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The biggest Western delusion about the regimes like Russian may be that they can be successfully challenged by some sort of “opposition”.

Reality check:

The King is most likely to be successfully challenged by the people who grew rich and powerful on the royal service (not )

That's easy to explain. You see, to do anything in the real world, you need resources (financial, administrative, guns), etc. Ideally, to endeavour anything big you should already command a small empire of your own. A large business for example can qualify as a small empire

People with no resources present little to no danger. People with some resources can present some danger. Now a coalition of people with private empires of their own can present a very significant danger, including to the authoritarian regime

But a regime like Russian will never allow anyone to command any sort of a small empire without being integrated to the regime one way or another. Therefore, anyone who can potentially present danger to the regime is integrated into the regime. A very common scenario

This is more typical than it might seem. American revolution, revolutions in Spanish America, (I'm not even talking about Brazil), Greek one, etc. - people successfully integrated into the previous regime played a key role everywhere. If they did not, then their children

If the best way for a Greek to get rich and powerful is to serve the Sultan in Danube principalities, then it will be Greeks serving the Sultan in the Danube principalities who pose the greatest danger to the Sultan of all the Greeks. If not them, then their children

The future of Russia does not depend upon the “opposition” or even the “people”. These are propagandist delusions. It depends upon the people who now hold positions of wealth and power under the Putin's regime. Who are integrated into the regime one way or another

Moreover, once Putin's regime ends, the people in charge will be like 90% coming from those who hold positions of wealth and power in Putin's Russia at this very moment. This includes every conceivable scenario including the breakup of Russia to a number of the smaller state

NB: I am not saying that everything will remain the same. What can happen is:

1. A very significant renegotiation of power and wealth *within* the ruling and moneyed class. Some go up, some go down, some are selected out
2. Which will allow a number of newcomers to rise as well

In other words, should the regime fall you won't be seeing the same faces you are seeing now. No, the faces will be very different. But both the faces in the TV and the people in charge will be mostly selected from those who already hold some sort of influence in Russia right now

I would say that people wildly underestimate the fragility of Putin - a man from flesh and blood who can just die at any moment. And just as wildly overestimate the fragility of the collective elite. Which is:

Not
Going
Anywhere

So once again: the regime(s), will not be the same, the hierarchy will not be the same. The ranks will be renegotiated. Many will be selected out. But:

Not having a position of power and influence in modern Russia is a good predictor of not having it in the future Russia either

And vice versa, having a small empire in modern Russia is a good predictor of having a far above average chance to hold a position of power & influence in whatever that can follow

You have resources -> you can invest them (successfully or not)

No resources -> nothing to invest

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