

# Evidence of Russia-Linked Influence Operations in Africa

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# 1 Executive Summary

Russia's global strategy for [reasserting itself](#) as a geopolitical superpower has led to an increased presence in Africa, where it has broadened efforts to shape the continent's politics and pursue new economic opportunities [to allay the effects of sanctions](#). While the presence of Russian military instructors and [paramilitary groups](#) in Libya and the Central African Republic is well documented, there is emerging evidence that Russian-linked companies are now active in the information space as well. Yevgeny Prigozhin, the oligarch perhaps best known for [running the Internet Research Agency](#), is central to this expansion.

In this post we identify a Facebook operation attributed to entities tied to Prigozhin – including, it appears, the [Wagner Group](#), a Russian organization that has served as a private military contractor in several African countries. The first allusion to a social media influence operation tied to Prigozhin stemmed from [Daily Beast reporting](#) and a document shared with us by the [Dossier Center](#) that suggested the existence of a cluster of Facebook Pages tied to the Wagner Group. We identified an initial cluster of Pages which targeted Libya, and shared the find with the Facebook Threat Intel team.

Facebook subsequently provided us with data on two related networks that they had been investigating previously. These networks have been targeting the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Sudan, and included "news" Pages and websites, and Pages purporting to belong to political parties as well as a specific politician. The part of the operation we analyzed included 7 Instagram accounts and 73 Facebook Pages. 1.72 million people liked the Facebook Pages, though we note that some of these likes are possibly the same person across multiple Pages. The Page managers were quite active; in October 2019 alone there were 8,900 posts.

## 2 Activities Targeting Libya

In September 2019 the [Daily Beast](#) reported that the Wagner Group had created Facebook Pages targeting Libyans. The Dossier Center shared with us the internal Wagner Group document that made this claim. The document stated that as of March 2019, "the company" (the word Wagner employees use to refer to their firm) had created 12 Libyan groups on Facebook that focused on 1) supporting Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, 2) news pages for the main regions of Libya, and 3) supporting Haftar.

Wagner is a complex entity. Although presumed to be founded by Dmitri Utkin, a former lieutenant colonel in Russia's special forces, there are varying beliefs about ownership and control of the organization; some believe that it is less a mercenary organization than a [semi-state force](#) connected to Russia's Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU). Wagner's physical presence in Africa has been widely reported on, particularly in [Sudan](#) and [Central African Republic](#). Its soldiers have also been deployed to protect political consultants sent to engage in election-related activities in support of preferred candidates in several countries, including [Libya](#) and [Madagascar](#). Reports suggest that [Wagner Group is supporting](#) strongman Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army militarily as he fights to seize Tripoli from an internationally recognized government. The Russian government has been supportive of Haftar, [receiving him in Moscow](#) and [supplying his army with technicians](#) to upgrade Soviet-era munitions. Our analysis of Pages targeting Libya provides one of the first known assessments of its apparent expansion into online social influence campaigns.

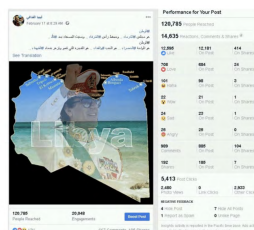
Similar to its actions elsewhere in Africa – such as [its involvement in Madagascar](#) – the Wagner Group seems to be hedging its bets by supporting multiple candidates. The Pages we reviewed indicate, in support of [prior reporting](#), that Russia is also [supporting Saif al-Islam Gaddafi](#) – Muammar Gaddafi's son, and another possible presidential candidate. (For more background on Libya, see the [Internet Observatory's scene setter from October 2, 2019](#).) All of the Pages had administrators in Egypt, along with at least one additional administrator in another country.

## Приложение 2.

С начала 2019 года в Ливийском сегменте сети интернет «Компания» ведет информационную пропаганду, направленную на продвижение интересов России в Ливии.

По состоянию на март 2019 года, создано 12 групп в социальной сети Facebook по следующим направлениям: поддержка Сейфа Каддафи, новостные группы в основных регионах Ливии, поддержка генерала Халифа Хафтара. Число постоянной аудитории ливийских групп в социальной сети Facebook составляет более 250 000 человек, а еженедельный охват публикаций - более 2 000 000 пользователей.

