



## **THE USE OF PMC WAGNER IN VARIOUS MISSIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND EASTERN EUROPE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Private military contractors and companies (PMCs) are often used to fill empty spaces in the security sector that are not fully facilitated by the state or even not provided. For this reason, adding this space is a good chance for the PMC business. Wagner, a PMC from Russia whose composition ranges from ex-military to foreign legion, has a special role in securing state assets or maintaining security against terrorism and enemy forces. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to injure other legitimate parties, for example, when trying to assassinate Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. This can be understood as an illicit private authority. Nonetheless, the market share of Wagner PMCs is still in demand and used today, most recently when they were deployed in Syria and Ukraine. This research has the objective of uncovering and answering research questions regarding Wagner's power network and its use in carrying out the mandate to carry out the missions that they were involved in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Using qualitative methods to be able to see in depth and detail, this paper argues that PMC Wagner exists because it is needed to carry out missions that regular military operators cannot carry out. Many are interested in joining because they get a higher salary than regular army members in the Russian Armed Forces; however, the use of Wagner PMCs is sometimes against the law. This paper concludes that the values carried by PMC Wagner are economically profitable for operators or owners. Renting is also enjoyable because of its success in managing tasks, but there are still legal violations committed, for example, when attacking another sovereign country.

**Keywords:** Private Military Contractors/ Company, Wagner, Illicit Private Authority.

## INTRODUCTION

### The Genealogy of Wagner PMC

Under President Vladimir Putin's power, a network of strategic state enterprises and siloviki security agencies linked to powerbrokers directly determines the fate of the Wagner Group. The Orel Anti-Terror group is among Wagner's military scientists. It is believed to primarily consist of small cadres of military intelligence veterans, retirees, and members of the Special Forces Spetsnaz Unit Reserve. The primary focus of Anti-Terror-Orel is on five individuals who are listed on the list of Russian companies involved in the Orel Airborne Forces and All Union Special Forces Association of Paratroopers: the founders, Igor Iliyev, Oleg Maslov, Alexander Filipinkov, Pavel Ovsyannikov, and Director Sergey Epishkin. Several Siloviki private security companies, some registered under Epishkin's name and seemingly linked to the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation (FSB) Alpha and other Spetsnaz units, relied on the veteran organization associated with the Orel counter-terror unit as a liaison. (Emmanuel Dreyfus, 2018)

The archival version of the group's website shows that about half of the individuals affiliated with the anti-terror group unit Orel turned out to have links with the Private Military and Security Company (PMSC) or private military contractor/company (PMC) and had served in the Air Force (VDV), 7th Squad of Special Forces "ROSICH," and 1st Special Purposes Unit of Internal Forces, or MVD "Vityaz." The other smaller portion of the group consisted of GRU *veterans*, *Vympel*, *Alpha*, and Russian sailors. There are also allegations that the Orel Anti-Terror Unit's network is affiliated with a number of groups, namely Patriot and ROSA. Some of its members may have shifted to join Rusich, a group of Russian neo-Nazi Spetsnaz veterans who will later play a key role in the battles in Debaltseve and Ilovaisk in Donbas, Ukraine. (Foley, 2022)

According to the archived version of the group's website, approximately 50% of the people associated with the anti-terrorism group Orel seem to have connections with the Private Military and Security Company (PMSC) or private military contractor/company (PMC). These individuals have previously served in the Air Force (VDV), the 7th Squad of Special Forces ("ROSICH"), and the 1st Special Purposes Unit of Internal Forces ("Vityaz"). Furthermore, there are claims that the Orel Anti-Terror Unit's network has connections with several organizations, specifically Patriot and ROSA. Several individuals from the gang may have transitioned to join Rusich, a faction consisting of Russian neo-Nazi Spetsnaz veterans. This faction would subsequently have a significant impact on the conflicts in Debaltseve and Ilovaisk in the Donbas region of Ukraine. (Spearin, 2019)

In 1996, the worldwide military/commercial security services industry saw the initial foray of Russian private military enterprises with the establishment of FDG Corp. This company conducted a number of limited operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Subsequent groups imitated this action in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but they eventually did not succeed in achieving noticeable success due to several variables, including the oversaturation of the private military contractor market by most Western participants. The eruption of the Libyan and Syrian civil wars, both of which underscored the potential involvement of non-state actors, including Private Military Companies (PMCs), reignited Russia's apparently waning interest in PMCs. (Sukhankin, 2019)

