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RUSSIAN MERCENARIES IN AFRICA

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Abstract

This paper assesses the impact of the Wagner mercenary group on Russia's foreign policy in Africa and examines how it is helping Russia's regional goals. Wagner has stepped up its foothold in the region by securing economic assets and through training local armies. Through a series of economic and military deals, Russia has become a powerful player on the continent. State run energy companies such as Gazprom have advanced Russia's influence in Africa's energy sector by sponsoring deals in nuclear reactors and power grids. The military has stepped up its presence by providing arms and logistics to countries shunned by US sanctions. Helping the Kremlin maintain all of this is the Wagner Group. Wagner is a mercenary organization that works for the Kremlin clandestinely. The principal focus of this paper will look at how Wagner is boosting Russia's foreign policy goals in Africa. It will also assess whether or not these mercenaries are a valuable asset for Russia's geopolitical ambitions. The paper will look at whether or not Wagner's presence in Africa is beneficial for Vladimir Putin's ambitions to make Russia a respected power. Additionally, it will also look at how Russia's actions contribute to the global power game between the US and China.

This paper is structured as follows. The first section of the paper will largely focus on the facts. It will look heavily into where Wagner is involved in Africa and how they operate. It will also see how Wagner's operations in Africa are beneficial for Russia's military and economic goals. Secondly, it will focus on how Wagner's presence ties into Russia's hybrid warfare strategy and quest for dominance. The last half of the paper will be analytical. The paper will assess whether or not Wagner is a valuable tool for Russia's foreign policy goals. Additionally, it will also look at how Western countries should counter the use of mercenaries and whether or not African countries should accept any Russian help.

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Introduction

Russia's foreign policy in Africa

Before we focus on the Wagner group, we must understand Russia's goals in Africa. According to the Brookings Institution, Russia's foreign policy in Africa is based on the following principles: arms exports, natural resources, and energy or power development¹. The US and China are engaged in a power grab. Both countries are doing their best to mitigate each other's global influence. Russia does not want to be left out of this fight. In recent times, China has heavily invested in Africa through the "Belt and Road" initiative. These multi million dollar infrastructure projects have given China considerable sway in the region. Russia wants to be taken as a serious power, which is why they have invested many resources to gain a foothold in Africa.

Russia is the biggest exporter of weapons on the continent. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIRPI) estimates that Russia accounts for 35% of arms exports to the region. As the Russian arms industry continues to be sanctioned by the US government, Russia will seek to advance its military ties. The US has shunned many African countries from receiving any military aid because of human rights abuses. The Russian government has taken advantage of this new development and has offered their own support. This has allowed Russia to sign military deals with about 20 countries, according to the SIRPI. The military expansion will continue as the US seeks to reestablish its own power in the region.

The last two factors are intertwined with one another. The US has heavily sanctioned Russian companies such as Yukos. Oil and gas play a heavy part in Russia's economy. Since these companies are no longer able to do business with the West, they have shifted their horizons to Africa. Many African states lack basic electricity and energy, Russian companies have stepped

¹ <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2019/11/14/what-does-russia-really-want-from-africa/>

in with multi-million dollar energy deals. In Egypt for example, Russia has invested heavily in nuclear energy. These deals provide Russian companies with much needed revenue.

Additionally, many African countries like the Central African Republic, Angola, and Congo have access to natural resources like diamonds. Russian mining companies have stepped up their presence in these countries in order to boost much needed revenue. Russia has gained economic leverage on the continent through continued investments in energy, oil, gas, and mining.

Who is the Wagner Group

Wagner is a mercenary group or private military company (PMC) composed of ex Russian military operatives. The Center For Strategic International Studies (CSIS) outlines Wagner's structure. The group was founded in 2014 under the leadership of Dmitry Utkin, a former operative for the Russian intelligence services. The name Wagner coincides with Dmitry Utkin's favorite composer: Richard Wagner. The mercenary's first deployment was in Ukraine during the annexation of Crimea. However, Wagner became more of a household name in 2018 when US airstrikes killed 100 of their operatives in Syria. In recent times, more details have emerged about Wagner's operations. The group has made headlines in Syria and Ukraine. However, Wagner's presence is more prevalent in Africa as they operate in places such as Libya, Sudan, Central African Republic, and Mozambique.

