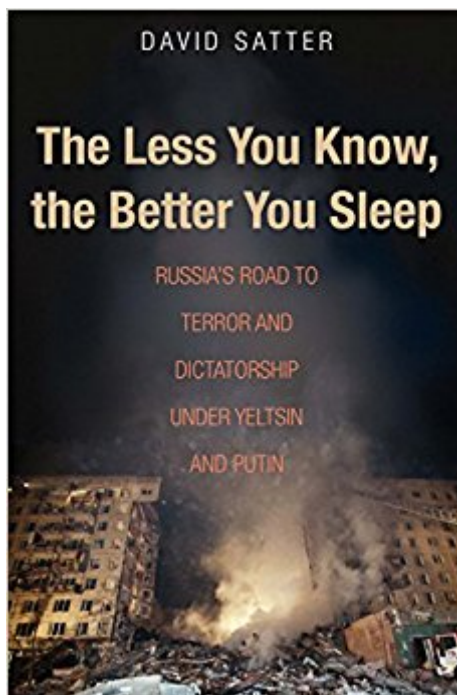




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The Less You Know, The Better You Sleep: Russia's Road To Terror And Dictatorship Under Yeltsin And Putin



Synopsis

Once you accept that the impossible is really possible, what happens in Russia makes perfect sense. In December 2013, David Satter became the first American journalist to be expelled from Russia since the Cold War. The Moscow Times said it was not surprising he was expelled, "but it was surprising it took so long." Satter is known in Russia for having written that the apartment bombings in 1999, which were blamed on Chechens and brought Putin to power, were actually carried out by the Russian FSB security police. In this book, Satter tells the story of the apartment bombings and how Boris Yeltsin presided over the criminalization of Russia, why Vladimir Putin was chosen as his successor, and how Putin has suppressed all opposition while retaining the appearance of a pluralist state. As the threat represented by Russia becomes increasingly clear, Satter's description of where Russia is and how it got there will be of vital interest to anyone concerned about the dangers facing the world today.

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Customer Reviews

"A darkly impressive account of post-Soviet Russia, skillfully moving between detective-style close-ups of key events and sweeping analysis." -- Peter Pomeranzen, author of *Nothing is True and Everything is Possible* "David Satter blends masterful journalism and rigorous scholarship in a disturbingly illuminating book on the origins, nature and future of the Putin autocracy. Required reading for all those who refuse to indulge in wishful thinking about a rogue state claiming to be a respectable superpower." "Vladimir Tismaneanu, author of *The Devil in History: Communism,*

Fascims and Some Lessons of the Twentieth Century" This very timely new book by David Satter, one of our finest analysts of contemporary Russia, provides crucial insights into Vladimir Putin. The negligible value he and his cohorts place on human life is chillingly illustrated. Here you will find a gripping account of the deliberate lethal gassing of hundreds of innocent hostages held captive by terrorists, demonstrating that seizing and holding power by any means is Putin's stock in trade." — Richard V. Allen, senior fellow Hoover Institution and former national security adviser to Ronald Reagan "Vladimir Putin's dictatorship was enabled by those who ignored the lessons of history and the warnings of people like David Satter, who was right early and often during the fall of Russian democracy and the rise of Putin's police state. Few can speak with so much authority and conviction on the triumphs and tragedies of modern Russia." — Garry Kasparov, Chairman of the Human Rights Foundation, former world chess champion "David Satter has the courage to ask what role the Russian authorities themselves had in the worst terrorist outrages there and — unlike others who did the same — has survived to tell the tale. If he is right that grand provocation had a key political role under both Yeltsin and Putin presidencies — and the evidence is persuasive — then Russia is a country from Dostoyevski's worst dreams. The Less You Know, the Better you Sleep is an uncompromising, cogent, disturbing account of a country whose authorities' nihilism may yet lead it to disaster." — Radek Sikorski, former Polish foreign minister

David Satter, who has written about Russia for almost four decades, is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and a fellow of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He divides his time between Washington, D.C., and London.

"In the absence of justice," asked Augustine in The City of God, "what is sovereignty but organized brigandage?" Organized brigandage is a good way to describe the Russian state that has emerged under the leadership of first Boris Yeltsin and now Vladimir Putin. Indeed, without mentioning Augustine, Satter describes Russian government as "banditry in the guise of a state." The first five chapters of The Less You Know, the Better You Sleep provide the evidentiary basis for this claim. Chapter 1 argues that Russia's Federal Security Service "the FSB" organized the bombings of several apartment buildings in the fall of 1999 and blamed them on Chechen terrorists. This provided newly elected president Vladimir Putin justification to launch the second Russian war in Chechnya, a "patriotic" war that unified the country behind his leadership against "terrorism." Satter's case is circumstantial, but it is also strong. Chapter 2 describes the "chaos and criminality"

