

The Wide Angle: “Project Russia,” Unknown in the West, Reveals Putin’s Playbook

by Dave Troy

Dec 12, 2024 | [Politics](#), [The Wide Angle](#)



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Between 2005 and 2010, a set of books called “[Project Russia](#)” was distributed to high-ranking officials in the Russian government and other influential thought leaders. The books offered a detailed program of spiritual warfare against Western democracies culminating in “controlled global collapse” and the establishment of a “supranational” state headed by a Prince-Monk who “best understands the world.” The plan described is ultimately a program for subjugating the world, which would also be united together in a single religion.

This all may sound fantastical, or even absurd. But the Project Russia plan comports very closely with what’s unfolding now, and has been [linked to groups](#) acting on behalf of the FSB, Russia’s security agency. It’s worth considering the ways in which this plan also reflects the inflection point we now face in the United States.

‘Project Russia’ Origins

The Project Russia series was initially published anonymously, but in 2010 Russian bloggers attributed it primarily to Yuriy Shalyganov, a man born in 1967 and rumored to be connected to the FSB. He is also affiliated with the Russian Institute of Strategic Security.



Project Russia (2005-2010)

The books were published by EKSMO, one of the country’s largest publishers, and are widely believed to have been commissioned by the Kremlin, and also possibly [connected](#) to Putin pal Vladimir Yakunin. The series went on to become a well-known bestseller, with an audience of at least 3 million.

The books assert that democracies do not work and cannot be salvaged. They argue that democracies are necessarily decadent, and that Russia is morally superior. This moral superiority is interpreted to mean that all

democracies are a natural enemy, and must be fought. That fight will necessarily lead to a controlled global collapse, after which a new supranational state may be established under the leadership of an enlightened elite.

Dysfunction of Democracies

Project Russia roots its disdain for democracies in the concept of decadence. Democracy is seen as inextricably linked to capitalism and materialistic desire. Western tolerance for homosexuality, they say, is driven by a godless desire to sell ever more consumer goods. Communism, because it is also godless, resulted in materialism. The authors propose a new model — neither capitalism nor communism — rooted in the “great idea” of a universal religion. Armed with this moral shield, they intend to conquer any foe.

American democracy, they say, is especially disingenuous because it is easily manipulated, while powerful elites shower our institutions with a fake veneer of gravitas and importance. Meanwhile, they say, voters behave like easily manipulated children and don’t have enough information, education, or domain expertise to weigh in on national leadership matters. While democracy focuses on constantly changing leaders (which is portrayed as a sign of weakness), Project Russia values strength and continuity of leadership. Putin is cast as the next link in the chain providing continuity from Soviet Russia into the future.

The books also cite a favorite trope of Putin’s, the “**Golden Billion**,” which suggests that the US and Europe unfairly lord over the rest of the world, while representing only a fraction of its population and consuming the bulk of its resources. Project Russia asks, “What will the [rest] of the world’s population do? Live on Mars’ resources?”

A Call for Collapse

The books explicitly call for a collapse of the existing order. The authors already believe that the United States is bound to failure, due to the perceived reliance on “printing money,” or US dollar hegemony. Even as a full collapse may be difficult to achieve, they can benefit from any partial destabilization they can induce.

“We believe that a new phase is coming in the development of human society. All will collapse—both Europe and America, and the U.S. dollar. It’s a matter of time. By the way, if the dollar collapses, after that crashes the old world order.”— Yuri Shalyganov (an author of Project Russia)

Russia’s program of hybrid warfare is thus focused on critiquing democracy, driving societal divisions, and promoting Russia’s unique role in the world. This, they believe, will lead to the downfall of the global dollar system.

The capture of the presidency by Putin through his proxies Donald Trump and Elon Musk presents a unique opportunity to accelerate destabilization. On January 20, 2025, we will face a barrage of chaotic assaults including potential US debt default, damaging new tariffs, mass firings of federal employees, and catastrophic budget cuts. Their primary target, the dollar, will be assaulted from every angle.

Unfortunately, there is a natural constituency for Putin’s accelerationist agenda in the United States. Elon Musk has mentioned the concept of ‘American Bankruptcy’ no fewer than 25 times since March 2024 — and eight times in November alone.

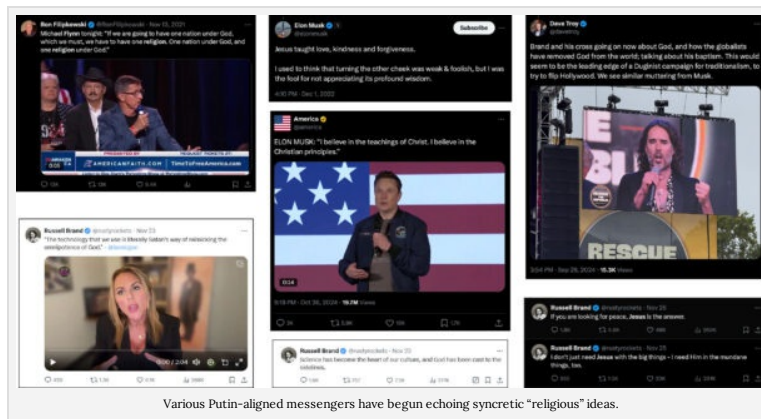
In addition to Musk and his DOGE colleagues Vivek Ramaswamy and Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA), Ron Paul, Gary North, Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY), and Sen. Cynthia Lummis (R-WY) have all expressed support for **terminating** the Federal Reserve, and favor new currency models, including cryptocurrencies.

