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## What Will Putin Do With Six More Years of Power?

The international stage is set for this strongman to lead Russia in an even more aggressive direction.

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Vladimir Putin surprised no one by securing another term as Russia's president. The final tally shows that he crushed all his rivals with 77 percent of the March 18 vote. Yes, there is evidence that Putin rigged the election to a degree. After all, this *is* Russia, where even if a dictator's victory is sure, he still pulls a few levers behind the scenes, if only for the sake of political tradition. But experts agree that, even without the rigging, Putin would still have comfortably won 60 percent of the vote—placing him leagues above the second-place contender's 12 percent.

The bottom line is that 65-year-old Putin has six more years at the helm of the world's largest country and second-most powerful military. And the 144 million people of the nation largely support his ongoing dominance of Russia.

Putin's influence has become so foundational that a Kremlin without him as the ultimate authority is difficult for many Russians to imagine. Vyacheslav Volodin, the speaker of the Russian parliament, summarized this common sentiment in 2014 by saying, "If there is Putin, there is Russia. If there is no Putin, there is no Russia."

To understand what Putin's next presidential term will bring for Russia and the world, his first 18 years of leadership must be examined.

## Reversing the 20th Century's 'Greatest Catastrophe'

Putin came into power eight years after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union. The collapse reversed a development that had been in the works since the 17th century when the Russian Empire first emerged: the systemic integration and centralization of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Siberia and the Caucasus. Its core was Moscow. Its goal was to challenge European powers.

Though economically brittle, Russia was militarily powerful enough to contribute heavily to the defeats of Napoleon Bonaparte and Adolf Hitler. Russia, the dominant member of the Soviet Union, even held its ground for four decades against the mighty United States during the Cold War.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, the West rejoiced, proclaiming it a victory for liberty, a triumph for democracy, and evidence of the supremacy of capitalism over socialism. Most former Soviet nations were grateful for their new independence and began to rebuild freer societies.

But Putin does not view this as a positive event, because it decimated Moscow's power in the world. He said in 2005, "[T]he demise of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century."

Vladimir Putin wishes the Soviet Union never fell. He wishes it were still here today. And he has been working to restore Russian power to its Soviet levels.

## Winning Hearts and Minds

When Putin became president, Russia was in chaos. It was threatened internally and externally. But Putin aggressively consolidated the country socially, politically, militarily and economically.

During Putin's first eight years in the Kremlin, Russia's industry increased by 76 percent and investments grew by 125 percent, according to *Atlas for Business and Political Decision Makers*. Real incomes of Russian citizens grew by over 100 percent. The average salary increased eightfold, from \$80 per month to \$640. The middle class swelled from 8 million to more than 55 million, and the percentage of Russians living below the poverty line fell from 30 percent to 14 percent. Under Putin, for the first time in their lives, many Russians owned cars and were able to vacation abroad.

Russian oil exports steadily climbed throughout these years; and in 2009, Russia overtook Saudi Arabia to become the world's number one energy exporter.

Gaps remained in Russia's energy grid, health care, infrastructure and industrial base. But the economic advancements were stark and Russians rallied around Putin as the country's "savior," its "white rider."

More recently, falling oil prices and Western sanctions have pounded the value of the ruble, and living standards have declined to a degree. Yet because of Putin's record of lifting millions from poverty and restoring Moscow's international relevance, the Russian people remain fiercely loyal to him.

Instead of seeing him as the cause of the current troubles, they continue to view him as the solution.

## Bypassing Law

At the end of Putin's second presidential term in 2008, he faced a problem: The Russian Constitution says, "One person may not hold the position of Russian president for more than two terms in a row." So Putin left the presidency—but only in the letter of the law, not the spirit.

He stepped aside to become prime minister, handing the presidency to his loyal protégé, Dmitry Medvedev. But throughout Medvedev's term, Putin remained in charge. He remained Russia's ruler in all but official title, with Medvedev serving essentially as his puppet.

Just three months after that charade of power transition, Putin powerfully demonstrated to his people and to the world that he is willing to use force to re-create the geography of the Soviet Union.

