

WEEKLY ANALYSIS

Issue Number - 410
(July 01–July 07, 2023)

THE END OF THE MILITARY INSURGENCY IN RUSSIA, THE HIDDEN ASPECTS AND ITS CONSEQUENCES



Weekly Analysis is one of the CSRS publications analyzing significant weekly political, social, economic, and security events in Afghanistan and the region. The prime motive behind this is to provide strategic insights and policy solutions to decision-making institutions and individuals in order to help them design better policies. Weekly Analysis is published in Pashto, Dari, English and Arabic languages.

In this issue:

- The end of the military insurgency in Russia, the hidden aspects and its consequences 3
- Introduction..... 3
- What is the Wagner Group and who founded it?..... 3
- Reasons for Wagner's military revolt against Russian troops..... 4
- Why did the Wagner rebellion end so easily? 5
- Aftermath of Wagner's military rebellion 6
- Russia's internal consequences..... 6
- Consequences related to the battlefield and its future with Ukraine 6
- Conclusion 7
- References..... 7

Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS)



THE END OF THE MILITARY INSURGENCY IN RUSSIA, THE HIDDEN ASPECTS AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

INTRODUCTION

After about a year and a half, the Wagner group fought in solidarity with the Russian army for a common goal (the victory of Russia – defeat of Ukraine) in the line of battle against Ukrainian forces. But now, according to the head of Wagner's private security company, Yevgeny Prigozhin, when he claimed that the Defense Ministry and the chief of staff of the Russian Army had not provided the company's forces with proper weaponry and even fired missiles at the group's headquarters. And he told the Russian army commander: "They betrayed us in a treacherous way."¹

The leader of the Wagner Group withdrew his troops from the battlefield with Ukraine on June 24 and reached the Russian headquarters against Ukraine. The group's fighters entered Rostov early Saturday morning and seized military sites in the city. The group's leader released audio messages claiming that he had acted to bring about justice and end corruption and lies at the head of the Russian military and that nothing would stop him. Pushing a large 25000-strong military train bound for the Wagner Group to Moscow, he declared that 25,000 of its troops were ready to die for justice and the Russian people. On the other hand, Russian President Vladimir Putin described Prigozhin's act as a betrayal and likened his action to the insertion of a dagger from behind. It also established the declaration of the Committee on Counter-Terrorism and declared the Wagner Group action a terrorist act and punished its perpetrators.²

However, less than 24 hours after the rebellion, Yevgeny Prigozhin, the top commander of the Wagner Group, ordered his troops to refrain from continuing their journey to Moscow and to return to their main headquarters as the reason for the setback of the "bloodshed" and civil war in Russia. After Wagner's forces were driven towards the capital, the group's troops had reached 200 kilometers from Moscow. But at the behest of the leader of the group, they returned to their headquarters.

In this article, we discuss what Wagner's group is, the reasons behind the Wagner group's military revolt against the Russian military, why the end of Wagner's military insurgency is so simple and, more recently, what will be the consequences of the Wagner group's rebellion be?

WHAT IS THE WAGNER GROUP AND WHO FOUNDED IT?

The Wagner Group is a paramilitary or private company with indirect affiliation with the Russian military engaged in proxy wars by recruiting volunteers. And according to the BBC, Tracey German, professor of security and conflict at King's College London, the group first stepped in during Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. The group is said to have been created by the Kremlin and serves as a secret part of the Russian military. Vladimir Putin has handed



over responsibility for the group to one of his closest associates, Yevgeny Prigozhin, who is known as the "Putin Chef".³

The group fought alongside pro-government forces in Syria in 2015 and protected oil fields. In 2016, he worked in Libya to support forces loyal to General Khalifa Haftar, and in 2017 he was invited to the Central African Republic to protect diamond mines, and reportedly worked in Sudan to protect gold mines.

Recently, it has played a prominent role in supporting the Russian military against Ukraine, and the capture of the Ukrainian cities of Bachmuth and Solder has been described as the group's achievement in the Russian war against Ukraine. On the other hand, the group has been sanctioned for committing numerous war crimes and human rights violations by the United States and the European Union.³

The group's military revolt led by Yevgeny Prigozhin against the Russian army is the first act of revolt against Vladimir Putin since its more than two decades in power.

