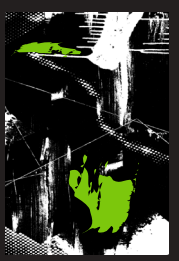
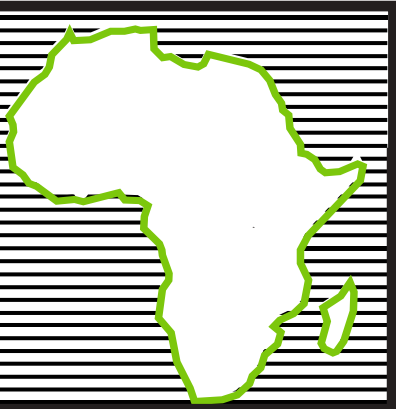




FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

EURASIA PROGRAM

The Wagner Group's Expanding Global Footprint



Colin P. Clarke

Christopher Faulkner

Raphael Parens

Kendal Wolf

All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

The views expressed in this report are those of the author alone and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Foreign Policy Research Institute, a non-partisan organization that seeks to publish well-argued, policy-oriented articles on American foreign policy and national security priorities.

© 2023 by the Foreign Policy Research Institute

April 2023



FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

EURASIA PROGRAM

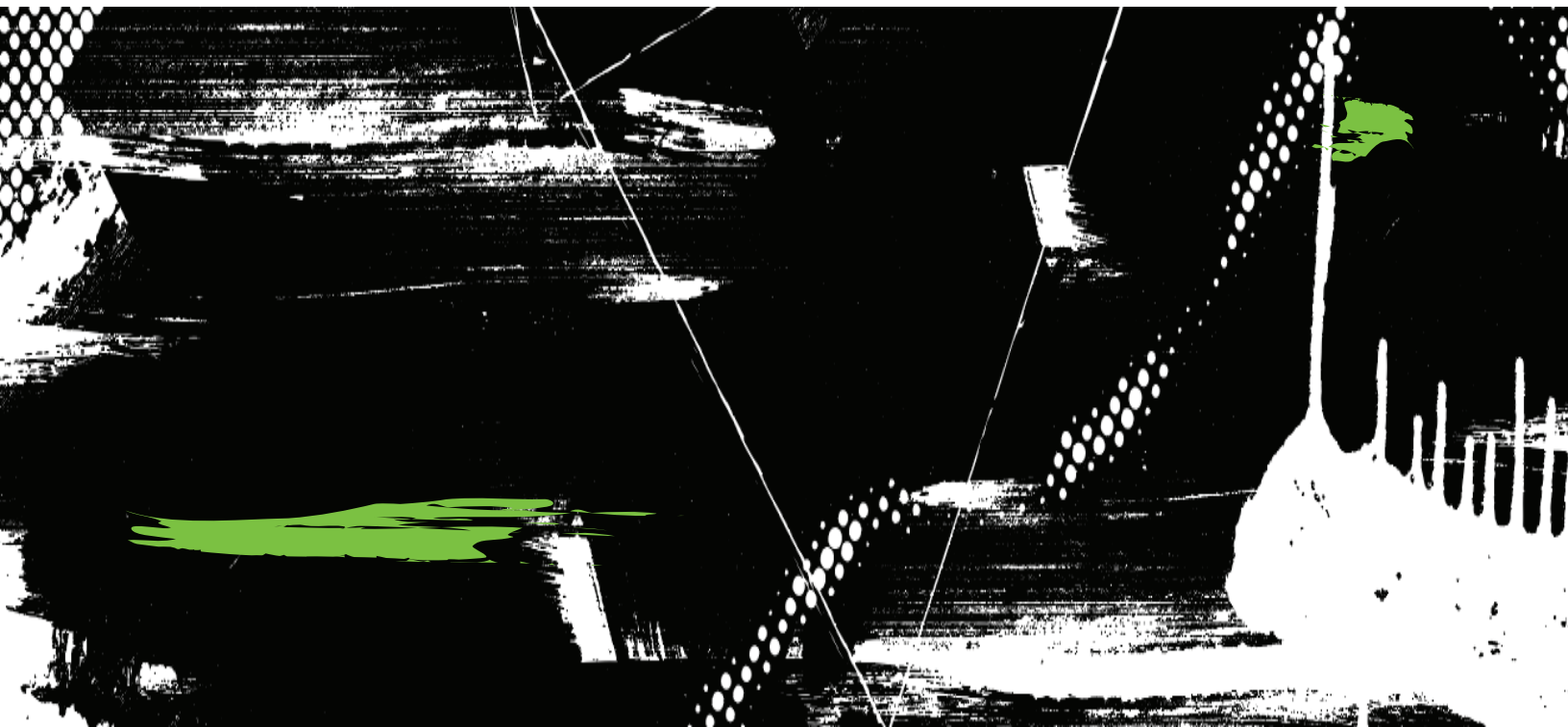
The Wagner Group's Expanding Global Footprint

Colin P. Clarke

Christopher Faulkner

Raphael Parens

Kendal Wolf





ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Colin P. Clarke is a Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute and an assistant teaching professor in the Institute for Politics and Strategy (IPS) at Carnegie Mellon University, where he also has responsibilities with the Institute for Strategic Analysis (ISA) and serves on the executive board for the Masters of Information Technology Strategy (MITS) program.

Christopher Faulkner is an assistant professor of national security affairs in the College of Distance Education at the U.S. Naval War College. He earned his Ph.D. in security studies from the University of Central Florida and was a Minerva-Jennings Randolph Peace and Security Scholar with the United States Institute of Peace (USIP). His research focuses on militant recruitment, private military companies, and civil-military relations.

Raphael Parens is an international security researcher focused on Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. He specializes in small armed groups and NATO modernization processes. He received his M.A. in international security studies at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and he is currently based in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo.

Kendal Wolf is a Senior Program Officer at the Strategic Capacity Group, leading monitoring and evaluation of SCG's Academies of Excellence Program in Mali.



TABLE OF CONTENTS



2 Introduction

4 Losses in Europe, Gains in Africa

8 Mercenary Evolution

12 Limited Responses

16 Wagner Roadmap:
A Multisector Approach to Fight the Group






INTRODUCTION

The Wagner Group is both the tip of the Russian spear in Ukraine and the state's backroom dealer in Africa. A mercenary outfit originally designed as an expeditionary foreign policy tool offering Russia the guise of plausible deniability, Wagner ascended as a leading force in the Kremlin's campaign to wage war in Ukraine as evidenced by its scorched earth assault in Bakhmut. Meanwhile, its leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, cuts deals with African junta leaders promising counterterror assistance for access to resources while he feuds with the Russian military brass over Ukraine. But Wagner is not the first Russian private military company (PMC), and it will not be the last. Throughout the tenure of Russian President Vladimir Putin, the use of semi-state security forces like PMCs has accelerated.

Russia's current use of PMCs reads like a classic case of "coup¹-proofing" and simultaneously enables Moscow to use proxy forces as part of its broader irregular warfare strategy to enhance Russia's reach abroad and achieve its geopolitical goals. Wagner trades its services—counterterror assistance and personal protection—for lucrative resource extraction deals², undermining Western political-military relationships³ with African states at the same time.

The West must consider the context in which Wagner has become a viable policy choice for governments.



