



SCENARIOS FOR THE WAGNER GROUP'S FUTURE IN THE MENA REGION

POSITION PAPER
REGIONAL POLITICS

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Summary:

The rebellion led by Yevgeny Prigozhin and the subsequent power struggle has raised uncertainties about the group's future operations in the MENA region. This position paper explores four possible scenarios:

■ **Scenario 1: Wagner Group Retains Control and Operations in MENA:**

In this scenario, Russia's influence in the region would remain intact, allowing it to exploit natural resources and exert geopolitical influence.

■ **Scenario 2: Splintering of Wagner Group and Loss of Russian Support:**

The overall influence of Russia in the region would decline, potentially opening opportunities for other external actors to fill the power vacuum.

■ **Scenario 3: Wagner Group Merges with Another Private Military Company**

A merger could result in a more consolidated and powerful entity. This outcome could have significant implications for the countries where the Wagner Group operates.

■ **Scenario 4: Withdrawal of Wagner Group from the MENA Region**

In this case, Russia's influence in the region would decline, creating opportunities for other regional and international actors to exert their influence.

Each scenario presents distinct implications for the countries where the Wagner Group operates, including Libya, Sudan, and others. By analyzing these scenarios, we can better understand the potential impact on regional stability, geopolitical dynamics, and the interests of various stakeholders.

Introduction:

The Wagner Group, a Russian private military company, has been operating in the MENA region as an extension of Russia's influence. Its activities encompass military support, training, and resource exploitation in countries such as Sudan, Libya, Syria, and others. The group's operations have been instrumental in securing Russian geopolitical interests, leveraging valuable natural resources, and countering Western influence.

However, the June 2023 rebellion of Wagner Group led by its Chief Yevgeny Prigozhin has cast doubts on the group's future. The power struggle between Prigozhin and Putin has left Wagner's clients uncertain about the future of their security partnerships. Prigozhin is likely to focus on safeguarding control over Wagner and his business empire. However, Russia is unlikely to relinquish its hold on Wagner without resistance, as the group plays a vital role in Russia's pursuit of geopolitical and military power in the region. These issues raise questions about the stability and continuity of Wagner's operations in the MENA region.

This position paper explores potential future trajectories and their implications for the Wagner Group in the MENA region within the timeframe of 2023-2025. By examining different scenarios, this analysis aims to shed light on the possible outcomes and impacts on the areas where the Wagner Group operates. The scenarios presented in this analysis are designed to provide insights into the dynamic landscape and the uncertainties that may shape the future of the Wagner Group in the near term.

Scenario 1: Wagner Group Retains Control and Operations in MENA

In this scenario, Yevgeny Prigozhin manages to consolidate his control over Wagner Group and maintain its operations in the MENA region. Prigozhin focuses on safeguarding his business empire, including Wagner, and continues to provide paramilitary services in exchange for access to valuable natural resources. Despite the power struggle with Putin, Wagner's clients in Iran, Libya, Syria, and Sudan remain uncertain but ultimately choose to maintain their security partnerships with the group. Prigozhin's ability to retain control allows Wagner to continue supporting Russia's geopolitical and military objectives in the region, mitigating the potential risks and power shifts.

However, this scenario could also lead to potential challenges and risks. The Wagner Group's autonomy and partial independence from the Russian government might result in conflicting agendas or actions that do not align with Russia's official policies. This could create complexities in the relationships between the group and the governments they support, as well as with other international actors involved in the region.

Driving Factors	Uncertainties
▲ Prigozhin’s control over Wagner Group solidifies	▼ Prigozhin’s ability to maintain control declines amidst challenges
▲ Client willingness to continue partnerships	▼ Impact of changing geopolitical dynamics on contracts and resources
▲ Mitigation of power struggles and uncertainties	▼ Potential international scrutiny and legal actions
▲ Rising demand for private military services	▼ Russia’s support and resources wane
Implications	▶ In Libya, Wagner’s presence would sustain Haftar’s position and the control over key oil facilities, potentially prolonging the conflict and complicating efforts for a political resolution.
	▶ In Sudan, Wagner’s support to the Rapid Support Forces could contribute to the continuation of the conflict, further destabilising the region and hindering the prospects of a peaceful resolution.
	▶ Russia’s influence in the region would remain intact, allowing it to exploit natural resources and exert geopolitical influence.

