

Thank you so much for persevering through all of these challenging times, --it is quite difficult, and your service is very much appreciated!

I wanted to share two recent articles about Libya: (1) Joshua Meservey's Daily Signal [article](#), "America's Opportunity to Quell Russian Meddling in Libya" (2) Tarek Megerisi's Guardian [article](#), "Why the 'ignored war' in Libya will come to haunt a blinkered west."

In his piece, Joshua Meservey analyzes the role and impact of the Wagner Group, a Russian paramilitary company operating in Libya. The Wagner Group is financed and operated by the well-known Russian oligarch Yevgeniy Prigozhin, often referred to as "Putin's chef" and who led the Internet Research Agency, and functions as a cutout for the Kremlin. Members of this group have fought in Ukraine, Syria, Mozambique, and the Central African Republic among other nations as agents of Russian foreign policy. Libya is the most recent country where Wagner mercenaries have deployed. These soldiers have been hired by Khalifa Haftar in an effort to bolster his military campaign which has thus far been effectively pushed back by the Libyan Government of National Accord.

In his op-ed, Tarek Megerisi documents the alignment between Khalifa Haftar and Bashar Al-Assad, the conflict escalation through proxy warfare, the rise of mercenaries, and the devastating humanitarian crisis. Earlier this month, Haftar established an embassy in Damascus. The UAE and Egypt have provided Haftar with Chinese drones and soldiers from Chad and Sudan. Without U.S. and European leadership, regional powers will draw out the conflict, and Libya is likely to face a humanitarian crisis on the scale of those suffered in Syria and Yemen.

Please find both articles attached. I have included key summary points and relevant quotes:

**Joshua Meservey, "America's Opportunity to Quell Russian Meddling in Libya," Daily Signal, March 13, 2020**

1. **Khalifa Haftar hired Wagner Group mercenaries in addition to Egyptian and Emirati-backed forces:** "Yet, by August 2019, Haftar's advance halted, creating a stalemate between his forces and the government. To break the deadlock, Haftar hired an estimated 2,000 well-equipped Wagner fighters to bolster his forces. The incursion prompted Turkey, which backs the Government of National Accord, to deploy 4,000 troops to Tripoli.
2. **The Wagner Group is an extension of the Kremlin:** "The Russian government equips Wagner fighters with sophisticated weapons and gear and grants them access to Russian military facilities. Wagner also pays wages four times higher than the average Russian soldier earns, which enables it to attract Russians with military experience and few other ways to obtain a steady income."
3. **The lack of U.S. leadership in Libya has encouraged Putin to get more involved:** "Wagner's intrusion also reminds us what can happen when the U.S. declines to lead the diplomatic efforts to resolve a conflict that is important to American national interests."
4. **Wagner's presence could cause the conflict in Libya to escalate dramatically:** "Russian meddling in Libya is yet another reminder of what is at stake in the conflict. The nation is a beehive of extremist activity and instability, and the spillover is harming American allies on

three continents. Libya is currently a headache for the U.S. It easily could become a blinding migraine.”

5. **This represents a growing trend of Russia in Africa:** “Wagner’s intrusion into Libya is unlikely to be decisive, but it represents a trend in Russia’s recent Africa policy. Moscow deploys the group to countries such as Mozambique and the Central African Republic to reap economic benefits: nations pay for Wagner’s services and grant Russian firms access to their valuable natural resources.”
6. **If Russia continues to gain a stronghold in Libya, it have access to Tripoli, a warm-water port, and the ability to threaten Europe’s southern flank:** “Wagner also gives Moscow influence in strategic countries; its Libyan foray is likely designed in part to give Putin leverage over Europe. Finally, Wagner’s status as a non-state actor allows Moscow to operate through the group with few restraints, and gives the Kremlin a fig leaf of deniability.”

**Tarek Megerisi, “Why the ‘ignored war’ in Libya will come to haunt a blinkered west,” Guardian, March 24, 2020**

1. **Khalifa Haftar and Bashar Al-Assad have established diplomatic relations:** “The most recent ally of Khalifa Haftar, the general who has been attacking the Libyan capital Tripoli since April last year, is Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. This union was formalised last week with the opening of a “Libyan embassy” in Damascus. The alarming partnership has been forged almost completely without comment.
2. **Haftar’s military campaign against the U.S.-recognized Government of National Accord has created a humanitarian crisis:** “A humanitarian disaster looms as more than two million people remain in the city, suffering daily shelling, failing electricity thanks to an oil blockade, and threats to cut off its water supply. All the while the attacking parties use terms such as “Aleppo” to describe the lengths they’ll go to win this fight.”
3. **The suffering in Libya is on a similar scale to Syria and Yemen:** “If Syria’s own tragic war augured how other powers would exploit the space left by a pivoting US, and Yemen’s war symbolised the shifting west/Gulf dynamics, then Libya is the conflict where the past decade’s geopolitical trends are coalescing to formalise the dystopia we’re stumbling into and for the most part, we’re none the wiser about it.”
4. **The UAE and Egypt are providing Haftar with Chinese drone technology:** “The blind eye the western world is turning to Libya has allowed it to become the world’s main theatre of drone combat, with the UAE and Egypt introducing Chinese-made drones to the field of Middle Eastern warfare. Not only does this undercut America’s shortlived monopoly on military drone technology, it has also shown the world that Chinese drones, as well as other equipment such as guided artillery, are the cheap and effective alternative for proxy warfare.”
5. **Haftar’s proxy supporters are also providing him with foreign fighters:** “With active fighters from private military contractors such as Russia’s Wagner Group, to rebel groups from Chad, Syria and those press-ganged by the UAE from Sudan – not to mention the multitude of special forces teams and “military advisers” – this is a dynamic that will have terrible consequences for decades to come.”

6. **The UAE and Egypt are using Haftar as a vehicle to reshape North Africa in their image:**  
“Khalifa Haftar is merely the local face of a regional project propagated from Abu Dhabi. His assault on the capital is the culmination of plans that began in 2014 for him to follow in the footsteps of Egypt’s President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi. It is a crude attempt to put the Arab Spring genie back in its bottle, and although one can only speculate on the logic behind it, the ambition is clear for all to see.”

Feel free to reach out if you have any questions and continue to stay safe and healthy.

Deirdre

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