Concurrently, the West must consider the context in which Wagner has become a viable policy choice for governments. Insecurity wrought by the growth of Islamist insurgencies in the Sahel region of Africa has crippled already fragile security forces. Coupled with a surge in civil-military crises over the past several years, Europe's patchwork⁴ counterterrorism efforts and the United States' "behind the wire"⁵ approach are insufficient in the eyes of the military regimes that seized power in Mali and Burkina Faso. Though such Western efforts were well-intentioned, they led to unintended consequences, which allowed a group like Wagner to fill a growing security gap. Addressing sustained insecurity in the Sahel will take more than lip service. With France having exhausted its relations with Bamako and Ouagadougou, Washington must think creatively about how best to counter terrorist threats that are gaining traction in the wake of Wagner's arrival.



A man wearing a camouflage uniform walks out of PMC Wagner Centre, which is a project implemented by the businessman and founder of the Wagner private military group Yevgeny Prigozhin, during the official opening of the office block in Saint Petersburg, Russia, November 4, 2022. REUTERS/Igor Russak

LOSSES IN EUROPE, GAINS IN AFRICA

Recently, much has been written about the Wagner Group. These articles may lead to some confusion because the Wagner Group is constantly evolving, eschewing classifications, evading sanctions, and frustrating Western generals and politicians alike. The group's battlefield behavior in Ukraine and recruitment tactics have changed, and rumblings of new frontiers in Burkina Faso, Chad, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) could provide alternate paths for economic and political gain. Indeed, if the Russian General Staff shuts Wagner Group out of the Ukraine conflict, it could return to a place of relative success when it resumes missions in Africa.

In the past few months, Wagner has assumed center stage with its involvement in the months-long battle around Bakhmut. The battle, a 21st-century⁶ Verdun, has seen Wagner locked in a war of attrition with Ukrainian armed forces for a city with little strategic value⁷. Like Verdun, Bakhmut has become a symbol, as both sides see victory there as key to the war effort. The Wagner Group has mimicked World War I-style tactics, using human waves⁸ to storm positions while taking massive casualties among the group's newly recruited prisoner cadres⁹. Although estimates vary, UK sources put Wagner's prisoner recruit casualties at approximately 50 percent¹⁰, while US sources gauge that Wagner suffered north of 30,000 casualties¹¹.

Many wonder what might be next for these prisoners¹². Some may turn to organized crime after the war. Others may continue with Wagner in other operations. Either way, Wagner's new recruits could have cascading effects¹³ on African instability. Indeed, the next shoe to fall may be Burkina Faso, host to persistent jihadist threats, spillover violence, and instability from Mali. Burkina Faso's government, like Mali's junta, came to power via a coup and has flirted with Wagner cooperation in recent months. In January, Ouagadougou demanded¹⁴ France end its counterinsurgency operations there, saying it would take on the mission of defending itself. France¹⁵ subsequently honored that request. Given the country's inability to defeat jihadist insurgents, a new security partner appears¹⁶ essential.

Like Verdun, Bakhmut has become a symbol, as both sides see victory there as key to the war effort.

Outlines of a Wagner campaign are already appearing among Burkinabe: a Russian-backed disinformation¹⁷ campaign aimed against the West, gold¹⁸ concessions suspiciously requisitioned by the government, and mining rights awarded to Russian-owned Nordgold.¹⁹ Ghana's



Funeral of Wagner group fighter Dmitry Menshikov, who died during a special military operation in Ukraine, at the military section of the Beloostrovskoe cemetery. 24.12.2022 Russia, St. Petersburg. Photo credit: Alexander Koriakov/Kommersant/Sipa USA(Sipa via AP Images)

President Nana Akufo-Addo²⁰ went even further, stating at the US-Africa Leaders Summit that Wagner is already deployed in Burkina Faso. If Ouagadougou were to invite Wagner in as a security partner, it could further divide the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), pitting the coup regimes in Ouagadougou, Bamako, and Conakry against Accra, Abidjan, and others. Such alliances may already be coalescing, as Burkina's prime minister openly discussed the possibility of a union²¹ with Mali during his recent visit to the country.

Meanwhile, in the Central Africa Republic (CAR), Wagner continues to expand, diversifying and attempting to sanctions-

proof its revenue streams. The group has heavily invested in diamond and gold mining, expanding the Ndassima²² gold mine from an artisanal scale to an eight-zone industrial project capable of producing roughly \$1 billion in gold. Wagner broadened its portfolio in CAR beyond mining precious metals, moving into the forestry²³, alcohol²⁴, and possibly coffee²⁵ industries. Meanwhile, the organization exports raw materials through the Cameroonian port of Douala²⁶. The group aims to ensure its place in CAR's economic and political future as it continues fighting rebel forces alongside the government, taking significant casualties²⁷, and killing civilians²⁸ along the way.

Wagner appears ready to expand its

footprint further across Central and West Africa. Recent US intelligence reports²⁹ suggest the Wagner Group, which previously embedded with the rebel group *Front pour l'Alternance et la Concorde au Tchad* (FACT) in Libya before they killed former Chadian President Idriss Déby, may be trying to destabilize Chad's current government. Wagner coordinated a plot to assassinate Mahamat Idriss Déby, the former president's son and the current head of Chad's junta, to work with FACT to take power thereafter. Other reports suggest Wagner is supporting a potential rebellion in northern Chad. Meanwhile, in the DRC, reports abound about Eastern European mercenaries³⁰ based in Goma and employed by the government to fight M23 insurgents. Open-source³¹ reporting suggests these are other mercenaries, not Wagner Group. Yet, a March 1 pro-Russia and anti-France protest in Kinshasa³², ahead of French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to DRC, troublingly mirrors similar, presumably Russian-sponsored activities in Mali³³, Burkina Faso³⁴, and the Central African Republic³⁵. These situations demand careful monitoring given DRC's status as a tinderbox³⁶ for the Great Lakes region and Chad's stability as a key factor in West Africa.

In Ukraine, Wagner's fortunes seem to have taken a turn for the worse, although this may benefit the group in the long run. Unsurprisingly, Wagner's heavy losses discouraged further recruitment among prisoners, leading Wagner to completely halt³⁷ prisoner recruitment. Meanwhile, Prigozhin, a loud critic of the Russian military's strategy in Ukraine, has accused

top military officials of treason³⁸ for their failure to supply Wagner with ammunition and air transport. Taken together, these developments suggest that Prigozhin and Wagner are losing³⁹ their campaign to compete directly with the Russian defense establishment. Yet, paradoxically, this 'demotion' in Ukraine may save the Wagner Group. Given the high attrition⁴⁰ rates near Bakhmut, it is unclear how long the group would endure if it maintains its current front-line assault role in the conflict. Instead, a recommitment to Africa would allow Wagner to resume its core mission—acting as an expeditionary force in unstable environments, while pursuing valuable resource extraction contracts and building Russian military-to-military relations with African countries.

A recommitment to Africa would allow Wagner to resume its core mission—acting as an expeditionary force in unstable environments, while pursuing valuable resource extraction contracts and building Russian military-to-military relations with African countries.



