



Vladimir Putin and Russian Statecraft (Shapers of International History)

Allen Lynch

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Since Russian leader Vladimir Putin assumed power in August 1999, speculation about his character, motives, and plans for Russia's future has been rampant in the West. A portrait of Putin has emerged in the West that is one-dimensional, ill informed, and diametrically opposed to the image of Putin the majority of Russians hold. Even after he stepped down as president in May 2008, retaining a significant measure of power as prime minister under his hand-picked successor, President Dmitri Medvedev, Putin remains poorly understood. In this interpretive biography of Putin, Allen C. Lynch seeks to reconcile the two conflicting images and find out just where the truth lies about the man and the statesman.

Westerners view Putin as an authoritarian holdover from the Soviet era who has clamped down on domestic opposition, freedom of the press, and other elements of a functioning democracy and who has relentlessly exerted Russian influence abroad, challenging the West and seeking to control its post-Soviet periphery. Most Russians, in contrast, are likely to be grateful to Putin for presiding over an economic recovery and reasserting Russian dignity on the world stage. A complete apprehension of the Russian leader, according to Lynch, requires an understanding of the way in which Putin's personal experiences and critical events in recent Russian history have shaped his outlook. Lynch convincingly demonstrates how a complex interplay of Russia's post-Soviet circumstances and the particular path of Putin's career have informed his choices as leader.

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