

The Real Casualties of Russia's 'Civil War': The Beltway Expert Class

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Numerous serious casualties were incurred during Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin's supposed "coup." The Grayzone offers an in-depth look at the massacre carried out by some of America's top Russia experts against their own credibility.

When Wagner Group leader Yevgeny Prigozhin launched a supposed revolt against Russian President Vladimir Putin on June 23, sending his forces on a march toward Moscow following a series of tirades against the country's defense establishment, Washington's expert class overflowed with an orgy of regime change fantasies.

For just over 12 hours, everyone from former US ambassador to Russia and noted Hitler apologist Michael McFaul to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to neocon pundit Anne Applebaum exploded with seemingly libidinal excitement about a supposed "civil war" that was certain to feature "Russians...killing Russians," along with "lots of casualties" and Putin "probably hiding somewhere."

It was as though the Soviet Union was collapsing all over again, and Prigozhin, a character named on the [FBI's most wanted list](#) whom the US government has [sanctioned](#) for leading what it described as a "transnational criminal organization," was suddenly a white knight storming into Moscow to liberate Russia from "the Putin regime" on the back of a tank. Move over, Juan Guaido.

Expecting a bloodbath and seismic political upheaval, corporate networks like CNN had budgeted wall-to-wall coverage of the coup that wasn't, filling cable news green rooms with rent-a-generals, K Street think tankers, and war-hungry former diplomatic corps hacks.

On the afternoon of June 24, however, news broke across the US that Prigozhin had struck a deal with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko to end his protest and go into exile. Thus ended a largely bloodless affair that ultimately saw fewer documented deaths than the

January 6 Capitol Riot.

Though the supposed revolt in Russia burned out faster than a Leopard tank on the way to Zaporizhzhia, we now know that a number of serious casualties were incurred inside the DC Beltway. The Grayzone obtained an exclusive look at the massacre some of America's top Russia experts carried out against their own credibility.

McFaul McFails, again

Ever since he was unceremoniously ejected from Moscow for apparently [attempting to organize a color revolution](#) in 2012, Ambassador Michael McFaul has waged a personal jihad against the country's government. His hatred of the Russian leadership grew so impassioned that he once [declared that Putin was morally inferior to Adolf Hitler](#), embracing a fringe view associated with Holocaust deniers that asserts the Nazi dictator "didn't kill German-speaking people."

When the events of June 23 kicked off, McFaul could hardly contain himself. The disgraced diplomat immediately [took to Twitter to insist](#) without a shred of evidence to claim that Putin "has ordered his army and others to destroy Wagner & Prigozhin."

"So there's going to be a big fight," he promised.

As for the Russian President, McFaul confidently declared: "I am sure that he is no longer in Moscow." Just after noon on June 24, he seemed to believe the Russian president's demise was imminent. "Rats are jumping" from Putin's ship, he [effused](#), referring to oligarch Arkady Rotenberg taking a flight to Azerbaijan. "This is now a civil war," the self-styled expert [confidently declared](#).

The fight is now on. This is now a civil war. <https://t.co/FfQ0nak1Z>

— Michael McFaul (@McFaul) [June 24, 2023](#)

But around 1:30 PM on June 24, the unwelcome news had made its way to Washington: Putin and Prigozhin had reached an agreement. There was to be no civil war in Russia, after all.

McFaul was suddenly forced to reckon with the reality that his predictions of a coup were premature, and that virtually everything he had said hours before was completely wrong. "Can anyone remember a mutiny or coup attempt that lasted 24 hours and no one really fought or was killed?," pondered the retired diplomat, seemingly coming to grips with the obvious.

Then, like an alcoholic in denial after yet another blackout, McFaul whimpered, "I was wrong about this. Eager to learn why."

I was wrong about this. Eager to learn why. There is so much to this story that we don't know yet. <https://t.co/zzsysPTF1Z>

— Michael McFaul (@McFaul) [June 24, 2023](#)

Russia Slides Into Civil War

Is Putin facing his Czar Nicholas II moment?

By Anne Applebaum



The Wagner Group claimed control of Rostov early Saturday morning. (Reuters)

JUNE 24, 2023, 6:26 AM ET

Anne Applebaum: “Russia is sliding into what can only be described as a civil war”

This May, anti-Russian pseudo-scholar and former Iraq war cheerleader Anne Applebaum predicted a decisive Ukrainian counter-offensive that would storm through Russian defenses and not only “liberate” Crimea, but encourage regime change from Moscow to Venezuela.

