



How Russia Really Works: Informal Practices in Politics and Business



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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).

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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. Ledeneva discovers ingenuity, wit, and vigor in these activities and argues that they simultaneously support and subvert formal institutions. They enable corporations, the media, politicians, and businessmen to operate in the post-Soviet labyrinth of I...Â Chapter One Why Are Informal Practices Still Prevalent in Russia? (pp. 10-27). *How Russia Really Works* book. Read 5 reviews from the world's largest community for readers. During the Soviet era, blat--the use of personal networks fo...Â *How Russia Really Works: The Informal Practices That Shaped Post-Soviet Politics and Business.* by Alena V. Ledeneva. 3.94 Â Rating details.Â 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. 1. Helmke, Gretchen and Levitsky, Steven, "Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda," *Perspectives on Politics* 2 (December 2004): 725-40 CrossRef Google Scholar. See also Vladimir Gel'man, "The Unrule of Law in the Making: The Politics of Informal Institution Building in Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 56, no. 7 (November 2004): 1021-41; Anna Grzymala-Busse, "Informal Institutions and the Post-Communist State" (unpublished article, 2004); Solomon, Peter H. Jr, "Informal Practices in Russian Justice: Probing the Limits of Post-Soviet Reform" *How Russia Really Works: The Informal Practices That Shaped Post-Soviet Politics and Business.* By Alena V. Ledeneva. *Culture and Society after Socialism.*