## AT: Russia War Good

### 2AC – No Decline

#### Reject their ev from western security pundits.

Natylie Baldwin 21, Author of "*The View from Moscow: Understanding Russia and U.S.-Russia Relations*," 10/26/2021, "Despite Western Assertions, Russia Is Not on the Decline," https://theglobepost.com/2021/07/30/russia-no-declining-power/, sg

Who Insists Russia Is in Decline and Why?

So where is this contention coming from and why does it persist? Part of the explanation is that many western pundits – and even government advisors – are ill-informed about Russia. But that doesn’t seem to explain the phenomenon entirely.

Western leaders – particularly those in the United States – loved Yeltsin who presided over an undemocratic Russia on the verge of collapse, a sizable portion of its population in desperate straits. They’ve heaped nothing but scorn on Putin, who – whether one likes him or not – demonstrably stabilized the country on many fronts, including the economy, mortality rate, crime, and the legal system.

When Putin is not being pressured by the US-led West, he is a typical Eastern European liberal. Putin’s actions and policies during his first two terms as president bear this out.

### 2AC – Not Declining

#### Russia isn’t declining BUT won’t be a threat regardless.

Michael Kofman 20, senior research scientist at the Center for Naval Analyses and a fellow at the Wilson Center’s Kennan Institute, 12/18/2020, "Bad Idea: Dismissing Russia as a Declining Power in U.S. Strategy," https://defense360.csis.org/bad-idea-dismissing-russia-as-a-declining-power-in-u-s-strategy/, sg

Russia is not a rising power, but it will not decline as a threat to the United States in any appreciable way in the near- or medium-term. Moreover, the declining power mantra is puzzling as a basis for defense prioritization since declining powers can be more dangerous than rising ones. The United States must not let its desire to focus efforts on China result in strategic malpractice by failing to account for a world with multiple competitors, including one in which Moscow and Beijing may collaborate to the detriment of U.S. efforts. Consequently, the United States needs to take Russia seriously. Moscow is an enduring great power and should continue to be a major factor in U.S. strategy.

Russia retains the power to challenge or violently upend the security architecture of Europe. In military terms, it has the conventional military power to deter the United States, take on any coalition of lesser states, and use force successfully outside of its region to deny U.S. foreign policy prerogatives elsewhere (as Syria aptly illustrates). As a nuclear power, Russia is in a league only with the United States, with a much larger non-strategic nuclear arsenal to boot. Together the United States and Russia account for over 90 percent of the world’s nuclear weapons. Moscow also has a seat at the table in the world’s most significant international institutions like the United Nations Security Council. A conflict between the United States and Russia — or between Russia and an American ally — could have existential implications for the prevailing international order.

Instead of comparing Russia to the United States or China, the question is whether Russian power relative to that of U.S. allies is declining by any appreciable measure. Perhaps the strangest and most factually inaccurate strain in national security discourse on Russia is the notion that there is something deterministic about Russia’s demographic outlook, and its implications for state power. While Russia’s population is set to decline by approximately 7 percent (to 135 million) by 2050, it will remain the most populous country in Europe by a wide margin. Russia’s demographic decline is not just overstated, based on dated estimates, but it is unlikely to substantially constrain Russian power in any meaningful way. The demographic outlook for many of America’s allies, as well as China, is just as worrisome. The relevance of demographics to state power today is not a simple question: what matters is quality of human capital rather than quantity. Often it seems that Washington’s understanding of how to assess power, and what matters, is more suitable for the world of 1920, as opposed to 2020. In any case, Russia is not going to run out of people.

Russia’s economy may appear one dimensional — depending heavily on resource extraction — but economic power speaks to potential, and even then crudely. In truth, the economic foundations of Russian power have often been weak compared to Moscow’s status ambitions. That said, Russia is not a one dimensional power. Simple GDP measures, based on market exchange rates, disguise the fact that Russia is one of the world’s largest economies with tremendous resources. For example, while many think tanks assess Russian defense spending at a mere $60 billion, a much more accurate way of comparing defense spending, which adjusts for purchasing power parity or PPP, illustrates that Russian military expenditure is in the range of $150-180 billion per year.

The mismatch between Russian economic strength and apparent performance has engendered a mistaken perception that Russia is just playing a weak hand well, perhaps due to President Vladimir Putin’s assertiveness. Individual leaders and their ideas matter, but the conventional wisdom has it backwards. Russia is much stronger, and more resilient as a power than it’s typically given credit, while its leadership is hardly a fountain of strategic aptitude. There is also little evidence that the significant disagreements over interests, values, and outlooks on how to order the world will disappear with a different Russian leader, or that a different regime in Moscow will embrace America’s view of the world. What the narrative on Russian decline gets wrong is Russia’s historic ability to resurrect itself after a period of stagnation, decline, or state collapse to rebuild state power and influence. U.S. defense thinking has fallen victim to the fallacy of secular trends: the belief that a rising China will stay rising and a stagnating Russia will continue to do so. Ironically, there is good evidence that China has tremendous structural weaknesses, which are commonly brushed aside, but in Russia’s case the same problems are viewed as somehow deterministic.

#### Russia is unambiguously stable.

Andrew Latham 21, professor of international relations at Macalester College, 12/26/2021, "Reports of Russia’s decline are greatly exaggerated," https://thehill.com/opinion/international/587281-reports-of-russias-decline-are-greatly-exaggerated/, sg

Tales of Russia’s demise have circulated with remarkable consistency since the fall of the Soviet Union on Dec. 25 exactly three decades ago. Having fallen from its superpower pedestal, the Soviet Union’s successor state was routinely characterized as a “declining power,” a “has-been power” and a “downshift power.”