In an article co-authored by [former Israeli prison guard](#) and Atlantic Magazine editor-in-chief Jeffrey Goldberg, and [illustrated by the Davos frontman, Bono](#), (with apparent help from an Etch-a-Sketch), Applebaum openly [fantasized](#) about a madman taking control of Russia’s nuclear arsenal. “Even the worst successor imaginable,” she wrote, “even the bloodiest general or most rabid propagandist, will immediately be preferable to Putin, because he will be weaker than Putin. He will quickly become the focus of an intense power struggle.”

By June 24, Applebaum seemed to believe her fever dreams were coming true. And it was then that she breathlessly announced, “Russia is sliding into what can only be described as a civil war. ”

“If you are surprised, maybe you shouldn’t be,” she lectured readers, just hours before the bloodless “coup” came to a conclusion.

“...what can only be described as a civil war,” according to Anne Applebaum, who also declared as a member of WaPo’s editorial board that Saddam Hussein’s possession of WMD was “irrefutable” <https://t.co/Vk2lr96MKw>

— Max Blumenthal (@MaxBlumenthal) [June 24, 2023](#)

Applebaum’s husband is the former foreign minister of Poland, Radek Sikorski, who [infamously tweeted](#) his gratitude to the US government for destroying the Nord Stream pipeline. While Sikorski deleted his tweet, Applebaum’s thoroughly discredited “civil war” article remains on the website of the Atlantic.

On June 25, Applebaum and McFaul were rewarded for their badly botched analysis with an appearance on MSNBC’s “Inside with Jen Psaki,” which is hosted by the Biden White House’s former press secretary.

Everything we said about Russia yesterday was an insane lie or completely wrong, now check us out on the White House ex-propaganda minister’s show today [#meritocracy](#) <https://t.co/uZQcTlkbUj>

— Max Blumenthal (@MaxBlumenthal) [June 25, 2023](#)

Volodymyr Zelensky: Putin is “very afraid”

“The man from the Kremlin is obviously very afraid and probably hiding somewhere, not showing himself,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky proclaimed on June 24. [According to fact checkers](#), Zelensky did not issue this bold statement from inside a bunker or in front of a green screen.



Putin 'very afraid', says Zelenskyy after armed mutiny in Russia

Volodymyr Zelenskyy says Vladimir Putin is "probably hiding himself" after the armed mutiny by the Wagner Group of mercenary fighters.

🕒 Saturday 24 June 2023 21:51, UK

Russia

Ukraine

Vladimir Putin

Volodymyr Zelenskyy



The US intelligence “community” claims “surprise”

On Sunday, CNN [reported](#) that US intelligence analysts were taken by surprise by “the swiftness of the deal that was struck on Saturday.”

What’s more, they believed that Prigozhin’s march toward Moscow “would encounter much more resistance” than it did.

“I do know that we assessed it was going to be a great deal more violent and bloody,” an unnamed US official reportedly told the outlet.

But DC’s disappointment with the lack of carnage on Moscow streets did not end there.

Kurt Volker declares “the end” for Putin

Kurt Volker is a former US special representative for Ukraine negotiations who also operated as a [de facto Raytheon lobbyist](#) while serving as the executive director of the John McCain Institute. Volker also [functioned](#) as a liaison for US and Ukrainian business interests while presiding over the founding of American University Kyiv.

During a June 24 CNN appearance, Volker declared that the brief moment of disorder in Russia marked “[the end](#) for Putin” and “the beginning of the end of Russia’s war in Ukraine.”

Christo Grozev: Bellingcat’s neocon-stradumus

Christo Grozev is the Russia director of the US and UK government-funded website Bellingcat. This April, Grozev [celebrated a terrorist attack](#) that saw a Russian war blogger assassinated and a cafe full of civilians blown up in St. Petersburg, Russia.

With chaos seemingly intensifying inside the Russian Federation again, Grozev suddenly transformed from a glorified OSINT blogger into a geopolitical soothsayer with a unique ability to divine the fate of the Kremlin.

“Prigozhin says he’s got 25k strong army and he’s going to take power and deal with the ‘traitors’ at the top of before returning to the front line,” the Bellingcat commentator [claimed](#) on Twitter. “Am old enough to remember how Russia ‘pundits’ said I was talking nonsense predicting a Prigozhin coup attempt this year.”

Having not been born literally yesterday, we at The Grayzone are thankfully old enough to remember when Prigozhin’s “coup attempt” failed to materialize and ended quickly with negotiations.

Our memory is so long, in fact, that we recall when the war prophet Grozev [stated](#) that Russia had expended 70 percent of its precision missile stocks back in April 2022. Since then, Russian missile strikes on Ukrainian targets have only increased.