## Expanding the Empire

In August 2008, Russian forces invaded the former Soviet republic of Georgia, easily conquering all resistance. Moscow assumed control of 20 percent of Georgia's territory, and it remains in control to this day.

This was a major geopolitical event, sending reverberations around the globe.

Editor in chief Gerald Flurry wrote in the October 2008 *Trumpet* issue, "Russia's attack on Georgia in August marks the beginning of a dangerous new era in history. This was the first military strike of a rising Asian superpower—and there will be more!"

Mr. Flurry went on to specifically name which other former Soviet nation might be targeted next: "Will a crisis occur over Ukraine? That area is the breadbasket of Russia, and surely it is willing to wage war over that as well."

Time proved that forecast accurate. In 2012, Putin returned to the presidency with a newly extended six-year presidential term. His rule over Russia was official once again. And in March of 2014, Russian forces stealthily invaded Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula and annexed it to Mother Russia. He had literally redrawn the borders of Europe—twice. Mr. Flurry wrote, "The fact that one man—*one man*—is responsible for this huge geopolitical shift is deeply significant."

Crimea is viewed within Russia as the nation's greatest victory in decades, and as a righting of historical wrongs. To reinforce this message, this year's presidential election was held on the fourth anniversary of the takeover.

"After [Putin] brought Crimea back, he became a hero to me," said Olga Matyunina, a 65-year-old retired economist, who cast her vote for Putin yesterday.

Since seizing Crimea, Putin has continued to destabilize eastern Ukraine, sending Russian forces to help pro-Russian rebels in a protracted conflict that has claimed 10,000 lives so far, with more deaths almost every day. He has forcefully prevented Georgia, Ukraine and other former Soviet countries from strengthening their relationships with Europe.

He pushed the U.S. out of his backyard in 2013 by pressuring Kyrgyzstan to evict American forces from Manas Air Base, the U.S.'s last remaining military base in Central Asia.

Meanwhile, beyond the Soviet regions, Russia has helped the murderous regimes of Syrian President Bashar Assad and

North Korean tyrant Kim Jong-un to retain power. And Putin has been instrumental in letting Iran continue its treacherous pursuit of nuclear weapons.

None of these moves would have been possible without formidable military might—and Vladimir Putin's will to use it.

## Building a More Lethal Military

The outdated military that Putin had inherited from Boris Yeltsin was barely fit for its purpose. One of Putin's highest priorities has been transforming it into a modern and more lethal force, and Moscow now spends a higher percentage of its gross domestic product on its military than does America.

The efforts have paid massive dividends.

"The Russian military is now better equipped and more capable of conducting modern combat operations than at any point since the fall of the Soviet Union, which has caught analysts in the West by surprise," wrote the *Strategist's* Mitchell Yates in 2016.

And don't forget: Russia has a vast nuclear arsenal, larger by number even than that of the United States. It has publicly stated that nuclear weapons remain vital to its defense strategy and that in certain circumstances it might launch preemptive nuclear strikes to defend its interests.

During his state-of-the-nation address in early March, Putin dazzled his people by unveiling an array of new advanced nuclear-capable weapons. In what was also an unofficial campaign speech, Putin sent a clear message to the people of Russia: Vote Putin, and you will help make the Russian military great again.

The March 18 election results show that the message resonated with a great number of voters.

But for Russians who have not bought in to Putin's dictatorial vision, he has had a different message.

## Eliminating Internal Enemies

Throughout all his years of working to restore Russia's power on the global stage, Putin has worked ruthlessly to quash all opposition from fellow Russians.

He has crippled Russia's democracy, enfeebled its parliament, and seized control of some of Russia's most profitable firms. Putin's internal wars have slaughtered more than 150,000 Russians in the Islamic region of Chechnya.

With kgb-style methods, he has crushed or silenced all forms of independent journalism and turned the Russian media into a personal propaganda machine.

Evidence suggests that he has murdered more than 130 journalists inside of Russia and numerous dissenting Russians exiled in foreign nations, such as the United Kingdom.

