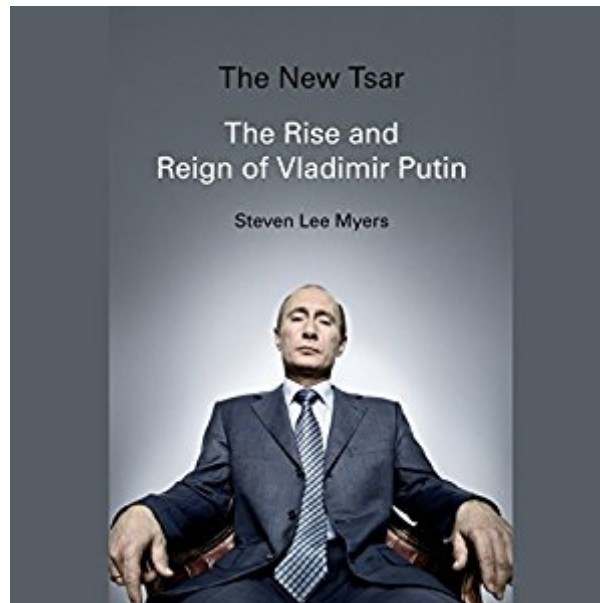


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# The New Tsar: The Rise And Reign Of Vladimir Putin



## Synopsis

The epic tale of the rise to power of Russia's current president - the only complete biography in English - that fully captures his emergence from shrouded obscurity and deprivation to become one of the most consequential and complicated leaders in modern history, by the former New York Times Moscow bureau chief. In a gripping narrative of Putin's rise to power as Russia's president, Steven Lee Myers recounts Putin's origins - from his childhood of abject poverty in Leningrad to his ascension through the ranks of the KGB and his eventual consolidation of rule. Along the way world events familiar to listeners, such as September 11th and Russia's war in Georgia in 2008, as well as the 2014 annexation of Crimea and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, are presented from never-before-seen perspectives. This audiobook is a grand, staggering achievement and a breathtaking look at one man's rule. On one hand, Putin's many reforms - from tax cuts to an expansion of property rights - have helped reshape the potential of millions of Russians whose only experience of democracy had been crime, poverty, and instability after the fall of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, Putin has ushered in a new authoritarianism, unyielding in his brutal repression of revolts and squashing of dissent. Still, he retains widespread support from the Russian public. The New Tsar is a narrative tour de force, deeply researched and utterly necessary for anyone fascinated by the formidable and ambitious Vladimir Putin but also for those interested in the world and what a newly assertive Russia might mean for the future.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The book, *The New Tsar* by Myers, is a well done bio of Vladimir Putin. To set my observation space regarding this work, I was in Russia from 1995 thru 2004, in Saint Petersburg and Moscow, starting my telecommunications company, and with partners who were from the same world as Putin. These folks knew me since in the 70s I had been part of the US Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty talks and had one on one contact with various Russians. I managed a bit of Russian language, adequate to get about, and even joke after a few vodkas. Thus I had been closely aware of Russia, the Russians, and the KGB world. Unlike most Americans I had no larger company backing and I needed in country partners, many of whom are covered in Myers tale. I saw Moscow via the Metro, the streets, the stores, the homes. I saw vodka used to brush teeth because the water is so infested it is barely adequate to flush toilets. Yet the streets looked like Tokyo at night, a change which occurred in less than ten years. Myers takes on a journey which has as its focus Putin, but for all purposes it is a journey on the change of Russia from Communism to what it is today. In a sense, the Orthodox Church has replaced the Communist Party for the masses, a milder means of establishing the mandated role of the rulers. This comes out in Myers work by the telling tale of Putin being baptized as a child. Myers did not really explore the depths of this ongoing cooperation but he does provide certain pieces. Myers follows Putin and attempts to give some depth to the man by his movement from young KGB "employee" to "employee", to the accidental head of the FSB (formerly the KGB) and then to President. In a sense Putin's life is almost *Forrest Gump* like, just being there when the bus went by and getting on to see where it took him next. Unlike a Tsar, one who was born to "greatness" and knew it by birth, Putin just happened to be at the right place at the right time with the right attitude. The appointment of Putin as President by Yeltsin was a turning moment, for up until that moment he was an effective administrative functionary, but then he was thrown headlong into the top leadership slot. His KGB past was his backstop. His trusted friends, if any, were from that time and space. Key among them was Sergei Ivanov, a KGB general and longtime associate. Ivanov flows in and out of Myers book but it would have been worthwhile to have explored him in more depth. The discussion by Myers concerning Putin and Bush is also telling. At first, after 9/11, there was a bond, but as the US managed to take its aggressive single handed approach to Iraq that bond fell apart. Putting understood Iraq, albeit from afar via Afghanistan and Russia's disaster. Bush did not, and his team also did not. Thus, the quagmire. There is also the discussion on boundaries and NATO and Russia's near abject terror of a NATO encroachment. Why the US never truly understood the need for Russia to have a buffer is amazing. Russia just needs neutral borders, ones not militarily aligned with the

West. Myers does a reasonable job on Putin I and Putin II. Namely Putin I is the accidental president. This is a period of his ascending to the highest rank. Much of this time he is learning and expanding. Then after his hiatus, he is now Putin II, no longer accidental, but deliberate and with a depth of team players to make him untouchable in Russia. The problem is when we see Putin II we see in many ways the old KGB tactics. Myers discusses many of the allegations of assassinations and corruption. The book is exceptionally well written and is a major contribution to the understanding of Putin. But the book also demonstrates that Putin II is a moving target and evolving and expanding player on the world stage, a man who is much more comfortable in his new role rather than the accidental presidency that pushed him to the forefront. If Myers's book does anything, it should enlighten some in Washington as to whom they are dealing with. He is a Russian, has a Russian mind, and in a sense a Russian soul. One must understand Russia at least a little to understand Putin. Kennan had such an understanding. Very few have had such in the US since then.

