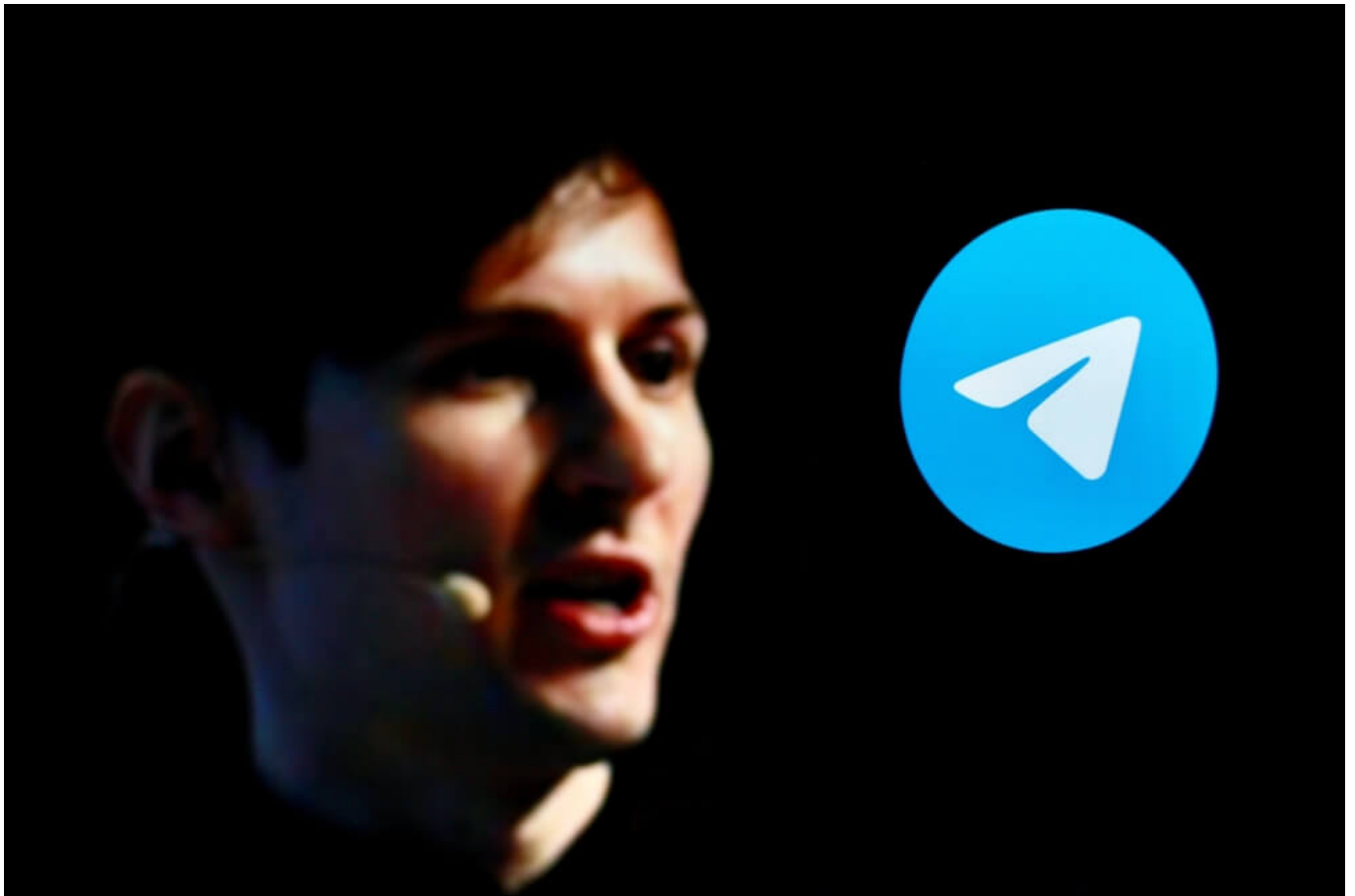




By: *The Editorial Board*

# Russia wants the world to believe that Pavel Durov is a dissident. But he is not



The founder and CEO of the Telegram platform, Pavel Durov, is many things; he is an entrepreneur, a clever businessman, and a wealthy and influential man, but there is one thing he is definitely not. He is not a dissident.

Russia deprives its dissidents of their property, kills them, or imprisons them. The Kremlin's leading oligarchs do not reward dissidents with hundreds of millions of dollars.

Dissidents do not leave Russia after selling their assets worth hundreds of millions of dollars. Once they manage to leave Russia, which is difficult in most cases, they go to the free and democratic world, where they are protected by Western governments.