Foreign military officials look on during an Armed Forces Day parade ahead of scheduled naval exercises with Russian and Chinese navies in Richards Bay, South Africa, February 21, 2023. REUTERS/Rogan Ward

MERCENARY EVOLUTION

While the Wagner Group has emerged as Russia's premier PMC, Moscow's use of semi-state⁴¹ security forces is far from novel. From Cossacks in the early 20th century to Chechen warlord Ramzan Kadyrov's "Kadyrovites," Russia has relied on various paramilitary-style forces both within and outside its territorial boundaries for decades. Under Putin, this trend has expanded⁴². The traditional notion of the state as the primary guarantor of security has gradually eroded during his tenure—morphing into a complex landscape of traditional and irregular armed forces.

Mercenary-esque outfits have been a key feature of the Kremlin's foreign policy toolkit for much of the past decade. While Wagner first appeared on the battlefield in eastern Ukraine circa 2014 and has ascended to the pinnacle of the Russian PMC hierarchy, other groups such as Anti-Terror Orel, the Moran Security Group⁴³, and Wagner's immediate predecessor, the Slavonic Corps, were already operating⁴⁴ in places like Nigeria and Syria well before Wagner fired its first shot. Many of Russia's modern PMCs have close, if not direct, links to the Russian Ministry of Defense and Russia's foreign military intelligence agency, the GRU.

But Wagner is not your ordinary PMC. In fact, the degree to which Wagner is truly a "private" and independent entity is questionable. Instead, the defining feature⁴⁵

of Wagner is that it blends private corporate interests with Russian state interests. Wagner itself is best viewed as the military component of an extensive network⁴⁶ of business entities owned, operated, or financed by Prigozhin. The group does not operate without the Kremlin's approval like a genuinely independent private military contractor might. While the organization may wield some autonomy at the tactical and operational levels, Moscow maintains a tight grip to ensure Wagner is in alignment with the government's broader foreign policy. This grip may have loosened over the summer of 2022 as Wagner's footprint in Ukraine expanded, but the Kremlin has made a recent, concerted effort to shorten Wagner's leash and streamline its activities.

Wagner itself is best viewed as the military component of an extensive network of business entities owned, operated, or financed by Prigozhin.

Moscow's relations with Wagner have been volatile for several years. Before calling Wagner to Ukraine, the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) relied⁴⁷ on another PMC named Redut, in part due to Prigozhin's ongoing disputes with Putin-backed



An interior view shows PMC Wagner Centre, which is a project implemented by the businessman and founder of the Wagner private military group Yevgeny Prigozhin, during the official opening of the office block in Saint Petersburg, Russia, November 4, 2022. REUTERS/Igor Russak

politicians. Redut failed miserably during the early days of the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, catapulting Wagner to the forefront of the war effort. But Prigozhin's recent infighting with the Russian General Staff has led to a flurry of speculation about Wagner's future and that of the Russian PMC industry more generally. This includes growing concern about the proliferation of Russian PMCs and Wagner copycats that will emerge to either challenge or supplant Prigozhin's firm via promises of a less adversarial relationship with the Kremlin.

However, to equate Wagner's demotion in Ukraine with the rise of various PMC challengers would be inaccurate. Russia's PMC market was already booming before Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine in February 2022 and recent reports suggest Russia's state-owned oil giant, Gazprom, is fielding⁴⁸ its private army. Gazprom's cultivation of its own PMC, should it fully materialize, could spell trouble for Wagner. However, it could also simply be an effort to construct an in-house security infrastructure, ensuring the oil giant need not rely on outsiders to protect its corporate interests.

The news of Gazprom's PMC pursuit is just the latest addition in a growing chorus of potential Wagner replicas. Kadyrov, who is leading his semi-autonomous forces in Ukraine, recently took to social media to advertise⁴⁹ his interest in fielding his own PMC after his "service to the state is completed."⁵⁰ Despite his praise of Prigozhin's forces, Kadyrov noted his ambition is to "compete" with Wagner, citing the necessity of having PMCs to bolster the

state. Kadyrov and others may ultimately see building PMCs as an alternative avenue for endearing themselves to the state—to say nothing of the financial payoffs to gain. Others have gone so far as to suggest⁵¹ that the fractionalization of PMCs, which may expand during and after the war, could backfire as these organizations begin to generate meaningful power. This is ironic given Russia's PMC industry was originally designed (in part) to give the Kremlin plausible deniability.

Even if the ongoing tensions between Prigozhin and the Russian General Staff ultimately lead to Wagner's demise, it will not signal the collapse of the Russian PMC industry.

Meanwhile, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu is reportedly also in the PMC game. Shoigu retains⁵² close connections to a PMC known as Patriot which has been deployed⁵³ in the town of Vuhledar in the Donetsk province. Whether this force is in direct competition with Wagner or simply another proxy to bolster the war effort in Ukraine is debated, but Patriot's presence is indicative of Moscow's increasing demand for such forces. Given that Patriot has competed⁵⁴ with Wagner in the past in other theaters,



Founder of Wagner private mercenary group Yevgeny Prigozhin leaves a cemetery before the funeral of Russian military blogger Maxim Fomin widely known by the name of Vladlen Tatarsky, who was recently killed in a bomb attack in a St Petersburg cafe, in Moscow, Russia, April 8, 2023. REUTERS/Yulia Morozova

and noting its close connection to the MoD, it would not be shocking to find these entities competing for resources as the war drags on and even after the war ends. Taken together, the PMC landscape in Russia is on a concerning trajectory and has been for years. Even if the ongoing tensions between Prigozhin and the Russian General Staff ultimately lead to Wagner's demise, it will not signal the collapse of the Russian PMC industry. The model itself—using mercenaries in the battle to maintain plausible deniability while advancing Russian foreign policy interests at minimal costs—is here to stay. Eventually, one of

the existing Russian PMCs, or perhaps new ones currently in development, will supplant Wagner, just as the end of the US PMC Blackwater was not the end of American private security firms. Like Blackwater, which became Xe Services and later Academi, PMCs can simply rebrand and reorganize under new names. Moscow will undoubtedly work to retain direct control and oversight in this space. However, emboldened actors like Prigozhin may have inspired the next generation of Russian PMCs. And with the influx of war veterans produced by the current conflict, there will be no shortage⁵⁵ of personnel to stack the PMC rank-and-file.

LIMITED RESPONSES

The potential growth and proliferation of Russian PMCs should concern Western decision-makers. The Biden administration, to say nothing of the broader US government, cannot agree on a strategy to most effectively counter the Wagner Group⁵⁶. In late January, the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated⁵⁷ the Wagner Group as a transnational criminal organization (TCO). The TCO designation makes it harder for Wagner to operate but also has its limitations. Beyond its symbolism, which is significant, OFAC's designation of Wagner as a TCO is intended to warn states of the consequences of doing business with the mercenary outfit. But the states where Wagner maintains connections—Libya, Sudan, Syria, Mali, and CAR, to name a few—are unlikely to be persuaded⁵⁸ by policies crafted in Washington.

These governments already know what they are getting into when they invite Wagner to their countries—a security-for-resources agreement with no strings attached⁵⁹, including no lectures over human rights abuses. In a speech delivered at the end of February, French President Emmanuel Macron⁶⁰ called the Wagner Group “life insurance of failing regimes in Africa.” Even China has not been deterred from dealing with Wagner. The US recently levied sanctions against Changsha Tianyi

Space Science and Technology Research Institute for supplying Wagner fighters with satellite imagery. Known as “Spacety China,” it was one of sixteen entities recently sanctioned⁶¹ by the Treasury Department.

