

Putin's Winter Offensive

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"Every dead Russian and Ukrainian in this war, every family anywhere in the world that suffers the consequences of this war, every business that shuts down because of the economic damage this war is causing and the increased risk of nuclear annihilation, it's all US Govt made." Twitter @KimDotcom

Proxy War (def)– a war instigated by a major power which does not itself become involved.

Ukrainian gains on the battlefield have been met by a widely-anticipated Russian escalation. On September 21, in a rare national address, Russian President Vladimir **Putin announced the mobilisation of 300,000 reservists who would be called to serve in the war in Ukraine.**

In recent weeks, the Russian army has suffered a number of setbacks due to its lack of sufficient manpower in the battlespace. Simply put, the Russians did not have enough combat troops to carry out their mission or to defend the vast area that has recently been annexed by Moscow. **Russia's Special Military Operation was never designed to seize and occupy great swaths of Ukrainian territory. In essence, the SMO was a police operation aimed at locating and eliminating the Ukrainian forces that had been bombarding and killing ethnic Russians living in east Ukraine.**

After numerous clashes with advancing NATO-trained battalions, it's clear that Russia needs significant reinforcements to roll back Ukrainian forces and impose a security buffer around its new provinces. Russia's critics see the under-staffing as an indication of military incompetence but, in fact, Moscow is merely adapting to a fluid situation in which both parties continue to raise the stakes. Here is an excerpt from a post by Big Serge at Substack that helps to clarify what's going on:

Of all the phantasmagorical claims that have been made about the Russo-Ukrainian War, few are as difficult to believe as the claim that Russia intended to conquer Ukraine

with fewer than 200,000 men. Indeed, **a central truth of the war that observers simply must come to grasp with is the fact that the Russian army has been badly outnumbered from day one....** On paper, **Russia has committed an expeditionary force of less than 200,000 men**, though of course that full amount has not been on the frontline in active combat lately.

The light force deployment is related to Russia's rather unique service model, which has combined "contract soldiers" – the professional core of the army – with a reservist pool that is generated with an annual conscription wave....The transition from a Soviet mobilization scheme to a smaller, leaner, professional ready force was part and parcel of Russia's neoliberal austerity regime throughout much of the Putin years.

.... **This Russian contract force can still accomplish a great deal, militarily speaking** – it can destroy Ukrainian military installations, wreak havoc with artillery, bash its way into urban agglomerations in the Donbas, and destroy much of Ukraine's indigenous war-making potential. **It cannot, however, wage a multi-year continental war against an enemy which outnumbers it by at least four to one**, and which is sustained with intelligence, command and control, and material which are beyond its immediate reach...

More force deployment is needed. Russia must transcend the neoliberal austerity army. It has the material capacity to mobilize the needed forces – it has many millions in its reservist pool, enormous inventories of equipment, and indigenous production capacity undergirded by the natural resources and production potential of the Eurasian bloc that has closed ranks around it. But remember – **military mobilization is also political mobilization.**" (["Politics By Other Means; Putin and Clausewitz"](#), Big Serge Thoughts, Substack)

Russia's critics, of course, will dismiss this explanation as nonsense, even so, the calling up of 300,000 reservists shows that **Putin's generals realize they cannot achieve their strategic objectives with merely an "expeditionary force"** but must adjust to changes on the ground. And that is precisely what they are doing; they are beefing up their forces at a time when Putin's public approval rating is at an eye-watering 77%. So, while an earlier mobilization would have undoubtedly been met with widespread condemnation and rejection, **the great majority of Russians now fully support the policy.** Simply put, Putin has won the hearts and minds of the Russian people. He has convinced them that their country, traditions, culture and lives face an unprecedented existential threat. Here's more from Big Serge:

Putin and those around him conceived of the Russo-Ukrainian War in existential terms from the very beginning. It is unlikely, however, that most Russians understood this....

What has happened in the months since February 24 is rather remarkable. The existential war for the Russian nation has been incarnated and made real for Russian citizens. Sanctions and anti-Russian propaganda – demonizing the entire nation as "orcs" – has rallied even initially skeptical Russians behind the war, and **Putin's approval rating has soared.** A core western assumption, that Russians would turn on the government, has reversed. Videos showing the torture of Russian POWs by frothing Ukrainians, of Ukrainian soldiers calling Russian mothers to mockingly tell them their sons are dead, of Russian children killed by shelling in Donetsk, have

served to validate Putin's implicit claim that Ukraine is a demon possessed state that must be exorcised with high explosives... The government of Ukraine (in now deleted tweets) publicly claimed that Russians are prone to barbarism because they are a mongrel race with Asiatic blood mixing." (Big Serge, Substack)

In short, the establishment media and political class have made Putin's job easier for him by persuading even left-leaning Russians that the western nations –led by the US– despise all-things Russian and are determined to destroy their country and subjugate their people. Here's Putin:

I want to underscore again that their insatiability and determination to preserve their unfettered dominance are the real causes of the hybrid war that the collective West is waging against Russia. **They do not want us to be free; they want us to be a colony. They do not want equal cooperation; they want to loot. They do not want to see us a free society, but a mass of soulless slaves....**I would like to remind you that in the past, ambitions of world domination have repeatedly shattered against the courage and resilience of our people. Russia will always be Russia. We will continue to defend our values and our Motherland.

