***The Precarious Future of the Russian Federation and its foretelling in Azeri Aggression:***

***BLUF: The future of the Russian Federation (RF) is precarious. Putin’s abject failure in Ukraine has significantly weakened his regime, and estranged the physically and socio-culturally distant ethnic republics of the RF. The economic, demographic, and geopolitical consequences of the war will either destroy the RF or create the conditions for it. The war, expected to only last weeks at most, and its failure have cost RF most of its remaining influence in the Former Soviet States (FSS), much of it underpinned by security guarantees, who are now accelerating outward facing foreign policies. Ultimately, the Russian empire has continuously shrunk since its peak and its collapse is accelerating. Putin’s legitimacy is beginning to fail, especially among the new guard of Stateists whom are now entering positions of power. The domestic consequences of his war in Ukraine, primarily demographic, economic, and social, will accelerate the RF’s collapse. Any confrontation with the West would see its forces decimated, with casualty ratios of 1-100/1000 being expected, while the cessation of war would lead to an economic shock rivaled only by the fall of the Soviet Union.***

RF’s war in Ukraine has accelerated the collapse of the Russian empire, and has turned the RF into a Chinese vassal state fighting a war it lost two years ago. China has accepted redirected energy flows, provided dual-use goods, military aid, and critically, machine tools to restart its military industry. This support has been insufficient; RF has grown reliant on North Korean and Iranian artillery shells, ballistic missiles, and drones, with the former two suffering dud-rates of 50% or more. Most of its professional soldiers and officers were killed in the first months, leaving a mass of 500,000 low-quality soldiers to execute frontal assaults to capture small and strategically insignificant settlements. Coupled with the dismal performance of some weapon systems (I.e. S-400, T-90M, Pantsir), the war has revealed the RF military to be a conventional non-issue, and has tanked Russian arms exports, a pillar of the Russian economy pre-2022. For advanced systems, Russia is wholly reliant on exports to fund R&D and achieve economies of scale, making the systems available to Russia’s modest defense budget.

With Gazprom nearing bankruptcy, and a Ukrainian strategic drone offensive targeting oil refineries reducing Russian value-add energy exports, Russia has focused on oil exports to maintain federal budgets. While effective, the absence of foreign energy firms will reduce the exploitation of new deposits, and maintenance work on energy extraction and transportation infrastructure, leading to a compounding reduction in production. Haliburton and Honeywell dominated the Russian energy services market pre-2022, and while it is believed that Russia has been able to somewhat manage domestic servicing, unusually long maintenance disruptions and an increasing number of accidents at energy facilities suggest it has been insufficient. The Sakhalin gas projects has seen an est. 10% reduction in production, while China has made use of Russia’s position as a vassal state to demanded subsidized energy prices for gas delivered via the Power of Siberia 2. India and China are accepting Russian oil, however at heavily discounted prices and on an ad-hoc basis. Russia is heavily reliant on energy exports for federal funding; they account for 50% of exports and over 14% of GDP.

WW2 decimated Russian demographics, exacerbated by the fall of the Soviet Union and the ensuing economic shock lasting over one decade. This has constrained the Russian economy and manpower in Ukraine; Russia reported a shortage of 4.8 million workers in 2023, and seasonal workers are estimated to make up 25% of the Russian workforce. Nearly all industries except the defense sector have reported labor shortages, while anti-migrant backlash following the Crocus Mall shooting has further restrained available labor and troops in Ukraine. Deaths and incapacitating injuries will accelerate Russia’s demographic collapse, as will rising inflation and reduced real growth from the war.

Possibly the greatest effect of the war is its reverse effect on Russia’s regional hegemony, already challenged by China; it has revealed the Russian military to be a conventional non-issue, and reduced the weight of its security assurances and treaties with FSS. Much of Russian influence in the FSS is underpinned by security assurances and economic relations. Security assurances were totally voided by Azerbaijan’s annexation of Nagorno-Karabakh using Turkish weapons, a NATO member, and during which it killed Russian peacekeepers at least twice. Shortly thereafter, France and the US increased security relations with Armenia, which recently withdrew its CTSO membership. Kazakhstan has indirectly sold weapons to Ukraine on at least one occasion, rushed troops to its border when threatened by Russia, and condemned the invasion alongside other FSS. Critically, China has begun building military outposts in or near Tajikistan and the Chinese-Afghan-Tajik tri-border area, revealing Chinese ambitions to replace Russia as the Central Asian Hegemon or its distrust in Russia’s ability to provide security guarantees to CTSO members.

Russia remains an empire, subjugating numerous ethnic republics and heavily influencing ex-Soviet Republics (ESRs), mainly in Central Asia.

* + Ethnic Russians dominate the European plain, while all of Russia past the Ural Mountains are dominated by numerous ethnic groups.
  + Historically, these republics have suffered a wildly disproportionate ratio of casualties to the ethnic Russians West of the Urals.
* Some Republics, specifically Dagestan and Chechnya, have become more outspoken in their civil policies since the beginning of the war.
  + During the first months, some Republics banned the export of key good such as wheat and sugar. As the war progressed and casualties mounted, and Moscow began a one-off mobilization, others began to interfere with the draft.
    - Specifically, Dagestan and Chechnya claimed they had already sent enough men. Russia now only enacts a covert mobilization, netting an estimated 20,000-30,000 men per month.
  + Inter-religious and ethnic tensions have risen significantly since the Crocus Mall shooting.
* The greatest threats to Russia are internal.
  + Putin relies on relies on a utilitarian interpretation of output legitimacy; the legitimacy of the state is contingent on what is produces and provides rather than how it makes decisions. More specifically, in Russia these are consistently rising standards of living and the “resurgence” of Russia, real or perceived.
  + Since the invasion standards of living have decreased alongside public services, while taxes have risen. 500,000 casualties, mostly from the aforementioned ethnic republics, degrades Putin’s output legitimacy.
* Putin’s failed invasion of Ukraine has seen former Soviet States distance themselves, while Azerbaijan has openly challenged Putin directly.
  + Azerbaijan has killed or engaged Russian peacekeepers in Nagorno Karabakh at least 2 times, and annexed the territory despite Moscow’s obligation as a peacekeeper.
    - Peacekeepers were shot on one occasion, and on another a Russian helicopter was shot down. During the annexation of Nagorno Karabakh, an Azeri drone destroyed the Russian armory at their peacekeeping base, making resistance a non-issue. ,m
  + Tajikistan threatened to end all relations if the mistreatment of migrant workers did not cease.
  + Kazakhstan has openly defied Moscow, responded defensively to hostile rhetoric, and has sold weapons to the West for delivery to Ukraine. Russian threats that Kazakh land inhabited by Russians would be Moscow’s next target, Almaty rushed its forces to the region and announced military exercises.
  + The Central Asian Republics have accelerated economic ties with China, and have begun establishing defense ties with other powers.
  + Armenia has heavily criticized Moscow for its inaction against Azeri aggression despite legislative requirements.
* The current (07/2024) state of Russian troops suggests the total lack of an Officer corps and proves issues in logistics and mobilization.
  + Many front lines troops are employed in meat assaults, using poor equipment and tactics. This suggests minimal training and coordination from an NCO corps.
  + Poor equipment, from drones to a lack of clean drinking water, suggests the Russian military industrial base is struggling.
    - The inability to produce industrial bearings, and the failure of military aircraft due to servicing issues, reinforce this assumption.
    - A lack of clean drinking water, even for pilots at air bases, is a damning revelation showing total inability to field a modern military.

IR attached; received too late for summary.