that permeated the Russian government, economy, and society during Boris Yeltsin's tenure as president. Yeltsin had emerged as a popular reformer after the fall of the Soviet Union. The goal of his reforms was to ensure a "point of no return" for socialism. This entailed a rapid privatization of state industries and properties. Privatization sounds like a capitalist goal, but as Satter points out, "by carrying out the largest peaceful transfer of property in history without benefit of law, the reformers created the conditions for the criminalization of the whole country." He goes on: "The new society that emerged had three outstanding characteristics: an economy dominated by a criminal oligarchy, an authoritarian political system, and, perhaps most important, a moral degradation that subverted all legal and ethical standards and made real civil society impossible." During the 1990s, the Russian people experienced a massive decline in wealth, health, and personal security, and their discontent endangered the Yeltsin regime. This sense of endangerment, Satter argues, explains why the FSB carried out the apartment bombings against its own people. The provocation helped focus the Russian people's attention on an external enemy and presented the government of newly elected president Putin as their national savior. (Interestingly, one of Putin's first acts was to grant Yeltsin, his family, and cronies immunity from prosecution.) Chapter 3 picks up the story with the transfer of power of Yeltsin to Putin. Satter writes: "The creation and consolidation of the Putin-era system involved installing a vertical chain of command and eliminating alternative centers of power." This "power vertical" coincided with rising Russian fortunes due to its revenue from oil and gas sales. When the economy is bad, people are more likely to pay attention to deficiencies in the regime. On the other hand, when it's good, they're less likely to do so. Rising wealth led many Russians to overlook Putin's consolidation of power, or even justify it. (Interestingly, Putin's personal wealth is estimated by some Western governments and media to approach \$40 billion, carefully hidden, of course.) Chapter 4 focuses on two hostage-taking incidents that demonstrated the "negligible value of human life" in the eyes of the Russian state. In October 2002, Chechen terrorists seized a theater in Moscow. In September 2004, they seized a school in Beslan. In both cases, they took a thousand or more hostages. And in both cases, the state responded with lethal violence, killing not only the terrorists but hundreds of the hostages too. Satter provides circumstantial evidence that "the government had a role in instigating the original attacks [of the terrorists]." Unfortunately, both hostage-taking incidents "were immensely helpful to Putin's efforts to depict himself as a foe of terrorism and to legitimize the war in Chechnya to both Russia and the West." Chapter 5 deals with the Russian invasion of the Crimea and eastern Ukraine. In 2011,

Putin, after a four-year hiatus as Russian prime minister, ran once again to be Russian president, successfully. Tens of thousands protested against his fraudulent election. At around the same time, Ukrainians took to the streets of Kiev to protest their own corrupt president, successfully driving him out of the country. Taking stock of what could be his fate, Putin decided to act and invaded Ukraine, conquering the Crimea and backing a faux independence movement in eastern Ukraine, where many ethnic Russians lived. Chapter 6 turns from history to the future, asking what is Russia's fate. Unfortunately, the answer is grim. "Russia faces a darkening future." What is needed, Satter believes, is "a truth commission, like South Africa's Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, that is able to examine dispassionately the crimes of postcommunist regimes and make them known to the Russian people." Given the violence that Satter argues the Russian state has been willing so far to perpetrate against its own people to ensure its own survival, however, how likely is such a commission to come about? *The Less You Know, the Better You Sleep* is a dark book, and for those raised in the West, a confounding one. How can a government be organized along the lines of such criminality? We Westerners, with our ideals of individual rights and good government have difficulty wrapping our minds around the kinds of things Satter reports. They don't make sense to us; they're not believable, which makes the task of understanding Russia complex. "Understanding Russia is actually very easy," Satter counters, "but one must teach oneself to do something that is very hard—to believe the unbelievable." He goes on: "Once one accepts that the impossible is really possible, the degradation of the Yeltsin years and Vladimir Putin's rise to power make perfect sense."

Very good and in-depth book about geopolitical situation in the modern day Russia. The book starts from the election of Yeltsin and leads all the way to the invasion of Crimea. I would really recommend it to whoever wants to understand Russia from the early 90's to about 2015. I purchased an audio-book, which was very nice to listen to while driving to work.

David Satter knows his topic well. The book is well documented and thorough and gives a unique insight into the political fabric of Russia.

David Satter is one of the few modern Westerners with the profound understanding of Russia and ability to present situation there with interesting observations which make his books page-turners not only for readers interested in Russia. However, everyone who is interested in the recent history of

Russia must read his books.

A good read and would recommend it.

If you want to understand modern day "Russia Inc" and the criminal entity it has become, read this book. Highly recommended.

Given everything that is going on in the world and in the world of American politics, this book is a must read. It makes the indisputable case that both Yeltsin and Putin, following in the footsteps of Russia's former leaders, kill their own civilians to gain whatever is needed to retain or gain power. This world cannot survive until all of us know that this goes on. I would rather lose sleep but not live in blissful ignorance. Yes, I recommend this book to every citizen of this country and the world.

A MUST READ!

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