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Russian Billionaire Moves to Launch Orthodox 'Troll Farm' – Reports

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Konstantin Malofeyev **Andrei Gordeyev / Vedomosti / TASS**

An influential pro-Kremlin billionaire wants to bankroll a conservative religious troll farm, the Open Media news website has reported, citing an unnamed political scientist who works with the Kremlin.

Konstantin Malofeev has long financed the Kremlin's drive to spread so-called "family values," including last year's U.S.-Russian summit of right-wing Christians who oppose same-sex marriage and abortion. Malofeev is under U.S. and EU sanctions for his alleged role in financing pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine.

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Malofeev's Orthodox Christian "troll farm" intends to emulate fellow magnate Yevgeny Prigozhin's infamous troll farm, according to the Kremlin-linked political scientist cited by Open Media on Friday.

Prigozhin has been sanctioned by the U.S. for his links to the Internet Research Agency, the Kremlin-backed "troll factory" which has been indicted in the U.S. for interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Malofeev's allies are offering financial support for right-wing social media accounts to unite under the banner of Russian patriotism and religious conservatism, Open Media reported.

The reported religious troll farm initiative follows an aborted move to install Malofeev as the head of a patriotic party ahead of Russia's 2021 parliamentary elections, the outlet reported.

Malofeev's spokesperson has dismissed Open Media's report as untrue.

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