

BEIJING DISPATCH: Russian “Oligarchs” vs. Chinese Billionaires—what gives?

Dispatch from [Beijing](#) } Jeff Brown’s special reports



TODAY’S TOPIC:

44 Days Radio Sinoland, Moscow-Beijing Express, Russian “Oligarchs” vs Chinese Billionaires 2015.7.5

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[box] [dropcap]A[/dropcap]lways suspicious of the mainstream media behind the Great Western Firewall, I asked myself, “Why are the rich Chinese guys called billionaires, while the Russian ones are known as oligarchs?”[/box]

For the answer to that, listen to our podcast, see the written article, below, or read along at our fraternal site, The Vineyard of the Saker: thesaker.is/the-moscow-beijing-...inese-billionaires/ And find lots and lots more unique, informative non-mainstream media radio shows, interviews and articles about China at www.44days.net.

[The Moscow-Beijing Express: Russian “Oligarchs” versus Chinese Billionaires](#)



China's AliBaba CEO/Founder Jack Ma, one of China's entrepreneurial powerhouses. Current worth: \$26+ Billion.

Jeff J. Brown

[dropcap]C[/dropcap>hina's billionaires and Russia's oligarchs have been in the media lately, due to a variety of business transactions, between these two allies and around the world, not to mention all the absurd sanctions the West has been piling on Russia over the last year and half.

Always suspicious of the mainstream media behind the Great Western Firewall, I asked myself,

Why are the rich Chinese guys called billionaires, while the Russian ones are known as oligarchs?

My suspicions were aroused, because *oligarch* is very pejorative. Oligarchs govern an oligarchy, which is defined as,

A form of government in which all power is vested in a few persons or in a dominant class or clique; government by the few.



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ol·i·garch

/ˈäləˌgärk/

noun

1. a ruler in an oligarchy.
2. (especially in Russia) a very rich businessman with a great deal of political influence.

Hmm... Does that sound like Russia today, or more like the United States? I then raised my eyebrows reading this definition of *oligarch*, on Google,

Oligarch: (especially in Russia) a very rich businessman with a great deal of political influence. (image by www.google.com)



Vladimir Potanin

Thus, at least in the English language, the very negative connotation of an oligarch is now officially linked to images of *Russians*. I always tell my students: words are powerful things.

To get to the bottom of this cognitive dissonance, that superrich Chinese and Russians are given very disparate appellations, I decided to do some research – to find out the truth. I created two tables, one of China’s Top Ten Billionaires <http://www.forbes.com/china-billionaires/list/> and another one with Russia’s Top Ten Billionaires. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Russian_people_by_net_worth For China’s wealthiest, I read their biographies in Chinese on Baidu and in English on Wikipedia. For Russia’s richest, I referred to English Wikipedia and a few other websites.

First, the Chinese:

China’s Top Ten Billionaires							
Name	Age	Company	Field	Past	Education	Connections	Dirt
He Xiangjian	72	Midea	Appliances	Entrepreneur	High School	CPC	None
Lei Jun	45	Xiaomi	Smartphones	Entrepreneur	BS IT	NPC 2013	None
Li “Robin” Yanhong	46	Baidu	IT	US IT	US MS IT	Self-Made	None
Li Hejun	47	Hanergy	Solar Power	Mr. Mysterious	Late life PhD	Self-Made?	None
Liu Qiangdong	40	JD.com	IT	Entrepreneur	BA Lib. Arts	Selfmade	None
Ma “Jack” Yun	50	Alibaba	IT	School Teacher	BA Ed.	Self-Made	None
Ma Huateng	43	Tencent	IT	Entrepreneur	BA Lib. Arts	Self-Made	None
Wang Jianlin	60	Wanda	Real Estate	Climbed Company Ladder	BA after PLA	PLA & CPC	None

Wang Wenyin	47	Amer	Mining, Copper	Entrepreneur	High School	Self-Made	None
Zong Qinghou	69	Wahaha	Food Processing	Entrepreneur	High School	NPC 2013	Back taxes?
Note:							
CPC: Communist Party of China							
PLA: People's Liberation Army							
NPC: National People's Congress							
Dirt: any kind of known fraud, embezzlement, collusion, organized crime, theft, etc.							