Scenario 2: Splintering of Wagner Group and Loss of Russian Support

In this scenario, the power struggle between Prigozhin and Putin leads to the fragmentation of the Wagner Group, leading to the weakening of the group’s position and capabilities. The loss of Russian support would be particularly challenging for the Wagner Group, as it heavily relies on the Russian government for financing, resources, and political backing. Without this support, the group’s ability to operate effectively and sustain its presence in the MENA region would be severely compromised. It could face difficulties in maintaining its existing contracts, recruiting mercenaries, and accessing the necessary logistical and financial networks.

Different factions emerge within the organization, with Prigozhin retaining control over one faction while others are absorbed into the Russian military or placed under new leadership. This splintering weakens Wagner’s influence and operations in the MENA region, causing uncertainty among its clients. As a result, countries like Libya and Sudan seek alternative security partnerships, potentially turning to China or even the US for support. The loss of Russian support and the disintegration of the Wagner Group create a power vacuum in the region, leading to rapid shifts in power dynamics.

For the countries where the Wagner group operates, the splintering and loss of Russian support could have mixed implications. On the one hand, it might lead to a decrease in the influence and activities of the group, potentially reducing human rights abuses and destabilizing actions. This could create an opportunity for these countries to reassess their relationships with external actors and pursue alternative partnerships. However, the absence of the Wagner Group could also create security vacuums and power struggles, particularly if there are no immediate replacements or alternative security arrangements in place. It could leave governments and factions that relied on the group’s support vulnerable to internal and external threats. In some cases, it could even lead to a resurgence of conflicts or the strengthening of rival armed groups.

Driving Factors	Uncertainties
▲ Power struggle grows, and factional divisions intensify	▼ Degree of fragmentation within Wagner Group
▲ Putin makes decision on absorption or appointing new leadership	▼ Impact on operational capabilities and securing contracts
▲ Clients’ pursuit of alternative security partnerships	▼ Response of rival private military companies and international actors
▲ Changing geopolitical dynamics and regional conflicts	▼ Emergence of new power dynamics and alliances
▲ International sanctions and legal challenges	
Implications	▶ In Libya, the withdrawal or weakening of Wagner’s support would significantly impact General Haftar’s forces, potentially shifting the power balance in favour of the internationally recognised Tripoli Government of National Unity (GNU).
	▶ In Sudan, the Rapid Support Forces may become vulnerable without Wagner’s support, potentially disrupting the current balance of power and creating risks for all parties involved.
	▶ In Syria, the potential withdrawal of Wagner may create a vacuum that the Russian military cannot effectively fill, as it prioritises military operations in Ukraine. This could consequently enable a new expansion of Iranian-affiliated militias.
	▶ The overall influence of Russia in the region would decline, potentially opening opportunities for other external actors to fill the power vacuum.

Scenario 3: Wagner Group Merges with Another Private Military Company

In this scenario, the Wagner Group merges with another private military company, such as Convoy, led by Sergey Aksyonov and Konstantin Pikalov. This merger strengthens the combined entity’s presence and influence in the MENA region. The new company inherits Wagner’s connections and recognition, allowing it to continue providing paramilitary services and securing access to valuable resources. The MENA countries that relied on Wagner’s support may face challenges in navigating the new dynamics and assessing the reliability of the merged entity.

