

'Golden billion' conspiracy theory

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In news— Russian President Vladimir Putin has recently invoked the decades-old conspiracy theory of the “golden billion” that is allegedly out to dominate the world and impose its will over unwilling nations.

What is the golden billion conspiracy theory?

- The golden billion is a term, in the Russian-speaking world, referring to the relatively wealthy people in industrially developed nations, or the West.
- The theory has been around for 30 years, and **accuses wealthy Western elites of having amassed wealth by exploiting the rest of the world**, and of seeking to perpetuate their total control over the planet's limited resources.
- According to the Russian President, it divides the peoples into those of first- or second-rate, and therefore it is racist and neo-colonial in its essence.
- **“Golden billion” was coined as the USSR stood at the cusp of collapse**, by a Russian named Anatoly K Tsikunov, in a book titled **‘The Plot of World Government: Russia and the golden billion’**, which he wrote in 1990 under the pseudonym A. Kuzmich.
- **The book described a doomsday scenario in which powerful Western nations deeply fearful of global overpopulation, ecological change, and the lack of sufficient resources, would seek to extend control over the rest of the world**, and ensure that it is habitable to only a billion of their own people.
- **Russia in particular, the theory had it, would be at the receiving end of this Western-led plan**, because its natural resources and large land mass would be necessary

for the survival of this billion-strong elit.

- **Kuzmich's ideas were popularised by the anti-Western and anti-globalisation Soviet-era intellectual Sergei Kara-Murz.**
- In an article written in 1999, Kara-Murz argued that while the elites in these rich Western countries do not refer to themselves as the golden billion, **the theory emerged from a combination of two major Western ideas:**
 1. One, of a **"golden age"** of prosperity and progress, and
 2. Two, the view that the world's limited resources would not be able to sustain its entire population.
- He argued that the golden billion had come to connote in practical terms the population of the high-income Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries that have higher levels of per capita consumption than the developing world.
- After the West sanctioned Russia to punish it for invading Ukraine, Russian officials have sought to use the theory as proof of the attempt to isolate Moscow.