## AT: DSCA DA

### 2AC---AT: DSCA DA---Russia Win Good

#### A Russia loss in Ukraine prompts war with NATO and wars on other fronts.

Jean-Baptiste Jeangene Vilmer, 2-22 (Jean-Baptiste Jeangene Vilmer, Ph.D., director of the Institute for Strategic Research at the French Ministry of the Armed Forces and a nonresident senior fellow at the Europe Center of the Atlantic Council, 2-22-2022, accessed on 5-15-2022, War on the Rocks, “PUTIN LOSES NO MATTER HOW THIS PLAYS OUT, BUT WE MIGHT TOO”, https://warontherocks.com/2022/03/putin-loses-no-matter-how-this-plays-out-but-we-might-too/, HBisevac)

What this war is destroying is the **future of Russia** and its people **know it**. The war in Ukraine is likely to produce **immense discontent** in Russia, and therefore an **immense problem** for Putin who, like all dictators, fears first and foremost his own people.

Even before the war, the Russian population was **divided** on the issue: A poll showed that 50 percent of Russians were supportive of a military intervention. But that was **before** the **all-out attack** on Ukraine, the shelling of civilians, the numerous Russian casualties, the international condemnation, the effect of the sanctions, the tumble of the ruble, and the threat of a nuclear war. It is an assumption, but it seems a safe one, that today the opinion of the Russian population has changed, as a number of signs suggest. Since the beginning of the offensive, **demonstrations** have been organized **all over** the country. Thousands took to the streets in support of Ukraine, in dozens of cities. Tags “No to the war” appeared everywhere, and the few remaining independent media in the country displayed their opposition to the conflict and their support for the Ukrainian people. Even the **political consensus** began to **crack**: Three members of the Russian Parliament, from the Communist Party, who had voted in favor of recognizing the separatist enclaves, are now **criticizing** the war in Ukraine. The war will be a **catalyst** for **Russian opposition**.

The Russian state is too repressive for this change in popular opinion to lead to major uprisings. More than 5,900 protesters were arrested in at least 60 cities in four days and, aware of the danger, the regime is likely to further increase internal repression. On Feb. 25, former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev proposed to take advantage of Russia’s expulsion from the Council of Europe to reintroduce the death penalty. And, two days later, the prosecutor general’s office issued a statement saying that any type of “assistance to a foreign state, international or foreign organization or their representatives in activities directed against the security of the Russian Federation” would be prosecuted under “high treason” charges. Those are signals to the population that, to ensure its survival, the regime is ready to take ever more radical measures. The war will logically **radicalize** the **dictatorship**, and **aggravate** the **repression**. That is neither good news for the Russian population, nor for Putin, as he will lose some of the **popular support** he built up over the past two decades.

More worrying for him is the discontent of the Russian **economic elite**, who will **lose** a lot of **money** to his adventurism, and that presents a **real risk** of **fragmentation** in a regime that until now maintained subtle balances. With “his” war, Putin is making enemies from **within**, including very powerful oligarchs who will pay the price of his dreams of grandeur. Adding to this are the nuclear threats that he may be willing to carry out, but most of his entourage, who are supposedly more reasonable, probably would not.

The **logical conclusion** of all this is that the **resentment** and hostility and fear that Putin **generates** within the **Russian elite** constitutes a real risk for his **maintenance** in **power** in the coming weeks, months, and years. The probability of a **palace coup** or an **oligarchic revolt** is **substantial**. There may come a point where it appears to the population and the economic, military, and security elite, including within the Kremlin, that the only way to **save Russia** is to **get rid of Putin**. This war is his greatest error of judgement and could be his undoing. That is why I wrote that it will be “the beginning of the end” — his end.

Consider the Worst Case

**Putin lost**. He cornered himself. But this is **no good news** because **he knows it**. Seeing that he has overestimated his forces in Ukraine and underestimated the international reaction, i.e., that he is **losing control** of the situation, Putin may want to regain the initiative by escalating. He may actually think that the only way out from this mess for him is to **escalate**. He can do this in **many ways** but here are three potential scenarios.

