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Vodka Politics: Alcohol, Autocracy, and the Secret History of the Russian State

By Mark Lawrence Schrad



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Vodka Politics: Alcohol, Autocracy, and the Secret History of the Russian State By Mark Lawrence Schrad

Russia is famous for its vodka, and its culture of extreme intoxication. But just as vodka is central to the lives of many Russians, it is also central to understanding Russian history and politics.

In *Vodka Politics*, Mark Lawrence Schrad argues that debilitating societal alcoholism is not hard-wired into Russians' genetic code, but rather their autocratic political system, which has long wielded vodka as a tool of statecraft. Through a series of historical investigations stretching from Ivan the Terrible through Vladimir Putin, *Vodka Politics* presents the secret history of the Russian state itself—a history that is drenched in liquor. Scrutinizing (rather than dismissing) the role of alcohol in Russian politics yields a more nuanced understanding of Russian history itself: from palace intrigues under the tsars to the drunken antics of Soviet and post-Soviet leadership, vodka is there in abundance.

Beyond vivid anecdotes, Schrad scours original documents and archival evidence to answer provocative historical questions. How have Russia's rulers used alcohol to solidify their autocratic rule? What role did alcohol play in tsarist coups? Was Nicholas II's ill-fated prohibition a catalyst for the Bolshevik Revolution? Could the Soviet Union have become a world power without liquor? How did vodka politics contribute to the collapse of both communism and public health in the 1990s? How can the Kremlin overcome vodka's hurdles to produce greater social well-being, prosperity, and democracy into the future?

Viewing Russian history through the bottom of the vodka bottle helps us to understand why the "liquor question" remains important to Russian high politics even today—almost a century after the issue had been put to bed in most every other modern state. Indeed, recognizing and confronting vodka's devastating political legacies may be the greatest political challenge for this generation of Russia's leadership, as well as the next.



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Editorial Review

Review

In this extensive but accessible account, Schrad (*The Political Power of Bad Ideas*) argues that throughout history the Russian (and Soviet) autocracy has been intrinsically--and often tragically--linked to vodka. ... In the post-Soviet era, the Russian Federation's own reliance on vodka has overseen a demographic disaster, in which rampant alcoholism has sunk Russian life expectancy to the lowest in Europe. As Schrad puts it, "the single greatest obstacle to a normal, healthy, and wealthy Russia" is the predominance of "the state's own vodka politics." -*Publisher's Weekly*

Overall, Schrad's strong research and analysis of economic policies and their social impact carry his argument. Social and economics historians or activists seeking to understand or tackle the ongoing Russian dependence upon vodka will find this work compelling.--Elizabeth Zeitz, Otterbein Univ. Lib., Westerville, OH (*Library Journal*)

a powerful critique of the effect of the levels of vodka consumption and of government policy ... this book has real value ... [which] principally lies in its laying bare the effects of excessive vodka drinking on the course of development of Russian society and the responsibility of the Russian state in allowing this to develop Graeme Gill, Australian Journal of Politics and History Schrad is an engaging writer. He ranges across Russian history with ease, zeroing in on countless striking anecdotes and developing his story within a competent and well-researched narrative. The author brings to bear vast scholarly literature as well as published and unpublished (including archival) primary sources ... Vodka Politics draws upon vast research, tells a lot of great stories, and advances a provocative thesis. Jonathan Daly, American Historical Review

From the Back Cover

"A gripping and original book." -Tyler Cowen, *Marginal Revolution*

"*Vodka Politics* retells the history of the Russian state as a startling, almost *Grand-Guignol* narrative of spiritous excess, with one autocratic regime after another using drink to befuddle its courtiers, pacify its masses, stoke its imperial ambitions, and keep its treasury full." -David Courtwright, author of *Forces of Habit: Drugs and the Making of the Modern World*

"Written in a lively and entertaining fashion, *Vodka Politics* details the enduring link between autocracy and alcohol across the expanse of Russian history. In this impressive interpretive history, Mark Schrad leaves no stone unturned in laying out how vodka became intertwined with governance in Russia and the tragic consequences that this has had for Russian society." -Mark Beissinger, Princeton University, author of *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*

About the Author

No Bio

No Bio

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Adrian Rogers:

Information is provisions for anyone to get better life, information these days can get by anyone at everywhere. The information can be a understanding or any news even an issue. What people must be consider while those information which is inside the former life are challenging to be find than now could be taking seriously which one would work to believe or which one often the resource are convinced. If you receive the unstable resource then you get it as your main information you will have huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen within you if you take *Vodka Politics: Alcohol, Autocracy, and the Secret History of the Russian State* as your daily resource information.

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