REASONS FOR WAGNER'S MILITARY REVOLT AGAINST RUSSIAN TROOPS

In general, there are three reasons for the Wagner rebellion:

The first reason goes back to accusations made by the leader of the Wagner group against the Russian defense minister. For months, Wagner's leader Yevgeny Prigozhny has accused the Russian defense minister and chief of military staff of treason, claiming they refused to support his forces. Many of the group's troops were killed in the war against Ukraine. More recently, it has accused the military of rocketing its base in Ukraine. Prigozhny said some of his forces were killed as a result of the projectiles. And so it accused the Minister of Defense and the Chief of Staff of treason and drove his forces from Ukraine to Russia to avenge these two military officials. However, the leader of the Wagner group claims that he did not want to make a coup, but rather to bring the traitors to justice.⁴

The second reason is that Prigozhin set up a series of luxury restaurants in St. Petersburg before founding the Wagner militia and became a place for the powerful and elite to move to and large and influential Russian cities after the collapse of the Soviet Union. From time to time when world leaders were invited to the Kremlin, the Red Palace banquets were held under contract with Yevgeny Prigozhin. He also made a fortune with the Russian Defense Ministry to provide food and catering to the army. But when President Putin's loyal comrade Sergei Shoigu was appointed to the Defense Ministry, he ended Prigozhin's lucrative contract with the country's defense ministry.⁵

So it seems that the differences between Wagner militia chief Yevgeny Prigozhin and Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shougu date back a decade to 2012. And it seems that the old grudges between these two former Kremlin loyalists (people close to Vladimir Putin) have caused a new event that could have plunged Russia into a full-blown crisis and a spoiling civil war, similar to the Bolshevik uprising of 1917.

According to the Washington Post, one of Prigozhin's **main reasons** for the rebellion was the order of the Russian Defense Ministry on June 10 to require all military groups volunteering in the Ukraine war to sign contracts with the ministry. It is also said that although the statement of the Russian Defense Ministry did not mention Wagner's private army, it appears that one of the



purposes of the statement was to place the Wagner group under the banner of the Russian Army.⁶

Whether Vladimir Putin was unaware of the outrage of these two military commanders? Why has he ignored the months-long dispute statements of these two great military commanders? And according to Western media reports, the US intelligence team predicted the Wagner group's insurgency and why the armed insurgency of the Wagner group was not foreseen by Russian intelligence and no decision was made to neutralize it. These are questions that hopefully will be answered in the future.

WHY DID THE WAGNER REBELLION END SO EASILY?

Although the Wagner group's action on media networks was deemed a military coup, the leadership of the Wagner group has denied that it was a military coup and has considered the reason for their revolt to be justice to prevent the bloodshed of the country's soldiers and punish the Minister of Defense and the army commander. However, the act was described as treason by the Kremlin, which led several cities to turn to a military status. On the other hand, according to the history of the coup all over the world, it is necessary that any coup attempt by its perpetrators should be in favor of one of the military branches (the Ministry of Defense, the Army's Command, and the Intelligence). But this military revolt by Wagner's group not only did not include any of these military factions, but also cited the reason for its rebellion to punish senior military personnel, especially (the Minister of Defense and Chief of Staff of the Army). On the other hand, it was hoped that in the alignment of the Wagner group and the seizure of some military sites and cities by this group, Vladimir Putin's opponents supported this uprising, but after 24 hours of military action of the group, no military or civilian faction officially declared support. Although Vladimir Putin addressed the Russian people in his statement, describing the Wagner group's actions as national treason, and the Russian people were expected to retaliate against the Wagner insurgency like in 2016 when a military coup against Erdogan's government took place.⁷

On the other hand, not only did the neighboring countries and the region not react positively to such a move, but some countries such as Chechin led by Ramzan Kadyrov expressed support for the Russian system led by Vladimir Putin, and according to some media outlets had pushed their forces to war against the Wagner group. In addition, recent reports indicate that Western countries have called on Ukraine to prevent the advance to Russian territory. This means that Western countries did not want to accuse themselves of being involved before the outcome of the rebellion. And most recently, with the mediation of Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko and an agreement with the head of the Wagner Group, to prevent civil war and bloodshed in Russia, the Wagner group's military insurgency ended with possible consequences as we will discuss in the following titles:

- Removal of the criminal case of Yevgeny Prigozhin imposed on him after the military uprising by President Putin and the security guarantee of his visit to Belarus.
- Wagner's forces returned to their military headquarters.



- Guarantees of security and non-prosecution to those members of the Wagner Group who participated in the event.

Therefore, given the above points, the mediation of Belarus with these guarantee preconditions was a good opportunity for Yevgeny Prigozhin to reconsider his decision to stand up against one of the world's five largest armies.

