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By Kumar Ramakrishna

SYNOPSIS

Influential observers argue that the current world order is increasingly dominated by the social and political values of the far right. A major far-right influence is Russian Christofascism, whose religiously legitimised militant outlook has had not only domestic but also wider geopolitical implications. Grasping the contours of Russian Christofascism is thus important.

COMMENTARY

At a recent RSIS public lecture in Singapore in April 2026, Professor Barry Buzan, a leading security studies scholar, declared that the emergent world order following the return of Trump 2.0 in 2025 was “dominated by the social and political values of the [far right](#)”. Among the far-right values Buzan catalogued were “cultural differentiation” and “social conservatism”. It should be added that the far-right outlook is concerning for its xenophobia, ultra-nationalism, racism and [authoritarianism](#).

Buzan highlighted an often-overlooked point: the foreign policy of states, including the great powers, reflects their domestic structures. As political scientist Roy Macridis once declared, foreign policy is a “by-product of [domestic politics](#)”. The notion that the current global order is strongly shaped by far-right ideological currents in the domestic politics of the major powers warrants closer analysis.

The Russian Far Right

One major power whose domestic politics have taken a pronounced “far right” turn is Russia under President Vladimir Putin. At first glance, this seems counterintuitive. After all, Russia, in its decades-long incarnation as the Soviet Union (1918-1991), was not far right but rather *far left*: it was the global epicentre of Communism. The Cold War (1945-1991) was, at root, a historic geopolitical and ideological contest between the liberal democratic capitalist states led by the US and its like-minded allies in Western Europe and Asia on the one hand; and the Soviets, Communist China and their Central/East European and Asian acolytes, on the other.

Yet, thoughtful observers of far-right extremism – of which fascism is one major [manifestation](#) – have argued that Putin – despite his Communist upbringing – is governing Russia in ways that display clear [fascist characteristics](#). More precisely, Putin and his circle exemplify what could be called *Russian Christofascism*. As a potent manifestation of the global far-right wave shaping the domestic politics of many states, and increasingly, as Buzan suggests, the current geopolitical order, Russian Christofascism deserves unpacking.

Why “Fascist”?

Certainly, the meaning of the term “fascism” is contested. Scholars argue that fascism, as a political movement, should be understood strictly within its original 20th-century historical context, associated with the rise of Mussolini’s Italy and Hitler’s Germany, resulting from the delegitimisation of liberal democracy at the end of [World War One](#).

Other scholars demur, arguing that fascism is still a very relevant concept, though it is protean and takes different forms in [different contexts](#). Jason Stanley, therefore, avers that fascism is, in essence, a political method that can emerge anywhere and at any time, under the right [conditions](#). Yet other scholars argue that fascism is driven more by [emotion and force](#) than by reason per se. The “fascist” appellation is arguably very relevant, certainly in the modern Russian case.

Why “Christofascist”?

Multiple scholars have argued that fascism possesses quasi-religious characteristics and functions like a [“political religion”](#), fulfilling many of the same functions as a traditional religion. Fascist tendencies could therefore conceivably infiltrate and mutate mainstream religions, giving rise to what we might call [religious fascism](#).

Tellingly, analysts such as Chris Hedges have long warned of [“Christian Fascism”](#) in the United States, while other writers prefer the term [“Christofascism”](#). Moreover, several scholars, including the respected historian [Timothy Snyder](#), have likewise spoken of the enduring impact of [“Christian fascism”](#) in Russian history.

The Worldview of Russian Christofascism

There are four basic elements of Russian Christofascism today.

State-Church Symbiosis

First, Putin's regime is very much supported by the Russian Orthodox Church, which has long been deeply infiltrated by the [Russian security services](#). Since the early 1990s, following the fall of Communism, the Russian Orthodox Church has come to "occupy the ideological niche" once filled by the [Communist Party](#).

Putin himself has [asserted](#) that, after the fall of the Orthodox Byzantine Empire – the Second Rome – Russia is now the only true Orthodox state left in the world. Putin appears deeply influenced by the Russian philosopher Ivan Ilyin (1883-1954), who "advocated fascism" as a means "to [protect Russian civilisation](#)". Putin thus sees himself not only as a political leader but also as a [spiritual one](#), whose divine mission is to ensure that Russia, as the "Third Rome", fulfils its historic, spiritual task of "redeeming the [sinful West](#)".

Hyper-Masculinity and Misogyny

Second, Putin's outlook is more Christofascist than Christian. Inspired by earlier exemplars such as the interwar Italian fascist leader Mussolini, Putin has carefully projected an image of militant masculinity, using his body as "an integral part of his identity as defender of Russia's pride and [strength](#)".

Additionally, Putin's "toxic masculinity has, whether intentionally or not, condoned violence against [women](#)", whilst encouraging a harsh "[homophobic](#)" public attitude, another telling characteristic of "[fascist ideology](#)".

"The Great Replacement"

Third, 20th-century fascist regimes in Germany and Italy were influenced by what philosopher Jason Stanley called fascism's most powerful "political trope": the "Great Replacement Theory". This conspiracy alleged that "an internal enemy" was seeking to "destroy the nation from within by importing people to "replace" the nation's defining national [group](#)".