Пример публикации в социальных сетях (тема «поддержка Каддафи»)



Патриотический пост про лучшее время Родины.

Дата размещения: 17.01.2019  
120 785 просмотров  
12 595 лайков

Figure 1: Wagner Group document shared by the Dossier Center

Page name (translated)	Creation date	Location of administrators	# of posts	Date of first post	Ave. # of all reactions	Ave. # of shares	Ave. # of comments
شبكة أخبار ليبيا Libya News Network 37,590 followers	12/25/2019	Egypt (6), Netherlands (3), Germany (1), Portugal (1), Romania (1), UK (1), US (1), not available (1)	724	2018-12-26	232	1	13
شبكة أخبار فزان Fezzan News Network 40,877 followers	12/25/2018	Egypt (7), Netherlands (3), Denmark (1), Finland (1), Germany (1), Ireland (1), Romania (1), UK (1), US (1), not available (1)	717	2018-12-28	292	2	17
شبكة أخبار طرابلس Tripoli News Network 49,286 followers	12/25/2018	Egypt (6), France (1), Luxembourg (1), Netherlands (1), not available (1)	471	2018-12-27	222	1	17
مصور الفتح Falcons of the Conqueror 39,539 followers	12/25/2018	Egypt (6), Netherlands (1)	782	2018-12-27	320	5	31
ليبيا أولا Libya First 41,453 followers	12/25/2018	Egypt (5), Spain (1)	548	2018-12-28	115	2	6
ليبيا القذافي Libya Gaddafi 73,496 followers	12/25/2018	Egypt (5), Italy (1)	706	2018-12-25	372	13	39
شبكة أخبار برقة Cyrenaica News Network 30,503 followers	12/30/2018	Egypt (7), Singapore (1)	785	2018-12-30	83	0	5
الشعب الوطني الليبي Libyan National People 32,353 followers	12/30/2018	Egypt (6), Romania (1)	777	2019-01-07	118	1	8
ليبيا لايلا Libya Libya 13,851 followers	1/20/2019	Egypt (5), Portugal (1)	791	2019-02-27	129	1	7
صوت ليبيا Voice of Libya 22,045 followers	1/20/2019	Egypt (5), Germany (1), UK (1)	603	2019-03-07	290	1	13
فرسان ليبيا Knights of Libya 12,227 followers	1/22/2019	Egypt (3), US (2), Netherlands (1)	660	2019-03-11	381	2	15

Figure 2: Posting information for Libya Pages

The document included an example post from a Page called ليبيا القذافي ("Libya Gaddafi"). The post was a photo of Muammar Gaddafi, overlaid on an outline of Libya. The document described the post as a "Patriotic post about



the best time for the Motherland." We found the ليبيا القذافي Page on Facebook. It was created on December 25, 2018 as a "Journalist" Page. It had five Page managers based in Egypt and one based in Italy. Its multiple daily posts typically shared older images of Gaddafi and memes featuring his son. Posts had moderate engagement, with a typical post receiving 100 to 300 likes and a handful of comments and shares.

