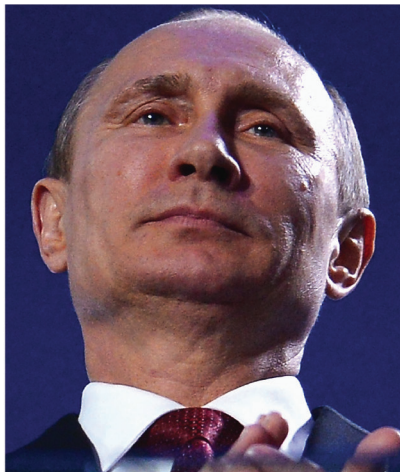


# Vladimir Putin – profile of Russia's strongman

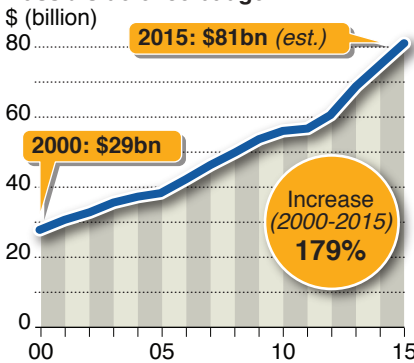
■ **Jun 1999:** In aftermath of 15-month Kosovo war, U.S.-led NATO troops block Russian peacekeeping efforts in standoff at Pristina airport

■ **2000:** After Kosovo humiliation and with Russian economy in chaos, **President Boris Yeltsin** resigns, nominating Putin to succeed him. **Kremlin begins rebuilding Russian military, increasing defence budget from \$29bn to \$68.2bn by 2013**

■ **2002:** U.S. initiates military training programme in former Soviet republic of Georgia



Russia's defence budget



■ **2004:** During Ukraine's **Orange Revolution**, victory of pro-Russian **Viktor Yanukovich** (left) in presidential election is annulled due to fraud. His opponent, pro-Western **Viktor Yushchenko**, is mysteriously poisoned with dioxins – Yushchenko survives and wins re-run

■ **2005:** New oil pipeline from Azerbaijan through Georgia to Turkey bypasses Russia

■ **2008:** NATO summit in Bucharest confirms Georgia and Ukraine will be offered membership. Referendum in Georgia shows 77% of voters supporting NATO accession. **Putin becomes Prime Minister, having served two terms as President**

■ **Aug:** In five-day war with Russia, Georgian military is forced out of South Ossetia and Abkhazia

■ **2010:** Yanukovich becomes President of Ukraine

■ **2012:** Putin wins third term as president

■ **2013:** U.S. backs off from threat to attack Syria over its use of chemical weapons after Kremlin aggressively opposes move. **Success boosts Putin's standing**

■ **Feb 2014:** Protests over Yanukovich's decision to back away from trade agreement with European Union forces him from power

■ **Mar:** Russia annexes **Crimea from Ukraine**. U.S., EU and Canada respond with sanctions

■ **Jul:** All 298 people on board Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 killed when aircraft is hit by missile over eastern Ukraine. **Kremlin denies supplying missile systems to pro-Russian rebels**

■ **Jan 2015:** Western sanctions and falling oil price contribute to recession. **Russian Central Bank forecasts GDP contraction of between 4.5%-4.7% in 2015**

■ **Mar:** Putin reveals that Moscow was ready to put its nuclear forces on alert to ensure Russia's annexation of Crimea

■ **Mar 16:** Putin orders Northern Fleet – with 38,000 troops, 41 ships, 15 submarines and over 100 aircraft – to full combat readiness as part of snap military exercise



▼ Flagship of Northern Fleet  
**Pyotr Veliky (Peter the Great)**