

FACT SHEET

Who Is Vladimir Putin? Key Events, Facts, and Quotes

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Key Events & Military Actions

- **October 7, 1952**—Vladimir Putin was **born** in Leningrad.
- **July 28, 1983**—Putin **marries** Lyudmila Shkrebneva.
- **1975 to 1991**—Putin **works** as an intelligence operative of the KGB, rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel.
- **July 1998**—Putin **appointed** head of the FSB (successor to the KGB).
- **August 9, 1999**—Putin **appointed** prime minister of Russia.
- **September 23, 1999**—“Putin **orders bombing raids** against the Chechen capital Grozny followed by a full-scale land offensive. Within months Russian troops retake Chechnya and install a loyal administration. Putin’s popularity rockets.” The Russian military nearly destroys Grozny, a city of 400,000 residents, after **unconfirmed allegations** of Chechens terrorizing Russian cities.
- **December 31, 1999**—Putin **appointed** by Boris Yeltsin to serve as president.
- **March 26, 2000**—Putin **elected** President of Russia with 53% of the vote.
- **April 2005**—Putin **declares** the collapse of the Soviet Union as “the greatest geopolitical disaster” of the 20th century.
- **May 7, 2008**—Putin **appointed** prime minister after temporarily handing Russian presidency to his protégé, Dmitri Medvedev.
- **August 2008**—Medvedev & Putin order Russian forces to **invade Georgia**.
- **November 17, 2009**—Putin employees **murder Sergei Magnitsky**, lawyer for key Putin critic, who was in a Russian jail being held on false charges.
- **May 7, 2012**—Putin **resumes** position as president after winning March election with 65% of the vote.
- **December 14, 2012**—President Barack Obama **signs into law the Magnitsky Act**, which enables sanctions to be imposed against Russian officials implicated in the death of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky.
- **June 2013**—Putin **divorces** his wife of thirty years.
- **February 2014**—Putin orders Russian special forces to **seize Crimea**.
- **March 2014**—Russia formally **annexes Crimea**.
- **Summer/Fall of 2014**—Putin orders Russian military forces to **seize control of eastern Ukraine**, notably a region known as Donbass.
- **June 2015**—Putin sees his **approval ratings surge** to 89% (up from mid-60s) after invading and seizing Crimea and eastern Ukraine.
- **September 2015**—Putin orders Russian forces to **militarily intervene in Syria** to help Bashar al-Assad’s regime crush all opposition.

- **Summer/Fall 2016**—Putin directs Russian intelligence forces to [subvert and disrupt U.S. elections](#).
- **March 18, 2016**—Putin will stand for a [sham “election”](#) again in Russia, though he first [orders the arrest of his most serious opponent](#), a lawyer named Alexei Navalny, who runs the Anti-Corruption Foundation.

Key Facts & Headlines about the Russia Putin Leads

- At least [28 Russian journalists have been murdered or died mysteriously](#) since Putin came to power in 2000, according to the Committee to Project Journalists.
- [Here are 10 critics of Vladimir Putin who died violently or in suspicious ways](#) (*Washington Post*, March 23, 2017)
- [Russia’s Newest Law: No Evangelizing Outside of Church](#) (*Christianity Today*, July 8, 2016)
- [A New Law Targets Evangelicals and Other ‘Foreign’ Religions](#) (*Newsweek*, September 15, 2016)
- [Russia’s Persecution of Christians Intensifies; Putin Can’t Be Trusted, Experts Warn](#) (*Christian Post*, May 20, 2017)
- Under President Putin, a significant crackdown of basic religious liberties is underway in Russia, notably against Evangelical Christians. Here are excerpts from the [2017 report](#) by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom:
 - “In July 2016, the Russian government adopted a package of amendments for the ostensible purpose of combating terrorism. These amendments, popularly known as the Yarovaya law, also significantly enhanced the scope and penalties of the religion and anti-extremism laws. The religion law now broadly defines “missionary activities” to forbid preaching, praying, disseminating religious materials, and even answering questions about religion outside of officially designated sites.”
 - “With no independent judiciary in Russia, any religious speech or activity not explicitly sanctioned by the authorities now has the potential to be criminalized, depending on the whims of local law enforcement and prosecutors.”
 - “By the end of the reporting period, at least 53 individuals or organizations had been prosecuted, of which 43 were non-Orthodox Christian groups. Thirty-four convictions have resulted, including substantial fines for activities as varied as conducting baptisms to advertising prayer groups online.”
- [Russia recession: The everyday struggle to make ends meet, while Putin presents strong front to the West](#) (ABC News, March 4, 2017)
- [Millions more Russians living in poverty as economic crisis bites— Nearly 20 million now surviving on wages which are below the poverty threshold according to latest state statistics](#) (*The Guardian*, March 22, 2016)
- [Incomes in Russia Continue 4-Year Plunge](#) (*Moscow Times*, November 21, 2017)