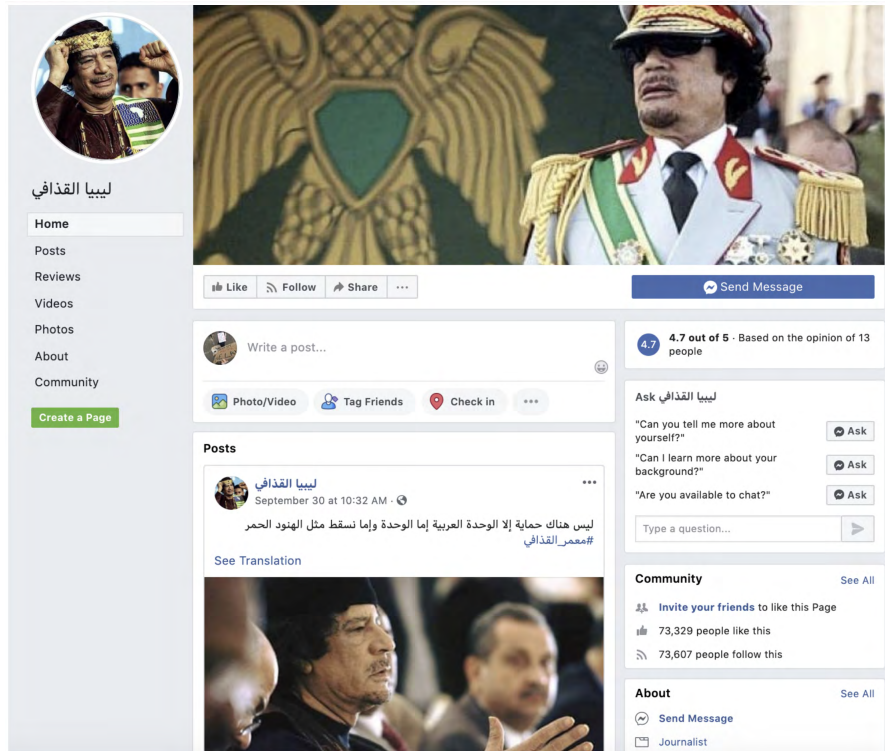


Figure 3: The "Libya Gaddafi" Page

## 2.1 Identifying and Assessing Other Pages

We then identified 10 additional Pages that we attributed to the same operational cluster. Facebook confirmed this attribution. This operational cluster is marked by the following characteristics:

- All Pages had similar (in many cases identical) creation dates. Six of the Pages were created on December 25, 2018, two on December 30, 2018, two on January 20, 2019, and one on January 22, 2019.
- All Pages but one listed "Journalist" in the About section. Ten of 11 About sections were otherwise empty; one Page ("Libya Forever") also

included the phrase "ليبيا الأم ليبيا الوطن ليبيا العز ليبيا للأبد" ("Libya mother Libya, the homeland of Libya, the pride of Libya forever").

- There was a consistent administration pattern across the 11 Pages. For each Page, the majority of Page Managers (typically five to seven) were located in Egypt, and at least one additional manager was in another country, but no managers were in Libya – despite the fact that all claimed to be Libyan Pages. Two Pages, "Fezzan News Network" and "Libya News Network," had more than 14 Page Managers seemingly spread out across seven or more countries.
- Approximately 200 posts were cross-posted verbatim across the cluster of Pages.
- Suspicious follower growth marked by at least four surges in Page likes, on a timeline that was consistent across Pages. See Figure 5.
- Consistent post timing and frequency. Most Pages posted at least twice a day, on most days.