The Biden administration, to say nothing of the broader US government, cannot agree on a strategy to most effectively counter the Wagner Group.

Bipartisan pressure has been building in Congress for the Biden administration to label Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism (SST)⁶² and, through the reintroduction⁶³ of the Holding Russian Mercenaries Accountable (HARM) Act⁶⁴, to designate Wagner as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO). An SST designation would place dual-export restrictions on the types of materials flowing to the Russian war machine.

An official FTO designation under the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act would go beyond existing sanctions against Wagner to bring into effect the US material support to terrorism statutes, which limits financial and business ties, hitting African leaders and Wagner with

U.S. President Joe Biden delivers remarks ahead of the one year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, outside the Royal Castle, in Warsaw, Poland, February 21, 2023. REUTERS/Evelyn Hockstein



harsh economic penalties⁶⁵ for cooperation. In April 2020, the US designated⁶⁶ the Russian Imperial Movement (RIM), a far-right group with white supremacist ties, as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity. RIM members are fighting in Ukraine and maintain ties to Wagner and Task Force Rusich. In early March, US Attorney General Merrick Garland said he would “not object”⁶⁷ to labeling Wagner as an FTO, referring to Prigozhin as a “war criminal.”

Wagner’s operations in Africa present a destabilizing force against Western interests on the continent

Labels aside, backroom diplomacy was attempted. US officials reportedly⁶⁸ made an offer to leadership in CAR suggesting that, if President Faustin-Archange Touadéra would be willing to break from Russia and the Wagner Group, Washington could offer concessions more beneficial for Bangui in the long term. Reports suggest that diplomats from the US, Europe, and Africa met to discuss the challenge posed by Wagner and circulated a “strategic roadmap”⁶⁹ to evict Wagner from CAR, though details are scarce. Any US or European offer of security assistance would come with human rights provisions and thus perhaps be less appealing to CAR’s leadership. Moreover, Wagner’s growing influence in Mali

represents the difficulty Western countries have making progress in sub-Saharan Africa.

Wagner’s operations in Africa present a destabilizing force against Western interests on the continent while also damaging the rule of law, humanitarian protections, and state capacity to maintain a monopoly of force within borders. Wagner’s continued operations on the continent will almost certainly escalate jihadist backlash⁷⁰ in countries where the group operates, leading to spillover violence and a surge of recruits for al-Qaeda and Islamic State affiliates active in the region. Western leaders must determine a multitiered, prudent strategy in countering Wagner Group and other Russian PMCs while balancing this response alongside the persistent issues of governance and security failure in the Sahel. Devoid of a comprehensive Western strategy to deal with the group, the mercenaries will continue filling power vacuums from Syria to the Sahel, perpetrating human rights abuses and destabilizing already fragile states and regions.



Demonstrators hold photographs of Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russian flags during a sit-in to protest against the visit of the French President Emmanuel Macron and France's perceived support for neighbouring Rwanda, which Congo accuses of supporting M23 rebels in the east, in front of the French embassy in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, March 1, 2023. REUTERS/Justin Makangara

WAGNER ROADMAP: A MULTISECTOR APPROACH TO FIGHT THE GROUP

While the US, the European Union, ECOWAS, and a variety of other states and international organizations have tried to respond to Wagner, these attempts have been reactive, struggling to limit the group's expansion or its numerous human rights abuses.

This paper provides ten potential responses, avenues, or ways of thinking about Wagner Group and other Russian-backed PMCs that can be turned into a roadmap to effectively combat the group.

The sanctions discussion needs to be expanded, as such designations should aim to shame Wagner's state partners. Potential Wagner partners should be informed of the outcomes of associating with the group—long-term instability and greater distrust in governance. Immediate examples include Burkina Faso, Liberia, DRC, and Sierra Leone.

Further, the Wagner Group has become very shrewd in sanctions-proofing its activities, as can be seen through its economic pipeline from Douala to Bangui. Third-party states should be warned against allowing Wagner Group arms, industrial equipment, or other elements from transiting across their borders. Wagner's TCO designation may have helped deter some states in this regard, but more work is needed.

Sanctions lists should expand to include actors in third-party countries, such as Broker Expert LLC⁷¹, a Russian-owned company widely reported to be shipping heavy machinery to support Wagner Group forestry activities in CAR, and First Industrial Company⁷², a business owned by Wagner operator Dimitri Sytyi which concocts cheap "Russian" alcohol in Cameroon and sells it in CAR. Governments must stay vigilant, updating sanctions lists routinely to account for shell corporations, new business ventures, and other avenues that the Wagner Group and other Russian entities use to evade sanctions.

Perhaps one of the more important lessons for countering Wagner and other Russian PMCs is the importance of multilateralism.

Perhaps one of the more important lessons for countering Wagner and other Russian PMCs is the importance of multilateralism. Given Wagner's ability to entice clients into partnerships via coalescence of false promises and disinformation, efforts to counter the group's activity demand a strong coalition.

Regional institutions can play an important role in this regard. For instance, ECOWAS originally sanctioned and ⁷³suspended Mali in January 2022 for its failure to adhere to its promised election timeline and has since eased⁷⁴ some of those sanctions after the Malian junta's commitment to a 24-month⁷⁵ transition to democracy. Yet, it is questionable whether the junta will honor the proposed timeline given its track record⁷⁶ in the past. If the government's partnership with Wagner is any indication, a partnership that has led to severe human rights abuses and direct targeting of civilians⁷⁷, then ECOWAS should consider redeploying a robust sanctions package against Mali. It would also be wise to remind Bamako that its confrontational relationship with its neighbors and toward the West is a risky gamble⁷⁸ as Russia is in no position to provide Mali with the tools it needs to cultivate a durable regime or generate any lasting security. Such actions could play an important role in convincing Mali's neighbor, Burkina Faso, that Wagner is the wrong partner of choice.

NATO must also continue to consider proactive tools to counter Russian and other PMCs. Moscow's use of gray-zone tactics via the employment of mercenary outfits like Wagner has frustrated the alliance, and finding effective responses to nontraditional tactics has always been difficult. Given that such hybrid warfare tactics are increasingly the norm, NATO must consider non-kinetic tools that can pack a punch in slowing Wagner's, and future Russian PMCs', metastasization.

NATO must consider non-kinetic tools that can pack a punch in slowing Wagner's, and future Russian PMCs', metastasization.

Though appearing mundane, NATO should work to amplify efforts to push the adoption of the 2008 Montreux Document⁷⁹—an international agreement designed to reaffirm the legal obligations of states where PMCs originate and for those who hire them. The Montreux Document currently has the support⁸⁰ of 58 states, including nearly all NATO members. NATO, the EU, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe have also invoked their support for the document. While the likelihood of convincing a state like Russia to commit to an agreement that seriously hampers their ability to use PMCs to operate in legal limbo and avail them of accountability, NATO and its members have an opportunity to push for its global acceptance⁸¹ which would seriously restrict the list of potential Wagner clients. In other words, the more states committed to enhancing rules-based norms about PMCs, the more difficult it will be for Wagner and other Russian PMCs to find business and operate with impunity.