We can directly connect the Wagner group to the Russian government for several reasons. Mercenary groups operate under no flag. They work for the highest bidder. CSIS has done extensive research on the group's link to Russia. The group receives most of its funding from a wealthy Russian oligarch, Yevgeny Prigozhin, who has heavy ties to Vladimir Putin. Prigozhin is said to be the chief architect of Russia's expansion in Africa. He funds the groups through a series of offshore accounts and concessions received from mining operations (CSIS).

Prigozhin's use of offshore accounts is usually how Russian oligarchs are able to funnel money across the globe without worrying about US sanctions (CSIS). It is through this offshore funneling that Wagner gets its money and how the Kremlin funds other illicit activities.

Additionally, Wagner uses military resources. Wagner is based at a Russian special forces training center in the region of Krasnodar. There have also been many instances where Wagner units are aided by Russian military units. This seems odd because mercenary groups usually operate under no flag. Many media outlets have reported on Wagner troops being treated at military field hospitals not only in Russia but also in hotspots such as Ukraine and Syria. In fact, Wagner has used the Russian air force to transport troops to Syria. The evidence collected by CSIS shows Russia's complicity in aiding and abetting the Wagner group. These facts are undeniable proof that Russia is deeply involved and invested in the well being of the group.

Once on the ground, Wagner forces essentially act like conventional Russian military units. They promote Russian interests by fighting alongside friendly forces such as in Syria with Bashar Al-Assad and in Libya with Khalifa Haftar. They collect intelligence on enemy forces and conduct covert missions. Given their non-state affiliation, it is very easy to deny any responsibility for their actions. Plus, they protect Russian interests by guarding coveted oil fields in hotspots like Libya and Syria. It is also likely that Wagner engages in areas of non-combat such as the cyber realm.

Wagner and Russia's foreign policy

For the Russian government, Wagner is a blessing in disguise. The Russian government likes to operate on the basis of plausible deniability. Essentially, they use third party tools such as hackers and mercenaries to achieve political goals. If something goes awry, Russia can deny all allegations since these tools are specifically non-state. They tend to not recognize any malicious activities such as the invasion of Ukraine or the continued interference in American elections. If things go south, Russia bears no responsibility for any casualties. This allows Russia to operate with impunity in hotspots like Syria and Ukraine.

The use of non-military tools is part of Russia's grand strategy: hybrid warfare. The Rand Corporation did a study on Russia's hybrid warfare and defined it as "the use of non-military tools to further Russian national interests" (Chivvis). In fact, hybrid warfare is part of Russia's new way of fighting. Valery Gerasimov, Russia's top general, authored the Gerasimov doctrine. This doctrine gives us insight on how the Russian military fights wars. The doctrine places a special emphasis on non-military tools such as misinformation, hacking, mercenaries, and other asymmetrical means as a more effective way of fighting wars and destabilizing enemies. This new style of fighting was used in Ukraine. The government used misinformation on social media and cyber attacks on Ukraine's power grids to seize further control of the Eastern region. Cyber attacks and propaganda were successfully also used in Estonia and Lithuania in 2008 as a way to retaliate against the closure of Soviet monuments. By using non-military tools, Russia's military saves resources and money for future conflicts.

Russia's strategy is to be powerful by being cheap. Money brings us to the most important part of Russian foreign policy. Maintaining a dominant foothold across the world is

very expensive. Russia lacks the monetary aspect of dominance. They cannot afford to maintain a global footprint because it is too expensive. Vladimir Putin is nostalgic for the “empire” as he wants to rebuild the Soviet Union. He wants to see Russia as a respected global power. But he cannot afford it as the Russian economy is sanctioned following the 2014 annexation of Crimea. Russia’s GDP is no way near that of China or America’s. Russia does not produce enough wealth to maintain a large overseas presence. The cost of maintaining numerous bases and feeding more troops is an extra expense that Russia cannot afford.