Russian experts, such as Aleksandr Ageev, argue that mercenary companies are useful tools for achieving geopolitical goals, such as changing regimes and strengthening the economy, which are in line with the interests of the state or its associated entities. Crucially, these private military companies function independently without any direct participation of the government. When Russian private military companies were unable to effectively compete with their Western counterparts, Russia resorted to historical strategies and patterns reminiscent of the 17th–20th centuries. During this time, the prototype of private military companies functioned as a *de facto* private army for either a sovereign state or a powerful individual. The Wagner Private Military Company (PMC) originated, established, and evolved into a highly structured paramilitary combat unit in eastern Ukraine. President Bashar al-Assad subsequently ordered his return to Syria to engage in warfare. (Kimberly Marteen, 2019)

Alternatively, the changes in payment rules could be attributed to the abundance of potential recruits in economically distressed Russian regions who are eager to join the PMC Wagner Group because to the limited job prospects. Based on a biographical examination of the Wagner fighters who were murdered in Ukraine and Syria, it is evident that the typical individual joining the group is a middle-aged guy, usually between the ages of 35 and 47, who has a family. These individuals often have a background in business and may have experienced financial difficulties or failures. While possessing a wealth of military experience, certain individuals struggle to transition into civilian life or navigate difficult economic circumstances. A senior military official, who wishes to remain nameless, observes that the Wagner Group consistently compensates its members in physical currency, which further contributes to the ambiguity surrounding their financial condition. (Marteen, 2019)

All expenses are financed by the Russian government and influential businesses, either in Russia or in Syria. The dynamics of global political progress extend beyond the utilization of conventional military forces. Non-state or private entities frequently undertake duties that a state is unable to execute. This has the potential to have a substantial impact on the formation of the country's power hierarchy. In this study, the researchers utilized Hall and Bierstaker's concept of illicit private authority. They argued that the mafia and mercenaries, acting as authorities, engage in activities that are deemed "forbidden" because they violate both domestic and international legal norms. "Mafias and merchants exert a type of private power that is deemed "illicit" due to their actions contravening established legal standards at both the national and international levels." Taking into consideration the above described context, the author utilizes qualitative research methodologies to examine the Wagner power grid and the missions carried out by Wagner in Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

## **THEORITICAL REVIEW**

This research demonstrates that Private Military Companies (PMCs) not only enhance a nation's military capabilities but also possess the capacity to extend their own influence and power on a global scale. Blackwater gained prominence due to their involvement in multiple contentious episodes in Iraq, sparking extensive discussions over the role and accountability of private military companies (PMCs) in armed conflicts. The significance of establishing a regulatory framework and international agreements to

govern the activities of PMC businesses has been a central point of emphasis in policy deliberations. A comprehensive framework such as International Humanitarian Law enables us to establish explicit boundaries on the actions that the Private Military Company (PMC) can undertake during armed conflicts. Nevertheless, the primary obstacle in these regulatory endeavors is to achieve a global agreement on suitable benchmarks, as well as ensure adherence to such benchmarks. Moreover, it is crucial for the state to be actively involved in regulating and supervising PMC enterprises. (Maashani, April 30, 2020)

An analysis of private military firms (PMCs), such as the Wagner Group, can be conducted using a realistic methodology within the framework of state relations. The Wagner Group, a private military company (PMC) closely affiliated with Russia, operates not only as a commercial enterprise but also as a proxy combatant, exacerbating conflict zones and questioning the prevailing narrative of major powers. Multiple studies have examined these phenomena, analyzed their influence on a nation's military might and efficiency, and uncovered the intricate connections between these types of corporations and the authority of the government. Multiple private military firms (PMCs), such as Executive Outcomes and Blackwater, have been extensive scrutiny to comprehend their impact on the global security environment. (Ramirez, 2021)

States should play an active role in establishing policies and enforcing the law to ensure that the existence and operation of PMCs do not jeopardize national security or global stability. This includes ensuring that such companies do not operate in conflict areas without official permission or violate human rights in the performance of their duties. This comprehensive approach to analyzing PMC entities, such as the Wagner Group, provides a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics behind global political and security realities. It also emphasizes the importance of integrating concepts of realism into policy debates related to the use and regulation of PMC companies. Thus, research continues to explore the impact and implications of such phenomena within a broader theoretical framework. (Sukhankin, War, Business and Ideology: How Russian Private Military Contractors Pursue Moscow's Interests, 2019)

## **RESEACRH METHOD**

This question's research follows a qualitative research approach, employing literature analysis as a data collection method. This approach entails gathering data from diverse sources, including books, journals, and existing research, with the aim of comprehensively and contextually describing phenomena. The data analysis techniques applied are descriptive analytics, which focus on data simplification, presentation, and endorsement of conclusions to ensure consistency with defined concepts. By doing data processing and analysis, the author intends to reach clear and comprehensive conclusions that are simple to understand, both by the researchers themselves and the readers. This approach emphasizes the importance of conducting qualitative research through literature

studies, as well as the application of descriptive analysis methods to investigate and interpret data in depth. (Furlong, 2022)

## **RESULT & DISCUSSION**

### ***The Influence of Wagner and its Various Positions***

Yevgeny Prigozhin, a Russian entrepreneur with a criminal history, is frequently associated with the Wagner Group. In 1979 and 1981, he faced convictions for money laundering and soliciting prostitution, which led to a nine-year prison sentence. According to Russian sources, Prigozhin, who was born in Leningrad in 1961, has a personal association with Viktor Zolotov, a former bodyguard of St. Petersburg mayor Anatoly Sobchak, the director of the Russian National Guard, and a member of the Russian Security Council who has maintained proximity to Putin since the late 1990s. Since 2010, Prigozhin, who had established a lucrative catering business network, had personal endorsement from Vladimir Putin, who visited the inauguration of Prigozhin's latest enterprise, Concord-Catering, in St. Petersburg. The Kremlin's interest appears to have resulted in a growing array of intricate tasks assigned to Prigozhin. The formation of the Internet Research Agency, also known as the Olginio Troll Factory, exemplifies the psychological information operations aimed at both foreign and domestic adversaries of Russia. This entity is considered instrumental in the anti-Ukrainian and anti-Western initiatives that emerged following the onset of the Ukraine crisis. (Rondeaux, 2022)

According to the Russian investigative platform The Bell, groups associated with Prigozhin commenced efforts in 2013 to establish a private military company capable of executing diverse cross-border military operations, including overseas missions. From 2014 to 2019, enterprises associated with Prigozhin, notably Concord Catering, secured profitable contracts totaling approximately 2.2 billion USD from the Ministry of Defense for services including cleaning, construction, catering, supply delivery, and the Moscow City Council. This is somewhat analogous in public educational institutions and healthcare facilities. Official Russian sources suggest that PMC Wagner may have established and financed itself with a portion of the funds designated for Prigozhin's enterprises. Notable ties between Prigozhin's affiliated enterprises and PMC Wagner surfaced in late 2016. During that period, this private military company had effectively conducted operations in Syria, as shown by a former member who entered into a contract with EvroPolis as a classified individual designated as a "technical specialist." (Rondeaux, Inquiry into the Murder of Hamdi Bouta and Wagner Group Operations at the Al-Shaer Gas Plant, Homs, Syria 2017, 2020)

Ali Ghanem, the Syrian Minister of Oil and Mineral Resources, and Alexander Novak, the Russian Minister of Energy, executed a deal between the EvroPolis firm and the Syrian government. This can be understood as enabling the firm to seize control of almost a quarter of Syria's oil and natural gas resources, despite the fact that most of these resources remained to be regained since they were still under the occupation of the

government's adversaries. Oleg Erokhin, a former member of the Special Rapid Response Unit (SOBR) and subsequently the head of Russia's Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Northwestern Federal District, took command of the company in 2017. (Stepanenko, 2022)

According to EvroPolis, the liberation of oil and gas fields in Syria has begun. Certain projections indicate that the company's net profit may attain 100 million USD monthly. A substantial figure, nearly exceeding Russia's budget, but significant when allocated among individuals. Moreover, in addition to hydrocarbons, EvroPolis is currently engaged in several sectors of the Syrian economy, including complete responsibility for Syria's electrification initiative. A notable aspect of the relationship between Prigozhin and the Wagner Group surfaced in the summer of 2018, as a chapel was erected to honor Wagner members who perished in Syria, situated near the city of Goryachy Klyuch (Krasnodar Krai), approximately 20 kilometers from the Molkino training facility, the primary training center for Wagner. Russian reports indicate that the chapel was constructed by Megalain, a business owned by Prigozhin. (Rondeaux, "Inquiry into the Murder of Hamdi Bouta and Wagner Group Operations at the Al-Shaer Gas Plant, Homs, Syria 2017, 2020)

### **Organization and Structure of Wagner**

The recruitment strategy employs a diverse composition, encompassing multiple societal strata, including individuals both directly and indirectly associated with Russia's state and commercial entities. Included are former regular soldiers or, at minimum, ex-members who have engaged in frontline combat. This group distinguishes itself from the others. In 2015, the Union of Donbas Volunteers emerged, reportedly establishing direct connections with Kremlin advisor Surkov during that period. Other Russian PMCs, specifically the ENOT Corps, intricately connect to this group, engaging in combat in Donbas and participating in military training for adolescents in the Balkans. Various other Russian private military companies, particularly PMC Wagner, purportedly use it as a recruitment tool. The second group is the Combat Brotherhood Organization, founded in 1997. In 2017, the Combat Brotherhood Organization arrested Georgy Tsurkanu, a notable member who had participated in the Yugoslav War, and purportedly killed him in Syria while fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). While veteran organizations recognized Tsurkanu's affiliation with the group, they promptly refuted any participation in recruiting recruits for combat in Syria. (A. Yudina, 2019 )

In January 2014, the Cossack force made its initial announcement, indicating its readiness to mobilize Cossacks in large numbers to suppress Ukrainian protests against then-President Viktor Yanukovich. Moreover, the Cossacks played a significant role in the annexation of Crimea and the ensuing intelligence operations in southeastern Ukraine. The operational scope, however, extends beyond Ukraine. The ISIS terrorist organization in Syria seized Roman Zabolotny and Tsurkanu in 2017. Although the Don Army's press staff confirmed Zabolotny's affiliation, they also neglected to mention his awareness or

participation in the recruitment of Cossacks for combat in Syria. PMC Wagner is also affiliated with active members of military commissions. Numerous sources have identified military commissariats (voyenkomati) as recruitment centers for PMC Wagner. The investigative research reveals that recruiters are actively soliciting assistance from reserve component members with combat experience in conflict zones, including Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Chechnya, and the South Caucasus. Moreover, recruiters prioritize individuals with active status in Spetsnaz or the Airborne Forces VDV. PMC Wagner includes not only Russians but also individuals from non-Russian ethnic regions and other countries. It is possible that certain Wagner Group fighters hail from the region, specifically Crimea and the Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republics (LPR-DPR). (Yudina, 2015)

With Russia's endorsement, PMC Wagner receives a second assignment to operate in Syria. The available data indicates that naval and aerial forces facilitated the transportation of PMC Wagner men to the Syrian battlefield through multiple methods. They began their maritime expedition from the cities of Sevastopol and Novorossiysk, both of which played an important role in the route to Bashar al-Assad's territory. In 2013, Russia successfully implemented a similar strategy by dispatching multiple vessels to Syria, carrying armored personnel carriers (APCs) and electronic warfare apparatus. In 2015, Russia augmented the transportation of military supplies to Syria using this established sea channel. On August 20 of that year, the Alligator-class landing ship Nikolay Filchenkov transported military supplies to the port of Tartus. Subsequently, in the latter half of September, two Russian landing ships, Korolev and Novocherkassk, accompanied by BDK-64 Caesar Kunikov, arrived with armaments for the Syrian Armed Forces. The Black Sea Fleet task force, known as "Syrian Express," carried out the collaboration among the components. They performed efficiently and completed the mission as instructed. The maritime route, although purportedly used for the transportation of Wagner PMC personnel to the battlefield, appears to primarily facilitate the conveyance of heavy weaponry, military equipment, and various supplies, along with supplementary logistical support. (Szénási, 2015)

Besides sea transit, there is an alternate option involving aerial travel. Russian private military contractors primarily employ airborne transport to reach the front lines in Syria. In September 2015, military transport flights from Moscow to Syria took place biweekly. The primary bases for these flights are Mozdok, Ryazan, Ivanovo, and other places that accommodate VDV units. A major element in the success of PMC Wagner is Russia's commitment to supporting the entire Southern Federal District (SFD). Rostov-on-Don plays an important role in PMC Wagner's development and operation. The city, located in the southern area of the SFD, functions as a crucial logistics center in southern Russia. The Rostov region is crucial in the eastern Ukraine conflict, serving as a principal channel for logistical assistance to the Donbas separatist forces. The Cham Wings airline, which operates civilian Airbus A320s, has established Rostov as a critical base for the passage of both private and contract Russian soldiers to Syria. The Wagner Group likely

used a similar approach to get its personnel to Syria, utilizing Platov International Airport in Rostov Oblast. Air travel now appears to be accessible, unlike the Soviet era when the large number of personnel and limited transit alternatives led to the transportation of military advisors by sea. Concerns regarding the anonymity of private military companies (PMCs) and their operations have elevated the importance of aerial transportation. (Lavrov, 2018)

### **Wagner's Mission in the Middle East**

Conclusive evidence indicates that the Russian governing elite is fully cognizant of the existence and operations of the Wagner Group as of December 9, 2016. An investigative journalist and blogger photographed the Wagner leader amid approximately 300 other attendees at a special event in the Kremlin. The Wagner commanders were ordered to execute a mission named Courage, purportedly for their role in the successful seizure of Palmyra, Syria. Dmitry Peskov, the press secretary of the Russian presidency, affirmed the PMC's participation in Russia's operations following the emergence of images online depicting Dmitry Utkin, Andrey Troshev, and Alexander Kuznetsov alongside Putin at the Kremlin gala (Den Geroyev Otechestva), which honored Russian heroes and recipients of the Order of Courage that day. During a significant news conference in December 2018, Putin effectively acknowledged the existence of PMC Wagner, widely recognized for its involvement in hostilities in Ukraine and Syria. PMC Wagner is capable of conducting operations and advancing its business interests globally. As long as they don't violate Russian internal laws and regulations, they can proceed. People perceive the Wagner Group's direct support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime, which is fighting various factions such as terrorists and opposition forces, as a de facto military operation in which Wagner fighters act as shock troops alongside other pro-Assad forces. These Russian mercenaries have scored multiple notable wins, aided by close air support from the Russian Air Force. The objective is to preserve the al-Assad regime throughout its ultimate conflict with ISIS and opposing factions. Simultaneously, PMC Wagner trained pro-Assad local armed organizations and organic factions of the Syrian Armed Forces, effectively emulating a primary function of Special Operations Forces (SOF). (Marteen, 2019 )

The former commander of Russian forces in Syria, Colonel General Aleksandr Dvornikov, emphasized that, despite challenges, Russian experts successfully coordinated operations among Brigadier General Suheil's Desert Hawks Brigade, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the Syrian Army's 5th Storm Troops Corps, and various units from Hezbollah and Fatimida. The Russian side emphasized that the subsequent consolidation of the initially fractured group into a consolidated force has proven effective in executing cooperative combat actions. PMC Wagner collaborates with Special Operations Forces (SOF) to provide direction for airstrikes conducted by the Russian Air Force (VKS). This serves a crucial function, as it can effectively target the enemy's essential assets. (Vitkine, 2022,)

PMC Wagner's operations counteract Syrian government adversaries with the goal of bolstering diverse economic endeavors undertaken by local entities and specific Russian individuals. Despite PMC Wagner's inability to engage militarily with technologically advanced troops on conventional battlefields, it offers benefits in quality and cost-effectiveness, making it suitable for clandestine missions, intelligence operations, and specialized duties. As a result, there are numerous reasons to assert that Syria, which is increasingly emerging as a focal point for Russian commercial endeavors, will continue to be the primary operational arena for the Russian Wagner PMC in the future.

In addition to Wagner and other enterprises linked to Yevgeny Prigozhin that are spearheading this commercial strategy, Gennady Timchenko, a prominent Russian businessman and close ally of Putin, has also re-entered the Syrian security sector. In April 2019, Timchenko's energy firm, Stroytransgaz, entered into a 49-year contract with the Syrian government for the development and enhancement of the port of Tartus. This informal agreement allows Russian enterprises to serve as the port's primary investors. Estimates place the project's value at 500 million USD, encompassing a comprehensive refurbishment and reconstruction of the port infrastructure. Russian media has reported the emergence of a new private military company, Shield (Shchit), in Syria. Currently, information regarding this entity is limited and consists solely of anecdotal evidence and speculation. Reports suggest that Shield established itself to protect Timchenko's interests in Syria and those associated with him. Conversely, Shield designed and expected Wagner to perform security services-related tasks. (Jones, 2021)

The Wagner Group offers a profitable career prospect for Russians aiming to earn rubles. What accounts for the disparity in compensation between enlisted troops in the Russian armed forces, who receive a base salary of 30,000 rubles (495 USD), and military leaders serving as training instructors for recruits, who earn 1,100 USD monthly during the training period? Upon official engagement with Wagner, we anticipate that the remuneration for private military contractors (PMC) associated with the organization, which generally includes retired regular Russian military personnel aged 35 to 55, will fall between 80,000 and 250,000 rubles monthly. 667–2.083 USD. One source indicates that certain members' payouts can amount to as much as 300,000 rubles. There are two thousand five hundred dollars in the United States. (More Russian Fighters from Private 'Wagner Group' Die in Syria, 2017 )

Wagner's operations started in Ukraine in 2014, during the annexation of Crimea. In 2014, this group also collaborated with Russian-backed separatists in the Luhansk region of Ukraine. Dmitriy Valeryevich Utkin, a veteran of the First and Second Chechen Wars, is alleged to have established the group. Until 2008 or 2013, Utkin held the rank of lieutenant colonel and commanded the special forces brigade unit of the Main Intelligence Directorate of Russia (GRU), in addition to the 700th Independent Spetsnaz Detachment of the 2nd Independent Brigade. Following his military service, he began employment in 2013 with Moran Security Group, a private enterprise founded by Russian military

veterans engaged in global security operations and training, with a specialization in anti-piracy security. (Vaux, 2016)

In 2017, Wagner's finances, sourced from remuneration for carrying missions and security operations, rose by 185 million rubles, equivalent to 3.1 million USD, with approximately forty Ukrainian nationals employed by Wagner, while 95 percent of the remaining workforce were Russian citizens. During the operation in Syria, one Ukrainian national was killed while serving in the Wagner group in 2016, for a total of three documented fatalities. Wagner has previously employed nationals from Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Moldova in addition to Russia and Ukraine. All individuals starting their careers at Wagner received training at the Russian Ministry of Defense's facilities in Molino, adjacent to the secluded settlement of Molkin, Krasnodar Krai. The barracks at the site are officially unassociated with the Russian Ministry of Defense, with legal documents characterizing it as a children's holiday camp. (Tsvetkova, 2019)

The private military contractor is forbidden from distributing photographs, texts, audio and video recordings, or any additional information obtained during their training on the Internet. Whether in Russia or another country, they must not disclose their whereabouts. The corporation relinquishes mobile phones, tablets, and other communication devices, allocating them at specified intervals with the approval of their commander. The corporation presented passports and other documents, and in return, issued an anonymous dog tag with a personal identity number to the corporate workers. The corporation requires new recruits to sign a 10-year confidentiality agreement, and in the event of a breach, reserves the right to terminate the employee's contract without compensation. (UNIAN, 2018 )

### **Attempts to Sabotage and Assassinate Zelensky**

Former Russian soldiers may elect to enlist in private military organizations after transitioning to regular military service. Primarily, people perceive PMCs as predominantly apolitical nonprofit entities that carry out a variety of military and security roles, including frontline combat and the execution of specialized tasks like troop training or VIP protection. The Russian security firm PMC Wagner operates as a private entity with strong affiliations to the government, frequently engaging in official operations. Russia utilizes PMC Wagner as a supplementary force to advance its geopolitical aims. For Russians possessing combat experience, the enhanced salary and life insurance offered by PMCs are undoubtedly a luxury and highly attractive. (Christopher Faulkner, 2022)