In this regard, the aforementioned [Ivan Ilyin](#), following the influential Nazi legal theorist Carl Schmitt, defined politics as the "art of identifying and neutralising the [enemy](#)". Russian Christofascists today similarly see "[virginal](#)" Russia as being existentially threatened by morally decadent internal and external [enemies](#).

Out-group Violence

For fascists in general, violence is a "cleansing force" that is, as Mussolini argued, "extremely moral, sacrosanct and [necessary](#)". Likewise, the fourth critical element of Russian Christofascism is the tacit acceptance that extreme violence in pursuit

of one's goals is both sacred and permissible. In this regard, numerous international observers have condemned Moscow for its abhorrent record of mass civilian atrocities since its invasion of neighbouring Ukraine in February 2022.

So transparent has been the use of “[eliminationist public rhetoric](#)” by senior Russian officials that observers have concluded that Russia’s “intent is to target the Ukrainian nation, both physically and ideologically”, erasing “any manifestation of its collective [identity](#)”.

The violence appears to have been driven by Russian Christofascist anxieties about how Ukraine – seen as inexorably part of Russia – was unforgivably flirting with the morally decrepit West. Given the threat to Russia’s “virginal organism”, therefore, “Russian violence was a [righteous defence](#) against penetration”.

The Geopolitics of Russian Christofascism

The ideological contours of Russian Christofascism may seem arcane. The geopolitical implications are anything but for two key reasons.

The Religious Importance of Ukraine

Conventional tropes that Putin invaded Ukraine in response to NATO’s westward expansion since the 1990s may be [overstated](#). In a [July 2013 speech](#), Putin articulated a messianic view that the “Baptism of Holy Rus 1025 years ago” in Kyiv meant that, under “the authority of the Lord”, Russia and Ukraine are “a single people” with a common history, traditions, and [culture](#).

Vladimir the Great, the Grand Prince of Kyiv, began the Christianisation of Russia in the 10th century, meaning Moscow and Kyiv are seen by Putin and his circle as the “temporal and spiritual centres of a single [state](#)”. Tellingly, [Patriarch Kirill](#) of the Russian Orthodox Church also “blessed the invasion of [Ukraine](#)”, despite opposition from some Orthodox clergy in Russia, Ukraine and elsewhere.

Rusky Mir and Russia’s Eurasian Destiny

Putin and the Christofascist thinkers around him also believe that Ukraine is a key part of “Rusky mir” or the “Russian world”, which includes “Belarus, Moldova, parts of the Baltic states and possibly [Kazakhstan](#)”.

Ukraine is moreover seen as the “battleground” in a wider conflict between Russia and the West for control of “[Eurasia](#)” – the Russian Christofascist vision of a Moscow-dominated European landmass. Furthermore, an influential contemporary Russian ideologue, Alexander Dugin, has argued that a religiously autocratic and imperialistic Russia marks the “pivot” of Eurasian civilisation, and that the Ukrainian crisis represents an apocalyptic “final war between the West and [Russia](#)” for control of Eurasia.

What Putin wants is for the European Union (EU) to be more like Russia than the other way round. In other words, Putin's vision of an alternative "Eurasian Union" – based on Russian Christofascist instead of liberal EU principles – would represent "the beginning of a new ideology and geopolitics of [the world](#)".

Dugin argues – in typical Christofascist terms – that Russia will win if it cultivates a "cult of war" as a "unique regenerative tool to destroy the old world and create a [new one](#)". In short, Putin's Eurasian project seeks to "encompass the entire world" and "redeem [mankind](#)" – in the process restoring Russia's past grandeur.

Why It Matters

Russian Christofascism is one variant of the wider phenomenon of Christofascism, which also exists elsewhere, such as in the US. While [American Christofascism](#) has its own unique history, one wonders if Russian Christofascist ideas have mingled with parallel ideas within [American far-right circles](#) as well, influencing key figures amongst Trump's [associates](#).

After all, the Trump 2.0 administration's focus on the [Western Hemisphere](#) as its "[sphere of influence](#)" resembles Putin's focus on the "[great space](#)" of Russky mir. Similarly, the gratuitous "[Christian militarism](#)" of senior figures in the current US military establishment parallels militant Russian Christofascist values as well. One American observer even "[dreamed](#)" that "Trump and Putin would one day come together and remake the [world order](#)".

Meanwhile, Russian "hybrid" operations have included [low-key backing](#) for ideologically similar far-right political parties in Europe. The ultimate aim: building a geopolitically influential far-right alliance, with Putin as "the global leader of the [extreme Right](#)".

According to Barry Buzan, the new far-right world order appears "[durable](#)". Better grasping the apparent order-shaping role played by seemingly esoteric Russian Christofascism – operationalised by the politically adroit former senior Soviet intelligence officer Vladimir Putin – seems especially pertinent. Alexander Dugin's declaration that "Putin is everywhere, Putin is everything, Putin is absolute, and Putin is [indispensable](#)" appears overblown – but then again, could there be something in it?

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