The Wagner Group and other Russian PMCs require consideration within a larger great power discussion, particularly as Russia's invasion of Ukraine has firmly aligned Europe and the US against Russia. Indeed,

the war in Ukraine is a cautionary tale but also a welcome precedent. Countries across the globe and particularly in Africa need help building defense and civil society responses to pro-authoritarian, particularly Russian, actors. On the kinetic side, the war in Ukraine demonstrates that the West has the means to provide massive military assistance, including arms, equipment, and training to partners in need. At the same time, these tools must not be used haphazardly, leaving a Cold War-like residue of authoritarianism. The West needs to continue corruption-proofing and authoritarian-proofing its “soft” tools in helping to build strong civil societies alongside militaries capable of maintaining a just rule of law.

Western responses should be a stark reminder of the sobering reality—Wagner is a farce and bad for African security and stability.

In the information and media space, Russian-backed sources of disinformation have been on the offensive, with cartoons and other media messaging tools used to sow discord against the West and glamorize the Wagner Group’s interventions in Africa. Western responses must not stoop to this level. Such cartoons are deeply infantilizing⁸² to target populations, demonstrating how disconnected Russia’s misinformation

warriors are from Africans. Western responses should be a stark reminder of the sobering reality—Wagner is a farce and bad for African security and stability. Its high rate of civilian killings in the places it operates, its failure in Mozambique⁸³ and subsequent exit, and its contribution to weak governance across Africa are all areas that should be directly and iteratively communicated to would-be Wagner clients. Such responses, in turn, can act as a deterrent against future Russian PMC operations.

On the US side, senior leaders should demonstrate a greater diplomatic commitment to African allies and put pressure on other African leaders considering, or currently contracting, the Wagner Group and other Russian PMC operations. CIA Director William Burns’⁸⁴ visit to Libya and Egypt and Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s⁸⁵ visit to Egypt, both in January 2023, provided a good start, particularly given the countries’ proximity to Wagner operations in Sudan and Mali. Vice President Kamala Harris’s visit to Ghana and Secretary Blinken’s visit to Niger are important steps forward. However, sub-Saharan Africa requires more visits, given the region’s high and increasing rate⁸⁶ of jihadism on the continent and threats posed by Wagner Group. Cabinet or secretary-level officials need to double down on the US strategic commitment to Africa with individual visits in Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. Like Burns’ and Blinken’s visits, these meetings must highlight the dangers of doing business with Wagner Group and other Russian PMCs.

Beyond warning states about Wagner, these diplomats should also extend an olive branch on security sector reform and assistance alongside NATO and the US. A proactive approach will prevent US leaders from having to offer security guarantees ex post facto after Wagner Group has already destabilized states and influenced governments, as recently occurred in CAR⁸⁷.

International bodies such as the African Union, ECOWAS, and the East African Community (EAC) should reevaluate their approaches to peacekeeping and instability.

“African solutions to African problems”—the idea of an autonomous Africa—presented by the late Ghanaian economist George Ayyitey when describing the Somalia crisis, is a much-debated and key element in the ever-changing debate on international security in Africa. While many argue for non-interventionism⁸⁸ as a defining doctrine of post-colonial Africa, the continent’s history⁸⁹ would suggest otherwise. Perhaps the continent should reevaluate this discussion at a time when former colonial military support is waning⁹⁰, at the behest of many African leaders. International bodies such as the African Union, ECOWAS, and the East African Community (EAC) should reevaluate their approaches to peacekeeping and

instability. Given the rise of jihadism and insurgency across the continent, now is the time for African leaders to take the lead in guaranteeing regional and continental security. Peacekeeping efforts have already begun among EAC members in the battle-ridden North Kivu province of DRC where Kenyan peacekeepers arrived in December 2022. Perhaps similar African peacekeeping strategies can be applied elsewhere on the continent—with the caveat that multilateral African approval ought to apply before individual peacekeeping interventions to prevent states from masking aggression as peacekeeping.

Exploiting the friction between Wagner’s financier and the MoD should also be considered a worthwhile policy option. As noted, Wagner and PMCs like it are only semi-autonomous. They cannot function without the approval or support of the Kremlin and the military. Therefore, opportunities to exploit deteriorating relations between Prigozhin and the Russian General Staff can have tremendous payoffs. US Treasury’s layered sanctions⁹¹ approach aimed at constricting Wagner’s financial capabilities is one way to frustrate the group in this regard, making it a far less appealing tool both now and in the future. Moreover, amplifying the narrative of problems between Prigozhin and the Russian military may have a deterrent effect as potential clients worry about Wagner’s ability to service a contract. However, such an approach has limitations. For starters, Prigozhin certainly does not need any help in straining relations with the Russian MoD, and at least for now, this does not appear to

have soured his contracts elsewhere. More importantly, however, his mercenary outfit is not the only one that the international community will have to deal with now, or in the future. Therefore, exploiting current friction is only a short-term solution.

NATO members must formalize methods of blocking contact with the Wagner Group through their international activities.

Last, NATO members must formalize methods of blocking contact with the Wagner Group through their international activities. France's subtle political support for Khalifa Heftar⁹² in Libya would have briefly aligned France with Wagner Group⁹³, particularly in Heftar's April 2019 offensives. Although France has since disavowed Heftar⁹⁴ and any potential connections with Wagner in Libya, NATO members must avoid becoming strange bedfellows with Wagner Group in the future. To this end, NATO members should adopt best practices that prevent accidental friendly contact with Wagner Group—perhaps members can draw on US Leahy Law⁹⁵, which prevents the US government from providing military assistance to individuals with a history of human rights abuses, or similar European practices.

The Wagner Group is the centerpiece of this article, and we argue that the Group must be countered quickly and effectively to stop its contagion effect across the continent. Still, it is surely not the only discussion point on African security policy and counterinsurgency. The group's commitment to humanitarian violations and its degradation of the long-term rule of law are worrying, particularly from a US perspective, but Wagner must be addressed within a greater strategy that considers security and good governance across Africa. PMC and mercenary groups like Wagner are neither new nor revolutionary concepts in Africa; however, their recent expansion into the political and economic life of African countries are particularly troubling trends. While Wagner Group needs to be addressed immediately, mercenary activities are a symptom of a greater failure in counterinsurgency and governance that must be addressed through long-term change by building civil society institutions and supporting free and fair governance.