In recent years, the more dire prophesies of Russian collapse that circulated in the 1990s having gone unfulfilled, such characterizations have given way to a recognition that Russia is in fact a “persistent power.” Fundamentally, though, nothing has changed. Whether rebranded as a mere “nuisance power” or as a perpetually “disruptive” power, Russia is viewed now as it has been since it emerged out of the wreckage of the Soviet Union in December 1991 — as a broken, if sometimes petulant, vestige of a once-mighty superpower.

But as the crisis in Ukraine has once again demonstrated, such characterizations are grossly misleading. Indeed, they couldn’t be more wrong. Russia is not the geopolitical basket-case it was in the immediate post-Soviet era. Nor is it the bit player on the world stage it is often portrayed as in the Western press. In fact, quite the opposite: Viewed dispassionately and in the cold light of Realpolitik, Russia is unambiguously a “great power” — a country possessing both substantial instruments of national power and the will to use these instruments to influence political outcomes around the world. And any American grand strategy worthy of the name will have to take that undeniable fact into account.

When it comes to possessing a substantial and varied instrument of power, there can be little doubt that Russia meets the “great power” standard. To be sure, economic woes and demographic challenges continue to plague the country. But the myth of Russian decline is precisely that — a myth.

The Russian military today is not the poorly trained and ill-equipped conscript rabble that fared so poorly in Chechnya in the mid-1990s. Spurred in large part by that experience, Moscow undertook a radical modernization and upgrading of the country’s nuclear and conventional forces, with staggeringly impressive results. While some asymmetries remain between Russia on the one hand and the United States and China on the other, resurrected Russia’s “hard power” capabilities now place it in the same league as those two recognized great powers — and in a different league altogether than almost every other country on the planet.

Similarly, there can be little doubt that Moscow is able to field the “soft” and “sharp” power capabilities of a great power. Regarding the former – which in Russia’s case refers to the country’s ability to “wage friendship” – Russia has developed a formidable arsenal of tools for generating good will and attracting political support. These include Russian media (including the RT and Sputnik networks), Russian cultural centers, the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian universities and research centers. Moscow also exercises soft power through the provision of humanitarian aid and debt relief and security through Russian-centered international organizations such as the Collective Security Treaty Organization.

### 1AR – No Decline – Economics

#### ECONOMICS. GDP doesn’t assume purchasing parity.

Andrea Kendall-Taylor 21, Senior Fellow and Director of the Transatlantic Security Program at the Center for a New American Security; Michael Kofman, Director of the Russia Studies Program at CNA and a Senior Fellow at the Center for a New American Security, 11/1/2021, "The Myth of Russian Decline," https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2021-10-19/myth-russian-decline, sg

The problem is that the case for Russian decline is overstated. Much of the evidence for it, such as Russia’s shrinking population and its resource-dependent economy, is not as consequential for the Kremlin as many in Washington assume. Nor should the United States expect that Russia will automatically abandon its course of confrontation once President Vladimir Putin leaves office. Putin’s foreign policy enjoys widespread support among the country’s ruling elite, and his legacy will include a thicket of unresolved disputes, chief among them that over the annexation of Crimea. Any disagreements with the United States are here to stay.

Put simply, Washington cannot afford to fixate on China while hoping to simply wait Russia out. Rather than viewing Russia as a declining power, U.S. leaders should see it as a persistent one—and have a frank conversation about the country’s true capabilities and vulnerabilities. Rethinking American assumptions about Russian power would allow policymakers to address what will be a period of prolonged confrontation with a capable adversary.

FAULTY ASSUMPTIONS

Expectations of Russian decline contain important truths. The country’s economy is stagnant, with few sources of value other than the extraction and export of natural resources. The entire system is rife with corruption and dominated by inefficient state-owned or state-controlled enterprises, and international sanctions limit access to capital and technology. Russia struggles to develop, retain, and attract talent; the state chronically underfunds scientific research; and bureaucratic mismanagement hinders technological innovation. As a result, Russia lags considerably behind the United States and China in most metrics of scientific and technological development. Military spending has largely plateaued in the last four years, and the population is forecast to decline by ten million people by 2050.

With such a dismal outlook, it is natural to assume that Russia’s capacity for disruption and hostility on the international stage will soon diminish, too—that the Kremlin will simply run out of resources for its aggressive foreign policy. But those data points miss the broader picture. They highlight Russia’s weaknesses and downplay its strengths. Russia may be “a downshifter country,” as Herman Gref, the head of Russia’s largest bank, complained in 2016. But its economic, demographic, and military potential will remain substantial, rather than entering a precipitous decline.

Consider the country’s economy, which, stagnant as it may be, is still larger and more resilient than many believe. Analysts like to point out that Russia’s GDP of $1.5 trillion is comparable to that of Italy or Texas. But that $1.5 trillion is calculated using market exchange rates. Factor in purchasing power parity, and it balloons to $4.1 trillion, which would make Russia the second-largest economy in Europe and the sixth-largest in the world. Neither measure is wholly accurate—one is likely an underestimate, the other an overestimate—but the comparison shows that Russia’s economy is nowhere near as small as the conventional wisdom holds. At any rate, raw GDP is often a poor measure of geopolitical power: it no longer translates easily into military potential or international influence.