This explains why the Russian government resorts to using non-military tools. Non-military tools and hybrid warfare are cheap and effective for promoting power. It has been very successful in Ukraine and is working well in Libya. Deploying military forces is an expensive burden for any government. By using mercenaries, the Russian government is able to save money and resources for its own military. This will allow Russia to invest more money in maintaining its army. As the great power battle intensifies, the Russian government will continue to deploy cheap and unconventional forces to maintain power.

Wagner has more value to the Russian military. Apart from saving money, Russia’s military wants more from hybrid warfare. They have more power and prestige. It is no secret that Russia envies the US military’s large scope and power. The Russian military wants an overseas presence, but they need to win wars to do so. However, what if someone else did the dirty work for them without causing too much trouble? Wagner is the answer to Russia’s military expansion. Essentially, Wagner is being used to do the dirty work for Russia’s military. They are being sent to hotspots like Libya, Sudan, and the Central African Republic to fight off enemies and protect Russian interests. Once things have stabilized, the Russian military will step in to uphold the

current status quo by establishing a military base. It is only a matter of time before we see little green men in Libya or Sudan. Put simply, Russia is winning wars without losing any soldiers.

In a way, Wagner's deployment also strengthens the intelligence services. Traditionally, agencies like the GRU would rely on the Spetsnaz to carry out operations. However, their global capabilities were limited since the Spetsnaz had a larger domestic presence. The GRU can now rely on Wagner for black ops. This will allow them to quickly eliminate or disrupt targets. If the GRU wanted to disrupt US operations in Africa. Secondly, Wagner will strengthen disinformation campaigns. The current disinformation is focused mainly in the digital arena. However, Wagner can expand the disinformation campaign to more traditional areas of media. As seen in the Central African Republic, they can help the GRU brainwash local populations by distributing pamphlets, publishing false ads in newspapers, and purchasing billboards to spread propaganda. This will boosten the information warfare Russia wages because it expands the war outside the traditional digital arena. With a more effective disinformation campaign, Wagner can help the intelligence services suppress pro-democracy movements to maintain a pro-Russia atmosphere.

The current strategy used by Russia is much different than Soviet times. Unlike the Soviet Union, Russia's foreign policy is not dominated by communist principles. The ideological aspect of the Cold War no longer exists today. Second, Russia is much weaker than the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was able to maintain its dominance because it had the proper funding. Russia cannot maintain Soviet era dominance because it lacks money to do so. The Soviet Union used conventional tools like military deployments through soldiers and missiles to maintain dominance. Russia uses unconventional tools like cyber weapons and mercenaries to maintain its dominance. However, both styles of foreign policy are similar because they share an overarching

goal of maintaining Russian power through constant aggression. In short, Vladimir Putin attains Soviet era foreign policy through aggressive use of unconventional tools of warfare like misinformation and cyber attacks. Cheap tools are used to maintain Russia's desire to be seen as a world power.

Wagner in Africa

This portion of the paper looks at Wagner's involvement in Africa. As you can see from this map, Wagner has a heavy footprint in the continent. They are deployed in almost 10 countries. This part of the paper will look at Wagner's deployment in a few countries and see what they have accomplished for Russia. PC: Daily Sabah



Central African Republic (CAR)

For the last few years, the Central African Republic has been marred in a civil war between governments and rebel militias. The war is far from over as government forces fail to control almost $\frac{2}{3}$ of the country. While the UN has a peacekeeping force on the ground to maintain stability, it is heavily understaffed and is unable to make a full impact. With this situation spiraling, the Russian government offered its hand to the Central African government in 2017. From then on, Russia and Wagner have maintained a steady presence in the country. Oftentimes, the Wagner involvement has come under scrutiny from many UN human rights officials. To understand Wagner's deployment in the Central African Republic we look at a study done by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).

