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Newest last straws are emerging today in Russia and Iran. The Russians have put up with Vladimir Putin, who step-by-step extinguished the democracy they established upon the collapse of the Cold War. Stifling the press and courts, and with a rubber-stamped parliament, Putin has made a farce of his reelections, making him de facto "president for life." By murdering every possible opposition leader, he easily put down demonstrations. His deal with the Russian public was that he would keep the peace, protect the new middle classes with food and freedom to enrich themselves, and ask them only to ignore the corruption and the demise of democracy. Every demonstration over the years has been suppressed.

Now, he has reneged on the deal. The country has serious economic problems due to sanctions imposed by the West. Putin has attempted a tried-and-true sop to Russian nationalism: an invasion of Ukraine that he expected to be as easy as his absorption of the Crimea in 2014. Instead, it has become a disaster. Ukraine is not a pushover this time, and it has the support of the US and NATO.

His army has been a disaster. Recruits are bad soldiers: either cowardly or war criminals, and they are surrendering in droves to the Ukrainians. Putin is humiliated and angry. His inner circle is no longer rubber stamping his autocracy. They have been complaining publicly, urging him to end the war. A growing number of them have died while "falling out of windows." This has been the same fate for investigative journalists too.

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Again, he is wrong! The mothers in the country are demonstrating, unwilling to have their menfolk die in an unwanted and unwarranted war in Ukraine. The returning body bags are telling them the truth, despite propaganda and press censorship. Thousands of draft-age men are trying to flee the country. They have saturated the airlines leaving Russia, and now there are thousands of cars trying to cross all borders of Russia. The demonstrations are growing nation-wide.

Iran has suffered the same dilemma: aging religious leaders with the Ayatollah 99 years old. Massive corruption, an economy suffering from sanctions, and now the arrest and death of a young woman who was not wearing the hated hijab "properly." Iranian women and men are once more demonstrating and there are too many to put in jail. This is the last straw. Iran has had enough of Shia dictatorship.

The dictators are losing.

685 words

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