At first glance, a number of characteristics stick out. Three of China's richest people are older, while all the others are 50 or younger. Six of the ten are in technology fields (IT, solar and smartphones). Most of them got their start to the top by being entrepreneurs, which is the classic path around the world. The other tried and true method is like Wang Jianlin, who worked his way up the company ladder, the hard way.

Three of them didn't go to college and two others went to university later in life. One of them, Li Hejun, of Hanergy, has almost no information about him, even in the Chinese press, which really stands out.

Only two of them can be construed as having the right connections, to make their way to the top, He Xiangjian and Wang Jianlin, via the CPC and the PLA. Two others, Lei Jun and Zong Qinghou, were recently elected to China's National People's Congress, but only long after they became billionaires.

In the Dirt category, only one out of ten has anything questionable about their business dealings, at least which has been made public. Mr. Zong Qinghou is rumored to owe some pretty significant back taxes. He's rich enough that he could

just cut them a check. But it looks like for now, instead of being arrested, he his paying them back quietly. So, it would appear that China's ten richest came about their success, without overtly committing any illegal acts.

Now let's look at Russia's Top Ten:

Russia's Top Ten Billionaires							
Name	Age	Company	Field	Past	Education	Connections	Dirt
Alekperov, Vagit	64	Lukoil	Hydrocarbons	Climbed Company Ladder	BS Eng.	Privatization, Self-Made	None
Fridman, Mikhail	51	Alfa	Consortium	Entrepreneur	BS Eng.	Government	Fraud
Lisin, Vladimir	59	Novolipetsk	Steel	Climbed Company Ladder	BS Eng.	Privatization, Self-Made	None
Mikhelson, Leonid	59	Novatek	Hydrocarbons	Climbed Company Ladder	BS Eng.	Privatization, Self-Made	None
Mordashov, Alexei	49	Severstal	Consortium	State Company, Entrepreneur	BS Eng., UK MBA	Privatization, Self-Made	None
Potanin, Vladimir	54	Interros	Consortium	Entrepreneur	BA For. Aff.	SCP, Family	Fraud
Prokhorov, Mikhail	50	NY Nets	Consortium	High Level Government	MBA	Government, Politics	None
Timchenko, Gennady	62	Volga	Consortium	State Company, Entrepreneur	BS Eng.	Privatization, Self-Made	None
Usmanov, Alisher	61	Arsenal FC	Consortium	High Level Government	BA Intl. Law	SCP, Family	Early Fraud?
Vekselberg, Viktor	58	Renova	Consortium	State Company, Entrepreneur	BS Eng.	Privatization, Self-Made	Fraud
Note:							
SPC: Soviet Communist Party							

Eng.: Engineering							
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First, compared to China, Russia's Top Ten are, on average older, but within a fairly tight band, 49-64. Unlike the Chinese, Russian billionaires are much more likely to be widely invested in a number of different sectors, via consortiums (conglomerates). Two of the ten are in hydrocarbons and one is in steel. The rest are all over the place. Russian billionaires are just as entrepreneurial as the Chinese, with eight of them working their way to the top. Russia's billionaires are a very educated lot. All of them have at least a college diploma, with seven of them in engineering.

For connections, four of the ten, compared to China's 2/10, have the kind of Rolodex that may have helped their careers. The other six are self-made success stories. They were undoubtedly in the right place at the right time, back in the 1990s, with the massive selloff – many would say giveaway – of the Soviet Union's state assets. Russia's richest didn't create these conditions, but they too advantage of them, apparently mostly legally.

In the Dirt department, three of the ten are known to have committed some kind of financial legerdemain. Mr. Usmanov was judicially exonerated twenty years later for Soviet era crimes, but a search on the internet will show that some people do not agree with that ruling. They say he was crook. We will probably never know, one way or the other.

