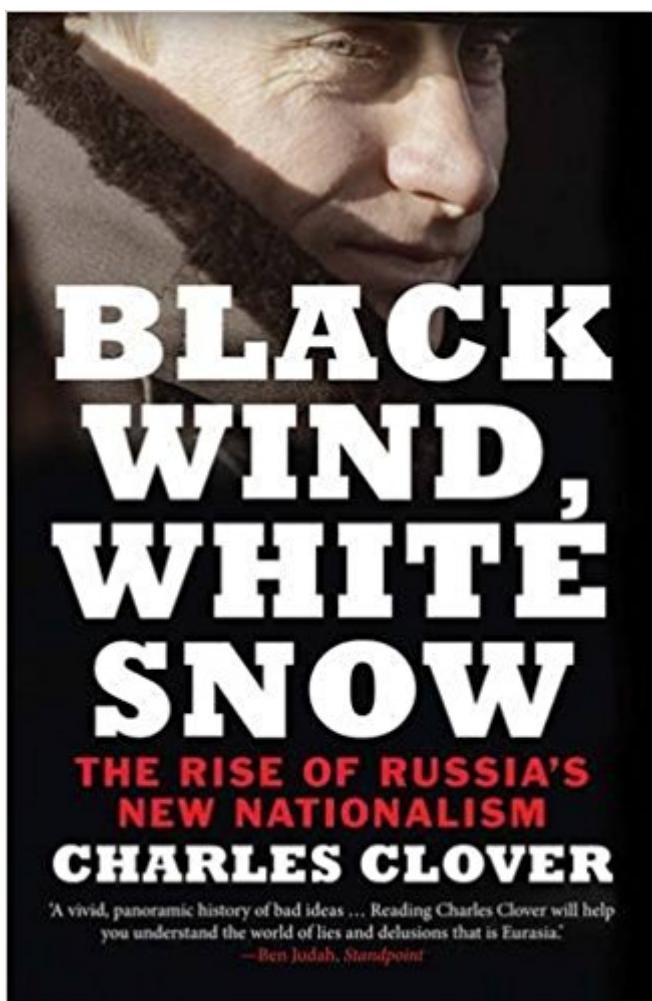


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Black Wind, White Snow: The Rise Of Russia's New Nationalism



Synopsis

A fascinating study of the root motivations behind the political activities and philosophies of Putin's government in Russia Charles Clover, award-winning journalist and former Moscow bureau chief for the Financial Times, here analyses the idea of "Eurasianism," a theory of Russian national identity based on ethnicity and geography. Clover traces Eurasianism's origins in the writings of White Russian exiles in 1920s Europe, through Siberia's Gulag archipelago in the 1950s, the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, and up to its steady infiltration of the governing elite around Vladimir Putin. This eye-opening analysis pieces together the evidence for Eurasianism's place at the heart of Kremlin thinking today and explores its impact on recent events, the annexation of Crimea, the rise in Russia of anti-Western paranoia and imperialist rhetoric, as well as Putin's sometimes perplexing political actions and ambitions. Based on extensive research and dozens of interviews with Putin's close advisers, this quietly explosive story will be essential reading for anyone concerned with Russia's past century, and its future.

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Customer Reviews

A veteran Financial Times correspondent analyses what really motivates the regime in Moscow by tracing the rise of Eurasianism: the belief (crudely put) that Russia's national identity is determined by ethnicity, geography and destiny. •The Economist, "Books of the Year 2016" (The Economist 2016-12-08) "An important

contribution to this discussion. Mr. Clover's reporting is excellent. The Economist (The Economist 2016-04-23) "What did Putin mean by 'Eurasia'; and where does his project come from? This is the question Charles Clover sets out to answer in this thought-provoking book. Part intellectual history, part portrait gallery. Black Wind, White Snow traces the background to Putin's ideas with verve and clarity. Geoffrey Hosking, Financial Times (Geoffrey Hosking Financial Times 2016-04-23) "Black Wind, White Snow is required reading. This is a vivid, panoramic history of bad ideas, chasing the metastasis of the doctrine known as Eurasianism." Reading Charles Clover will help you understand the world of lies and delusions that is Eurasia.

Ben Judah, Standpoint (Ben Judah Standpoint 2016-04-01) "[A] deeply researched, fascinating account of how nationalist views that were once dissident or marginal in the Soviet Union seeped into the corridors of power in the Kremlin when Marxism-Leninism stopped working." Clover's book deserves to win prizes for originality of mind as well as the strength of his liver. He has spent many nights drinking with these nationalists. Michael Burleigh, the Times (Michael Burleigh The Times 2015-05-07) "The new Russian nationalism for which Dugin speaks is entirely genuine. Clover casts a considerable light on its roots, on its passionate bias against the West, and on the Russian reality with which the rest of us now have to deal. His is therefore a book that needs to be read." Rodric Braithwaite, Open Russia (Rodric Braithwaite Open Russia 2016-06-16) "Clover writes knowledgeably and engagingly of the Russian political scene. Readers who would like to make that judgement for themselves in the case of today's Russia will scarcely find a better introduction than Black Wind, White Snow." Edmund Griffiths, TLS (Edmund Griffiths TLS 2016-06-01) "Clover's account of Eurasianism in Russia is unlikely to be equaled. . . . Clover's unusual command of source material and personal interviews integrates his subject into the improvised and obscure style of Putin's Russia. Highly recommended." Zachary Irwin, Library Journal (Zachary Irwin Library Journal) "[Black Wind, White Snow] has significance beyond its immediate subject matter. Its meticulous observation provides us with a case study of birth of a new ideology, taking place before our very eyes." Antony Black, European Legacy (Antony Black European Legacy 2017-04-01) --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

American journalist Charles Clover is currently the Financial Times' China correspondent.