In "The New Tsar: The Rise and Reign of Vladimir Putin," Myers presents a comprehensive biography of Putin in a mostly neutral tone, focusing on the history and the facts. Myers follows Putin's rise from that of a child impressed with a spy movie, to a law school graduate, a KGB officer stationed in Germany, the number two man to St. Petersburg's mayor, a series of positions in Yeltsin's administration (helped by his contacts from St. Petersburg and the KGB who were already a part of it), to his position as the FSB (the successor to the KGB) director, prime minister, and ultimately Yeltsin's successor to the presidency. According to Myers, what made Putin stand out was his honesty and loyalty in the sea of intrigues, backstabbing, and conniving that were a hallmark of the people surrounding Yeltsin in a never-ending battle for the president's favor and, more importantly, power. Between 1998 when Russia defaulted and Putin's 2000 presidency, Yeltsin has a steady stream of prime ministers--each of which keeps getting replaced for no other reasons than Yeltsin's whims. It doesn't help matters that Yeltsin feels threatened as the attorney general threatens to investigate Yeltsin and his family. Increasingly feeling like he has no one to trust, while knowing his presidency can't last any longer--not only because of the eroding support but his own health problems--Yeltsin secretly plots to appoint a successor, someone who he can not only trust with the country, but with his own fate. Someone who won't go after Yeltsin or his family as soon as the former is no longer president. Impressed with Putin's loyalty to his former boss--St. Petersburg's former mayor Anatoliy Sobchak who suffers a heart attack after his enemies arrest him, and who ends up getting rescued by Putin who helps him escape Russia by chartering a plane that takes him

to Paris--Yeltsin chooses him for succession. And true to Yeltsin's expectations, the first decree that Putin signs as president is one exonerating Yeltsin and guaranteeing him a comfortable retirement. Myers goes on to cover the highs and lows of Putin's presidency-including Nord Ost (the siege of the Moscow theater) and Beslan (the siege of a Beslan school) by terrorists, the drowning of the submarine Kursk, the arrest of oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky and the dismantling of the company Yukos, the intrigues surrounding the ownership re-structuring of Russia's oil companies, the growing wealth of those surrounding Putin, the wars in Chechnya, the still unsolved 1999 apartment bombings which the government blamed on Chechen terrorists but which others blamed on the FSB, the murders of journalist Anna Politkovskaya and ex-FSB officer Alexander Litvinenko among others, the 2004 orange revolution in Ukraine including the poisoning of eventual president Viktor Yuschenko, the 2008 war in Georgia and South Ossetia, the 2014 Sochi Olympics, and ultimately the annexation of Crimea among other events. Overall, I found Myers' book to be a serious biography, that sticks to a chronological timeline and covers all the major political events. The book ends with a detailed list of bibliographical references, and the author's acknowledgement which mentioned that as he was finishing the book one of his informers and Kremlin critics over the years, Boris Nemtsov, was assassinated. This would have also been an interesting addition to the book, which otherwise covered a lot of ground. Overall, if you're looking to learn more not just about Putin himself, but also about the political backdrop of his ascent to the presidency as well as the evolution of the political climate in Russia, this is a comprehensive and informational read.

This biography is fairly comprehensive, taking the reader from Putin's stark childhood beginnings to his current position of power. The author had lived in Russia for several years, and illustrates fine nuances in narrative work. Good world history lesson as to how internal Russian tensions grew and their outcomes over the past 40 years. I purchased it to try to understand Putin's mindset, as it relates to current-day foreign affairs and the U.S. Trump administration. Very thorough read.

This is an excellent, up-to-date biography of Vladimir Putin, and I would recommend it to anyone. I tip my hat to the author for his in-depth research and objectivity. His writing style is clear, concise and very readable. This book was for me a "page turner." I have followed Putin's life with fascination over the years and have developed a personal theory about him. I call it "Putin's Luck." As I see it, Putin has literally been the luckiest political figure in the entire tortured history of Russia. That is what makes him such a dangerous man. Yes, Vladimir Putin is ruthless, vindictive, driven and of limited vision and intelligence; and also, as Stephen Myers shows in this biography, he is

cold-bloodedly fearless in the face of danger, tireless in the pursuit of his political goals and willing to take risks few world leaders would dare consider. In my opinion, those traits, all well-documented by Myers, were only responsible in part for Putin's success. His many opponents failed simply because they did not have "Putin's Luck." The author in various passages remarks on how amazingly lucky Putin appears to have been, although I am sure Myers does not see luck as a force in the universe the way I do.

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