The Russian government deployed Wagner's troops to stabilize the security situation in the country. It is estimated by the CFR that there are at least 400 mercenaries on the ground in the Central African Republic. So far, Wagner has deepened Russia's influence in CAR's political and military structure. For instance, Wagner forces are tasked with protecting CAR's President Touadera. There have been many coups in the CAR in recent years and so Wagner is there to make sure coups do not happen. Additionally, Wagner has provided military training to local forces by supplying them with helicopters and guns. In fact, Wagner's forces have helped the President maintain his power in the country by helping him retake key towns and stifling protests about fraudulent elections. Through Wagner's protection, President Touadera enjoys unlimited power and protection. However, everything comes at a cost when doing business with the Russian government. (Council on Foreign Relations)

Russia's interest in the Central African Republic is based on ulterior motives. This is all part of Russia's foreign policy in Africa, where they seek to gain access to Africa's natural

resources. The Central African Republic is home to many diamond reserves. Wagner's protection of President Touadera has allowed Russian mining companies to gain access to lucrative deposits of gold and diamonds. These diamond mines are heavily guarded by Wagner's forces and are later smuggled out of the country. Russia wants the US to remove sanctions on CAR's diamond industry so that it can make a larger profit on the international market. Wagner is helping Russia exploit CAR's diamond supply and use it for political gain. As Russian mining companies continue to drill their influence in the country, valuable resources will be exploited from CAR's economy. (Council on Foreign Relations)

Wagner has also given Russia a very high level of political influence in the country. The top advisors to President Touadera are ex members of the Russian intelligence bureaus. In a way, Putin is indirectly influencing CAR's domestic affairs in order to protect Russian interests. Additionally, Wagner has heavily invested in local radio stations that spurt propaganda about Russia's benevolent intentions in the country. Mining companies have also sponsored propaganda Russian cartoons to indoctrinate local children. They have also invested in billboards



signifying Russia's involvement in CAR's military. This billboard is an example of propaganda as it signifies Russia's benevolent involvement in the military. (Council of Foreign Relations)

PC: New York Times

Libya

Libya has been torched by an ongoing civil war between Western backed government forces and a rogue warlord named Khalifa Haftar. Haftar has been able to gain territorial advances against government forces, but not without any help. Haftar's forces have had significant support from Wagner. According to the US military, there are at least 1500 mercenaries providing technical assistance to Haftar on the ground and in the air via airstrikes. In recent times, more support has been poured in towards Haftar after his forces suffered heavy losses after a government offensive.

But, this support is not for free. According to OPEC, Libya has the largest oil reserve in Africa. Wagner is only providing support for Haftar in exchange for Russian access to Libyan oil. Haftar's forces have been able to disrupt Libya's oil supply, destabilizing international oil prices. Russian forces now have access to the largest oil field in Libya: Sahara fields. This unprecedented access to Libyan oil will boost Russia's geopolitical narratives in Africa. Economically, Russia has been able to get a big share of the natural resource market. This untapped market will allow Russian companies such as Gazprom and Yukos to gain significant access. It is likely that Russia will continue to support Haftar in order to gain more access to Libya's oil reserves. (BBC)

Wagner has also made way for further Russian military involvement. In recent times, the Russian air force has been able to conduct airstrikes to support Wagner forces on the ground. Intelligence from the US military indicates that Russia is using airfields in Libya to place its

military hardware such as planes and missile launches. In a way, Russia is discreetly creating a military influence in the region. The end goal for Russia will probably be the establishment of a military base alongside the Mediterranean. This will expand Russia's operational capabilities in the Mediterranean leading to more influence. (BBC)

Wagner's deployment in Libya has given Russia a significant upperhand in Africa. Russia now controls a large portion of the oil supply. This will allow Russia to boost its economic investments in the continent further. It also created a potential base for Russia's military operations in the Mediterranean. With Haftar's forces in control of a significant chunk of territory, it is highly unlikely that government forces will be able to gain any territory. This stability is the perfect breeding ground for a military base. Additionally, Russia can use its deployment in Libya to interfere with NATO's influence in the Mediterranean.