- 1 Catrina Doxsee, "Putin's Proxies: Examining Russia's Use of Private Military Companies," Congressional Testimony, House Oversight and Reform National Security Subcommittee, September 15, 2022, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/putins-proxies-examining-russias-use-private-military-companies>.
- 2 Raphael Parens, "The Wagner Group's Playbook in Africa: Mali," Foreign Policy Research Institute, March 18, 2022, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2022/03/the-wagner-groups-playbook-in-africa-mali/>.
- 3 Christopher Faulkner, "Undermining Democracy and Exploiting Clients: The Wagner Group's Nefarious Activities in Africa," *CTC Sentinel*, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, Vol. 15, Issue 6, June 2022, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CTC-SENTINEL-062022.pdf>.
- 4 Silvia D'Amato, "Patchwork of Counterterrorism: Analyzing European Types of Cooperation in Sahel," *International Studies Review*, Volume 23, Issue 4, December 2021, <https://academic.oup.com/isr/article/23/4/1518/6295091?login=false>.
- 5 Brian Finucane, "Still at War: The United States in the Sahel," *Just Security*, April 7, 2022, <https://www.justsecurity.org/81028/still-at-war-the-united-states-in-the-sahel/>.
- 6 Robert Zaretsky, "Ukraine's Verdun," *Quillette*, February 17, 2023, <https://quillette.com/2023/02/17/ukraines-verdun/>.
- 7 Sinéad Baker, "Russia has spent 9 months bleeding troops to try to capture a city with limited strategic value, experts say," *Business Insider*, February 14, 2023, <https://www.businessinsider.com/bakhmut-russia-grinds-for-9-months-city-limited-strategic-importance-2023-2>.
- 8 Mia Jankowicz, "Wagner Group can only afford to throw soldiers into Bakhmut's 'meat grinder' for another 2 months before it runs out of men, Ukrainian commander says," *Business Insider*, April 12, 2023, <https://www.businessinsider.com/wagner-group-2-months-human-wave-troops-left-bakhmut-ukraine-2023-4>.
- 9 Christiaan Triebert, "Video Reveals How Russian Mercenaries Recruit Inmates for Ukraine War," *New York Times*, September 16, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/16/world/europe/russia-wagner-ukraine-video.html>.
- 10 Jack Dutton, "Wagner Group's Convict Recruits Suffer 50% Casualties in Ukraine War: U.K.," *Newsweek*, February 17, 2023, <https://www.newsweek.com/wagner-group-convict-recruits-casualties-ukraine-1781929>.
- 11 Niha Masih, "Over 30,000 Wagner fighters killed or injured in Ukraine, U.S. says," *Washington Post*, February 18, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/02/18/wagner-group-ukraine-war-casualties/>.
- 12 Colin P. Clarke, "What Will Become of Russia's Convict-Soldiers?" *Wall Street Journal*, February 26, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/what-will-become-of-russias-convict-soldiers-wagner-group-kremlin-criminal-organized-crime-ukraine-war-invasion-vladimir-putin-2c9e2f3b>.
- 13 Raphael Parens, "Mercenary Shocks: What the War in Ukraine Will Eventually Mean for Africa," *War on the Rocks*, February 17, 2023, <https://warontherocks.com/2023/02/mercenary-shocks-what-the-war-in-ukraine-will-eventually-mean-for-africa/>.
- 14 Thiam Ndiaga, "Burkina Faso ends French military accord, says it will defend itself," *Reuters*, January

23, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/burkina-faso-confirms-end-military-agreement-with-france-2023-01-23/>.

15 “French army officially ends operations in Burkina Faso,” *France 24*, February 20, 2023, <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20230220-french-army-officially-ends-operations-in-burkina-faso>.

16 Hénri Nsaibia and Caleb Weiss, “Oil on the Jihadi Fire: The Repercussions of a Wagner Group Deployment to Burkina Faso,” *CTC Sentinel*, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, January 2023, Vol. 16, Issue 1, <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/oil-on-the-jihadi-fire-the-repercussions-of-a-wagner-group-deployment-to-burkina-faso/>.

17 “Burkina Faso Under Influence,” *All Eyes on Wagner*, February 2023, <https://alleyesonwagner.org/2023/02/05/burkina-faso-under-influence/>.

18 All Eyes on Wagner, Twitter post, February 15, 2023, 11:28 a.m., <https://twitter.com/alleyesonwagner/status/1625894782164733953?s=46&t=OqXNhGD6-nHHHwoYCEMI0Q>.

19 “Burkina Faso denies favouring Russia's Nordgold over gold mine permit,” *Reuters*, February 6, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/burkina-faso-denies-favouring-russias-nordgold-over-gold-mine-permit-2023-02-06/>.

20 “Burkina Faso summons Ghana envoy over president's claim on Wagner,” *Al Jazeera*, December 16, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/16/burkina-faso-summons-ghanaian-ambassador-over-wagner-allegations/>.

21 “Burkina Faso, Mali eye federation after expelling French soldiers,” *Africanews*, February 2, 2023, <https://www.africanews.com/2023/02/02/burkina-faso-mali-eye-federation-after-expelling-french-soldiers/>.

22 Erin Banco, “U.S. cable: Russian paramilitary group set to get cash infusion from expanded African mine,” *Politico*, January 19, 2023, <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/01/19/u-s-cable-russian-paramilitary-group-set-to-get-cash-infusion-from-expanded-african-mine-00078551>.

23 “Come follow the redwood trees – tracking Wagner's forestry business in CAR,” *All Eyes on Wagner*, July 26, 2022, <https://alleyesonwagner.org/2022/07/26/come-follow-the-redwood-trees-tracking-wagners-forestry-business-in-car/?s=09>.

24 David Ehl, “More than mercenaries: Russia's Wagner Group in Africa,” *DW*, April 17, 2023, <https://www.dw.com/en/more-than-mercenaries-russias-wagner-group-in-africa/a-64822234>.

25 Jane Flanagan, “Pro-Kremlin Wagner mercenaries expand into African coffee business,” *Times (London)*, January 27, 2023, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pro-kremlin-wagner-mercenaries-expand-into-african-coffee-business-vkp0vt3qw>.

26 Mathieu Olivier, “CAR - Cameroon: An investigation into the Wagner Group's African financial model,” *Africa Report*, January 18, 2023, <https://www.theafricareport.com/275235/car-cameroon-an-investigation-into-the-wagner-groups-african-financial-model/>.

27 Zeinab Mohammed Salih and Jason Burke, “Wagner mercenaries sustain losses in fight for Central African Republic gold,” *Guardian*, February 2, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/feb/02/wagner-mercenaries-sustain-losses-in-fight-for-central-african-republic-gold>.

28 Elian Peltier, “Wagner Group May Have Committed War Crimes in Mali, UN Experts Say,” *New York Times*, January 31, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/31/world/africa/mali-wagner-civilian-killings.html>.

29 Benoit Faucon, “U.S. Intelligence Points to Wagner Plot Against Key Western Ally in Africa,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 23, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-intelligence-points-to-wagner-plot-against-key-western-ally-in-africa-29867547>.

30 Simone Schlindwein, “Are white mercenaries fighting in the DRC conflict?” *DW*, January 17, 2023, <https://www.dw.com/en/are-white-mercenaries-fighting-in-the-drc-conflict/a-64407711>.

31 Fiston Mahamba Wa Biondi, Twitter post, January 2, 2023, 8:11 a.m., @FMLarousse, <https://twitter.com/FMLarousse/status/1609900066579550209?s=20>

32 “Kinshasa: Young Congolese protest upcoming visit of French leader,” *Africanews*, March 1, 2023, <https://www.africanews.com/2023/03/01/kinshasa-young-congolese-march-against-upcoming-visit-of-french-leader/>.

33 Philip Obaji Jr., “How These Mali Coup Plotters Staged a False Flag Pro-Russia March,” *Daily Beast*, June 2, 2021, <https://ca.news.yahoo.com/pro-russia-demo-false-flag-085554255.html>.

34 François Picard, Juliette Laurain, Imen Mellaz, and Charles Wente, “Coups after coups: After Mali, pro-Russia sentiment stoked in Burkina Faso,” *France 24*, April 10, 2022, <https://www.france24.com/en/tv-shows/the-debate/20221004-coup-after-coup-after-mali-pro-russia-sentiment-stoked-in-burkina-faso>.

35 “Pro-Russia protesters rally in Central African Republic,” *Africanews*, March 3, 2023, <https://www.africanews.com/2022/03/05/pro-russia-protesters-rally-in-central-african-republic/>.