- Meanwhile, the Russian population is dropping precipitously—today there are **three million fewer Russians alive** than when Putin took power.
 - “Whereas the Russian population was slightly more than 100 million in 1950, it peaked at nearly 149 million by the early 1990s. Since then, the population has declined, and official reports put it at around 144 million,” noted a 2014 Yale University **report**. ‘High rates of smoking, alcohol consumption, drug use, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, obesity, heart disease, violence, suicide and environmental pollution contribute to Russians’ poor health. Russia’s current male life expectancy at birth of 64 years is 15 years lower than male life expectancies in Germany, Italy and Sweden. Russia’s aging population has placed strains on the economy that will impact numerous sectors including agriculture, manufacturing, the armed forces, and retirement schemes. In the next decade, Russia's labor force is expected to shrink by more than 12 million, or around 15 percent.’”
 - “As of mid-year 2005, Russia’s estimated population was around 143 million. UNPD projections for the year 2025 range from a high of about 136 million to a low of about 121 million; for the year 2030, they range from 133 million to 115 million. The Census Bureau’s projections for the Russian Federation’s population in 2025 and 2030 are 128 million and 124 million, respectively,” noted a 2009 **article** in *World Affairs*. “If these projections turn out to be relatively accurate—admittedly, a big *if* for any long-range demographic projection—the Russian Federation will have experienced over thirty years of continuous demographic decline by 2025, and the better part of four decades of depopulation by 2030. Russia’s population would then have dropped by about 20 million between 1990 and 2025, and Russia would have fallen from the world’s sixth to the twelfth most populous country. In relative terms, that would amount to almost as dramatic a demographic drop as the one Russia suffered during World War II. In absolute terms, it would actually be somewhat greater in magnitude.”
- **Vodka blamed for high death rates in Russia** (BBC, January 31, 2014)
 - “The study says 25% of Russian men die before they are 55, and most of the deaths are down to alcohol. The comparable UK figure is 7%.”
 - Researcher Prof David Zaridze, from the Russian Cancer Research Centre, said: “They binge drink. That's the main problem. It's the pattern of drinking not the per-capita amount they are drinking.”
 - “The average life expectancy from birth for men in Russia is only 64 years.”

Key Quotes

In 2000, three Russian journalists—Nataliya Gevorkyan, Natalya Timakova, and Andrei Kolesnikov—published ***First Person: An Astonishingly Frank Self-Portrait by Russia's President***, which may prove to be one of the most important books ever written about Putin.

It is useful not because the journalists offered their own insights or analysis into Putin, but because they simply let Putin speak for himself.

They interviewed the Russian leader six separate times. Each interview lasted about four hours. The book is merely a transcript, and when it comes to understanding Putin’s

ambitions and approach, it is a gold mine of intelligence.

Putin on his mission in life: “My historical mission,” he insisted, is to stop “the collapse of the USSR” (p. 139). To do this, he vowed to “consolidate the armed forces, the Interior Ministry, and the FSB [the successor to the KGB, the secret police of the Soviet Union]” (p. 140). “If I can help save Russia from collapse, then I’ll have something to be proud of” (p. 204).

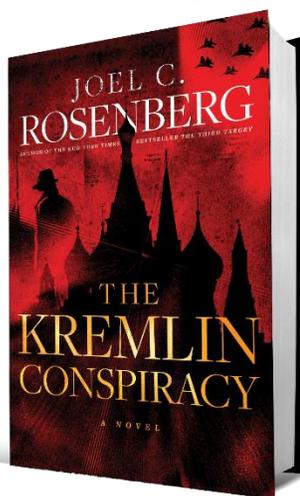
On his style: “Everyone says I’m harsh, even brutal,” Putin acknowledged, without ever disputing such observations. “A dog senses when somebody is afraid of it, and bites,” he observed. “The same applies [to dealing with one’s enemies]. If you become jittery, they will think they are stronger. Only one thing works in such circumstances—to go on the offensive. You must hit first, and hit so hard that your opponent will not rise to his feet” (p. 168).

On the Czars: “From the very beginning, Russia was created as a super-centralized state. That’s practically laid down in its genetic code, its traditions, and the mentality of its people,” said Putin, adding, “In certain periods of time . . . in a certain place . . . under certain conditions . . . monarchy has played and continues to this day to play a positive role. . . . The monarch doesn’t have to worry about whether or not he will be elected, or about petty political interests, or about how to influence the electorate. He can think about the destiny of the people and not become distracted with trivialities” (p. 186).

On his choice of history’s most interesting political leader: “Napoleon Bonaparte” (p. 194).

On his rise from spy to president: “In the Kremlin, I have a different position. Nobody controls me here. I control everybody else” (p. 131).

On his critics: “To hell with them” (p. 140).



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