

A Military Coup Against Putin Although Unlikely Cannot Now be Excluded, Felgengauer Says

Opinion

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Felgengauer…mentions that a coup is now possible is an indication that tensions within the top elite in Moscow may be far more serious than most observers have allowed.

By Paul Goble for “Window on Eurasia”; April 28 – Tensions within the Russian political elite are now higher than at any point in years, Pavel Felgengauer [pictured] says; and as a result, he “does not exclude even a military coup in Russia. This perhaps is an extremely low probability scenario, but one must not exclude it completely.” Felgengauer, one of Russia’s most prominent independent military analysts, makes this unprecedented and disturbing declaration in a comment for Kyiv’s Apostrophe portal (apostrophe.ua/article/world/ex-ussr/2018-04-27/delo-doshlo-do-kraynosti-v-rossii-vozmogjen-voennyiy-perevorot/18152). He says that rumors are now flying in Moscow that the Russian military will soon make a large strike into the Donbas in order to improve its strategic position there but argues that there is little reason to believe these rumors: any such strike wouldn’t improve Moscow’s position much, and the situation in the Russian capital makes such a move highly improbable. According to Felgengauer, “actions by Russia in the first instance are determined by the domestic political struggle there,” where political tensions have “reached the maximum” in recent years, exceeding even those of 2012, largely because of disagreements over foreign policy moves in Syria and Ukraine and in the worsening of relations with the West. “All this,” he says, “can lead and is leading to the exacerbation of tensions along the entire perimeter of foreign policy.” Two weeks from now, Russia will have a new government and “obviously a completely new policy is possible.” Aleksey Kudrin is talking as if he will either lead or be the most influential player in the new regime. “Naturally, for the Russian ‘war party’ this is such a serious threat” that the army may expand the war in Ukraine “in order to avoid it.” Indeed, Felgengauer says, in this situation, “I do not exclude even a military coup in Russia.” Many in the defense sector support the current hard line against the West, and it is conceivable that they would take radical steps in order to prevent a new thaw, especially since any thaw might prove popular and that could weaken their positions. Russia has no tradition of military coups, but it does have a longstanding tradition in which the views of the military are important in the formation of policy. That Felgengauer even mentions that a coup is now possible is an indication that tensions within the top elite in Moscow may be far more serious than most observers have allowed

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The commentary above is from Paul Goble’s “Window on Eurasia” series and appears here with the author’s permission. Contact Goble at: paul.goble@gmail.com

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