless plan, in reality Berezovsky and many other oligarchs forgot what a large ego could potentially do with public office. Instead of taking a backseat to Putin's politics, Berezovsky launched his own campaign scrutinizing Putin after they did not agree on various issues. One circumstance in particular being a Russian submarine that sunk and killed 118, some believed that Putin neglected foreign help and therefore was responsible for their deaths. Putin defended himself from attacks by Berezovsky by nationalizing the majority of television channels, which was equivalent to silencing the most valuable political weapon in Berezovsky's arsenal. At this time Aeroflot, a Russian airline company that Berezovsky was a head at was brought up on corruption charges. These charges signaled the end for the tycoon's career. He escaped the country before interrogation by the authorities began. While in exile in London, Berezovsky was compelled to sell his stake in Sibneft Oil Company to a fellow oligarch, Roman Abramovich. By 2013 legal conflicts between Berezovsky and the Russian state had taken their toll. He was depressed and quickly losing everything; in March 2013 Berezovsky committed suicide, but not before sending a letter to Putin apologizing for his bad behavior. An ending that was symbolic of a trend taking place since the arrival of Putin, enjoy your riches and stay out politics.

“Putinism is an authoritarian regime, representing the interests of several groups in Russian society.”

Laqueur defines this as a “vertical power structure, which simply means orders derive from the top on down. Russia identifies itself as a “Sovereign democracy, with an emphasis on the sovereign. As Laqueur writes, “it means that the country is not ready for Western-style democracy, perhaps never will be.”

He continues, “it is not (Western democracy) a political

system wanted by most Russians, since it is not in the Russian tradition and in consonance with Russian values. • Many Russians are under the belief that democracy is what happened to their country after the fall of the Soviet Union and before the rise of Putin. They see democracy as enviably leading to corruption and cultural decadence; they are willing to trade freedom and democracy for stability and order. Putin's rule has always been viewed through his nostalgia for Russia's lost superpower status. This becomes clear when he promotes old symbols and sees Russia as the defender of traditional values against the assault by the West. In a narrow sense, today's Russian ideology is nationalism combined with anti-westernism. On pg. 201 Laqueur writes, "belief among Russian nationalist ideologues that their country cannot exist except as a great empire is deeply rooted and goes back a long time. To many Russians, a number of regions that were lost (such as Ukraine) are still considered to be parts of Russia proper. A discussion of the future of Russia would not be complete without recognizing that Russia sees itself as having a great messianic mission to complete and defend. This mission serves to justify foreign policy and the power of the state, but it also serves as an ideology to connect the people to the state and prevent anomie. In the end a future with friendlier relations between the US and Russia looks unlikely. Russia sees itself as the last force of traditional values in the world and justifies its authoritarian rule by presenting strict rule as needed to prevent corruption from the US and the West. Nearly 25 years since the fall of the Soviet Union tensions between the values of the West and Russia seem to be heating up again. PUTINISM Russia and Its Future With the West By Walter Laqueur 271 pages. Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Press. \$27.99.

Slow reading through the first few chapters as it deals with Russia / the Soviet Union's past history. However, upon reading the following chapters I began to realize that in order to understand Russia's future with the West, I had to understand how this past history impacts on the future. Putinism points out that while Putin has his own agenda, in many respects, it's the Russian people's agenda. Putinism helped me to understand how the West is regarded by the Russian people and that the goals of Russia under Putin's leadership are to regain its position as a world superpower. I would recommend Putinism to everyone who wants to understand what makes Putin and Russia tick.

Great way to learn Russian history from the Czars to the current administration headed up by Vladimir Putin. It gives you a good idea how President Putin thinks because of his patriotism and

allegiance to Mother Russia.

This is a quite good study on Putin and the way he leads Russia. You can complete the information on it with another good book that belongs to the counterpart bias: "Putin vs Putin. Vladimir Putin viewed from the right" of Alexander Dugin. I recommend them both a lot.

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