Ian Bremmer, the Peter Hotez of international relations

As president of the Eurasia Group risk analysis firm, political scientist Ian Bremmer has leveraged his supposed expertise into a lucrative business.

Bremmer recently [weighed in](#) in defense of the absurdly [double-talking pediatrician](#) and pundit Peter Hotez, defending his decision not to debate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. on Covid-related issues on the grounds that Hotez was a credentialed expert, and RFK Jr. was not. “It would be like me debating elon [Musk] on electric vehicles. Or him debating me on international relations,” Bremmer argued, asserting his own superior credentials. “There’s no value added.”

During the events of June 23, Bremmer joined the rest of the Beltway expert class in [predicting](#) imminent doom for Putin. “wagner territorial gains in russia dramatically faster than in ukraine,” Bremmer wrote in a viral post seen by more than 1 million Twitter users. Moments later, he [joked](#) that “ukraine has run out of popcorn,” implying that Kiev was eagerly preparing for Russia’s collapse.

wagner territorial gains in russia dramatically faster than in ukraine.

— ian bremmer (@ianbremmer) [June 24, 2023](#)

Following the announcement of Wagner’s stand-down on June 24, an apparently

disappointed Bremmer [insisted](#) “there’s no environment where [Putin and Prigozhin] hug it out.”

Top Biden officials’ travel plans interrupted

Among the most overlooked victims of the brief march on Moscow were high-ranking US officials’ [weekend plans](#).

On Saturday, a spokesman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff announced that a planned visit to Jordan and Israel by Gen. Mark Milley, the top military officer in the US, had been canceled “due to the situation in Russia.”

Biden administration National Security Council director and possible human scarecrow Jake Sullivan was forced to cancel a trip as well. Sullivan had reportedly been slated to attend a conference on Ukraine in Denmark until Prigozhin decided to make a trip of his own toward Rostov-on-Don.

Stephen King, lost in fantasy

Horror author-turned-liberal Russiagate conspiracist Stephen King, who once [praised Ukrainian Nazi collaborator and Holocaust perpetrator Stepan Bandera](#) in a phone call with a prankster he believed to be Volodymyr Zelensky, was clearly titillated by the events of June 23. When Prigozhin’s forces briefly took over the city of Rostov-on-Don, King once again proved unable to contain his overactive imagination. “Putin sowed the wind. Now he must reap the whirlwind. Slava Ukraini!” he exclaimed.

Putin sowed the wind.
Now he must reap the whirlwind.
Slava Ukraini!

— Stephen King (@StephenKing) [June 24, 2023](#)

Noted online stalker Idrees Ahmad predicts “the death of Aaron Mate’s career”

Idrees Ahmad once existed on the margins of the UK’s antiwar movement, publishing a [book](#) attacking the Iraq war-era neocon cabal, [suggesting](#) Senators Barbara Boxer and Russ Feingold voted for Iran sanctions because they are Jewish, and openly [questioning](#) the West’s narrative of a genocide in Darfur.

After running into financial trouble and [escaping deportation](#) to his native Pakistan “against the odds” thanks to a Home Office decision that remains unexplained, Ahmad transformed into the very thing he once condemned.

Having re-emerged as a rabid supporter of the West’s dirty war on Syria, Ahmad busied himself by stalking The Grayzone, even [phoning its editor](#), Max Blumenthal, to threaten him against publishing a factual investigation of the Syrian White Helmets in 2016.

While Ahmad’s recent work at the [spook-infested Newlines think tank](#) has failed to generate much interest, even among his fellow regime change cheerleaders, we noticed his June 24

prophecy that Prigozhin’s “coup” would lead to the collapse of The Grayzone, the international committee of the Democratic Socialists of America, and “the death of Aaron Mate’s career.”

In the difficult days that lie ahead, spare a thought for the comrades at Grayzone News, [@jacobin](#), [@dsa_intl_comm](#), and [@BTnewsroom](#). And you can direct your condolences for the death of Aaron Mate’s career to [@DrGaborMate](#).

— Idrees Ahmad (@im_PULSE) [June 23, 2023](#)

At the time of publication, we are still triggering Ahmad’s rage-a-holic personality while his own media career has gone about as far as Prigozhin’s march toward Moscow.

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The editor-in-chief of The Grayzone, Max Blumenthal is an award-winning journalist and the author of several books, including best-selling [Republican Gomorrah](#), [Goliath](#), [The Fifty One Day War](#), and [The Management of Savagery](#). He has produced print articles for an array of publications, many video reports, and several documentaries, including [Killing Gaza](#). Blumenthal founded The Grayzone in 2015 to shine a journalistic light on America’s state of perpetual war and its dangerous domestic repercussions.

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