



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on March 9, 2022

Report: Some Russian Officials “Frightened” and “Apocalyptic”; Putin in “Offended” State

“Whoever tries to impede us, let alone create threats for our country and its people, must know that the Russian response will be immediate and lead to the consequences you have never seen in history.” So said Russian president Vladimir Putin mere minutes before launching the invasion of Ukraine.

Three days later, the Russian leader put his nuclear forces on “special combat readiness,” a high-alert status. Around the same time, TV anchor Dmitry Kiselyov, known as a venomous Kremlin mouthpiece, [boasted](#) to his viewers of Russia’s destructive nuclear capacity and then echoed the [Puntinesque principle](#), “Why do we need the world if Russia isn’t there?”



AP Images
Vladimir Putin

All this may just reflect another Russian principle, a military one: “Escalate to deescalate” (that is, to intimidate and extract concessions). Yet there’s another possibility.

For decades we’ve relied on a yet different principle — Mutually Assured Destruction, or MAD — to forestall a nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union/Russia. It has a catch, however: MAD only works if not even one of the leaders in question is mad.

This may explain a new report about how some Russian officials are “frightened,” are making “apocalyptic” predictions, and may even be worried about Putin’s mental state.

The report, created by Russian journalist Farida Rustamova, was translated into English by fellow journalist Ilya Lozovsky. It states that some Russian officials believe the Ukraine invasion was a mistake and that Putin has mishandled it, describing the endeavor as a “clusterf***.” As Rustamova [writes](#):

In reality, the attitude toward the war within the corridors of power is ambiguous. I came to this conclusion after speaking with several members of parliament and officials at various levels. Many of them are discouraged, frightened, and are making apocalyptic forecasts. Andrei Kostin [head of the largely state-owned VTB Bank] is “in mourning.” Some Duma members are thinking of giving up their seats. Two days before Putin announced the start of the “special operation,” one of my most ‘in-the-know’ friends thought that it wouldn’t come to war, because war wouldn’t benefit anybody. I see that officials, deputies, and even journalists at government outlets who have left their posts are relieved that they no longer have anything to do with this, and are speaking out against the war.

Rustamova can write as she does, freely, because she recently fled Russia. She previously worked for the now-suspended BBC Russian Service and other outlets.



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Rustamova informs that many within Russian power circles are “in a state of near-paralysis.” “No one is rejoicing,” the journalist quotes a source close to the Kremlin as saying. “Many understand that this is a mistake, but in the course of doing their duty they come up with explanations in order to somehow come to terms with it.”

“Some officials aren’t associating themselves with what’s happening at all, viewing Putin’s decision as a historical choice over which they have no influence, and the meaning of which no one will understand for a some time to come,” Rustamova then adds.

The journalist also relates that no one expected Putin to launch a war, viewing the belligerent talk as a tool for leverage. Note here that only a tiny group of Russian officials is given any substantial amount of information as the leader makes the decisions and “everything is happening within one person’s head,” as a source close to the government put it.

Partially for this reason, the following “best revenge is living well” wise counsel won’t be influencing Putin. “If Russia considers itself an empire, why not become attractive to its neighbors by developing the country instead of by forcing their loyalty? Let’s build good roads, quality health care and education, and eventually come up with the kind of technology that would allow us to be the first to colonize Mars. That would be quite empire-like,” a high-ranking official said brokenly when I asked him what he thought of Putin’s motives for starting the war,” Rustamova also tells us.

In fact, Putin is indignant regarding his current course. A person Rustamova describes as a “good acquaintance of Putin’s” stated that the Russian president maintains that the game’s “rules” were broken not by him but the West. He thus believes the fight is now no-holds-barred.

“Here he is in a state of being offended and insulted,” the Putin acquaintance also said. “It’s paranoia that has reached the point of absurdity.” The source mentioned, too, as another factor, “Putin’s degradation from being in power for too long.”

The acquaintance further stated how the Russian president believes that, especially during his rule’s first five years, he genuinely tried to improve relations with the West.

Whether this is true or not, for sure is that our establishment’s actions inflamed tensions. Most recently, its minions’ Trump Derangement Syndrome was accompanied by Putin Derangement Syndrome as they spent years fabricating a mythical Russia/Trump alliance and demonizing the Bear in an effort to oust Trump from power. (It’s also likely that Russia’s traditionalist, anti-“woke” policies contribute to the establishment hostility.) In fact, ex-attorney general Bill Barr just admitted that this propaganda made it impossible for Trump to seek detente with Russia (which I warned at the time would be a consequence).

Moreover, the neocon policy of [expanding NATO to Russia’s very borders](#) — which wiser heads had [warned against for decades](#) — has also likely contributed to the current hostilities.

The result is a very dangerous situation, with trends forecaster BCA Research [predicting](#) a 10 percent chance of a civilization-ending nuclear war within the next year.

The problem here is very human: Putin is responding to bad policy with bad policy. And along with the aforementioned Russian officials, many in the West are concerned about his mental state. While he previously was known for being cold, calculating, and intelligent, he now at times has appeared a bit unhinged.

Don’t consider intelligence a guarantee against rash action, either. “There’s a fine line between genius and insanity,” as the saying goes, after all. Unless it’s all a big bluff — a lot to bet civilization on — Putin



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appears to be running at least partially on passion. And negative emotion is like darkness: The more there is, the less you can see.

The second issue is that Putin is now what some have called a “personalist leader.” In other words, unlike in the USSR — where after the 1950s power was more dispersed and cooler heads could perhaps temper a leader’s rash impulses — the Russian president has something uncomfortably close to absolute power.

The third issue is that, as commentator Pat Buchanan has warned, Putin *cannot lose this war*. To him that might be a final and intolerable humiliation, a loss of face and prestige that could presage his loss of power. So he perhaps will do *whatever he has to to win*.

The bottom line is that since Ukraine is not America’s or NATO’s battle, a question should be asked: Do we really want to risk turning Putin into a man with nothing to lose, a man who maybe, just perhaps, could descend into a state where all he wants is to see the world burn?



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