



By: *Tomorrow's Affairs Staff*

# The Wagner Group rebellion - the end of Putin's authority among remaining friends in the world

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The friends of Russia and Vladimir Putin, who said that the rebellion of Yevgeny Prigozhin and his Wagner paramilitary group was "an internal matter for Russia", gave a response that gratified the Russian leader in a difficult moment.

At the same time, they lied to him, inadvertently or intentionally. They knew well that Prigozhin's rebellion interests not only Russia but everyone who has a relationship with Russia.

They will adjust their policy and attitude towards Russia and Putin according to the dramatic 24 hours that shook Russia and everything that happens in the near future.

Two problems Vladimir Putin had with the Wagner Group rebellion put the most pressure on him.

First, to solve the crisis as soon as possible, and in addition, to solve it with their own resources, never through any internationalisation.

He succeeded to some extent, because he apparently ended the uncertainty rapidly after he publicly compared the crisis to the 1917 revolution, and the collapse of the state through a bloody civil war.

However, in the second imperative, he has failed. The mediator in solving the crisis was outside Moscow.

## Diplomacy under duress

Even though the mediator was the leader of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, the leader of a country that is de facto in union with Russia, his mediation publicly shamed the Russian

leader, showing that his power has limits.

This will remain one of the most bizarre diplomatic episodes in history, in which the head of a foreign state negotiated with the putschists from another state not to occupy their own capital.

Putin obviously did not have the strength to carry out such negotiations by himself, and he did not have the confidence to leave the negotiations on the "internal" crisis to the locals.

No matter how the crisis in Russia develops, its international implications are already enormous. There is every chance that the end has not been set, but that both sides have bought time and are starting to bargain.

The most significant consequences will be in Ukraine, where the year-and-a-half aggression is experiencing its greatest upheaval.

"Now, it is very important that no one in the world remains silent because of being afraid of this Russian chaos. All the actions of the leaders now can be historic", said President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky.

## Ukraine is the biggest winner

His message hits very precisely at the heart of the problem the Kremlin is now facing.

Putin's authority as the principal decision-maker in the war has been threatened, if not destroyed.

Russian operations in Ukraine will be hampered, military power drastically reduced, and the chain of command and subordination

irreversibly damaged.

If the deal between Lukashenko and Prigozhin meant asylum for the leader of the Wagner Group and thousands of his fighters in Belarus, the Russian occupation forces in Ukraine would be left without numerous and motivated agents.

On the other hand, the threat of another similar large-scale insubordination will inevitably force the Russian military to strengthen its engagement inside Russia, reducing its focus on operations in Ukraine.

President Zelensky's message is not addressed only to his Western partners but to those still hesitant towards the Kremlin, partly because of fear of reprisals and partly because of political and business calculations concerning the post-war period.

It is addressed to Putin's silent or vocal supporters around the world, and warns them that they can no longer find a partner in the Kremlin who can control the situation.

## China's silence - a prelude to change

No high-ranking Chinese official reacted to the dramatic events in Russia. The reason is caution and the desire to take a comprehensive look at the complicated situation and its rapid development.

But, at the same time, the weakening of Putin's position as the most significant consequence of Prigozhin's rebellion will undoubtedly change Beijing's attitude towards its partner.

If the meeting between Putin and Chinese

leader Xi Jinping in Moscow last March was a triumph of friendship between the two countries (in the eyes of Russia), then the military rebellion put at least a question mark on that friendship, if not an end.

The relations between China and Russia, as the axis of authoritarianism in the world, are based on the personal relations and mutual guarantees of the two autocratic leaders.

After the demonstration of Putin's immense internal weakness, China can no longer be sure whether it still has him as a partner who controls all agreed political, security and economic arrangements in Moscow.

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Many people worry that Putin's political standing isn't stable, and that political turmoil in Russia could affect China”, said Wang Yiwei from China's Renmin University.

## Who will answer Putin's call?

Putin can expect the same trust issues with all his previous partners, in whom he saw a way out of the unbearable economic blockade.

The telephone conversation with the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan can only give the confused Russian public the illusion that friends are still present, answering the phone.

Because immediately afterwards, the new head of Turkish diplomacy, Hakan Fidan, and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken talked on the phone about the crisis in Russia, which provides a more realistic position for Turkey.

It is clear to the leaders of Turkey, the leaders of India, and African and some Middle Eastern countries that they can no longer consider

Vladimir Putin an authority who has full control over events in his country, with the question of whether he can implement the agreements they made with him.

Western leaders have spent the storm in Russia in great public restraint, repeating that they are "monitoring the situation", but at the same time stressing that they will continue strongly to support Ukraine's defence against aggression.

However, moves by the Baltic States to close and strengthen security on their borders with Russia are a clear sign of an assessment that chaotic events have the potential to spill over into the local environment.

## Beware of crisis spill over

This kind of caution will continue to be at the top of the priorities of the West, particularly those countries in contact with Russia, which may be exposed to security risks since the situation in Russia is far from calm.

At the same time, the upheaval caused by the Wagner Group rebellion is a significant incentive for a more decisive continuation of support for Ukraine's fight against Russian aggression, because the vulnerability shown by Putin's power structure leaves no room for caution and hesitation.

The head of Ukrainian diplomacy, Dmytro Kuleba, called on the international community on Twitter to "abandon false neutrality" towards Russia and to send weapons to Kyiv to end the aggression.

"Those who said Russia was too strong to lose: look now", wrote the Ukrainian minister.