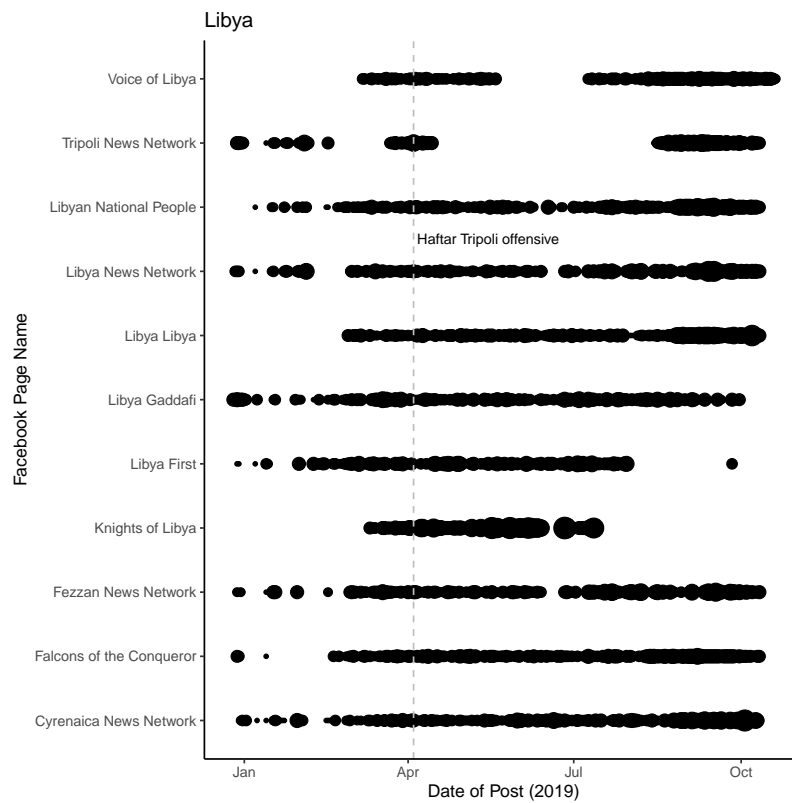


Figure 4: Frequency of posting across the 11 Facebook Pages. The Pages are remarkable for their high frequency of posting – in recent months, many Pages post about five times a day, sometimes with paragraphs of text and original memes. Source: CrowdTangle

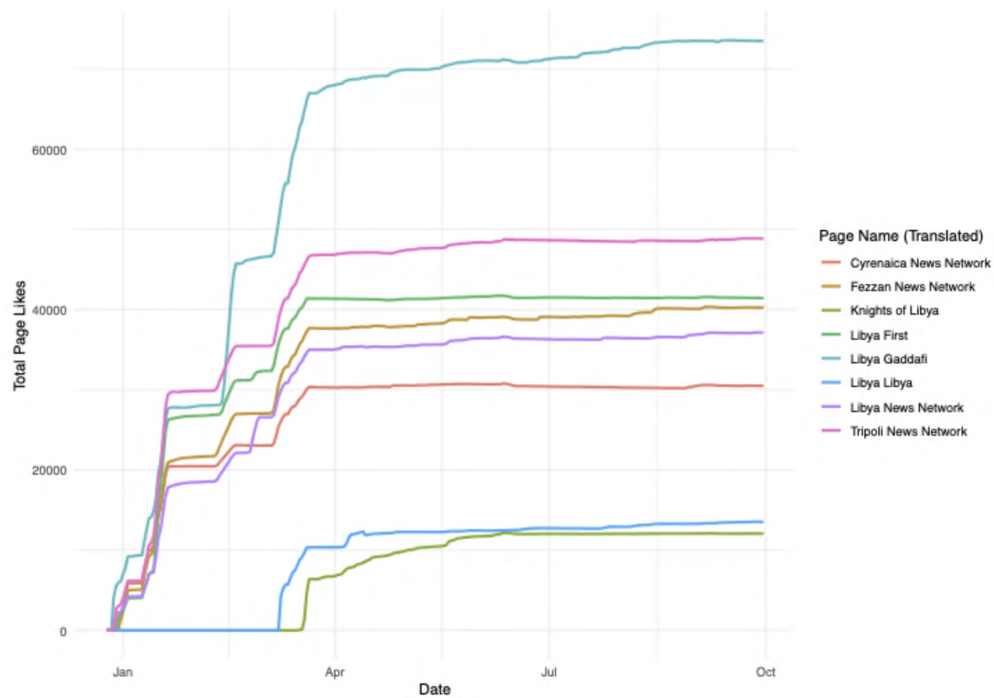


Figure 5: Total number of individuals who liked each Page (as opposed to posts on a Page) from December 2018 through September 2019. We do not include "Libyan National People," "Falcons of the Conqueror," and "Voice of Libya" because data was unavailable for these three Pages. The top line is "Libya Gaddafi." Source: CrowdTangle

## 2.2 Pro-Khalifa Haftar Pages

Four of the Pages we reviewed supported Haftar. فرسان ليبيا ("Knights of Libya") was unique in that it stopped posting in July. The other three were ليبيا أولا ("Libya First" — the name and profile photo appear to be stolen from [this Page](#)), الشعب الوطني الليبي ("Libyan National People"), ليبيا للأبد ("Libya Forever"), and صوت ليبيا ("Voice of Libya").

The five Pages posted similar content: they extolled Haftar's military conquests, provided military updates from Libyan National Army press conferences, shared pro-Haftar poetry, pushed anti-Qatar and anti-Turkey narratives (two governments allied with the Government of National Accord), and sug-

gested that the Government of National Accord was supporting the Muslim Brotherhood.



Figure 6: Example post from "Knights of Libya" on April 5, 2019, one day after the start of Haftar's Tripoli offensive. The text, written from Haftar's perspective, notes he will persist through even difficult conditions.