Sudan

Sudan has been heavily isolated under the rule of Omar Al-Bashir. The US has sanctioned the Sudanese government for its human rights abuses in the Darfur region. Angered by US interference, Bashir called on Russia to protect Sudan from Western forces. With this call for help, Russia was quick to come to the rescue. Initially, Wagner was sent to protect local installations. In 2017, Russian diamond companies gained permission to enter Sudan's lucrative natural resource market. Wagner was sent to protect these installations from any enemy interference. In the meantime, Russian companies signed a series of deals in South Sudan to gain access to oil reserves. Wagner's role consisted of guarding precious oil and diamond reserves in the country. (Brookings)

Additionally, they were also sent to train local forces. Some 300 Russian soldiers arrived to train local forces. More soldiers arrived in late 2018 and early 2019 as Bashir was dealing with

a revolution. Wagner reportedly trained local forces on how to deal with crowd control. There were also rumors that Russian forces were present in the Darfur region, potentially providing support to security forces in the ongoing war. It is highly likely that Russia's relation with Sudan will strengthen as protests against the military junta are intensifying. Continued sanctions from the West will push Sudan closer to Russia making them more susceptible to Russian military and economic influence. (Brookings)

Sudan's porous borders with the Central African Republic boosts Russia's diamond smuggling operations. Central Africa's diamond industry is heavily sanctioned by the US. By moving the diamonds to Sudan, Russia can sell these stones on the world market without having to worry about sanctions. Additionally, Wagner has used Sudan's borders to smuggle weapons into the Central African Republic in order to avoid arms embargoes. They have also used Sudan as a place to negotiate deals with CAR rebel leaders.

Wagner enjoyed these privileges under the leadership of Bashir, however, he was ousted in 2019. Many feared that Russia would lose access to natural resources in the region, yet Russia has maintained a friendly relationship with the new government. In fact, Russia has agreed to boost Sudan's infrastructure by investing in telecommunications and agriculture. It is likely that Wagner will continue to stay in Sudan to protect Russian operations in natural resources.

Wagner's presence will soon be amplified as Russia will open a naval base in Sudan bringing in more military hardware. The prospects of a new military base on the Red Sea have serious ramifications for US operations.

Analysis

The analytical portion of this paper is structured as follows. Essentially, this portion answers key questions about Russian meddling and predicts the future.

Why Africa?

Russia is expanding in Africa because of an ongoing power game. The Chinese are making headway in the region through their “Belt and Road” project. At the moment, the US has no vision for Africa creating this power struggle. Russia does not want to be left behind and so is engaging in these shadow wars to keep their power strong. The Kremlin sees Africa through the lens of a realist as it is every man for himself in the region.

Another reason is because of energy and natural resources. African countries lack basic goods to power their cities. Given how sanctioned many Russian oil companies are, Africa provides a much needed source of income for the Russian countries. The Kremlin preys on poor nations to feed their cash strapped economy.

Lastly, the defense industry has a lot of customers in Africa. Many African countries are human rights violators making them less likely to receive US help. With this in mind, Russia will continue to establish rapport with brutal regimes in the region such as Eritrea and Sudan as a way to keep their defense industry afloat.

Should African Nations Take Russian Help?

Bottom line is that most African security forces are unable to fight conflict on their own. They are poorly trained and inept. Russian help does not really require much of a commitment to human rights or democracy. Given the lack of democratic freedoms in the region, Russian help may be beneficial. However, countries risk selling their sovereignty to the Kremlin and becoming political pawns. They could lose their natural resources and become a victim of

neo-colonialism. The truth is: there is no right or wrong answer to this question. Everything really depends on the context of this situation.

Regardless of whoever any African nation teams up with, they will be victims of neo-colonialism. To this day, Africa has not developed properly. To address these shortcomings, Africa relies on the help of foreign actors like China. However, African nations have to pay a big price for outside assistance. Oftentimes, this means selling away their sovereignty just to provide enough for their citizens.