A list from [human-rights group Memorial](#) shows that 142 people are currently in Russian prisons for their political or religious beliefs. *Quartz* wrote, "In this, Putin's Russia is continuing Tsarist and Soviet traditions: Political dissenters are still being sent to Siberia or to work camps as in Stalinist days."

Russia's Constitution still states that the president may serve no more than two consecutive terms, meaning Putin would be obligated to step down in 2024. But with such a tight grip on the levels of power, he could easily amend the Constitution, orchestrate another rendition of the "Medvedev shuffle," or devise some other method to retain power at the end of the current term.

Many analysts are certain he will find a way. "I am absolutely convinced that Vladimir Vladimirovich [Putin] will not cede power in 2024 either," Alexei Venediktov, editor of *Ekho Moskvy*, said in November. "That means ... it's necessary to change the configuration of power and transfer the main power to an institution other than the presidential post."

## The Russian Cycle: Where Is Moscow Now?

Russian history shows that the country operates on a four-phase cycle. First comes a national calamity, usually the result of foreign invasion or poor planning by the government. Second, from out of the ruins emerges an idealistic "white rider" ushering in an era of what Russians deeply crave: national stability. Third, after the white rider succumbs to political frustration, he hands the reins of rulership over to a dark rider bent on internal control and external aggression, such as Ivan the Terrible and Josef Stalin. Finally, the dark rider ruthlessly quashes domestic opposition and expands Russia's unsecurable borders until the overextended empire collapses into stagnation and decline and the cycle begins again.

Where is Russia in this cycle now?

In the 1990s, Russia suffered great national calamity after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Then, Putin emerged as the heroic white rider to resuscitate the dying bear. But Russia's changing landscape indicates that the white rider phase is now

over.

“Russia’s current white horse period is coming to an end,” Stratfor wrote in 2007 as Putin prepared to install Medvedev as his puppet. “Putin’s efforts to stabilize Russia have succeeded, but his dreams of Westernizing Russia are dead. The darkness is about to set in.”

Stratfor then speculated that Putin himself could become the dark rider: “In particularly gloomy periods in Russia’s past (which is saying something) the white rider himself actually has shed his idealism and become the dark rider.”

These were sobering words back in 2007, and much more so now that Putin has confirmed all suspicions that he is a dictator bent on maintaining his power at all costs.

It is now clear that Putin has exchanged his white robes for black, and that Russia is once again in a dark rider phase.

History proves that once a dark rider becomes Russia’s ruler, he pulls out all stops to achieve national security: crushing domestic challengers; subjugating economic life to Moscow; pouring resources into the military, which pushes against other nations’ borders.

The history of Putin’s rule so far indicates that his new term will lead Russia into an even more dangerous and aggressive direction. And when the history is placed alongside Bible prophecy, the indication becomes a certainty.

## An Army of 200 Million

The Bible warns people in the end time to expect a great power to rise from the East. Scripture calls this power “the kings of the east” (Revelation 16:12). In Revelation 9:16, the Apostle John recorded a stunning prophecy about this Eastern power bloc: “And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand.”

This Asian military bloc will have *an army of 200 million men!*

The Bible provides many vital details about this largest army ever assembled. Daniel 11:44, 12:1 and Matthew 24:21-22 make clear that this force will be one of the main players in a nuclear World War iii.

A passage in Ezekiel tells which specific countries will contribute soldiers to this mega-army, and shows that it will be led by one nation—and one man.

## The ‘Prince of Russia’

“[S]on of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him” (Ezekiel 38:1-2).

Bible scholars generally agree that “Gog” refers to Russia and “the land of Magog” includes the vast area where modern-day China is located.

Meshech is a group of people whose name appears throughout history in several variations: Musku, Muski, Mushki. These are related to the modern Russian spelling of Moscow: *Москва*.

Tubal refers to another region of Russia. To the east of Russia’s Ural Mountains lies the city of Tobolsk, a name derived from the ancient name *Tubal*. Tobolsk formerly functioned essentially as the capital of Russia’s central and eastern Asian region.