The implications of such a merger would depend on the identity and nature of the other private military company involved. If the merger occurs with a company that shares similar objectives and strategies, it could lead to seamless integration and a continuation of the Wagner Group’s operations. This would mean that the countries where the group operates, such as Libya, Syria, and Sudan, would continue to experience the influence and impact of the merged entity. However, if the merger involves a company with different priorities or approaches, it could lead to significant changes in the group’s operations and strategies. This could result in shifts in the countries of focus, realignment of alliances, or even the termination of certain contracts and relationships. The merged entity might prioritize different economic interests or geopolitical objectives, altering the dynamics in these countries. It might have a greater capacity to exert influence, engage in human rights abuses, or pursue destabilizing activities. This could generate tensions with other countries, regional powers, or international organizations, leading to increased scrutiny and potential conflicts.

Driving Factors	Uncertainties
▲ Potential benefits of merging with another company	▼ Complexity of merging different structures, cultures, and objectives
▲ Shared interests and synergies	▼ Response of Wagner’s clients and willingness to continue agreements
▲ Desire to consolidate and strengthen presence	▼ Reaction of rival companies and international actors
▲ Changing market dynamics and competition	

Implications	▶ The impact on Libya and Sudan would depend on the objectives and alliances of the merged entity. It could either maintain support for Haftar’s forces in Libya and the Rapid Support Forces in Sudan or shift its priorities and partnerships.
	▶ The merger would present opportunities for continued influence and resource exploitation in the MENA region, albeit with potential changes in strategy and focus.
	▶ A merger could result in a more consolidated and powerful entity. This outcome could have significant implications for the countries where the Wagner Group operates.

Scenario 4: Withdrawal of the Wagner Group from the MENA Region

In this scenario, due to the power struggle and uncertainties surrounding the future of the Wagner Group, the organization decides to withdraw its operations from the MENA region. This withdrawal creates a significant security vacuum, especially in countries like Libya and Sudan, where Wagner’s presence was substantial. The departure of Wagner fighters weakens the positions of local actors supported by the group, potentially shifting the balance of power in favor of rival factions or governments. This could weaken their ability to combat rebel groups, protect key infrastructure, or maintain control over valuable resources. The departure of the Wagner Group could also lead to a realignment of alliances, potentially triggering new conflicts or exacerbating existing ones.

Moreover, the withdrawal of the Wagner Group could create opportunities for other external actors to fill the security void. Regional powers or international stakeholders may seek to expand their influence in the affected countries, leading to increased competition and potential proxy conflicts. This could further destabilize the region and complicate efforts for peace and stability. On the other hand, the withdrawal of the Wagner Group could also provide an opportunity for affected countries to reassess their relationships with external actors and pursue alternative partnerships. They may seek to diversify their sources of military and security support, engaging with other private military companies, international organizations, or regional alliances. This could potentially lead to more balanced and independent security arrangements.

The withdrawal of the Wagner Group would also have implications for Russia’s influence in the MENA region. It would signal a shift in Russia’s strategy or priorities, potentially affecting its relationships with the affected countries. Russia may need to find alternative ways to maintain its geopolitical interests and protect its economic investments in the region.

Driving Factors	Uncertainties
▲ Power struggle grows leading to a decision to withdraw	▼ Impact of Wagner’s withdrawal on security vacuum and power dynamics
▲ Potential international pressure, legal actions, or reputational risks associated with Wagner’s activities	▼ Response of rival actors and international stakeholders to address resulting challenges
▲ The potential re-evaluation of Russia’s foreign policy objectives and priorities in the region.	▼ Uncertain outcomes for ongoing conflicts and power dynamics
Implications	▶ In Libya, the withdrawal of the Wagner Group would create a security vacuum, potentially destabilizing prospects of Haftar’s ability to exert military and political influence locally.
	▶ In Sudan, the departure of Wagner forces could disrupt the current balance of power between the Rapid Support Forces and the Sudanese Armed Forces.
	▶ Russia’s influence in the region would decline, creating opportunities for other regional and international actors to exert their influence.



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