

The “Russian Coup” that Wasn’t

By [Dr. Paul Craig Roberts](#)

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Yesterday I posted a video discussion that Larry Sparano and I had about the alleged “Russian coup.” See [this](#).

Looking back at our discussion, I am satisfied that we did a good job given the unresolved situation about which there was not much information. I am addressing the “coup” again because there is a great deal to be learned from it that is not being learned.

It is discouraging to see that the Russian media is as capable of creating false narratives and setting them in stone as Western prestitutes. The Russian media has set in stone the narrative that Prigozhin, the commander of the Wagner Group which has done most of the fighting in the liberation of Donbass, launched an “armed rebellion” against Putin despite the fact that there is no evidence of an armed rebellion.

The so-called “coup” has many curious aspects and raises many neglected questions.

I acknowledge that Prigozhin had become increasingly displeased with the Russian military command. The Kremlin had not addressed the feud between Prigozhin and the Russian military brass. The Kremlin’s failure to resolve the differences is the most likely cause of events mischaracterized as a coup. For Prigozhin, the final straw was his belief that an encampment of his troops was hit by a missile from the rear, that is, from Russia, not from Ukraine. Perhaps Prigozhin was given false information for the purpose of worsening the relations between the main fighting force and the Russian high command during a Ukrainian “counter offensive.” Perhaps a missile strike occurred, but has a different explanation.

The situation exploded when the Russian Ministry of Defense denied Prigozhin’s accusation when the proper response would have been to send an investigatory team to establish the fact and if a missile strike did occur to determine the source.

In addition to tensions between the Wagner Group and the Russian military bureaucracy

stemming from, for example, inadequate ammunition supplies at critical stages of the fighting, the Russian military bureaucracy was determined to exercise command over the Wagner Group, a demand or desire that Prigozhin would not accept. Getting rid of Prigozhin became a priority for the Russian military bureaucracy.

As I illustrated in the discussion with Sparano, conspiracies against military commanders during war are commonplace, so an attack on Wagner forces designed to set Prigozhin off is a possible scenario. This possibility gains credibility from the immediate denial instead of investigation and from the instant official narrative of an “armed rebellion.” As there was no investigation, all that Putin knows is what the generals tell him, and that will be their side of the story.

What the “armed rebellion” amounted to was Prigozhin starting out to Moscow with a convoy of his troops to, in Prigozhin’s words, “confront corrupt generals.” Prigozhin announced in advance that he intended no coup.

But let’s assume he intended a coup and let’s accept the exaggerated claim by pressites of a convoy of 25,000 troops traveling with him on the roads to Moscow. How is a convoy of troops going to get to Moscow without being decimated by air attacks, and, should they arrive, how are 25,000 troops going to overcome the Russian Army, occupy Moscow, and establish a government?

The question that immediately jumped to my mind is: Why did Putin rush to embarrass Russia by announcing an “armed rebellion” unless he had no army with which to defend Moscow?

The question of the whereabouts of the Russian Army has been growing on my mind. Why, as I have repeatedly asked, has Putin, instead of using sufficient force to end the conflict, permitted it to ever-widen with increasingly provocative participation on the part of Washington and NATO? This makes no sense. It serves no Russian purpose. Why is Putin fighting a dangerous conflict not merely with Ukraine but with the West with a small private military group and Donbass militias? Where is the Russian Army? Is there one?

Or has Putin been warned by his central bank and the neoliberal Russian economists not to risk the ruble and the budget deficit by spending money on the military? Surely Russia has its own David Stockman. Has Putin been convinced that the economic threat is greater than the military threat? Has Putin decided that with his vast superiority of nuclear forces over ours he doesn’t need an army? Why do Russian leaders keep warning of nuclear war if they have sufficient conventional forces?

Perhaps Putin doesn’t use sufficient conventional force to end the conflict in Ukraine because he doesn’t have the troops.

If this is the case, then the prospect for nuclear war is more likely than I have thought, and I already thought such a possibility was extremely high. If Western provocations finally cross a line that Putin cannot ignore and his only possible response is nuclear, Armageddon is upon us.

The unfortunate effect of the Russian government and media joining those of the West in proclaiming an “armed rebellion” and setting the narrative in stone is that it serves the West’s purpose of discrediting Putin and serves the neoconservatives’ propaganda that “we

can win” if we fully commit to the task. Clearly, no one in the Kremlin or Russian media was thinking when they joined the propaganda against themselves by endorsing the portrait of dissent in the Russian military that threatens the regime. The picture created of internal dissent plays into the hands of the West.

The danger is that now with more confidence, the West pushes harder against Russia. This is the unfortunate result of the failure of the Russian military brass to placate Prigozhin.

In the West the misunderstanding of last Saturday’s event is total. Even normal level-headed analysts, such as Scott Ritter and Moon-of-Alabama, have contributed to the gross misunderstanding of the event. Ritter described Prigozhin as being in “Victoria Nuland’s pocket” and working with Ukrainian intelligence cells inside Russia. Moon-of-Alabama blames the event on Putin’s use of an independent military force in Ukraine.

Perhaps the most absurd of all is the self-serving claim by unidentified “sources” of “US intelligence agencies” that they had advanced knowledge of Prigozhin’s “coup.” How could they unless they were responsible for the missile strike, knowing that it would light Prigozhin’s fuse? (Even the Russian media reported this absurd claim: see [this](#).)

I will end this essay, which I hope provokes thought and awareness of how much more dangerous the situation is now, with a final observation. If there was actually a coup attempt and Prigozhin and his Wagner Group troops constituted a danger to the Russian state as Russian leaders declared, why was the situation resolved by permitting Prigozhin refuge in Belarus and the Wagner troops to be enrolled in the Russian Army? **Does this indicate that the Kremlin knows there was no coup? Or does it mean that the Kremlin lacked an army with which to confront the coup and had to come to terms with Prigozhin?**

Is this the appropriate conclusion of a dangerous threat to Russian national existence?:

“Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Saturday evening that the criminal case against Prigozhin had been dropped and that he would leave for Belarus under guarantees given by Putin. The spokesman added that the members of the Wagner PMC involved in Saturday’s events would not be prosecuted given their distinguished service during Russia’s special military operation in Ukraine.” See [this](#).

Update: June 26, 2023

Amazing how quickly a false narrative was set in stone.

Col. Douglas Macgregor Agrees with me that there was NO coup.

He also agrees that the forever-war is leading to nuclear war.

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