



What is the Significance of Prigozhin's Revolt for Russian Security Policy?

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On the night of 23-24 June, Yevgeny Prigozhin, the head of the Wagner Group private military company, which has been fighting in Ukraine and operating elsewhere, stood up to the Russian Ministry of Defence and began an armed march on Moscow. However, in the end he and his forces did not storm the capital, officially as a result of negotiations led by Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenka. Prigozhin's actions will worsen the morale of Russian soldiers and mercenaries fighting in Ukraine but will not change Russia's hostile actions towards NATO countries.

What were the causes of the revolt?

The march by Wagner Forces was the culmination of a long and growing crisis between Prigozhin on one side and the Minister of Defence Sergei Shoigu and the Chief of the General Staff General Valery Gerasimov, commanding the so-called special military operation in Ukraine, on the other. Prigozhin, whose [private military company](#) (PMC) mercenaries comprise the [Wagner Group](#) had a significant role in Russia's capture of Soledar and Bakhmut, pointed to mistakes by the higher command that he argued torpedoed the actions of the Wagner forces, including stopping the supply of ammunition and sending regular units that were poorly equipped and trained. These statements were tolerated by Vladimir Putin for a long time, which indicated that he treated them as a form of criticism of the Russian army's lack of success and form of pressure on the Ministry of Defence. However, for the Ministry of Defence, Prigozhin became an increasingly substantial problem, and on 10 June, Shoigu announced that all "volunteers", including PCM troops, must sign contracts with the army by 1 July. The aim was to deprive the Wagner mercenaries of independence of action on the Ukrainian front. This provoked opposition from Prigozhin, who, under the pretext of an attack by Russian artillery on the Wagner camp, announced an armed "march of justice". The Wagner forces first entered Rostov-on-Don

where they seized the headquarters of the Ukraine operation and then, with Prigozhin's demands, such as a personal meeting with Minister Shoigu, not met, they set off towards Moscow.

What consequences could Prigozhin's rebellion have for the situation on the Ukrainian front?

Despite his defiant declarations, Prigozhin did not achieve his goals of forcing reforms in the armed forces that were supposed to improve the situation of Russian soldiers at the front. This will have a negative impact on the morale of the mercenaries and regular troops fighting for Russia in Ukraine. The failure to consider some of Prigozhin's demands will be confirmation for them that the Russian authorities are not interested in improving the situation of soldiers fighting on the front. At the same time, the lack of decisive action to suppress the insurgency and the lack of severe punishment for the rebels may be perceived as a signal of the erosion of the state security structures, which will also affect Russia's military operations. Prigozhin's rebellion also proved that Russia has no reserves in the immediate rear of the front, which can be exploited by the Ukrainian armed forces to increase the effectiveness of operations in these areas. However, the rebellion will not affect the activity of the Ukrainian armed forces, which have

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been conducting counter-offensive operations mainly in the Donetsk oblast since the beginning of June.

What role did Lukashenka play in the negotiations?

Negotiations with Prigozhin were undertaken by Lukashenka, who, according to the official message, was conducting them in consultation with Putin. As a result, Prigozhin abandoned the march to Moscow and ordered the troops that were only about 200 km from the capital to return to their camps in Donbas. According to the agreement, Wagner Group mercenaries who were not involved in the coup attempt will be allowed to sign a contract with the Ministry of Defence and the others will not be prosecuted. However, it is not clear what the group's future will look like, whether it will be dissolved or reformed and handed over to someone from Putin's entourage. At the same time, the Russian authorities said they had discontinued the investigation against Prigozhin on the condition that he leaves for Belarus.

Lukashenka undertook mediation in part because of his long-term acquaintance with Prigozhin. In exchange for taking him and a positive outcome from the perspective of the Russian authorities, Belarus can now expect Russia to offer economic support (i.e., unifying the price of energy resources), for which Belarus has been striving for a long time, or to write off part of the Belarusian debt. If Prigozhin stays in Belarus, he may be used, for example, to help in the

further development of the Belarusian security company Guard Service, which operates similarly to the Russian PMC, and its owners are people from Lukashenka's inner circle.

What consequences could Prigozhin's rebellion have for Western countries and NATO?

In an extraordinary speech, Putin emphasised that the rebellion benefitted Russia's external enemies, while other politicians falsely pointed out that it could have been inspired by Western states. In the near future, this response from the Russian authorities, who will want to demonstrate to the public their strength vis-à-vis NATO countries, will intensify. This means that before the NATO Vilnius summit in July, an intensification of Russian hybrid activities, including cyberattacks against the critical infrastructure of Alliance countries, can be expected. More military provocations, especially on the border between Belarus and Lithuania, and Poland, cannot be ruled out. One should also expect an increase in the intensity of discussions conducted by Russian politicians and pro-government commentators about Russia's possible responses to NATO, including the use of nuclear weapons, which is rhetoric intended to strengthen the prestige and potential of Russian deterrence. Moreover, Russia will also try to intensify its actions against Ukraine, likely via further waves of missile and artillery attacks on Ukrainian cities.