

A Justified Fear?

**British/American experts/politicians on
Russia's influence in Africa**

By Christian Witman

Research

- Task - collect and analyze ideas, thoughts, quotes, and statements from British/American experts on Russia's presence in Africa since 2019
- Open sources - international relations articles, official government statements, politicians quotes from interviews, etc.
- The **objective** of the research was to get an idea of what these experts believed to be true for the question of "Is Russia's presence a threat to political destabilization in the region?"

A short overview of Russia's influence in the continent of Africa

- Investments - Energy Sector
- Military Presence - Wagner Group
- Attempt to obtain global Influence

In a speech Putin considered Africa “one of Russia's foreign policy priorities”

Russian President Vladimir Putin also seeks to create African dependencies on Moscow's military assets and access African resources, targeting countries that have fragile governments but are often rich in important raw materials, such as oil, gold, diamonds, and uranium.

On Investments

Judd Devermont, director of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies said

"Moscow will try to make as much hay as possible about its growing investments in the region at the Russia-Africa summit. It wants to present itself as influential in Africa, even if Russian engagement is relatively small compared to the United States, European Union, and China"

"Most deals will focus on security and energy sector, such as a recently signed nuclear power deal with Rwanda"

On Investments

Indigo Ellis, head of Africa at risk consultancy Verisk Maplecroft, said African governments would welcome Russia's renewed interest as they are

"slowly waking to the realities of China's murky lending, and long aware of the West's conditional, and ever scarcer loans." "Russia offers 'no strings attached' investment for African countries that seem to be a win-win for both parties," Ellis said, adding that she expects trade agreements and partnerships for energy, mining and defence to emerge from Sochi.

"While defence contracts have so far been Russia's primary modus operandi in engaging with African governments, Russia will curry favor across Africa through more energy deals."

"Lukoil will be the Russian player to watch," said Ellis. "While Gazprom and Rosneft have the Russian market cornered, Lukoil is looking to Africa for expansion, most recently entering Congo."

On Investments

George Voloshin, a director at risk consultancy Aperio Intelligence said "Given the fact that African projects can only be realistically shouldered by state-backed players (Gazprom, Gazpromneft, Rosneft) plus Lukoil, it is fair to presume that most oil and gas cooperation will be taking place in countries where Russia already has or is quickly building out close military and security relations"

UK Minister for Africa, Vicky Ford's statement on Wagner Group:

“Wagner has committed human rights abuses, undermined the work of international peacekeepers, and sought control of mineral resources, to the detriment of local citizens and their economy. Wagner does not offer long-term security answers in Africa.”

UK Statement on Wagner

Statement by the UK and international partners:

“We, the international partners committed to supporting Mali and its people in their efforts to achieve sustainable peace and stability and combat terrorism, firmly condemn the deployment of mercenary troops on Malian territory. This deployment can only further deteriorate the security situation in West Africa, lead to an aggravation of the Human Rights situation in Mali, threaten the Agreement for peace and reconciliation in Mali resulting from the Algiers process, and hamper the efforts of the international community to ensure the protection of civilians and to provide support to the Malian armed forces.”

“We are aware of the involvement of the Russian Federation government in providing material support to the deployment of the Wagner group in Mali and call on Russia to revert to a responsible and constructive behaviour in the region.”

Wagner is “involved in serious human rights abuses, including torture and extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and killings, or in destabilizing activities in some of the countries they operate in.”

Daragh McDowell on Wagner

Daragh McDowell, head of Europe and principal Russia analyst at global risk analysis firm Verisk Maplecroft said

“It is difficult to draw a clear line between state and private interests in Russia’s engagement in Africa, or for that matter, commercial and political,”

“In a number of cases, PMC Wagner appears to have taken on contracts for commercial purposes. The ‘official’ Russian state can then use these existing, commercially driven engagements to achieve diplomatic aims,” says Mr **McDowell**, who noted Wagner’s presence in Sudan prior to the 2018 revolution

Rear Admiral Heidi Berg on the goal of Russia's military contractors presence

Rear Admiral **Heidi Berg**, Africom's director of intelligence, said in an interview at her headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany,

“Russian military engagement and use of private military contractors in Mozambique is designed to increase Russian influence in southern Africa and to enable Russian access to Mozambique's natural resources, including natural gas, coal and oil”

U.S Brigadier General Gregory Hadfield on Russia's lack of helping in the effort to counter extremist groups

told reporters in a conference call "Outside of selling arms for their own economic benefit, China and Russia are not doing much to help counter extremist groups seeking to rob Africans of their future"

Which is controversial because that is supposedly the goal of Russia's military presence in the first place.

U.S National Security Advisor's criticism of Russia's influence in Africa

The U.S. is already critical of Russia in Africa.

Former U.S. National Security Adviser **John Bolton** said in a 2018 speech, that “predatory practices pursued by China and Russia stunt economic growth in Africa, threaten the financial independence of African nations, inhibit opportunities for U.S. investment, interfere with U.S. military operations, and pose a significant threat to US national security interests.” In critical reference to the “votes-for arms deals” in the U.N., Bolton stated that such moves “keep strong men in power, undermine peace and security and run counter to the best interest of the African people.”

US Officials on possible threat of withdrawing U.S soldiers with Russia's presence

“A withdrawal from the continent would also certainly embolden both Russia and China,” **Senators Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina, and Chris Coons, Democrat of Delaware**, wrote that sustaining United States forces in Africa “serves as a check” against those rivals expanding their influence on the continent, the senators said.

“Any drawdown of our troops would be shortsighted, could cripple Africom’s ability to execute its mission and, as a result, would harm national security,” **Senator James M. Inhofe** of Oklahoma

In conclusion

Is western criticism of Russia's presence in Africa legitimate?

Is it a justified fear?

Or are their concerns actually hypocritical?