### 2.3 Pro-Saif al-Islam Gaddafi Pages

The next set of Pages were Muammar Gaddafi nostalgia Pages that intermittently threw in posts intended to bolster his son's political prospects. This set of Pages included the one discussed above, "Libya Gaddafi," and also **صقور الفاتح** ("Falcons of the Conqueror"). The two Pages are almost identical in messaging, but generally shared unique content. They primarily shared old photos of Gaddafi and claimed that everything was better under his rule.

One post said (translated from Arabic): "A leader with a future view of the situation knew that those we see today fighting over power are not worthy of governance but looting and corruption." Not everyone engaged positively with the Page content; one user wrote that "it looks like you never lived in Libya under Gaddafi, otherwise you wouldn't post these imaginary things" (translated and summarized).



Figure 7: Post from the "Libya Gaddafi" Page on September 26, 2019. The bullet points highlight all of the things that were great about Gaddafi's rule, such as free healthcare.

A typical post supportive of Saif might have text that says "Dr. Saif Islam, President of Libya" with a photo of Saif.





Figure 8: A post supportive of Saif al-Islam Gaddafi. Post is from the "Libya Gaddafi" Page on September 29, 2019.

Though less focused on modern political issues than the other Pages, posts on these Pages occasionally touched on these debates, for example posting this seemingly original meme suggesting that the internationally recognized Prime Minister's time is running out:



Figure 9: This graphic was posted on "Falcons of the Conqueror" on September 9, 2019.

## 2.4 Regional News Pages

As in other Russia-affiliated influence operations (see below), four of the Pages were set up as "news networks": "Libya News Network," "Fezzan News Network," "Cyrenaica News Network," and "Tripoli News Network." (The last

three correspond to the three historic provinces of Libya.)



Figure 10: The "Fezzan News Network" Page. As of October 28, 2019 all four "news networks" were still active.

These Pages, three of which were created on December 25, 2018 (the fourth, "Cyrenaica News Network," was created on December 30), posted on average more than twice daily. As of October 28, they all had between 30,000 and 50,000 followers.

A typical post on the mimic news Pages consisted of a photo – often of military equipment, or of a political or military figure – followed by a brief description of some action or political commentary. Although they purported to be news organizations, they very rarely posted links to sources or content outside of Facebook. While they did not typically display the overt partisanship we find on the pro-Haftar or Gaddafi-nostalgia Pages, these Pages nevertheless had a distinct anti-Government of National Accord slant. The Pages appear to have changed in tone over time, tending to move from more neutral content at the beginning of 2019 to more stridently pro-Haftar content as the year went on.

The first post on the "Tripoli News Network Page," for example, simply relayed the United Nations' call for an end to the conflict in Libya:



Figure 11: A post on "Tripoli News Network" reporting the UN's call for an end to the conflict in Libya.

Later in the year, the Page frequently posted content that was highly critical of Turkey (an ally of the Government of National Accord):



Figure 12: A post on "Tripoli News Network" criticizing Turkey for intervening in Libyan affairs and attempting to create a Turkish zone of influence in North Africa.

Initial analysis suggests that these Pages changed course regularly in response to current events and did not stick rigidly to any single topic. Further analysis of their content might reveal other trends.



## **2.5 Instagram Account**

There was a personal Instagram account associated with these Libya Facebook Pages. The individual is associated with a social media firm that provides web development and digital marketing services. While the website for what appears to belong to the person's company is down, a Facebook Page, YouTube channel, Udemy courses, a Medium account, and a GitHub page remain. It seems possible that this individual or their firm managed the Libya Facebook Pages; we have chosen not to reveal their name for privacy reasons. This appears to be a person from the region, suggesting that Wagner may have subcontracted to create a degree of deniability and obfuscation in their operation.

## **2.6 Takeaways**

These 11 Pages published content that was in consistent alignment with Russia's foreign-policy aims in Libya. They served as boosters for Khalifa Haftar and Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, two political figures whom Russia has supported, and disparaged the Government of National Accord in Tripoli. To this end, these Pages generated and shared ideologically charged content while purporting to be reliable news sources. This content was consistent in form across Pages and, in many cases, shifted with current events. Finally, despite the fact that most of the Page managers were based in Egypt, these Pages were intended to appear local and to influence Libyans' impressions of the conflict in their country, and of Haftar and Saif Gaddafi in particular.