House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) has ties to the energy firm American Ethane, and has been **backed** by Konstantin Nikolaev, a Putin crony and the largest shareholder of American Ethane. Project Russia was **authored** in part by Mikhail Yuriev, another **major shareholder** of American Ethane. Nikolaev also provided **support** for the well-known Russian spy Maria Butina.

Supranational Autocracy

Once dollar destabilization is underway, there is no way to guess where it might take us. But we know that the Kremlin sees this as an opportunity to establish a kind of “supranational autocracy.” Another way to describe it might be as a “monarchy” at a global scale, where Putin is effectively “King of the World.”

This vision of Putin as the “Prince-Monk” is, of course, aspirational. Russia is weak in many ways, and needs to square its global ambitions with geopolitical facts. Xi Jinping is **backing** Russia’s efforts to the hilt, at least as long as he believes China can benefit from this global reordering. Elon Musk appears to be Putin’s point person in the United States, and is doing everything he can to accelerate destabilization. We can envision the resulting autocracy as one led by Putin, Xi, Musk, and a handful of their trusted henchmen.



Various Putin-aligned messengers have begun echoing syncretic “religious” ideas.

The Kremlin’s design necessarily depends on the adoption of a single world belief system or religion. Expect a syncretic, **gnostic** blend, rooted in hierarchy — the Russian Orthodox Church at the core, and other religious factions accorded favor based on demonstrated fealty. But the “great idea” they believe they possess is that a religious belief system will necessarily ground Putin’s super-state in a kind of morality, thus equipping it to conquer godless democracy and communism.

What is to be done?

The acid test will come in the first half of 2025, when this agenda is likely to unfold. The American public will get a chance to see in detail for the first time just what they voted for. Congress must decide whether to go along — all while reacting to a series of assaults, each one more appalling than the last. We won't know what hit us.

We will also learn whether Donald Trump's disastrous, Kremlin-aligned cabinet picks can be rammed through as interim and **recess appointments** — or whether we have any kind of immune system left to fight off this infection.

I might suggest that we should use our institutions to stop this assault. However, I doubt this is possible, because I doubt that our institutions can comprehend and respond to the esoteric nature of this threat. The ethical thing to do now is to brace for impact, hope the public wakes up, and then try to defend our American values as we build whatever may come next.

And of course, Putin may not succeed in realizing his vision, but he and his allies can wreak incredible, irreversible damage in its pursuit.

If we do manage to respond to this assault, we must immediately engage in crafting a positive vision for the future of democracy that can survive the threat posed by the proscriptions of Project Russia. Even as many of its assertions are false and made in bad faith, they represent a potent framework for mobilizing a majority of the world's population against democracies. Until we can offer a powerful counter narrative, we should expect this assault to continue to completion.

See also:

Corum, Lynn. "Project Russia: The Bestselling Book Series of Putin's Kremlin." *South Central Review* 35, no. 1 (2018): 74–100. <https://doi.org/10.1353/scr.2018.0004>. (archive.org)

Also:

Listen to "Dave Troy Presents, Season 3, Episode 2" for a deeper dive into Project Russia.

Dave Troy is an investigative journalist focused on exposing threats to democracy. Based in Baltimore, his background as a technologist with an interest in studying online extremism affords him a unique perspective. His work has appeared at MoMA in New York, and he is a fellow with New America Foundation's Future Frontlines. Dave writes regularly about information warfare, history, and politics. He is the host of the podcast Dave Troy Presents, and speaks regularly at conferences on disinformation, extremism, and information warfare. Contact information is available at davetroy.com.

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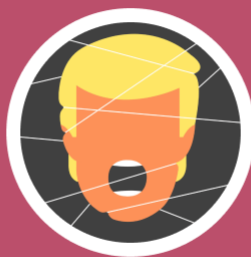
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3 Comments

LeeAnn Kendall on December 16, 2024 at 10:05 AM

This needs to be circulated directly to every House and Senate member.

Sofai on December 19, 2024 at 8:44 PM

In such a scenario, how should a disabled retiree on a fixed income proceed? In normal times, the most rock-solid thing to do is invest in treasury bills. But what is a secure place to put money in this kind of scenario?

Max Sawicky on December 28, 2024 at 1:57 PM

How Russia's potential would stack up against the juggernaut consumer-oriented Chinese economy is not touched upon herein.

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