To be honest, with the horrible reputation that Russia's rich have been given behind the Great Western Firewall, I was pleasantly surprised at this list. I was expecting a long rap sheet on every one of these guys. I checked the aforementioned Wikipedia list for the next ten richest Russians and was again, very startled to see that most of them have no "controversies". Only one of the #11-#20, Roman Abramovich has definite dirt on his hands. Oleg Deripaska has a bad smell, as

it seems organized crime hovers around his dealings a lot, but still, no arrests. Dmitry Rybolovlev was imprisoned but later exonerated, when others were arrested on charges of a contract killing. Like Mr. Usmanov, at this point, who knows?

[dropcap]D[/dropcapoes Russia have its fair share of bad guys? Probably no more than the West. Ronald Reagan's administration was the most corrupt in American history. Yet all the hundreds who went before justice then, could easily commit the same crimes, starting in Bill Clinton's presidency, up to today, with no consequences in sight. Now, high ranking members of the US government and corporate criminals routinely commit perjury while testifying, walking away with a big pat on the back for a job well done. The insidiously corrupt revolving door between state and business just keeps on spinning. Do we need to discuss the totally rigged stock, bond, gold, silver and derivative markets? The wholly bogus "official" US government statistics on employment, the consumer price index (CPI) or the gross domestic product (GDP)? Or how about the LIBOR and swap rates, as well as the London gold fix? Then there is the plethora of offshore tax havens and the outright looting of billions from middle class pension funds. What can we say about all the stench of corruption in Brussels, which is a laughing stock across Europe? Or the Gilded Age, sunshine bribery racket in Washington, DC, where President Obama and Congress poll lower than a dried dog turd? Just web search these various key word combinations: "scandal", "financial", "corporate", "political", "American", "US", "European", "2014", "2015", etc., for enough eye scorching filth to blind you.



Ukrainian tycoon Kolomoyskyi: Though Jewish, he backs the openly Nazi Azov Battalion. Lately that burden has been made less onerous via generous contributions by US taxpayers, as the CIA/Pentagon agencies are now training these Nazi bands. But in massively ignorant, disinformed America, no one seems to bat an eye. Or care. A job well done, "free press."

[dropcap]Y[/dropcap]es, Russia has some really bad actors. Ihor Kolomoyski, a Ukrainian billionaire, working with the West and Israel, is presumed to be helping organize some of the genocidal butchery in the eastern part of his shattered country, including the 2014 mass murder of 48 innocents in Odessa. Yet, is Barak Obama any better? He signs off on a weekly hit list, sending out drones across the world, killing and maiming thousands of innocents. Bill Clinton and John Major/Tony Blair gleefully exterminated hundreds of thousands of children in the 1990s, while enforcing genocidal sanctions on Iraq. And let's not forget what Mr. Clinton did to Serbia. Later, Tony Blair and George Bush massacred millions in Iraq and Afghanistan. As we have since learned, these two resource rich countries were just a warmup for Western *perpetual war* and carnage across the planet. In 2011, Nicolas Sarkozy and

David Cameron gaily bombed Libya and its people back to the Stone Age. Are these murderers any different than Mr. Kolomoyski?

[While all billionaires represent a threat to the democratic fabric of society] the vast majority of the super-rich in Russia and China today made it the old-fashioned way: plenty of luck, and they mostly worked for it. And in Russia's "oligarchs" lineup, there are far fewer genuine criminals than the Western reports would suggest.—eds.