Pavel Durov chose Dubai, the emirate that Russia considers friendly, which contributes to Russia's current successful circumvention of sanctions.

Pavel Durov is not a dissident, nor has he sought the protection of the free and democratic world.

On the contrary, in his public appearances, he has deliberately and constantly tried to blur the fundamental difference between authoritarian Russia and the democratic world.

Not once did Durov criticise Putin's regime. He was always criticising and expressing opinions about the West, which influential Westerners like Elon Musk or Tucker Carlson gladly accepted.

## A dissident from the FSB

Pavel Durov had a successful, albeit shady, **career** in Russia and then in Iran.

He is an IT entrepreneur exploited by the Russian government. His story can be **compared** to that of Jan Marsalek, the former top manager at card processing and issuing company Wirecard, recruited by Russian intelligence.

The founder of Telegram might have been

recruited, or at least cultivated, while he was studying English and interpreting at St. Petersburg University.

The FSB and other intelligence services typically recruit at higher education institutions.

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The Russian intelligence could not ignore Durov's combination of narcissism, arrogance, and misanthropy, which he concealed with his alleged libertarian views.

Powerful and loyal Russians assisted Durov in his attempt to replicate Facebook in Russia and establish the social network VKontakte, which became known as the Russian Facebook.

Then even more powerful and loyal Russians, including Alisher Usmanov, the top Russian oligarch and technically the godfather of Alina Kabaeva (Putin's mistress and mother of his children), purchased VKontakte, securing Durov a generous settlement of around \$300 to \$350 million in cash.

## Piracy, fake news

Durov left Russia shortly after the sale of VKontakte. His fake dissident legend and Western appearance enabled him to attract people in the West with remarkable success.

This alleged Russian oppositionist and renegade entered the West with a new plan after profiting from the sale of VKontakte.

This time, Durov was to copy WhatsApp and launch the fake, super-secure Telegram messenger on the market.

Staying true to his original strategy, Durov added a few personal and additional features

to his new copy of WhatsApp, similar to how he copied Facebook.

On his VKontakte, Durov had the option to share and listen to pirated music.

Telegram allowed people to hide their personal information, such as their name and phone number. Telegram also enabled users to exercise freedom of expression or spread fake news via the so-called Telegram channels.

### The Russian establishment has always navigated Durov and his new businesses

Pavel Durov's enormous amounts of money and untruthful dissidence, supported by Russian authorities in various ways, enabled him to sell and distribute his false super-secure messenger first in Russia and then in the former USSR countries.

The Russian establishment has always navigated Durov and his new businesses, such as Messenger, sometimes towards the governmental sector and sometimes towards other countries, for example, Iran.

Following the success in Russia and the former USSR states, Durov's Telegram naturally made its way to the West. This allowed him and the Russians behind him to set up the Telegram messenger behind enemy lines.

### A messenger of the FSB and the mafia

Durov's Telegram was used by Russian spies, agents, mafia members, drug dealers, and corrupt or Russian-subverted Western politicians.

He was not the first to be sent to the West with a fake legend that was very attractive to at least part of the Western audience.



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Durov spoke of freedom of speech, just like the Russian spy in the US, Maria Butina, spoke passionately about the right to bear arms when, in reality, she knew full well that Putin's regime would never allow Russians to freely own weapons.

Similar to Butina's case, Pavel Durov was intelligent enough to know that Russia uses freedom of speech narratives to defend its right to spread fake news and indoctrinate Western audiences.

### Telegram Trojan horse

Durov's Telegram was a powerful tool that Russian intelligence had in the West.

Not only did Telegram allow the Russians to offer a communication tool to various organisations and people in the West, but Durov's cryptocurrency would have established a Russian-controlled monetary system in the West that would have been impossible for Western authorities to access but would have enabled Russia to sponsor and finance insurgents, saboteurs, and agents in the West.

## When the West bought into the unrealistic myth that Durov was a dissident and defender of free speech, he was valuable to Moscow

Russia will fight hard to protect Durov's legacy and secure his **release**. However, if the Western authorities already possess proof that Durov was not who he claimed to be and that Russian intelligence compromised his messenger, the Russians might prefer to have another Julian Assange in the West, or even worse, they might attempt to kill him and blame the West.

When the West bought into the unrealistic myth that Durov was a dissident and defender of free speech, he was valuable to Moscow.

If Pavel Durov's Telegram is exposed as a communication provider for drug dealers and paedophiles, as well as an FSB messenger, everything might be very different for him.

In this case, he might not end up where he expected many years ago when he made the first investment.