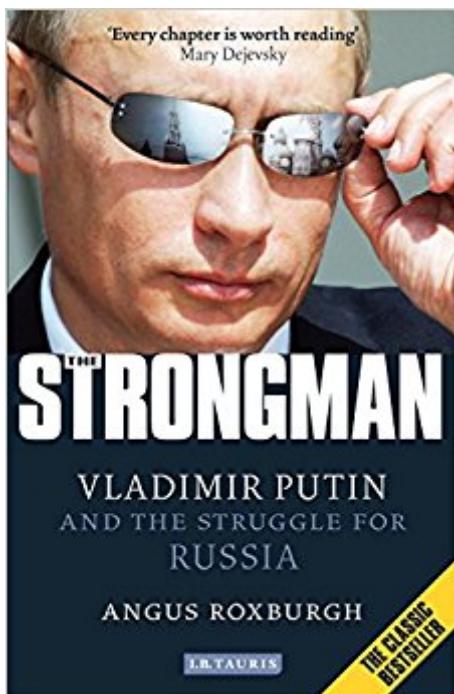


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The Strongman: Vladimir Putin And The Struggle For Russia



Synopsis

Russia under Vladimir Putin has proved a prickly partner for the West, a far cry from the democracy many hoped for when the Soviet Union collapsed. Angus Roxburgh charts the dramatic fight for Russia's future under Vladimir Putin - how the former KGB man changed from reformer to autocrat, how he sought the West's respect but earned its fear, how he cracked down on his rivals at home and burnished a flamboyant personality cult, one day saving snow leopards or horse-back riding bare-chested, the next tongue-lashing Western audiences. Drawing on dozens of exclusive interviews in Russia, where he worked for a time as a Kremlin insider advising Putin on press relations, as well as in the US and Europe, Roxburgh also argues that the West threw away chances to bring Russia in from the cold, by failing to understand its fears and aspirations following the collapse of communism. Fully updated following the 2012 presidential election, the new edition of this acclaimed book provides a unique and penetrating inside view of Putin's Russia.

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Customer Reviews

"Roxburgh paints a...compelling portrait. He is sympathetic to what motivates Putin but critical of what Putin has become during his years in power...engrossing." - Foreign Affairs "A solid foreign correspondent narrative of Putin's behavior" - Bill Keller, The New York Times "The considerable value of this book lies in [Roxburgh's] painstaking and empathetic effort

to understand how Mr. Putin came to power, why many Russians still support him today, and how the West's approach to Russia has helped to shape his rule... Mr. Roxburgh persuasively argues" "Roxburgh is a talented journalist and writer...a useful history of the Putin era....with views from Russian politicians, and some of the key players from the world of international politics, it is a book firmly rooted in fact and analysis. This means that Roxburgh's approach is refreshingly free from some of the usual polemic, and he is to be congratulated for giving credit where credit is due and for underlining Putin's role in stabilising Russia after the free-fall of the Yeltsin years." "Good Book Guide" "an old Russian hand. [Roxburgh] takes us behind the curtain of the Kremlin press section" "he is at his best in a chapter on fraught Georgian-Russian relations, capturing the culpability on all sides." "Stephen Kotkin, TLS" "[A] lively and absorbing study.... [Roxburgh] is especially well placed to tell the story of how the west's early enthusiasm for Putin turned sour." "Luke Harding, Guardian" "[Written] with admirable even-handedness and insight...The Strongman is not only political history; it is informed by the author's close acquaintance with many of the prime players...Every chapter of this book is worth reading." "Mary Dejevsky, Independent" "Well researched and with many personal observations by an admired and insightful journalist, this will appeal to contemporary Russophiles and Putin watchers." "Library Journal" "Roxburgh's experience as a public relations advisor to Putin provides the basis for some of the most interesting passages in the book." "David Satter, Literary Review" "...much can be learned about the conduct of Western and Russian international relations from the valuable interviews the author conducted with Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice, Gerhard Shroder, Mikhail Kasyanov, German Gref as well as David Miliband, George Robinson and Ukraine's Viktor Yushchenko." "David Lane, London Progressive Journal" "Roxburgh's book accordingly is a vivid account by a Western journalist with excellent senior access of the tumultuous transition of Russia away from Soviet communism to today's sui generis Russia" "Roxburgh offers many vivid, credible anecdotes about Putin and his merciless dealings with top Russians and Western leaders" " Charles Crawford, EUROPP (European Politics and Politics LSE Blog) "We need an insider to give us some insight into what has really been going on since 1999, when Putin went from unknown to acting president. It is fortunate then that we have Angus Roxburgh... fair, nuanced and well written...His account of the complete mutual incomprehension between his employers, Ketchum, and the Russians they worked with is fascinating." "Oliver Bullough, Sunday Telegraph" "[Roxburgh's book] is

