

Ukraine War: It Worked Perfectly for Russia

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Western Illusions

Ukraine is losing the war. Everything is breaking down for Kiev and NATO. Moscow needed a motivation for Kiev and NATO to go on fighting their losing war until their own self-destruction. And what better fake motivation to give NATO than playing to their delusions, vanity, and hubris that perhaps Moscow would break down all by itself.

It has all worked perfectly for Russia.

The West now believes that Moscow could break down any time. Just a little wind, then perhaps.

While in reality, both Russia and the Kremlin are stronger than ever.

Putin in Control

Russia's president Putin managed the situation quickly and with minimum or no bloodshed. The [former] fighters of Wagner will continue to fight for Russia, now under contract directly with the Russian Ministry of Defense. On the occasion, Putin received allegiance of loyalty personally and directly from each of all top generals and governors in Russia. Russia continues to win in Ukraine, the Russian economy is doing better than probably ever – and Russian diplomacy is successful.

A Successful Military

The Russian military has performed very well, most of the time even excellently. It has successfully adapted, and the war is very different from when it started 24 February 2022. Training, equipment, and doctrine have all been successfully developed – contrary to NATO. Defense Minister Shoigu and Chief of General Staff Gerasimov both deserve honor for this. Shoigu as the manager who has modernized and developed the organization and

established the industrial foundation. Gerasimov as the military leader. Look how Ukraine with all its NATO weapons, NATO training, NATO officers, and NATO intelligence is being smashed on their “counteroffensive” which started on 5 June 2023. That is operational excellence achieved by the Russian military, and without any participation from Wagner whatsoever.

A Special Unit in Transition

Wagner has played one central role as special forces and stormtroopers against cities and some of the deadliest fortifications like Soledar. These operations require special skills, and even under the best of circumstances incur high losses. Attacks normally require numerical superiority like 3-1 or more. Wagner captured Artemovsk (Bakhmut) and other deadly targets with numerical inferiority.

Whether Wagner has received the optimal amount of ammunition, equipment, and support for this, is hard to say. On the other hand, it is normal that commanders always complain that they “don’t get enough” – even US generals about to go against Iraq complained to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, that they needed “more”. Rumsfeld famously rebuffed his complaining generals by saying “maybe you don’t have all you ‘need’, but you’ve got 100% of what you’ve got !!” In the end, Rumsfeld was more than right on that point, as Iraq was completely rolled over (the US problems started later).

Russia has spared the lives of its soldiers and has taken exceptionally few losses. But a large part of the losses taken by Russia have been borne by Wagner. It is an organization led by extremely competent military people with many Spetsnaz (special forces). And to bear many of the losses and swell the ranks quickly, Wagner added a lot of convicts, who have performed well, probably much better than many expected. Wagner has functioned similarly to the French Foreign Legion, which also has recruited convicts, and which is also a unit designed to do special operations, where losses will not create public “discomfort”.

Time for Change

Prigozhin has no military background or education. Some commentators say Prigozhin does not lead Wagner’s military operations, though we have seen that Prigozhin has been playing a leading and probably motivating role with all the men. But a lot of the words and thoughts do not point to great consistency, temper, or analytics. Prigozhin built Wagner but time is right for Wagner to have a very different type of leader to carry it on. Entrepreneurs are not always good at managing big organizations once their creation grows and becomes much more complex. Wagner’s operations in Ukraine are totally different from Wagner’s role overseas in places like Africa. Both roles need to be developed independently. It is time to redefine Wagner.

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