### 3 Activities Targeting Sudan

Wagner is known to have provided [military training](#) in Sudan since 2017, and Prigozhin has received [mining rights](#) in Sudan. In terms of social media activity, we see Prigozhin-linked entities creating news Pages, several of which have associated news websites, along with "news" Pages for the two most recent governing councils in Sudan, and purportedly official Pages for two political parties. We note that Facebook investigated three of the Sudan Pages – "Mahdi does not Agree," "Sudan is Complete (or Perfect)," and "Sovereign Council News" – as part of a larger cluster including the CAR, DRC, Madagascar, and Mozambique Pages. The rest of the Sudan Pages are part of their own distinct investigation. We also note that the bulk of the Sudan Pages may not be part of a unified strategy – rather some of the Pages may have been compromised, or were simply operated by individuals who operated other Pages that Facebook attributed to inauthentic activity.

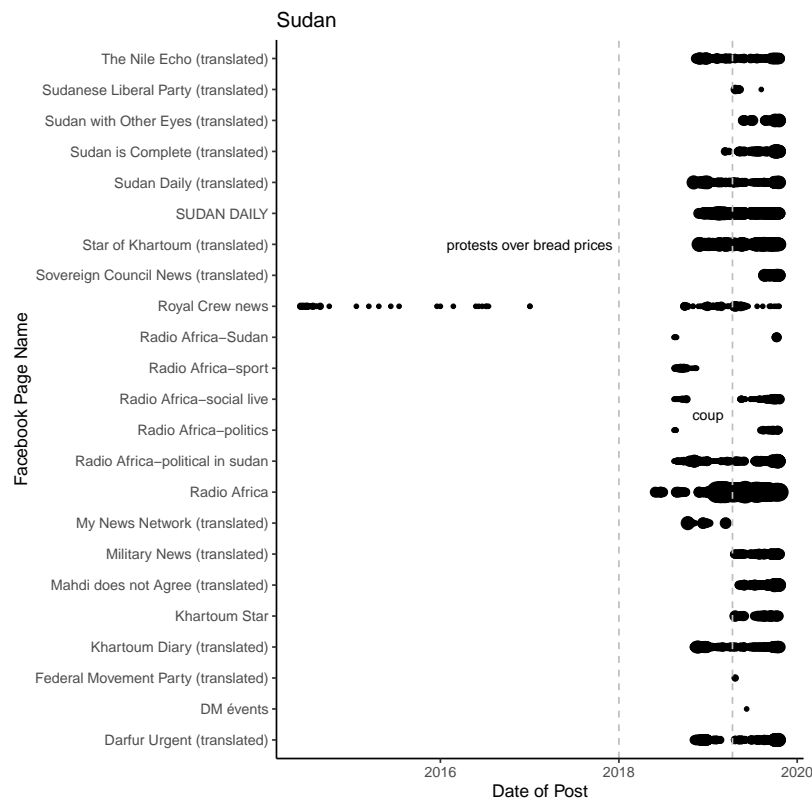


Figure 13: Posting frequency

For context, on April 11, 2019, following protests, former President Omar al-Bashir was deposed in a coup that brought a Transitional Military Council to power. This Council responded brutally to peaceful sit-ins, losing the support of its foreign backers. On August 20, 2019 the Sovereign Council of Sudan took power. This Council comprises individuals appointed by both the protest groups and the military.