36 Raphael Parens, “Conflict in Eastern Congo: A Spark Away from a Regional Conflagration,” *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, September 8, 2022, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2022/09/conflict-in-eastern-congo-a-spark-away-from-a-regional-conflagration/>.

37 Sophia Ankel, “Wagner Group stops recruiting prisoners as growing numbers refuse to be enlisted on suicide missions, reports say,” *Business Insider*, February 9, 2023, <https://www.businessinsider.com/wagner-stops-recruiting-prisoners-suicide-missions-russia-ukraine-2023-2>.

38 Sophia Ankel, “Wagner Group stops recruiting prisoners as growing numbers refuse to be enlisted on suicide missions, reports say,” *Business Insider*, February 9, 2023, <https://www.businessinsider.com/wagner-stops-recruiting-prisoners-suicide-missions-russia-ukraine-2023-2>.

39 Jamie Dettmer, “Russia’s military chiefs go to war ... with each other,” *Politico*, February 22, 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/yevgeny-prigozhins-ramzan-kadryov-feud-with-russia-top-brass-boils-over/>.

40 Raphael Parens, “Wagner Group Redefined: Threats and Responses,” *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, January 30, 2023, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/01/wagner-group-redefined-threats-and-responses/>.

41 Kimberly Marten, “Russia’s use of semi-state security forces: the case of the Wagner Group,” *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 35, Issue 3, 2019, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/ref/10.1080/1060586X.2019.1591142?scroll=top&role=tab&aria-labelledby=refs>.

- 42 Anna Borshchevskaya, “Russian Private Military Companies: Continuity and Evolution of the Model,” Foreign Policy Research Institute, Russia Foreign Policy Papers, December 18, 2019, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2019/12/russian-private-military-companies-continuity-and-evolution-of-the-model/>.
- 43 Candace Rondeaux, “Decoding the Wagner Group: Analyzing the Role of Private Military Security Contractors in Russian Proxy Warfare,” New America, November 7, 2019, <https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/decoding-wagner-group-analyzing-role-private-military-security-contractors-russian-proxy-warfare/>.
- 44 Candace Rondeaux, “Decoding the Wagner Group: Analyzing the Role of Private Military Security Contractors in Russian Proxy Warfare,” New America, November 7, 2019, <https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/decoding-wagner-group-analyzing-role-private-military-security-contractors-russian-proxy-warfare/>.
- 45 “Russian Private Military Companies (PMCs),” Congressional Research Service, September 16, 2020, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IF11650.pdf>.
- 46 Tim Lister, Sebastian Shukla, and Clarissa Ward, “Putin’s private army is trying to increase Russia’s influence in Africa,” *CNN*, August 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/interactive/2019/08/africa/putins-private-army-car-intl/>.
- 47 “A mercenaries’ war: How Russia’s invasion of Ukraine led to a ‘secret mobilization’ that allowed oligarch Evgeny Prigozhin to win back Putin’s favor,” *Meduza*, July 14, 2022, <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2022/07/14/a-mercenaries-war>
- 48 Ariel Cohen, “The Coming Hurricane: Russian Energy-Giant Gazprom Is Creating An Army,” *Forbes*, February 22, 2023, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/arielcohen/2023/02/22/the-coming-hurricane-russian-energy-giant-gazprom-is-creating-an-army/?sh=74c2a78242e9>.
- 49 Sophia Ankel, “Chechen leader says he wants to ‘compete’ with Wagner founder Yevgeny Prigozhin and create his own private military,” *Business Insider*, February 20, 2023, <https://www.businessinsider.com/ramzan-kadyrov-private-military-group-wagner-chechen-leader-russia-putin-2023-2?international=true&r=US&IR=T>.
- 50 Caleb Davis and Guy Faulconbridge, “Chechnya’s Kadyrov: one day I plan my own mercenary group,” *Reuters*, February 19, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-ally-kadyrov-one-day-i-plan-my-own-private-military-company-2023-02-19/>.
- 51 Matteo Pugliese, @MatteoPugliese, Twitter Post, February 26, 2023, 9:13 a.m., <https://twitter.com/MatteoPugliese/status/1629847245913747457>.
- 52 Tetiana Lozovenko, “Shoigu deploys his Private Military Company, which competes with Wagner Group, to war against Ukraine,” *Ukrainska Pravda*, December 28, 2022, <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2022/12/28/7382706/>.
- 53 Tim Lister, “‘Like turkeys at a shooting range’: Mauling of Russian forces in Donetsk hotspot may signal problems to come,” *CNN*, February 14, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/2023/02/13/europe/russia-ukraine-vuhledar-donetsk-fiasco-intl/index.html>.
- 54 “Wagner versus Patriot: Fighting for Mercenary Control,” *Russia Monitor*, Warsaw Institute, July 12, 2018,

<https://warsawinstitute.org/wagner-versus-patriot-fighting-mercenary-control/>.

55 Raphael Parens, “Mercenary Shocks: What the War in Ukraine Will Eventually Mean for Africa,” *War on the Rocks*, February 17, 2023, <https://warontherocks.com/2023/02/mercenary-shocks-what-the-war-in-ukraine-will-eventually-mean-for-africa/>.

56 Neil Hauer, “Russia’s Favorite Mercenaries,” *The Atlantic*, August 27, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/08/russian-mercenaries-wagner-africa/568435/>.

57 “Treasury Sanctions Russian Proxy Wagner Group as a Transnational Criminal Organization,” US Department of the Treasury, January 26, 2023, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1220>.

58 Christopher Faulkner and Marcel Plichta, “How to Beat the Wagner Group,” *Foreign Policy*, February 13, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/02/13/russia-wagner-group-sanctions-ukraine-putin/>.

59 Colin P. Clarke, “Russian Mercenaries Are Destabilizing Africa,” *New York Times*, January 31, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/31/opinion/russian-mercenaries-africa-wagner.html>.

60 “France’s Macron calls Wagner Group ‘life insurance of failing regimes’ in Africa,” *Reuters*, February 27, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/frances-macron-calls-wagner-group-life-insurance-failing-regimes-africa-2023-02-27/>.

61 Kelly Ng, “Ukraine: US sanctions Chinese firm helping Russia's Wagner Group,” *BBC News*, January 27, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-64421915>.

62 Aaron Pellish, “Senators put bipartisan pressure on Biden to designate Russia a state sponsor of terrorism,” *CNN Politics*, August 7, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/07/politics/biden-russia-state-sponsor-of-terrorism-cnntv/index.html>.

63 “U.S. Lawmakers Want Terrorist Designation for Russia's Wagner Group,” *U.S. News & World Report*, February 15, 2023, <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2023-02-15/u-s-lawmakers-want-terrorist-designation-for-russias-wagner-group>.

64 *Holding Accountable Russian Mercenaries Act*, S.416, 118th Congress (2023–2024), <https://library.bowdoin.edu/research/chicago-gov.pdf>.

65 James Petrila and Phil Wasielewski, “The Case for Designating Wagner Group as a Foreign Terrorist Organization Is Still Compelling,” *Lawfare*, January 18, 2023, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/case-designating-wagner-group-foreign-terrorist-organization-still-compelling>.

66 “IntelBrief: Russian Imperial Movement Labeled a Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity,” The Soufan Center, April 7, 2020, <https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-russian-imperial-movement-labeled-a-specially-designated-global-terrorist-entity/>.