We have never agreed to and will never agree to such political nationalism and racism. What else, if not racism, is the Russophobia being spread around the world? What, if not racism, is the West's dogmatic conviction that its civilisation and neoliberal culture is an indisputable model for the entire world to follow?...

Today, we are fighting so that it would never occur to anyone that Russia, our people, our language, or our culture can be erased from history. Today, we need a united society, and this unification can only be based on sovereignty, freedom, creation, and justice. Our values are humanity, mercy and compassion." ([Speech on the Accession of the New Regions to Russia](#), Vladimir Putin, Unz Review)

According to Putin, the collective west wants to plunder Russia, enslave its people, and create a colony whose wealth can be siphoned off by tyrannical bigots and foreign profiteers. **The media's relentless attack on Russian athletes, scholars, scientists, musicians and even businessmen has only reinforced the view among ordinary Russians that they have entered the crosshairs of a violent and out-of-control western coalition that intends to deliver the same lethal death-blow to Russia that they did to Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan and countless other nations.** Putin's soaring public approval ratings underscore the fact that most Russians think the threat is real and that the battle must be joined. Here's more from Big Serge:

"Putin has ... achieved his project of formal annexation of Ukraine's old eastern rim. This has also legally transformed the war into an existential struggle. Further Ukrainian advances in the east are now, in the eyes of the Russian state, an assault on sovereign Russian territory and an attempt to destroy the integrity of the Russian state. **Recent polling shows that a supermajority of Russians support defending these new territories at any cost.**" (Substack)

The speed at which Putin annexed the four regions in Ukraine suggests that the real purpose of the action goes far beyond the expansion of Russia's western border. **The real reason Putin rushed through the measure was to fundamentally change the rules of engagement.** Needless to say, a Special Military Operation is worlds apart from the

defense of one's own sovereign territory. In other words, **the real purpose of the referendum was to indicate that "the gloves are off" and that Russia is going to respond to Ukraine's attacks with unexpected ferocity.** Here's Serge again:

A political consensus for higher mobilization and greater intensity has been achieved. Now all that remains is the implementation of this consensus in the material world of fist and boot, bullet and shell, blood and iron."

..... **Russia is massing for a winter escalation and offensive, and is currently engaged in a calculated trade wherein they give up space in exchange for time and Ukrainian casualties.** Russia continues to retreat where positions are either operationally compromised or faced with overwhelming Ukrainian numbers, but they are very careful to extract forces out of operational danger....

Russia will likely continue to pull back over the coming weeks, withdrawing units intact under their artillery and air umbrella, grinding down Ukrainian heavy equipment stocks and wearing away their manpower. Meanwhile, new equipment continues to congregate in Belgorod, Zaporizhia, and Crimea. **My expectation remains the same: episodic Russian withdrawal until the front stabilizes roughly at the end of October, followed by an operational pause until the ground freezes, followed by escalation and a winter offensive by Russia once they have finished amassing sufficient units.**

There is an eerie calm radiating from the Kremlin..... The disconnect between the Kremlin's stoicism and the deterioration of the front are striking. Perhaps Putin and the entire Russian general staff really are criminally incompetent – perhaps the Russian reserves really are nothing but a bunch of drunks. Perhaps there is no plan.

Or perhaps, **Russia's sons will answer the call of the motherland again, as they did in 1709, in 1812, and in 1941.**

As the wolves once more prowl at the door, the old bear rises again to fight."
([Big Serge](#), Substack)

Bottom line: Russia has now laid the groundwork for a broader and more violent conflict. 300,000 reservists have been called up, vast amounts of military hardware are being shipped to the front, and public opinion overwhelmingly supports the war-effort. **All the signs point to a significant escalation in the fighting that will leave much of Ukraine in ruins while pushing Washington and Moscow closer to a direct confrontation.**

Mearsheimer's Chilling Prediction: "The Russians are going to turn Ukraine into rubble." (2 minute video)

John Mearsheimer called it right in 2015 and he called it right again 7 months ago. Maybe the US Govt should hire him as a fire alarm.
pic.twitter.com/8CvbMPyUO6

— Kim Dotcom (@KimDotcom) [October 12, 2022](#)

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