# Russia After the Long War: A Bleeding State or More Dangerous?

(Translated)

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The Russian-Ukrainian war has raised a crucial question in international relations: Is Russia, after a long military conflict, a weakened state whose capabilities have been eroded, or has it become more dangerous, after breaking the taboos of the international order?

Some people believe that Russia is coming out of this war burdened by losses, suffering from structural exhaustion, that limits its ability to act internationally. On the other hand, others think that the war has reshaped Russia into a stronger, more dangerous power, less committed to the rules of the international order, and more willing to take risks and escalate conflicts. To understand this debate, we need to look at the deep changes in Russia's tools of power, and weigh what it has lost, against what it has gained in the balance of international conflict.

**First: What has Russia lost so far?**

**1.** Military exhaustion: Huge human and material losses, massive consumption of traditional military stockpiles, and increasing reliance on military industries that are under pressure due to sanctions.

**2.** General economic pressure: Unprecedented sanctions targeted its banking system and energy sector, leading to the withdrawal of major Western investments, weakening Russia's ability to grow in the long term.

**3.** Decline in relative political status: Due to the reduction of its influence in Eastern Europe, the expansion of NATO instead of its contraction, and a shift in Russia's relationship with Europe from using political and soft power tools, to almost entirely relying on hard military force.

**Second: Why does Russia seem more willing to take risks, despite these losses?**

Even though it is exhausted, Russia has elements that make it more willing to take risks. These include:

1. Freedom from ethical and legal constraints: Russia has become less concerned with the liberal international order and less willing to be held accountable by international law. This has been shown in Syria and its actions within Ukrainian territory, which has encouraged it to expand its military strength and enhance its cyber warfare capabilities.

2. Long war combat experience: The war has helped shape Russia's military doctrine and given it battlefield experience that many European armies lack.

3. Shifting from seeking leadership to undermining the international order: Russia no longer seeks to lead the international order but works to undermine it, believing that this order is no longer capable of dominating and is more vulnerable to disruption. It is prepared to adapt to any transition from a unipolar world to a multipolar one, or even chaos.

4. Expanding into alternative arenas: Russia's danger lies in its ability to escalate indirectly with Europe and engage in other regions, like Africa, the Middle East, and the Arctic.

**Third: Russia as a wounded but stubborn power**

Russia today is not the fallen Soviet Union, nor is it a collapsed state. It is a wounded but stubborn power. It has lost some control, but has gained a higher willingness to take risks. In a world heading toward "organized chaos," the most dangerous powers may not be the strongest ones, but those with nothing left to lose.

Therefore, Russia should not be viewed as an emerging power, but as a country trying to prevent further decline. It possesses weapons and deterrence, and seeks to expand its influence in fragile areas, with the consent of regional and international backers. Despite its economic and technological weaknesses, and a decline in human development due to sanctions, the Russian mindset remains a factor of danger, even though it may have limited reach.

Today, Russia is a disruptive player, a tactical partner rather than a strategic leader. Its strength lies in its ability to prevent others from achieving a complete victory, rather than in achieving its own. Its weakness lies in the absence of a global project that goes beyond mere confrontation.

**Fourth: Russia in a multipolar world:**

In the world that emerges after major crises, Russia may not be the leading state of the future, but it will certainly be a key player in any international agreements.

If the international order shifts from a unipolar order, with one dominant power, to a multipolar order, with many major powers, or even into a more chaotic state, Russia's vision since the fall of the Soviet Union fits well with a world based on balance of power, rather than the dominance of a single center.

A multipolar world reduces the West's ability to isolate Russia or impose harsh sanctions. Russia's nuclear weapons also become an essential tool to secure its place in the world. Moreover, Russia is skilled at forming non-ideological alliances with countries like China, Iran, India, and many African nations.

In such a system, there will be a greater need for countries capable of mediating or blocking decisions, and Russia is skilled in both areas.

Therefore, in a multipolar world, Russia might not be the strongest power, but it will be an indispensable power that cannot be ignored. Russia's goal is not to lead the international order but to prevent the formation of an organized order that is against it. It wants to compete for influence and status in a world that is moving toward an incomplete multipolarity, or managed chaos.

**Fifth: The Fear of an Islamic State in the Russian mind:**

Russia's main fear is not a traditional military threat but the possibility of an Islamic state that could cross borders. Within Russia, there are between 20 to 25 million Muslims, in places like Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Tatarstan, and the creation of an Islamic state elsewhere could provide symbolic legitimacy to movements that want to be part of this new political entity.

Russia also fears a neighboring state that does not recognize the nationalistic borders as Russia understands them. Russia does not see this as just a new political entity, but as a model of legitimacy that could penetrate its own borders, raising questions about identity and loyalty within Russia's fragile domestic structure.

For this reason, Russia prefers to support authoritarian regimes that it can control rather than risk the rise of a state that gets its legitimacy from outside the modern national framework. Moscow's concerns are not about what such a state might do internationally, but the domestic impact it could have within Russia.

Therefore, Russia's true battle is not against Islam as a religion, but against the creation of a political system it cannot contain or control. In a world where borders are becoming weaker, this is the greatest strategic nightmare for the Russian mind.

This is why Russia's widespread arrests of members of Hizb ut Tahrir are understood. The focus here is not just security, but ideology. Russia is trying to prevent the idea of a state that views itself as part of a broader Islamic Ummah, one that rejects nationalistic borders and international law, and that seeks to revive the glory of Islam as it was, or as it was given glad tidings of by the Prophet Muhammad (saw).