



# How Russia Really Works: Informal Practices in Politics and Business



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Wednesday, April 2, 2008


12:10 – 1 pm

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In a famous 1939 broadcast, Winston Churchill told his audience: “I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It’s a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.” Communism has long gone but is Russia becoming more transparent? In tackling this question my recent book *How Russia Really Works* presents a novel approach. Rather than looking at what does not work in Russia and why, I focus on what does work and how. By analyzing post-Soviet politics and business from the perspective of informal practices, I discover rarely visible forms of activity and dispel a number of commonly held stereotypes about corruption and illegality.

Prof. Ledeneva received her undergraduate degree in economics at Novosibirsk State University (1986) and her M.Phil. (1992) and Ph.D. (1996) in social and political theory at Cambridge University. She is author of *Russia’s Economy of Favours: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange* (Cambridge University Press, 1998) and *How Russia Works: The Informal Practices That Shaped Post-Soviet Politics and Business* (Cornell University Press, 2006) and co-editor of *Bribery and Blat in Russia* (Macmillan, 2000) and *Economic Crime in Russia* (Kluwer Law International, 2000).

Sponsored by the Center for Russian and East European Studies.  
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In *How Russia Really Works*, Alena V. Ledeneva explores practices in politics, business, media, and the legal sphere in Russia in the 1990s—from the hiring of firms to create negative publicity about one's competitors, to inventing novel schemes of tax evasion and engaging in "alternative" techniques of contract and law enforcement. The politics and economy of the 1990s remained dependent on the functioning of informal practices that were widespread, recognized, and reported upon in every region of Russia. *Managing Informal Business Practices in Russia: The Experience of Foreign Companies*, 149–174, 157. Russian businesspeople prefer to work with proven suppliers and business partners. A German manager working for the Russian subsidiary of a Western European. *Managing Informal Business Practices in Russia: The Experience of Foreign Companies*, 149–174, 159. "Informal practices" are the grease that interests Ledeneva, and in Russia they are the material that fills the gap between formal legal institutions and informal extralegal norms. They operate in politics (through illicit electoral manipulation), where business and politics meet (in insider mutual-protection societies), and in the economy at large (through barter, double bookkeeping, and "privatized" government agencies and services). Each has roots in Russian and Soviet history but with the important difference, as Ledeneva notes in her thoughtful exploration of both in *How Russia Really Works*. Read 5 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. During the Soviet era, blat—the use of personal networks for... *How Russia Really Works: The Informal Practices That Shaped Post-Soviet Politics and Business*. by Alena V. Ledeneva. 3.94 ⭐ Rating details. In *How Russia Really Works*, Alena V. Ledeneva explores practices in politics, business, media, and the legal sphere in Russia in the 1990s—from the hiring of firms to create negative publicity about one's competitors, to inventing novel schemes of tax evasion and engaging in "alternative" techniques of contract and law enforcement. Ledeneva discovers ingenuity, wit, and vigor in these activities and argues that they simultaneously support and subvert formal institutions.