67 Masood Farivar, “US Attorney General Says He Would Not Object to Designating Wagner a Foreign Terrorist Organization,” *Voice of America*, March 2, 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/us-attorney-general-says-he-would-not-object-to-designating-wagner-a-foreign-terrorist-organization-/6987153.html>.

68 Cyril Bensimon, “US engages in strategy to remove Wagner Group from Africa,” *Le Monde*, February

20, 2023, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/02/20/us-seeks-to-strike-a-deal-in-strategy-to-remove-wagner-group-from-africa_6016597_4.html.

69 Erin Banco, Sarah Anne Aarup, and Anastasiia Carrier, “Inside the stunning growth of Russia’s Wagner Group,” *Politico*, February 18, 2023, <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/02/18/russia-wagner-group-ukraine-paramilitary-00083553>.

70 Colin P. Clarke, “How Russia's Wagner Group Is Fueling Terrorism in Africa,” *Foreign Policy*, January 25, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/01/25/russia-wagner-group-africa-terrorism-mali-sudan-central-african-republic-prigozhin/>.

71 “Come follow the redwood trees – tracking Wagner’s forestry business in CAR,” *All Eyes on Wagner*, July 26, 2022, <https://alleyesonwagner.org/2022/07/26/come-follow-the-redwood-trees-tracking-wagners-forestry-business-in-car/>.

72 Mathieu Olivier, “CAR - Cameroon: An investigation into the Wagner Group’s African financial model,” *Africa Report*, January 18, 2023, <https://www.theafricareport.com/275235/car-cameroon-an-investigation-into-the-wagner-groups-african-financial-model/>.

73 Press Statement, “ECOWAS Action on Mali,” U.S. State Department, January 10, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/ecowas-action-on-mali/>.

74 “Mali: Avoiding the Trap of Isolation,” Crisis Group, February 9, 2023, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/b185-mali-eviter-le-piege-de-lisolement>.

75 “Mali junta adopts 24-month transition to democratic rule from March,” *Reuters*, June 7, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/west-africa-bloc-willing-accept-another-12-16-months-transition-mali-2022-03-25/>.

76 Christian Akorlie and Tiemoko Diallo, “West African nations sever links with Mali over election delay,” *Reuters*, January 10, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/mali-eyes-elections-four-years-west-african-bloc-mulls-sanctions-2022-01-09/>.

77 “Wagner Group Operations in Africa: Civilian Targeting Trends in the Central African Republic and Mali,” ACLED, August 30, 2022, <https://acleddata.com/2022/08/30/wagner-group-operations-in-africa-civilian-targeting-trends-in-the-central-african-republic-and-mali/>.

78 “Mali: Avoiding the Trap of Isolation,” Crisis Group, February 9, 2023, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/b185-mali-eviter-le-piege-de-lisolement>.

79 The Montreux Document, <https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/foreign-policy/international-law/international-humanitarian-law/private-military-security-companies/montreux-document.html>.

80 Participating States of the Montreux Document, <https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/foreign-policy/international-law/international-humanitarian-law/private-military-security-companies/participating-states.html>.

81 Christopher Spearin, "NATO, Russia and Private Military and Security Companies," *The RUSI Journal*, 163:3, 66-72, 2018, DOI: 10.1080/03071847.2018.1494676.

82 "Information war: Moscow's messaging puts France on the back foot in Africa," *France 24*, YouTube video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FApmtauVe-o>.

83 Daniel Sixto, "Russian Mercenaries: A String of Failures in Africa," *Geopolitical Monitor*, August 24, 2020, <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/russian-mercenaries-a-string-of-failures-in-africa/>.

84 Marita Kassis, "CIA director in Egypt after Libya and Ukraine, meets Sisi," *Al-Monitor*, January 24, 2023, <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/01/cia-director-egypt-after-libya-and-ukraine-meets-sisi>.

85 Samy Magdy, "US seeks to expel Russian mercenaries from Sudan, Libya," *ABC News*, February 3, 2023, <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/us-seeks-expel-russian-mercenaries-sudan-libya-96868804>.

86 "Violent Extremism in the Sahel," *Global Conflict Tracker*, Council on Foreign Relations, March 27, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violent-extremism-sahel#RecentDevelopments-2>.

87 Cyril Bensimon, "US engages in strategy to remove Wagner Group from Africa," *Le Monde*, February 20, 2023, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/02/20/us-seeks-to-strike-a-deal-in-strategy-to-remove-wagner-group-from-africa_6016597_4.html.

88 "From Non-Interference to Non-Indifference: The African Union and the Responsibility to Protect," International Refugee Rights Initiative (ReliefWeb), September 2017, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/non-interference-non-indifference-african-union-and-responsibility-protect>.

89 Emizet F. Kisangani and Jeffrey Pickering, *Intra-African Hostile Military Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/african-interventions/intraafrican-hostile-military-intervention/734148CF414D253C5E08410FE365429E>.

90 Emmanuel Macron, "Replay: Emmanuel Macron outlines France's new strategy for Africa before four-nation trip," *France 24*, YouTube video, February 27, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDLSLRkMnwA>.

91 "Treasury Sanctions Russian Proxy Wagner Group as a Transnational Criminal Organization," US Department of the Treasury, January 26, 2023, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy1220>.

92 Paul Taylor, "France's double game in Libya," *Politico*, April 17, 2019, <https://www.politico.eu/article/frances-double-game-in-libya-nato-un-khalifa-haftar/>.

93 Ilya Barabanov and Nader IbrahimWagner, "Scale of Russian mercenary mission in Libya exposed," *BBC News*, August 11, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-58009514>.

94 "France abandons Haftar, attacks Wagner," *Middle East Monitor*, July 4, 2020, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200704-france-abandons-haftar-attacks-wagner/>.

95 Leahy Law Fact Sheet, US State Department, <https://www.state.gov/key-topics-bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/human-rights/leahy-law-fact-sheet/>.



The Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI) is a nonpartisan Philadelphia-based think tank dedicated to strengthening U.S. national security and improving American foreign policy.

Established in 1955 by the noted 20th century geopolitical strategist, Ambassador Robert Strausz-Hupé, FPRI was founded on the premise that an informed and educated citizenry is essential for the United States to understand complex international issues and formulate foreign policy. FPRI remains committed to this principle and strives to inform both policymakers and the general public through FPRI research and educational programs.

FPRI is a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and takes no institutional positions on issues and conducts no advocacy. The organization has six main research programs, covering U.S. National Security, the Middle East, Eurasia, Europe, Asia, and Africa. Each program produces reports, articles, public events, and private briefings for policymakers, FPRI members, and the general public.

© 2023 by the Foreign Policy Research Institute

Foreign Policy Research Institute

123 S. Broad Street, Suite 1920

Philadelphia, PA 19109

215.732.3774

www.fpri.org

@FPRI

FPRI Editorial Team

Eurasia Program Director

Maia Otarashvili

Eurasia Head of Research

Robert E. Hamilton

Executive Editor

Shane Mason

Design and Production

Natalia Kopytnik

Leah Pedro

Cover Art and Production

Cover Art

Natalia Kopytnik

Cover Photos

Reuters

United Nations

Wikimedia Commons

Printing

Creative Print Group Inc



FOREIGN POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE