Write-up Outline

1. Why is Wagner important to study?

We selected the Wagner Group as a matter of importance because it represents one of the most influential private military security contractors in the world. Acting as arm of Russia’s geopolitical goals, the Wagner Group remains a consistent actor is numerous states across three different continents. Yet, the identity and classification of the Wagner Group remains largely unexamined across the academic literature. The Wagner Group creates a hole in the literature on how we understand the role of PMSCs by sovereign states. The Central African Republic represents an important case study to understand the Wagner Group’s relationship with Russia as well as an African state on the continent with their greatest influence. For the past decade, Russia has increasingly used the Wagner Group as a means of establishing government relations in CAR and as a means to collect black market resources. Yet, the Wagner Group is responsible for multiple atrocities and failures in duty leading us to ask…..

1. Research question and interestingness
2. Lit review
   1. Journal articles
      1. Only one article really covering Wagner in-depth
         1. (Marten, 2019)
            1. Research question: Why is Russia using the Wagner group without “legalizing its existence or role?” (abs)
            2. Case-study research
            3. Main argument: Wagner is often used in the same way that other states use PMCs, “corrupt informal networks tied to the Russian regime have also used it in ways that are not typical of other strong states and that potentially undermine Russian security interests” (abs). Moscow uses Wagner in the way we expect, i.e., for purposes of plausible deniability, but this purpose likely no longer works because of how much Wagner has been in the news. Instead, Marten argues, Putin uses Wagner because their technical illegal status inside of Russia allows him to control the group and impose state sanctions if they do not listen to him.
            4. Mentions constructivism, saying Russia should legalize PMCs and sign the Montreaux document to reinforce its membership in the great power club that uses PMCs legally
            5. Sovereignty implications

“That kind of blurring has been frequently practiced by corrupt post-colonial regimes, but it is not expected of today’s great powers who have strong civilian control over their military forces” (198)

***Maybe we could make the case that Wagner and other are disrupting or hurting Russian sovereignty?***

* + 1. Various other articles mentioning Wagner
       1. Poli-sci lens
          1. (Østensen & Bukkvoll, 2021)

Research question: Can Russia use PMCs as a tool to “increase respect for its great power status at a low financial cost?” (13)

Also asks whether PMCs are just ways for elites to make more money

Answer:

Often not cheaper as “war-fighting state proxies” or as grey zone operators (14)

However, when Russian PMCs are “engaged as security exports traded for strategic or economic access… their ability to increase Russian great power status on the cheap may be stronger” (14)

Strengthening Russian power projection?

“Such an engagement sends the message that Russia may be in the process of resurrecting its ability and will to project power globally, much to the reminiscence of the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s. In this respect, PMCs play a significant and not very expensive part in this wider effort to strengthen Russian ‘power as prestige’” (14)

* + - * 1. (Karagiannis, 2021)

Tries to explain why Russia uses PMCs & militias, specifically in a case study of Ukraine & Syria

Answer: Russia uses them to minimize casualties (since the public is now sensitive to them), concerns over legal and reputational costs of direct Russian interference, and military advantages afforded by PMCs & militias

* + - * 1. (Giedraitis, 2020)

Research question: Why is Russia using private military companies, especially in the context of 2014-19?

Uses principal-agent theory to examine agency slack from Wagner group

Examines the settings and time from “2014–2019 in the regions of Syria, North-East and Central Africa, Ukraine, and Venezuela” (125)

Pretty sloppy article, published in the *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review*

* + - 1. Others are strategic comments and policy type papers
         1. (“Russia’s Use of Its Private Military Companies,” 2020)

Short paper, discusses some history and various reasons why they think Russia uses PMCs, i.e., because they’re cheaper, easier to use, and are deniable

* + - * 1. (Guzansky & Marshall, 2021)

Only slightly mentions Wagner, is mainly discussing the mediterannean and Russia’s role there, saying Russia uses Wagner because “Deploying Wagner fighters gave the Russian army decisive ground offencive capabilities without affecting formal casualty statistics” (5)

* 1. Policy articles
     1. These are very fact based and serve more as evidence for research than anything else
     2. (Marten, 2019)
        1. Article uses evidence from Russian, French, and African media sources about Prigozhin’s and Wagner’s 2018 activities.
     3. (Rondeaux, 2019)
        1. Great article for summary of the functions of Wagner Group and how it fits into PMSCs. Believes Wagner to be a frontline agent of a Russian grand strategy that desires a multipolar world.
     4. (Marten, 2019)
        1. Article states that Putin is concerned in his last legal term that he will lose support by seeming weak. Finds that Putin may have “arranged the collaboration of the Russian military in Prigozhin’s corrupt deals in Africa in order to mend a dispute within the Kremlin elite.”
     5. (Grissom et al., 2022)
        1. Geostrategic assesment of Russian activity in Africa that tries to “make sense of the growing mass of often contradictory micro-level reporting on Russian” activities (2)
     6. (Sukhankin, n.d.)
        1. History of Russian PMCs and Wagner
        2. “During the 2014–2016 interim, several Russian PMCs operated in Ukraine. While some of them disappeared/became invisible, Wagner Group successfully went through the “natural selection” process and assumed a dominant role” (1)

1. Major points (from whiteboard)
   1. How does Russia’s use of Wagner affect its sovereignty?
      1. Delegated authority from PA lit
         1. Costs not the same as Blackwater & US
            1. Blackwater is not seen as state run
      2. Hybrid state actor
         1. Fluid actor, fluctuates almost as between a state and non-state actor
         2. Deniable
      3. No distinction between Wagner and the state
         1. Thus, high sovereignty costs
         2. Similar to my double delegation
      4. Combo of state association and non-state control
      5. Plausible deniability until no longer effective
      6. Use & abuse
      7. Business creates diplomatic ties
2. Why is CAR a good case study?

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