Page name	Page creation date	Location of administrators	# of posts	Date of first post	Ave. # of all reactions	Ave. # of shares	Ave. # of comments
Radio Africa 355,712 followers	March 31, 2018	Sudan (11), Russia (2), Germany (1)	14,044	2018-05-30	268	33	70
نجمة الخرطوم (Star of Khartoum) 99,255 followers	November 21, 2018	Sudan (11), Russia (2)	4,496	2018-11-22	54	16	15
SUDAN DAILY 683 followers	October 29, 2018	Sudan (11), Russia (2)	3,584	2018-11-24	0	0	0
سودان ديلي (Sudan Daily) 13,966 followers	October 29, 2018	Sudan (5), Iran (1), Russia (1)	1,499	2018-10-31	31	3	3
Radio Africa-political in sudan 106,682 followers	August 13, 2018	Sudan (7), Russia (1)	1,450	2018-08-15	87	19	18
يوميات الخرطوم (Khartoum Daily) 41,838 followers	November 1, 2018	Sudan (5)	1,422	2018-11-06	40	3	10
صدى النيل (Echo of the Nile) 38,079 followers	November 1, 2018	Sudan (6)	1,286	2018-11-13	51	5	10
دارفور عاجل (Darfur Urgent) 33,424 followers	November 1, 2018	Sudan (4)	1,225	2018-11-06	22	2	8
المهدي لا يوافق (Mahdi does not Agree) 5,549 followers	May 4, 2019	Sudan (6)	946	2019-05-06	6	1	0
السودان تكم (Sudan is Complete) 13,788	March 9, 2019	Sudan (7)	933	2019-03-11	14	1	4
أخبار العسكري (Military News) 14,130 followers	April 16, 2019	Sudan (5)	780	2019-04-16	52	2	6
أخبار المجلس السويدي (Sovereign Council News) 19,465 followers	August 15, 2019	Sudan (7)	747	2019-08-15	50	2	5
السودان بعيون أخرى (Sudan with Other Eyes) 7,400 followers	May 16, 2019	Sudan (8)	692	2019-05-22	14	1	1
Khartoum Star 2,455 followers	April 20, 2019	Sudan (7)	593	2019-04-22	8	2	0
Radio Africa-social live 20,617 followers	August 13, 2018	Sudan (4), Germany (1), Russia (1)	366	2018-08-15	45	9	13
Royal Crew news 4,380 followers	June 5, 2014	Russia (3), Sudan (1)	251	2014-06-07	25	6	3
شبكة الإخبارية (My News Network) 649 followers	September 28, 2018	No visible admins	128	2018-09-29	1	0	0
Radio Africa-politics 7,625 followers	August 13, 2018	Sudan (4), Germany (1), Russia (1)	111	2018-08-15	51	3	1
Radio Africa-sport 302 followers	August 13, 2018	No visible admins	82	2018-08-16	4	1	0
الحزب الليبرالي السوداني (Sudanese Liberal Party) 27 followers	April 22, 2019	No visible admins	40	2019-04-22	0	0	0
Radio Africa-Sudan 19,150 followers	August 13, 2018	Sudan (3), Germany (1), Russia (1)	32	2018-08-15	30	3	13
حزب الحركة الاتحادية (Federal Movement Party) 1 followers	April 22, 2019	No visible admins	3	2019-04-22	0	0	0

Figure 14: Posting information for Sudan Pages

### 3.1 News Pages

Most of the news Pages were created between August and October 2018, before the coup, and many were actively posting as of October 2019, and beginning to expand their presence to other social media platforms like Twitter. That Pages remained active and supportive of governments across regime changes suggests the Pages were not working in service of any particular politician. Five of the Pages were tied to one of three news websites. These included two Khartoum Star Pages (tied to [khartoumstar.com](http://khartoumstar.com)), two Sudan Daily Pages ([sudandaily.org](http://sudandaily.org), in both English and Arabic; there is also a suspended [Twitter account](#)), and a Page and Group for Shabatky News (tied to [shabaktynews.net](http://shabaktynews.net), now defunct; [archived version](#)). None of the Sudan news sites had ads – indeed this is true for all of the news sites discussed in this post.

The sites were generally supportive of whatever government was in power in the moment, and supportive of Russia. Sudan Daily frequently shared Sputnik stories. Its bias would occasionally become very visible, for example with this [Khartoum Star anti-protester story](#), or this [Sudan Daily article](#) titled "Oil, diamonds, and nuclear power: Russia eyes Africa business," which discussed Russia's great expertise in managing the extraction of these resources. But in general, the bias on these sites was subtle, and often they read like news sites that simply were not adversarial with the government.