powerful...and gives much more attention to the international connect and to Russia's economy [than Masha Gessen's book]" — The Age "As a former adviser to the Kremlin in 2006-09, working for the Brussels based consultancy GPlus, Roxburgh had an excellent vantage point, and here he offers a stellar cast of sources, drawn from those closest to Putin and Western leaders. Their accounts make this is a valuable book." — European Voice

Angus Roxburgh is one of Britain's most distinguished foreign correspondents. An author and renowned journalist, he was the Sunday Times Moscow correspondent in the 1980s until he was expelled from the Soviet Union in a tit-for-tat espionage row. He returned in the 1990s and was the BBC's Moscow correspondent during the Yeltsin years. Subsequently, he worked as an advisor and speechwriter for Putin's communications team, a role which gave him unrivalled access to the Kremlin's inner circle. He is the author of *The Second Russian Revolution* and *Pravda: Inside the Soviet News Machine*.

Britain's veteran Russia specialist, Angus Roxburgh, offers a mature, reasoned, and experienced Western view of Putin and Putinism. It serves as a necessary counterpoint to the incessant demonizing of both emanating from the United States. I seriously doubt if it could have been written or published now in the US. Russia-bashing is an old American tradition, predating even the Bolshevik revolution (see David Fogelsong's "The American Mission and the 'Evil Empire': The Crusade for a 'Free Russia' Since 1881.") And unfortunately, in the wake of the Crimean annexation, it is the negative that's escalating to ever more shrill (and impotent) heights. Roxburgh bids us to stand back and look at the world not just from Putin's view, but that of Russia itself. The West has obviously (or, perhaps knowingly) plowed on ahead with a self-interested agenda to simultaneously remold and contain the "New" Russia, as if said adjective was merely a supporting prop. Roxburgh is good at demonstrating the Western "forked tongue" over NATO expansion eastward, which is ultimately behind most of the post-Soviet angst. But he shies short from connecting the dots. The Latvian president's tear-jerking ode to her country's freedom from Russian domination at the Prague summit of 2002 (p. 97) left many Russian eyes dry, as they recalled the two Latvian SS divisions that served Nazi occupiers in the Third Reich's thrust toward Moscow. The Kremlin cries today of "Ukrainian fascists" who have taken over Kiev hearken to the same bloody memories, still willfully ignored by the West as it seemingly patronizes groups precisely for their anti-Moscow militance. Roxburgh is also, I feel, being disingenuous when he wonders why post-communist Russia has not "turned itself into a thriving manufacturing country like China or

