



By: *Sergei Stepancev, TA Moscow*

# Why does the Kremlin have no response to armed resistance inside Russian territory?



Many on social media applauded US Secretary of State Antony Blinken for his recent statement in Helsinki that the Kremlin has often claimed to have the second strongest army in the world, and is now the second strongest in Ukraine.

One of the more popular comments in support of Blinken's unusually informal statement was that the Russian army will soon be the second strongest in Russia.

It is possible that the author of this comment was referring to Wagner, the Kremlin's private army under the command of Yevgeny Prigozhin, and perhaps also to armed forces that carry out operations in areas inside Russia near the Ukrainian border. The competition is strong.

Russia claimed that Ukrainian intelligence controls these battalions consisting of Ukrainian nationals and some recruited Russians. However, this is also part of the Kremlin's false narrative.

The vast majority of people in the battalions are ethnic Russians or, to be precise, Russki people, the dominant ethnic group in Russia.

The Russian people probably oppose Putin in peaceful protests in Russian cities in the past and might have participated in various opposition rallies, but at some point, concluded that Putin's regime would not fall peacefully.

## A long-standing belief that Putin will not go away peacefully

Putin's opponents believe he will not go away

peacefully in the elections. This has been an issue of discussion within the Russian protest movement for quite a while, at least from the day Boris Nemtsov was killed.

The idea of a peaceful transition of power in Russia disintegrated when Dmitry Medvedev's short and fake presidency (2008-2012) was succeeded by Putin.

Since Putin returned to the Kremlin in 2012, Russia's deviation started growing and intensifying much faster than it did before.

Russia started to adapt rapidly to the aggressive doctrine of the Russki world - the radical nationalism of the Russki people.

As a bureaucrat and a life-long apparatchik, Putin pays a great deal to his appearance of being legitimate. Putin's domestic enemies use his obsession with legitimacy against him.

What legitimacy? Putin cannot even provide security to the Russian people from drone attacks and rebels.

## Underground opposition and ethnic fighters

Due to the repression by the authorities at the very start of the aggression against Ukraine, a part of its opponents became passive, but the more passionate part went "underground".

Many considered opposition events counterproductive and dangerous because those rallies enabled the regime to detect and arrest those most passionate and threatening.

Many domestic, quiet, and passionate foes of

the regime started considering Ukraine an ally in their struggle against Putin's presidency.

Many of these organisations seem to be sponsored by various domestic opponents, and it was just a matter of time before all these groups decided to merge into several well-equipped militia units.

Various ethnic groups inside and outside Russia added an additional impulse to these armed groups.

Throughout history, the Russian empire has moved through other ethnic groups like a plague, killing everyone who opposed it, and acting as a fungus absorbing and converting those who agreed to submit to Russian imperial expansion.

Those wounds of subversion and submission on the bodies of other ethnic groups which the Russian Empire conquered constantly bled, and occasionally turned into a major rebellion. This was evident during the 2 Chechen wars and is evident in Ukraine.

That is why there is a belief that many representatives of different ethnic groups are part of these militia battalions fighting against Russia.

To the people of the Caucasus or Georgian people, Russia has been a lifelong aggressor that used force, corruption, or geopolitical intrigues to force other ethnic groups to submit in the course of its violent history.

Perhaps even people of Belarus are part of these anti-Russian battalions, because Russia is the only reason why Lukashenko's authoritarian regime was able to sustain itself after its electoral loss to Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya.

## Putin is the sponsor of all the dictatorships in the area

Putin and his regime have benefited from all regional despotic and deviant rulers, from Lukashenko to the Chechen leader, Ramzan Kadyrov.

Many Chechen people are fighting against Russian invaders in Ukraine and are among these Russian militia groups conducting sorties on Russian territory.

Chechen people have been under Russian suppression for centuries. They have been seeking a way to retaliate, even though Russia installed Ramzan Kadyrov to govern Chechnya and to suppress the Chechen people on behalf of Moscow with an iron fist.

Most representatives of the Georgian people strongly oppose Putin's Russia and the somewhat questionable stance on Russia by Bidzina Ivanishvily - the main sponsor of the Georgian ruling party.

His Georgian Dream ruling party adopted a neutral position on the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine, of which many people in Georgia disapprove.

However, openly siding with Ukraine and engaging in a direct fight against Russia would be a suicidal decision for a small country like Georgia.

What could Georgia do? It could allow capable and wealthy Georgian bankers and businessmen to dispatch volunteers to fight Putin's regime in Ukraine and inside Russia.

That seems to be happening right now. Georgia has opened up a private front against Russia, fighting Russia similar to the way

people from Chechnya are, both in Ukraine and Russia.

## Fighting coalition

Ukrainian resistance has given hope to all those ethnic groups and to Putin's domestic enemies to fight the regime from within.

This has been a very unpleasant fact for the Kremlin, which has no solution to the numerous military actions shaking Russia from the inside.

The Kremlin's narrative about mercenaries led and organised by the Ukrainian army and intelligence services is only the first reaction to a problem without an answer.

A fighting coalition consisting of internal opponents of the regime, and members of ethnic communities that have always been victims of majority Russian repression, constitutes an enemy that the Kremlin would never want.

The Kremlin will not admit that this exists because such armed resistance destroys the essence of the Russian military campaign being conducted outside the borders of the country, and a historical justification and national consensus around it.