What can the West do?

Put simply, Africa is vulnerable to Russian influence because of instability. Not every country can meet American “standards” for assistance. Given this reality, countries try to find alternative ways to tackle their problems. So far, Russia has proven to be a reliable partner.

In the short term, the options to tackle Wagner’s and Russia’s influence are very limited. The best the US can do is sanction key members of Wagner and continue to seize monetary assets. The US could try to persuade African countries to shift away from Russian support, however, this request may simply be rebuffed by many countries. They could persuade countries by offering them more economic or military aid. Yet to meet these concessions, most countries will have to liberalize their institutions. This gradual shift will take longer than expected. In reality, Wagner is too involved in African politics to be simply removed overnight. Wagner has made rapid advancements into Africa’s economic and political structure. This new development is something which the US will have to live with.

In the long term, covert action seems to be a possible option. Intelligence agencies could disrupt Wagner’s operations by jamming radio frequencies or through misinformation. They could also leak embarrassing information on Wagner’s mercenaries highlighting the human

rights abuses in a particular country. Given this unnecessary spotlight, it could force many countries to shy away from Russian help as it leads to more controversy. The likelihood of military force being used against Wagner is very slim. For the US to use military force, Wagner will have to directly attack US operations in Africa. The chances of this happening is very slim because Wagner's forces will be completely destroyed by any American attack. In the future, Russia will need Wagner to pursue more of its goals. It is highly likely that Russia will leave US operations in Africa alone, but they will definitely try to disrupt

The China Factor

We cannot talk about Africa without mentioning China. China is the biggest investor in the region. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is pouring billions of dollars in building infrastructure such as ports, railroads, etc, in Africa. China will seek to use these investments as a way to expand their military and economic might in the region. Will China be at odds with Russia's expansion in Africa?

In my opinion, this is highly unlikely. China and Russia want the same goals: limit US power and promote stability in their respective areas of influence. As long as these goals are met it is highly unlikely that China will balk at Russian expansion. The Russian military will not go near Chinese military installations in Africa nor will they disrupt Chinese projects. China will follow the same strategy with Russia's investment. In fact, it is in China's best interest that Russia will develop more clout in the region because it will sideline the US and keep away any resistance to BRI. If a Russian friendly nation comes next to a Chinese friendly nation, expect both sides to greet each other with a warm welcome.

Ties between China and Russia won't be severed, but they will be tested. China is hungry. It is hungry for energy to keep 1 billion people warm. The Russian economy is heavily reliant on

energy and natural resources. Given this shared desire, relations will be tested. Each side desires the same resource whether they be diamond reserves or oil fields. At first, things may seem to be solved without any trouble. But in the future, the allocation of resources will test the strength of China-Russia relations. It won't be enough to sever ties, but it will test them to a certain extent. It may or may not change how China sees Russia or vice versa.

Will Russia continue to use Wagner ?

In the future, expect to see Russia invest more in Wagner to achieve its strategic goals. As it stands, Wagner has scored 100% in all key areas.

Since the Soviet Union, the Russian government has desired access to warm water ports. By having access to warm water ports, the Russian navy would be able to project its power on a more global scale and compete with the US for maritime dominance. However, the Russian navy is currently limited to the ports of Murmansk and Vladivostok, where the ice freezes the water making it difficult to send ships. The addition of the warm-water port of Sevastopol in Crimea has helped push the Russian navy in the Black Sea.

By fighting in the right wars and backing up the stronger side, Wagner has helped Russia achieve its goal. A classified German Foreign Ministry report has confirmed that the Russian navy is building bases in Eritrea, Sudan, and Madagascar. These bases are likely to be built in the near future. These new bases are located near strategic waterways such as the Red Sea, Mediterranean Sea, and Indian Ocean. If Russian backed forces win in Libya, there could potentially be two naval bases in the Mediterranean. These naval bases will allow Russia to assert itself in the Mediterranean and diminish NATO dominance. The new bases in Madagascar will allow Russia to disrupt US maritime operations in the Indian Ocean. Additionally, the base

in Eritrea will allow Russia to challenge the American dominance of the Suez Canal. Wagner will continue to provide strategic victories for Russia in achieving its long term goals.

