Tomorrow's Affairs
Analysis of today
Assessment of tomorrow

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# Choose your fighter - who can take advantage of Prigozhin's rebellion?

Is Yevgeny Prigozhin a modern-day Yemelyan Pugachev? There are some obvious similarities in their rebellions.

For instance, both Prigozhin and Pugachev rallied their people during wartime, which caused unrest and hardship in the country.

And yet, Prigozhin and Pugachev are very different. Pugachev challenged Catherine the Great in the 18th century, seeking leadership in the country. Prigozhin did not say anything about Putin, nor has he declared any ambitions to challenge Putin‘s leadership.

When Putin did not answer Prigozhin's appeals, he started to criticise Putin by claiming that the president was wrong.

Prigozhin‘s conflict is originally with the Russian military leadership. Wagner's paramilitary leader has been systematically criticising the Russian military leaders. He kept calling them morons, and even worse.

It all resembled an interesting populist charade, which most Russian people enjoyed watching or hearing.

## The fight for the title of true military leader

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu has no suitable military background and has not even served in the army like most young Soviet men.

Shoigu was appointed to lead the army because Putin needed a loyal and likeable man, not electable in the fair Russian elections because of Shoigu‘s Tuva ethnic physical features, something which the Russian chauvinist majority would reject.

There should be no doubt that Putin himself, with a few close people, manages the actual HR of the ongoing war on Ukraine.

All Russian generals have gone through the casting process to see if they could pull a miracle on the front line. No one should doubt that all combat decisions have been coordinated with Putin.

Shoigu is a professional apparatchik. He is one of very few Bortsy listen ‘s people who transited comfortably to Putin‘s hierarchy.

Shoigu is not Nikolai Patrushev or Yury Kovalchuk, the people to whom Putin listens.

Shoigu is a ‘yes’man in the army, someone to whom Putin was willing to entrust the Russian army and not worry about the coup d'état attempt.

Shoigu was an effective head of the Ministry of Emergencies, but never a politician, which is very important to Putin. Putin does not want politicians around him. He wants people who follow his orders and get the job done.

## Prigozhin‘s motives

Yevgeny Prigozhin is a lifelong full-time criminal who survived 10 years in a Russian prison.

A Russian prison teaches people how to navigate dangerous and complicated interactions between inmates of different

hierarchies.

It takes a lot of effort for an inmate in a Russian prison to survive and rise in the hierarchy if he is not a public person. Prigozhin started from the bottom as a robber, pimp and racketeer.

Prigozhin knows a lot about Putin. They are both from the same Russian city, and were in the same criminal orbit.

Vladimir Putin's time in Saint Petersburg was a link between organised crime and intelligence. The current Russian leadership was formed as a mix of organised crime and the intelligence services.

In Prigozhin's categories, Sergei Shoigu is just a"punk". Prigozhin has many criminal methods to handle Shoigu if he wants to eliminate him.

At war, any crime can be committed in Russia with some monetary and human injection, and blamed on Ukraine and those Russian rebels fighting against Russia.

By raising rebellion, Prigozhin wanted publicity. He wanted to make the conflict public and, at the same time, demonstrate good will, if not loyalty, towards Putin, because Prigozhin appealed to Putin for assistance and intervention.

## Prigozhin speaks a language most people understand

Prigozhin tried to pressurise Putin to make a choice and to support him in his conflict with Shoigu.

But to consider the state of affairs in the country's leadership and the army, it is evident that Shoigu is a nominal figure in today's war and that by removing him, nothing would change.

The Kremlin has already tried everything to change the course of the war, including eco-terrorism.

Prigozhin understands better than most people what has been happening in Russia, and who has been controlling warfare against Ukraine.

Therefore, Prigozhin's appeals to Putin to remove Shoigu were nominal as well.

Prigozhin was trying to attract attention and to speak using the vocabulary and terminology which the majority of Russian people would share and understand.

## What has changed in Prigozhin's agenda?

Putin's response demonstrated that he wanted to remain national leader once proclaimed by the servile speaker of the Russian parliament, Vyacheslav Volodin, and that he will not tolerate anyone appealing to the Russian people at the expense of his image.

During Prigozhin's PR campaign, something might have changed in Prigozhin's agenda. He is now a part of a big game yet to be fully revealed.

We can see that the Kremlin is troubled by

Wagner‘s refusal to obey.

Prigozhin‘s 25.000, or even 50.000 fighters, could not significantly intimidate Putin and the Kremlin.

Considering the Kremlin's statements, Putin‘s and his backing singers’ statements, like Dmitry Medvedev and other Russian public figures, it appears they are all confused and troubled.

Prigozhin could be supported by some powerful domestic organisations.

The FSB alone has 300.000 people. The National Guard has about the same number of people, and the Interior Ministry has at least the same number, if not more.

The Kremlin‘s current and Prigozhin‘s indicate that the Kremlin doesn‘t know who else supports Prigozhin or could be using Prigozhin as a ramp against the Kremlin.

Prigozhin is not a kamikaze, which could mean that he has loyal forces, so far not revealed, that are supporting him.

Prigozhin is too outnumbered for his current bravery, while his criminal and prison background suggest that one should never pick a fight with someone more powerful.

## Has Prigozhin been manipulated?

No one should forget that a few days ago, Prigozhin released a video and refuted Russia’s original version of why Russia had to attack Ukraine.

Prigozhin said that Ukraine did not plan to attack Russia and that nothing worth starting a war happened in Donbas.

What if a dispute is happening in the Kremlin now on how to proceed with the war? Putin is the only one who has no way out of it. Everyone else could be saved and even prosper in post-war Russia.

What if Putin wanted to proceed with something that raised objections from the FSB, interior bosses, or both?

Then some powerful and capable forces inside Russia could side with Prigozhin and use him as a modern-day Pugachev to attract the average Russian.

Putin will never admit that the war was a mistake, or that he could stop it. He started the war to be equal to great Russian historical figures. He is now continuing this war to survive.

Someone in Russian intelligence or other similar organisations could be searching for ways to remove Putin, particularly if Putin is considering crossing some lines out of desperation.

In this light, Prigozhin’s performance is beneficial or could be orchestrated by those planning to remove Putin. Prigozhin cannot do it alone.