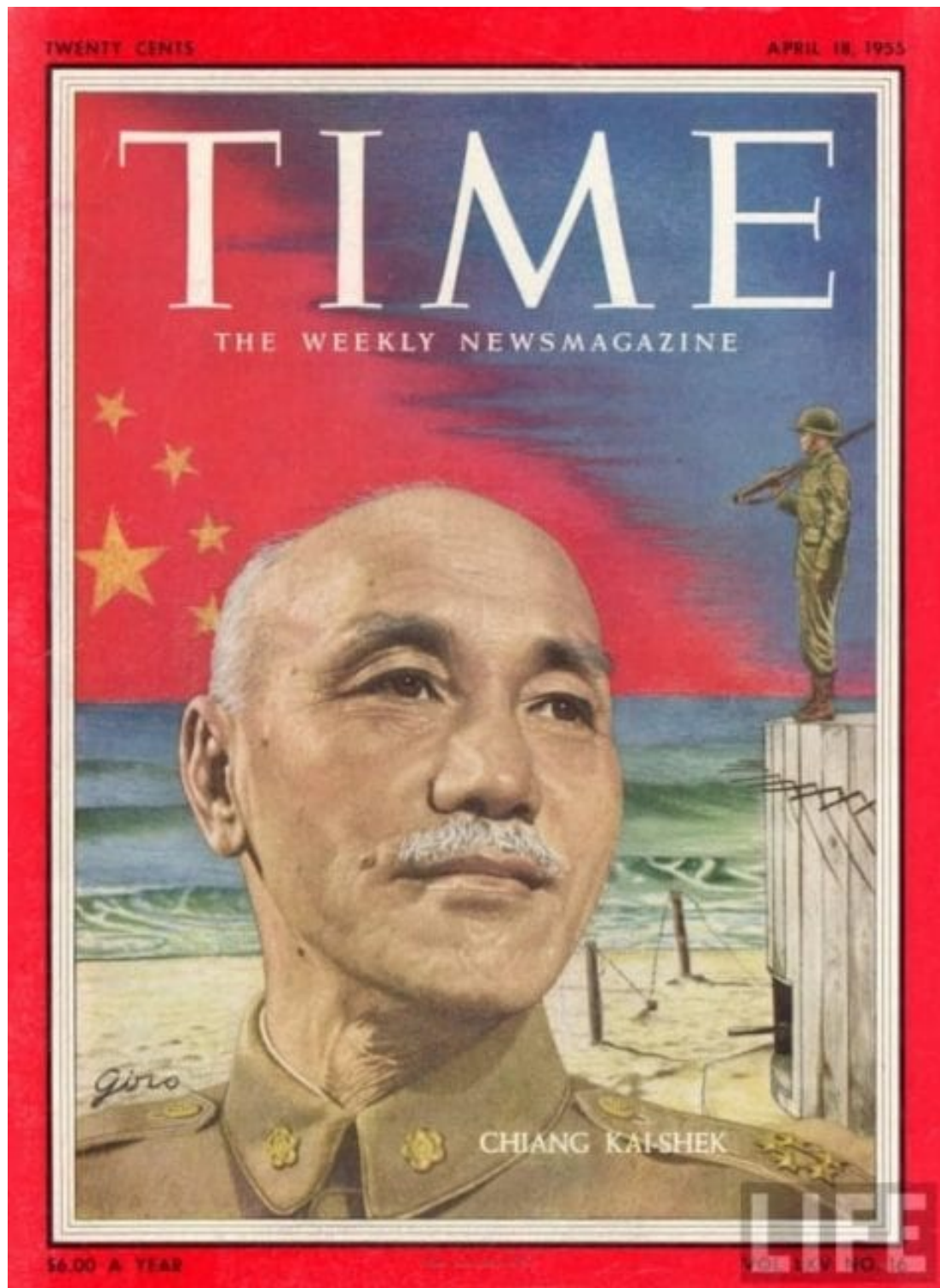
One very good explanation as to why Russia does have its fair share of criminal billionaires, is that they came to life during a period of social, economic and political anarchy. This happened in the 1990s, when President Boris Yeltsin opened up his country to predatory plunder, literally the rape of nation, by colonizing Western banks, corporations and governments. In that kind of environment, psychopaths thrive at the expense of everyone else. Many of the Wikipedia biographies of the more infamous, criminal Russian/Ukrainian billionaires point out that they were associates of the utterly corrupt Yeltsin, who was in fact their and the West's spineless patsy for pillage. *Let's not forget, Russia's criminal corporate class was and still is very much an important ally of Western criminal corporatocracy.*



Chiang in full regalia: As head of the Kuomintang, he always put ruling class interests above the welfare of China's masses, thereby endearing himself to the Western powers.