Over the past decade, Russia has extensively utilized private military companies as a cost-efficient instrument for foreign policy. The Russian Private Military Company is an advancing component of the Kremlin's military and foreign policy framework, notably the Wagner Group. They provided Moscow with a plausible refutation of human rights violations or accusations of unethical and unscrupulous military conduct. Consequently, those seeking to attribute blame to Russia have challenges since Russia refutes any formal

association with the matter. Private military companies enable their patrons, such as Russia, to enhance geopolitical alliances and procure resources with minimal risk. (Jone, 2021)

The calculated deployment of these perilous forces has resulted in multiple triumphs for Kremlin objectives, including bolstering the Syrian government, extricating the Central African Republic and Mali from French dominance, and trafficking gold and diamonds to alleviate certain effects of sanctions levied against Russia. The recent possible collapse of this organization in Ukraine suggests that the ongoing conflict will likely position Wagner for future successes, particularly due to an expanded recruitment pool and heightened demand for its security services. Nonetheless, this cannot occur if the government takes measures to impede it, as it can effectively restrict its activities. (Ilyushina, 2022)

Russia relies on the Wagner Group, a private security organization, for its security interests. This can be evidenced by the deployment of over 400 contractors from their original assignment in the Central African Republic in mid-to-late January 2022 on a mission to assassinate Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and members of his government, thereby laying the groundwork for Russia to take control of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022. The Ukrainian government received this information earlier on February 26, after which it announced a strict curfew for 36 hours to comb through the capital in order to neutralize the sabotage threat from the Wagner PMC forces. (Rana, 2022)

The Ukrainian government announced that the previous day, its forces had eliminated 60 enemy combatants suspected of orchestrating sabotage in Kyiv while masquerading as territorial defense units. After receiving the information, intense clashes erupted in western and northeastern Kyiv, with Ukraine claiming that it had thwarted assaults on military installations. Shortly after the aforementioned incidents, Ukrainian soldiers secured the capital. The United States characterized the Russian forces approaching Kiev as reconnaissance units. Two days later, a U.S. official revealed indications of Wagner's contract for the reconnaissance mission, albeit with unclear location and quantity details. The Wagner Group is believed to have coordinated two of the three assassination attempts Zelensky has survived. In March, at the onset of the battle, the Ukrainian military asserted that they had eliminated the initial members of the Wagner PMC since the commencement of the Russian invasion, with the first report being on March 13. (Watling, 2022)

During the 2022 Ukrainian crisis, a minimum of 5,000 mercenaries affiliated with the Wagner gang collaborated with Russian forces in Ukraine. French intelligence sources corroborate this assertion, indicating that numerous Wagner militants have departed from the African continent to assist the group's endeavors in Russia's 'Special Operation' in Ukraine. Bonuses, disbursed in USD, have incentivized Wagner fighters to eliminate Ukrainian tanks or units. Russia is increasingly using Wagner to fill the power void at the

front lines. Wagner participates in specialized operations, implementing dragon's teeth fortifications to thwart counterattacks from Ukrainian forces using armored vehicles, including tanks. Wagner is positioned at several front lines, in contrast to the Chechen fighters, who concentrate on Russian offensives on Bakhmut. Human rights abuses in Ukraine allegedly implicate Wagner. (Pokalova, 2023)

## CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Military organizations are employed in a nation's security and defense operations, but if the state is unable to fulfill this responsibility or cannot do so comprehensively, private groups may bridge that gap. PMC has the potential to assume roles within the security industry. The Wagner Group, from Russia, emerged as one of the private military companies engaged in security operations both within and beyond Russian borders. Moreover, both Russia's close allies and state adversaries employ it to counter insurrection and terrorism. Russia employs Wagner on multiple battlefields to protect its operations and interests. In the Middle East, specifically in Syria, Russia supports President Bashar al-Assad's administration, while in Ukraine, it opposes Western influence and supports President Vladimir Putin's Special Operation. The security situation has created an advantageous environment for Wagner's operations, which boast a membership in the thousands. A significant number are keen to enlist in Wagner due to the more elevated remuneration offered compared to conventional soldiers.

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