AFTERMATH OF WAGNER'S MILITARY REBELLION

However, from what was suspected of the first stages of the rebellion with the slogans of the leader of the Wagner Group together with Yevgeny Prigozhin's agreement with Belarus to prevent bloodshed, the revolt can be downplayed by possible internal and regional consequences, but it is impossible to ignore the possible threats to the system, concerns about President Putin, or the impact on the morale of the Russian forces and the outcome of this aggressive war. So we will examine the consequences of the Wagner rebellion here on two levels:

RUSSIA'S INTERNAL CONSEQUENCES

- Considering that Wagner's forces captured Rostov without any impediments and traveled hundreds of kilometers without any obstacles and reached the Russian capital Moscow. The question arises: Were there no loyal military commanders in the military bases and the direction of Wagner's forces to stand up to this military uprising? Therefore, it is likely that there are other military commanders in the Russian army who are unhappy with the regime's war policy or the Russian military command in the war with Ukraine. This itself could make possible subsequent rebellions in Russia, or it could be a prelude to other military uprisings in Russia.
- Since President Putin's government failed to foresee the Wagner group's military insurgency and intelligence forces could not unveil it before doing so, this could indicate the possible weakness of President Putin and his governance in the face of the nation and the system.
- Will the Wagner group's military revolt and the scope of Yevgeny Prigozhin's differences be so far? And there will be no more insurgency activity from this military leader and the forces of the Wagner Group, the majority of which are trained veterans? Perhaps these questions are topics of concern to President Putin.
- On the other hand, the reception of Yevgeny Prigozhin and his troops in Rostov and the escorting of this military leader indicates that Russian citizens are tired of the war and welcome any factor that can reduce the bloodshed in the Russian war with Ukraine. And this could indicate disbelief or separation of nation and state in Russia.

CONSEQUENCES RELATED TO THE BATTLEFIELD AND ITS FUTURE WITH UKRAINE

However, the Russian rulers of the Wagner Group have stated that the rebellion will not affect the country's war with Ukraine, and despite serious follow-ups by the Western media, the rebellion has so far been able to bring significant changes on the battlefield to Ukraine, except for a few advances in the days of the rebellion. However, it is possible to see the possible consequences of this insurgency on Russia in the future of the war with Ukraine:



- Separation and withdrawal of 25,000 Special Forces of the Wagner Group, who had more brutal combat experience in various fields. It will undoubtedly affect the fighting morale of the warring parties and make Russia's defeat in the war with Ukraine even more likely.
- Wagner's rebellion in Russia implies a lack of proper management of the Russian war against Ukraine, and the current state of the country indicates Russia's military weakness in the war with Ukraine.
- Wagner group's military rebellion and the surrender of the battlefield to the enemy by this group means what Russia thought of its victory in the war with Ukraine has backfired, implying that it has clawed many soldiers to death? And Yevgeny Prigozhin's accusation of treason by military commanders in killing soldiers will have a terrible effect on the fighting morale of the Russian forces.
- More recently, given the citizens' lack of support for the ruling system in the face of the Wagner insurgency in Russia and international opposition outside Russia, it is certain that the country's war with Ukraine is inevitable.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of Russia's war with Ukraine, it seemed that Russia, with the dream of re-establishing the Soviet Union, could easily take over Ukraine, annex the geography of this country to its occupied territories and dominate it according to its wishes. But after about a year and a half of the war, it is seen that this devastating war has not achieved anything other than destruction, human casualties and the creation of a massive crisis in the region and its shadow over the world. And even considering the above, it has managed to create in some cases popular discontent and military conflicts on the battlefield by the Russians. On the other hand Russia's continued conflict with Ukraine during the Cold War with the United States and the European Union not only does not reflect Russia's strength but also by increasing the crisis associated with this war it makes regional countries suspicious of Russia and increases beliefs about Russia's occupying spirit.

It is therefore hoped that Russia will take advantage of at least the opportunities that would end its war with Ukraine by taking advantage of the means of dialogue for a permanent peace. The end

REFERENCES

1. BBC: Russia accuses militia commander Wagner of "armed rebellion", 23 June 2023, link: <https://www.bbc.com/persian/articles/cw819xez918o>
2. Al-Jazeera: Commander Faghner announces the control of the forces over the southern facilities of Russia and the forces are retreating from the march towards Moscow, June 24, 2023, link: <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2023/6/24/%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AC%D9%84-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%B9-%D8%B1%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%A9->



B1%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%82%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D9%86
%D8%B3%D8%AD%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AF

The Centre for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS) is an independent, non-profit, and non-governmental research organization established in July 2009 in Kabul. CSRS is committed to promoting policy-oriented research through conducting authentic and unbiased research concerning Afghanistan and the region.

Contact Us:

Email: info@csrskabul.com - csrskabul@gmail.com

Website: www.csrskabul.com - www.csrskabul.net

Phone & WhatsApp: +93780618000

