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## **Private military companies as proxy forces in international politics with special reference to the Russian Wagner Group/African Corps and its operations in Africa**

*Thursday 26 June 2025 16:10 (20 minutes)*

Since the Cold War's end, private military companies (PMCs) have increasingly served as third parties in proxy wars, with states and non-state actors relying on them for military operations. These actors have become a key feature of external involvement in contemporary conflicts. Notable PMCs include Blackwater in Iraq, Executive Outcomes in Angola and Sierra Leone, and the Russian Wagner Group.

Max Weber defined the modern state as a community that claims a monopoly on legitimate force. The rise of PMCs challenges this, undermining state sovereignty when governments outsource security and warfare—fundamental aspects of statehood. This shift reflects broader international trends where PMCs play an increasing role in global conflict dynamics, deviating from the traditional notion that states ensure security. Scholars argue that national sovereignty, as established after the Peace of Westphalia (1648), is in decline. Weaker states, with limited institutional capacity, struggle to control violence, making PMCs both a symptom and a cause of fragile governance.

The Wagner Group, closely tied to Russia, has influenced numerous African countries since 2014, advancing Russian interests while providing plausible deniability for the Kremlin. This avoids public fallout from military losses or human rights abuses abroad. The death of its leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, in August 2023, following his rebellion against Putin, raised critical questions about Wagner's future. As a key Russian foreign policy tool, Wagner played major roles in Syria, Yemen, Ukraine, and Africa.

Now rebranded as the Africa Corps, Wagner remains active in Africa. This article examines its influence in Libya, the Central African Republic, Sudan, and Mali, exploring what the future holds for this PMC as it adapts to shifting geopolitical dynamics.

**What discipline or branch of humanities or social sciences do you identify yourself with?**

International Relations

**If you are submitting an Open Panel proposal, have you included all four abstracts in attachment?**

Yes, I have included all required information (see below).

**Are you a PhD student or early-career researcher?**

No

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