many other developing economies" (p. 283). He seems unaware that Russia is not a developing country, but an old developed economy whose industries were of the same rust-belt generation as the mills, mines, and factories of Youngstown or Pittsburgh. The thrust of "economic reform" was thus to dump old industrial investment for new finance-driven capitalism, exactly as in the old-money West - with the added inducement that Russia's modernization was further hamstrung by bans on new-technology sales to Moscow. This policy is far from dead, as the quashing of Russia's bid to acquire GM asset Opal attested: to keep Russia from acquiring the very technology required to make it competitive. I disagree with Roxburgh's take that Russian reform has always "come from above." The Tzar's granting of a Duma in 1906, and initiating land reforms, was inspired solely to quell the revolutionary movement of the streets and villages. Similarly, the Russian revolution re-erupting in February, 1917, was a perfect parallel to Egypt's Arab Spring as a groundswell of street activism, bringing down two governments within a year. But it's true that Putin has rolled back the glasnost era, when Russian liberty seemed to have arrived into its own at last. Two points here: Yeltsin was not the "democrat" the West made him out to be, as Roxburgh accurately recalls, but an authoritarian predecessor for all that it now objects to in Putin. Secondly, Yeltsin's entourage was composed not only of Democratic Russia liberals, but entrenched apparatchiks who hated Gorbachev, who abandoned the old CP because it was no longer theirs - like Yeltsin himself. Mouthing democratic phrases was a small price to pay for access to Western loot. The rise of Putin in 2000 demonstrated the final eclipse of the liberal DemRossiya wing of Yeltsin's movement. It has been a downhill slide since, but with equal responsibility from a self-serving West. Putin's role, as he sees it, is to reconstruct the Russian, not the Soviet empire. His vision is the old mantra of "Great Russia, One and Indivisible." Western fuming over the return of the USSR shows an ignorance as mutual as the Russian belief that 9/11 was a Zionist-CIA plot. He highly resembles another "strongman", the former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic. Yet the West will not be able to bomb Putin to the negotiating table. It will have no other option but diplomacy and recognizing Russian interests. Russia - like GM - is simply "too big to fail."

An excellent insight to the Russian administration, to their political and historical thinking, and a clear and detailed picture of Vladimir Vladimirovich. Not as detailed as other biographies but the purpose of the book is to place his politics into a context not to know every inch of him. If you want to understand, what is actually happening today in Russian politics in the shadows of the Ukrainian crisis, this book is a must read. You will understand, why Putin is not backing out from the crisis, why the Russian people support this controversial quest, why the West doesn't really understand

his moves. The author's view is very balanced, most of the hypotheses are on solid ground and also very useful how the motivations of Putin are shown - you can even predict some moves and steps if you read carefully. Not heavy, a fun to read, but worth to do it at least twice (or make a lot of notes) or you can get easily lost in the web of oligarchs, business ties and networks.

This is both a well written book and an enjoyable read. It doesn't take a stance heavily one way or the other which keeps the book from being to heavy handed. There are many times in which he gives the opinions and view points from people behind the scenes and this is what makes this a really good book. I really enjoyed reading this and felt I knew the Russians and Putin's stand on things better after reading it. I highly recommend it to anyone wanting to better understand the Russian approach to foreign policy, Great Book!

I wanted to learn more about Putin and how he came to be the latest "Czar" of Russia. This book did a great job in explaining Putin's rather circuitous route to the top. The reader learns of Putin's youth in St. Petersburg as an impoverished youth and his steady climb through the KGB to becoming Russia's leader. I found most fascinating that Putin was very much interested in becoming friendly with the West once he succeeded Boris Yeltsin but the West totally mishandled this opportunity thanks primarily to the Bush administrations misreading of his intentions. This is an informative book though somewhat dated.

I found this book very informative, giving a long range perspective on Russia and its President. The author is fair to both Putin and the West, and shows errors and miscalculations on both parts, and leaving the reader with the feeling that things could have been so much different ... and better. There was a window of opportunity to truly engage the former Soviet Union and improve relations, but a failure to understand the history of the Russian people and assuming that they would embrace democracy as anyone does in the West proved fatal. Rebuffed and somewhat dismissed, Putin turned to what he knew ... autocratic power ... turning what might have been a budding democracy into a sham democracy that hides a totalitarian regime. It is hard to review without going into details, so I will recommend this book to anyone interested in post-Soviet Russia and its 'strongman' President, Vladimir Putin.

An excellent, albeit short, book on Putin that discusses his early life, his KGB career, and his rise to power first in St. Petersburg and later in Moscow. The author had wonderful access to Russian and

former East German archives and used them in compiling this insightful and easy to read book.

The book gives a crystal clear insight in Putin's persona. Much of what we now see happening in the Crimea, the Ukraine and elsewhere is rooted in events that took place several years ago when the book was written. It is fascinating to read how Putin's moves could be foreseen long before we got into today's crises.

Wonderful book about a wonderful man.

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