Yet another name for all of Russia lies somewhat hidden in this passage. There is disagreement over how the Hebrew word *rosh* should be translated into English in this verse. The King James Version quoted above renders it as the adjective “chief.” But the correct translation renders it not as an adjective, but a proper noun: *Rosh*.

Properly translated, the verse reads: “the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal.”

*Rosh* was an ancient name for the people who became known as *Rus*—Russia. So the identity of this “prince” of Russia, Moscow and Tobolsk begins to take clear shape: The list of all three names confirms that this is one individual ruling over all the various peoples across Russia—from west to east.

The mention of Magog shows that this man’s leadership extends beyond the borders of Russia and into China. Ezekiel 38:5-6 mention ancient names for the peoples of such nations as India, Japan and the Koreas, saying these will also lend their military might to this bloc, led by Russia. Russia is already building a powerful alliance with China and laying the groundwork for close relationships with many of these other nations. (Order your free copy of our booklet [Russia and China in Prophecy](#).)

When these Bible passages are examined alongside current events in Moscow, the identity of this “prince of Russia” becomes clear. In the September 2014 issue of the *Trumpet*, Mr. Flurry wrote:

I strongly believe Vladimir Putin is going to lead the 200 million-man army. Just look at the power he already has. Can you think of any other Russian politician who could become so powerful and have the will to lead Russia into the crisis of crises? I see nobody else on the horizon who could do that. ... I believe there is *not* enough time for a competitor to arise and challenge him. Over 80 percent of his people support his leadership.

This much is absolutely certain: The restoring of Russia's power by Vladimir Putin—the prince of Russia—was prophesied!

## Europe's Response

As Putin begins his fourth term, he does so with astonishing political, economic and military power—and proven determination to use it. Many Europeans—particularly in the eastern part of the Continent—are alarmed by Putin's increasing aggression.

In 2014, shortly after Russia annexed Crimea, Mr. Flurry explained the significance of this move in terms of Bible prophecy: "We have been prophesying for around 70 years that Eastern Europe would become a vital part of a new European superpower—a resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire. This prophecy is *directly related to the Crimean crisis!* The *fear* you see in Europe because of events in Crimea is going to cause 10 leaders in Europe to unite in a sudden and dramatic way—and in *precise accordance* with the Bible's description of that European empire! ... Europe's new fear of Russia is going to play a major role in hastening the fulfillment of that prophecy!"

The Europeans have not forgotten what Putin has done to Georgia and Ukraine. They see Russia's increasingly provocative involvement in the Middle East and its bellicose nuclear threats. Many Europeans are fearful enough to more urgently seek European unification. Within a politically, economically and militarily unified European bloc, the Europeans can better stand up to the rising Russian threat.

## A Sign of Great Hope

In his booklet *The Prophesied 'Prince of Russia'*, Mr. Flurry thoroughly examines the role that Putin plays in end-time Bible prophecy. He writes that the fact that this "prince of Russia" is on the scene proves that the most hope-filled event in mankind's history is now near: "Vladimir Putin is a sign, literally a *sign*, that Jesus Christ is about to return!" he writes. "This is one of the most inspiring messages in the Bible."

Mr. Flurry continues: "What we are seeing in Russia ultimately leads to the transition from man ruling man to *God* ruling man! And it is almost here! It is just a few short years away. ... Russia's resurgence—which we see reported in headlines often—shows that end-time Bible prophecies are rapidly being fulfilled!"

In the near term, the fact that Putin has secured six more years at the helm of a resurgent Russia is a harbinger of terrible global tumult. But this development is intimately tied to the best imaginable news: Jesus Christ will return to Earth and usher in an age of peace for the peoples of Russia and all the world!

To better understand what is ahead for Putin's Russia, and to prove for yourself that this was prophesied in your Bible, read online or order a free copy of Mr. Flurry's booklet [\*The Prophesied 'Prince of Russia.'\*](#) ■