A strong case can be made that if China were put in the same situation as 1990s Russia, it too would have a whole slew of criminal billionaires to deal with. Thanks to history, the Chinese know this all too well. During their 110 year, colonial *Century of Humiliation*, 1840-1949, there were similar, 1990s-Russia conditions throughout much of the country. Who was in charge? Really nasty oligarchs, called *war lords* and *gangsters*, who worked arm in arm with Western colonialists, corrupt government officials and wealthy local compradors, to suck dry the country's natural and human resources. The granddaddy of them all was the fascist KMT's Generalissimo, Chiang Kai-Shek. The first order of the day, wherever the KMT came in control, was to be the Grand Pimp of all the criminal gangs, to control the drug, prostitution, gambling, loan sharking, protection and arms rackets. That

doesn't even count all the KMT's financial crimes, like looting treasuries, skimming off contracts, counterfeiting, etc. Such is the order of the day, when chaos and anarchy reign. For the Chinese masses, Mao Zedong and liberation in 1949 couldn't come soon enough.



Generalissimo Chiang kai-shek on Time Magazine's cover (18 April 1955). Henry Luce, who owned TIME and LIFE magazines and other major US publications was a zealous supporter of Chiang, practically a friend of the family. The dictator was featured prominently (and favorably) on Luce's media empire for decades, literally dozens of times, always boosting the influence of the reactionary

nationalist “China Lobby.”

[box] There are fewer criminal billionaires in China these days, for several reasons. First, the market here is so huge and economic growth has been so torrid, that they can make all their money reasonably ethically. Secondly, Baba Beijing (China’s leadership) keeps a very firm grip on the economy. It has many laws and regulations in place, similar to what the United States had, thanks to Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal. Sadly for the US, they were disdainfully dismantled by the 1% elite.[/box]

CLICK ON IMAGE(S) TO EXPAND



Henry Luce’s support for Chiang typified the corruption of the US media—which naturally continues unabated to this day.

Contrary to myth, there has never been a really decent and honest mainstream capitalist media. The whole notion of a golden age of US journalism is a myth.

[dropcap]T[/dropcap]his started during the Reagan administration, in the 1980s, picking up rapid pace through later presidencies and is still ongoing today. All the pervasive, Western financial and political corruption we see today can be largely blamed on thousands of abrogated laws and regulations, which were put in place to rein in humanity's avaricious greed heads. Thirdly, unlike the West, corporate and government crooks really get prosecuted in China and do long, hard time in prison. If their actions are egregious enough, they will get a lead bullet in the back of the head. It pays much more, with negligible risk, for billionaires and bureaucrats to blatantly break the law in the West, than in China.

In closing, the Western mainstream media has done a brilliant job of further trashing Russia's reputation, by smearing all wealthy Russians as "criminal oligarchs". In terms of propaganda coups, it ranks right up there with tarring people and countries as conspiracy nuts, liberals, extremists, commies, terrorists, and the whole panoply of slurs, which is ruthlessly used by the Washington-London-Paris consensus. This includes ceaseless attempts to discredit Baba Beijing and the Chinese Communist Party. Behind the Great Western Firewall, this all results in the effective brainwashing and control of the masses. If that sounds like a strong statement, remember, they call it a "free press", and 99% of the people actually believe it is true.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jeff J. Brown—TGP’s Beijing correspondent— is the author of *44 Days* (2013), *Reflections in Sinoland – Musings and Anecdotes from the Belly of the New Century Beast*(summer 2015), and *Doctor WriteRead’s Treasure Trove to Great English*(2015). He is currently writing an historical fiction, *Red Letters – The Diaries of Xi Jinping*, due out in 2016. Jeff is commissioned to write monthly articles for *The Saker* and *The Greanville Post*, touching on all things China, and the international political & cultural scene.

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