An Attack on a NATO Member

Russia could accuse a **NATO member** state of **supplying** **arms** or **intel**ligence, of protecting **Zelensky** or members of his **government**, of a fabricated attack (a **false flag operation**), and attack through a **border** incident (for example by bombing an arms convoy at the Polish border), or a **skirmish** in the **sky** or in the **Black Sea**. If Russia attacks a member state it is likely to simultaneously signal the **nuclear threat** in the hopes of **deterring Article 5 solidarity**.

Brutalizing Ukraine

Russian forces are **already escalating** because the **first phase** of the attack **failed**. Therefore, they will resort to more shelling, missiles, tanks, perhaps airstrikes, and this second phase will be **more devastating** for civilians. However, if even this does not work — and considering that each day that passes puts him in more danger with the appearance of a Russian defeat, the international pressure and domestic concern — Putin may be willing as a **last resort** to use a **tactical nuclear weapon**. He could do it under the pretext of retaliating against a **staged attack**: Moscow is already starting to **spread the rumor** that the Ukrainians might detonate a “**dirty bomb**” on Russian territory. In a risky “**escalate to de-escalate**” move, by using a nuclear weapon against Ukraine, Moscow would signal its intention to **go all the way**, hoping to **stun NATO** and assuming that it will **not dare** to escalate. A variation of this scenario would be an attack on one of the 15 nuclear reactors Ukraine has, or a destruction of Chernobyl’s protective sarcophagus. Such an attack would be staged so as to be blamed on the Ukrainian side, and from the Kremlin’s perspective the radioactive consequences could have the advantage of rendering a portion of the Ukrainian territory unlivable and therefore of turning it into a de facto buffer zone with the West.

A Diversion

Putin could also choose to **open** a **new front**. It could be in the **region** (for instance in the Balkans), in **space** (by attacking satellites under the pretext that they are being used to help the Ukrainian forces), **under sea** (by cutting internet cables), or **elsewhere**, wherever you least expect it. He would do it not only to **maximize** its **chances** of **winning** for the same cost (if he believes that international sanctions have already reached their peak), but also to create a **diversion**, i.e., to hide what will be a relative or **absolute failure** in **Ukraine**. However, this hypothesis comes up against a material and psychological reality. It is not at all certain that Russia has the means for other ambitions, and above all it is not certain that the generals — some of whom, it can be assumed, were already not in favor of the Ukrainian adventure — follow Putin elsewhere, which would only increase his frustration.

The worst-case scenario is improbable but not impossible, as is the risk of major war in general. As Putin is visibly locked in a paranoid and hubristic delirium, **nothing can be excluded**. It is also in this tragic sense that this could be the **beginning of the end**.

### 2AC---AT: DSCA DA---Russia Already Lost

#### Russia has already lost.

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No matter how the war in Ukraine plays out, **Putin loses**. Even if Russian forces prevail on the ground and in the air, he loses. Even if he takes Kyiv tomorrow, **he loses**. Russia **lacks** the **forces** (and perhaps the **will**) to occupy Ukraine in the face of a restive civil society and guerrilla movement. And that would be on top of having already **reinforced NATO**, **awakened Europe**, **isolated** his country, **ruined** its **economy**, and **alienated** many Russians, including his “friends.” What happens next depends less on the military outcome of the conflict than on other factors he has already put in motion and that will further affect him. It might seem presumptuous in the first week of a war to predict its outcome and second-order effects for Ukraine, Russia, and the West, but it seems Putin’s defeat is the **likely product** of five factors: the **heavy price** of a **prospective** military **victory**, the **quagmire** of an **occupation**, the **strengthening** of **NATO** and **European** defense, the **international isolation** of Russia, and the **internal contestation** which may lead to Putin’s fall. So Putin lost, but it does not mean we win. He knows that he cornered himself and this is precisely where it gets dangerous because he may think that the only way out for him is to escalate.