In 2011 he received the Foreign Reporter of the Year Award at the British Press Awards.

Russian history is full of hollow points. Bereft of filling due to constant strife, war, tension, revolutions, subversions of rule - it was closed by totalitarian might, fueled by rage of the man made purgatory (Ivan Grozny), cleansing to reach modernity (Peter the Great) or external aggression (Stalin). Where facts made past examples unsavory to follow, the Eurasian theory was rapidly conscripted by those leading Russia today - acknowledging the excesses but seeing no alternative to keep those voting for them engaged. Clover contextualize ideas of Russian nationalism with those first who have carried them (Gumilev and how he have used Vernadsky geo theories) and how those have found their use for stratagems of today's Russian leaders. He narrates the crumbling of the Soviet Union and how it has manifested the kickoff for search of a new ideology - and what leaders it had brought to power (weary of Soviet times but willing to use the myths around it for a new beginning - both connected to the yarn of the past while also totally new. A much recommended read.

Among the quotes from John Maynard Keynes that never go out of fashion is the one that ends: "Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back." Charles Clover's fascinating book starts off as a history of just those sorts of scribblers: a band of exiled aristocrats and structural linguists who developed a political theory that would be name-checked, decades later, by Vladimir Putin himself. Clover spent many years in Moscow as a correspondent for the Financial Times, and the second half of the book shifts to a more conventional account of the twists and turns of modern Russian politics, an environment in which nationalist ideas have only grown stronger and stronger. The political upheavals of 2016 will no doubt inspire many more books which try to decode the intellectual roots of the current populist-nationalist-whatever upsurge. But this gonzo history of the strange ideas and even stranger practices of contemporary Russian politics got there first.

To many it is the twisting of reality, employing patriotism as a crass political tool, harnessing the whirlwind of nationalism, that is most worrying about what is going on in Russia today. Charles Clover (*Black Wind, White Snow*, Yale, \$35) traces this phenomenon from its unlikely roots a century ago in the science of linguistics, through a myriad of non-scientific perversions that have coagulated into the Russian nationalist idea known as Eurasianism. Clover's story

is mainly about the peculiar rise and influence of Alexander Dugin, a mystic, right-winged radical turned political theorist. But there are also KGB-funded nationalists, the exhibitionist-sensationalist author Eduard Limonov, the Gulag-informed theories of Lev Gumilev, and a whole range of wild and strange characters that seem ripped from the pages of Gogol or Dostoyevsky. They have relevance only because Eurasianism has bubbled up to the Kremlin, appearing in dog-whistle statements like one by President Putin that “The Great Russian mission is to unite, bind civilization. In this type of state-civilization there are no national minorities, and the principle of recognition of friend or foe is defined as a common culture and shared values...” The Eurasianist idea is that the twenty-first century will be one in which major continents of political, economic and military power will compete for the future of civilization. And therefore Russia should preside over a “historically Eurasian” landmass united by a traditionalist worldview “one defined less by what it stands for, than what it stands against, which as Clover succinctly puts it, is “the cyborg-like rationalism of a West that has lost touch with its inner human nature, its spirituality, its fraternal family bonds.” It seems an almost metaphysical conception, where the un-embraceable Russian soul (Putin in 2012: “Of course, we are less pragmatic, less calculating than representatives of other peoples, and we have bigger hearts. Maybe this is a reflection of the grandeur of our country and its boundless expanses. Our people have a more generous spirit.”) is counter-posed against outside forces that want to change it, contain it. Yet it is not mystical; it is very real. Like the communist ideology that mad the USSR responsible for leading the worldwide revolution, this perspective asserts a Russian responsibility for stewarding a Eurasian landmass of like-minded nations. And you cannot steward something over which you have not control. Thus, the Eurasianist worldview, Clover asserts, “directly provoked” the war in Ukraine, helped instigate the war in Georgia, and is turning “Western liberalism” into Russia’s chief foe and that foe is not merely foreign: witness Kremlin assertions about “fifth columns” and “national traitors” seeking to subvert the country from within. “It is hard to escape the idea,” Clover writes, “that Putin has become, in some sense, a geographical border around a separate truth.” As reviewed in “Russian Life” magazine. (Review continues with review of “The Less You Know, The Better You Sleep: Russia’s Road to Terror and Dictatorship under Yeltsin and Putin”)

A masterpiece on Russian nationalism including the history of Eurasian Studies; Essential reading for students of Post-Cold War Russia.

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