

World Leaders: Vladimir Putin

By Biography.com Editors and A+E Networks, adapted by Newsela staff on 11.04.16

Word Count **834**

Level **890L**



TOP: Portrait of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Wikimedia.

Synopsis: Vladimir Putin is the president of Russia. He was elected to his third term in 2012 and was elected again in 2018. He was also president from 2000 to 2008. Putin has also been Russia's prime minister, similar to a vice president in the United States.

Early Political Career

Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, on October 7, 1952. He grew up attending the schools there and liked sports. He earned a law degree in 1975 and worked as a KGB intelligence officer until 1990. The KGB was the main spy agency for the Soviet Union. It was similar to the CIA in the United States. The Soviet Union broke apart in 1991 into several smaller countries, including Russia.

Putin spent a few years working for a city government. In 1998, he began to work for Russia's then-president Boris Yeltsin.

In August 1999, Yeltsin dismissed his cabinet along with his prime minister. Putin became the prime minister, which is the leader of the cabinet. The cabinet helps the president make important decisions.

President Of Russia: 1st And 2nd Terms

In December 1999, Yeltsin resigned as president of Russia. He appointed Putin as the temporary president until the official elections. Putin was elected to his first term in 2000. He promised many changes for the country.

After the September 2001 terrorist attacks, Putin announced Russia's support for U.S. anti-terror efforts. The United States wanted to remove Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein from power, but Putin did not support this plan.

In 2004, Putin was re-elected president. He could not run again in 2008 because he had already been president twice. But, Russia's new president Dmitry Medvedev made Putin the prime minister again.

Third And Fourth Terms As President

In 2012, Putin became Russia's president again for the third time. Many people wondered if the election results were honest. Putin made Medvedev the prime minister.

Putin made the United States unhappy by not allowing Americans to adopt Russian children anymore. Putin also allowed American Edward Snowden to stay in Russia instead of sending him to the United States. Snowden faces criminal charges for sharing U.S. government secrets. Putin has also upset many people with his new anti-gay laws.

On March 18, 2018, Russian citizens elected Putin again. This is his fourth time as president.

Chemical Weapons In Syria

In 2013, the United States told Syria to give up its chemical weapons after the weapons were used in the civil war there. The United States threatened military action if Syria did not do this. The Russian and U.S. governments made a deal for the weapons to be destroyed.

Putin said Syria's government didn't use the weapons, rebels did. He also said U.S. action in Syria could result in more war in the area.

Invading Crimea

In 2014, there was unrest in the Ukraine. Putin sent Russian troops into Crimea, which is on the country's coast. That area had been part of Russia until 1954. About 16,000 Russian troops invaded the territory. Putin denied that Russia wanted to take over Crimea and that it was just trying to help the people of Crimea. The people of Crimea voted to join Russia in a vote that many said was rigged. Russia still has some control over Crimea. Ukraine is not happy about this.

Syrian Airstrikes

In September 2015, Russia surprised the world by announcing it would begin strategic airstrikes in Syria to target the extremist group, Islamic State (IS), also known as ISIS. The group tried to set up its own country in the Middle East and made significant advances in the region because of the chaos created by Syria's civil war.

Many believed Russia's intervention was a way for the country to help the Syrian government stay in power by targeting groups that opposed the Syrian president.

U.S. Election Hacks

In the months leading up to the 2016 U.S. presidential election, emails sent by members of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) were hacked. The DNC is the group that governs the U.S. Democratic party. The personal emails of John Podesta were also hacked. At the time of the hacks, Podesta was running Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. More than a dozen U.S. intelligence agencies agreed that Russia was responsible for the hacks.

The emails were given to WikiLeaks, a website that publishes government and corporate secrets from the U.S. and other governments. WikiLeaks published the DNC emails in July 2016. It published the Podesta emails in October 2016, just a month before U.S. Election Day.

In December 2016, CIA officials concluded that Putin was involved in interfering with the U.S. presidential election. The officials stated that the hacked emails were meant to damage Clinton's campaign in favor of her Republican opponent Donald Trump. The FBI and National Intelligence Agency supported the CIA's statements.

Personal Life

In 1980, Putin met his future wife, Lyudmila, who was working as a flight attendant at the time. They married in 1983 and had two daughters. In 2013, the couple divorced.

Quiz

- 1 Select the sentence from the section "Early Political Career" that shows Putin first got his political power from working with Boris Yeltsin.
- (A) He earned a law degree in 1975 and worked as a KGB intelligence officer until 1990.
 - (B) Putin spent a few years working for a city government.
 - (C) In August 1999, Yeltsin dismissed his cabinet along with his prime minister.
 - (D) Putin became the prime minister, which is the leader of the cabinet.
- 2 Choose the paragraph in the section "President Of Russia: 1st And 2nd Terms" that suggests that Putin was unable to be elected for a third term in 2008.
- 3 Read the section "Third And Fourth Terms As President."
What effect did Putin's election to a third term have on the Russian people?
- (A) Most people were extremely excited about his election.
 - (B) Most people were indifferent to his election.
 - (C) Most people questioned the legitimacy of his election.
 - (D) Most people were confused by his election.
- 4 Based on the section "Syrian Airstrikes," which of the following statements is TRUE?
- (A) The United States expected Russia to begin airstrikes in Syria.
 - (B) Most people believe that Syria wanted Russia to start airstrikes.
 - (C) Some believe that Russia wants Syria's government to stay in power.
 - (D) ISIS wanted Russia's support in ousting the Syrian government from power.