However, Russia must be wary of the wars that they choose to fight. According to the latest US intelligence reports, Wagner is now deployed in Mali to help address the Islamist insurgency in the Sahel. But asymmetric warfare is Wagner's weakness. The deployment of Wagner forces to fight the Islamist insurgency in Mozambique was a complete failure. Many soldiers were beheaded by jihadists and Wagner was forced to pull back. This deployment of forces to Mali can lead to disastrous consequences. If Wagner is unable to tackle the Islamist insurgency, the very efficacy of these mercenaries will be questioned. Keep in mind that jihadists threaten the very stability of West Africa, if Russia is not seen as a capable fighting force then it could potentially lose out on more security agreements.

Now that we have looked at the military aspect, we must shift to the economic aspect. Russia wants to diversify its economic influence. The Russian government cannot compete with American or Chinese economic might. Russia's economy is heavily reliant on gas and oil. It seems highly likely that Europe will try to diversify its energy needs and shift away from Russia. At the same time, Russia's economy needs income as sanctions have crippled its growth.

Wagner's involvement in Africa has allowed Russia to gain access to valuable natural resources. Russia uses Wagner as a way to gain economic concessions. So far, it has delivered the desired results. The support of the Khalifa Haftar in Libya has given Russia access to Libya's large oil reserves. This has allowed major Russian oil companies such as Gazprom and Yukos access to gain a much needed source of revenue. The access to diamond mines in Sudan, Central African Republic, and Guinea has given Russia greater control in Africa's natural resources market. It is likely that Wagner's deployment in the Congo, Rwanda, and Angola will give

Russia even more access to diamonds and oil. Overall, expect to see Wagner being used as both a military and economic tool used by Russia to expand its power in a very cost effective manner.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Wagner has proven to be an effective pawn in expanding Russian influence. They have proven to be a cheap way for Russia to achieve its strategic economic and military goals. From gaining access to warm water ports to expanding into Africa's natural resource market. In the future, Russia will deploy Wagner to hotspots not only in Africa but also in South America and Asia. In fact, Wagner's deployment in Venezuela has given Russia access to South America's largest oil reserves. This could potentially allow the Russian military to place missiles in Venezuela capable of reaching major US cities in the South.

However, there is an even bigger picture to look at. As the Beatles famously said, "Money can't buy me love". By using Wagner, Russia has proved that money is not needed to expand power. They do not need to spend billions of dollars maintaining large deployment of troops overseas like the US does. The US Department of Treasury estimates that maintaining Wagner costs the Russians 3 million dollars annually. The investment of 3 million dollars has given Russia a billion dollars worth of rewards. Russia has successfully proved that deploying non-state actors is a cheap and effective way to maintain power. Non-state actors maintain a level of plausible deniability that allows countries to operate with impunity.

The precedent set by Russia will be used by many countries. For instance, Iran balks at the US presence in the Middle East. In the future, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard could create its own mercenary outfit to maintain and gain Iranian strategic goals in places such as Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Pakistan could develop a mercenary force to play a more active role in assisting the jihadist insurgency against India in Kashmir. The Saudi and Emirati government

could use mercenaries to continue its war in Yemen without having to worry about pushback from its Western backers.

The deployment of mercenaries will be more actively used in the future as a way to maintain power. The US can condemn the deployment of mercenaries, but they will be very limited in controlling such a deployment. If this trend begins, it is highly likely that countries will use these mercenaries as a way to commit more human rights abuses. All in all, Russia has set a very dangerous precedent by successfully deploying Wagner in Africa. It is very possible that the Ukrainian or American government deploy its own mercenary force to push back on Russian expansion in Europe and the Middle East. Only time will tell how the international community will react to this new development in international politics.

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