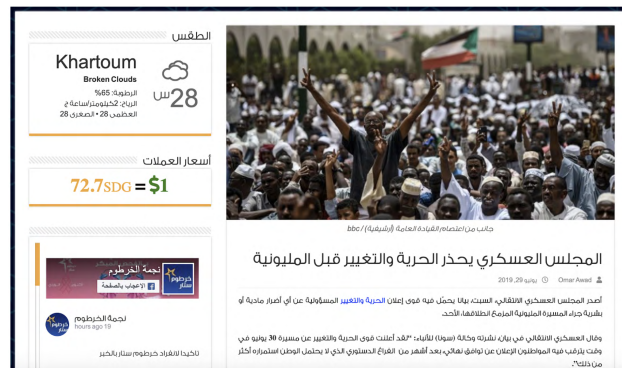


Figure 15: A June 29, 2019 Khartoum Star article that repeats a Transitional Military Council statement noting that the forces of the Declaration of Freedom and Change (a January declaration calling on Bashir to step down) are responsible for any material or human damage caused by the planned March of Millions, a protest that occurred on June 30, where at least seven protesters were killed.

The Pages and sites emphasized their neutrality. A Sudan Daily Facebook Page claimed to be "carried out by a group of independent Sudanese journalists, without affiliation to anybody, party or tribe. We are committed to credibility, professionalism and objectivity, as well as ethical journalism in our work and standards of journalism" (translated). The Khartoum Star claimed to cover "news related to Sudan and the world in a neutral and professional manner."

There appears to have been a real effort to build up Khartoum Star as a news site. A [job posting](#) in May suggests they were hiring four Arabic speaking reporters and four English speaking reporters. Several of the Radio Africa Facebook Pages discussed below linked to [khartoumstar.com](#). It has a [WhatsApp](#) and [Telegram](#) group, an [Instagram](#) account, and perhaps a [suspended Twitter](#) account.

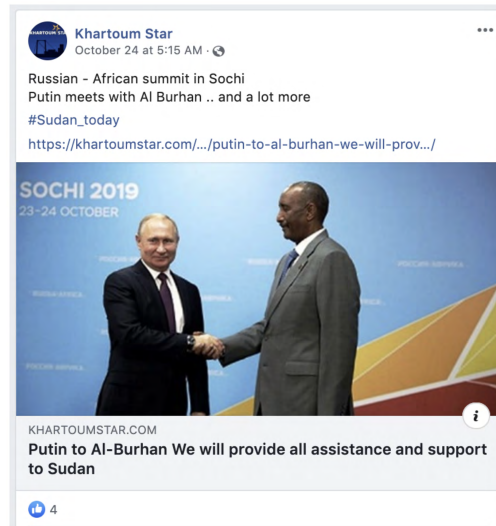


Figure 16: Sample post from the English "Khartoum Star" Facebook Page

The largest cluster of Sudan Pages had the word Radio in the Page title. These include Radio Africa, the largest, with about 356,560 followers. These Pages were ostensibly news Pages, in one case [describing itself](#) as follows: "Radio Africa is an independent platform for Sudanese media students and journalists to echo events with a different vision" (translated). The Pages had similar slants to the websites discussed above, acting as government mouthpieces for whatever government is in power, though rarely linking to any website. The main Radio Africa Page posted 14,044 times since May 2018 – about 28 times per day, and had moderate engagement, sometimes getting several hundreds of likes on a post. Several of the Radio Pages linked to [the main Radio Africa Twitter handle](#), which was only started in October 2019. There is also [a Telegram channel](#), with 146 members.



Figure 17: The "Radio Africa" Page



Figure 18: Sample "Radio Africa" post, with typical engagement. This post is announcing the reshuffling of an Education Ministry post.

### 3.2 Political Pages

We reviewed several Pages that – at least at first glance – appeared to be government entities or parties. For example [facebook.com/Transitionalmilitarycouncil](https://facebook.com/Transitionalmilitarycouncil), which was created on April 16, 2019, around the time this Council was created. The Page name was أخبار المجلس العسكري (Junta News) until September 19, 2019, when its name changed to أخبار العسكري (Military News). The TMC stepped down in August 2019. The Page says it is "an independent news page that cares about Sudan's Transitional Military Council." Under the TMC, and up to October 2019, this Page served to present government news.



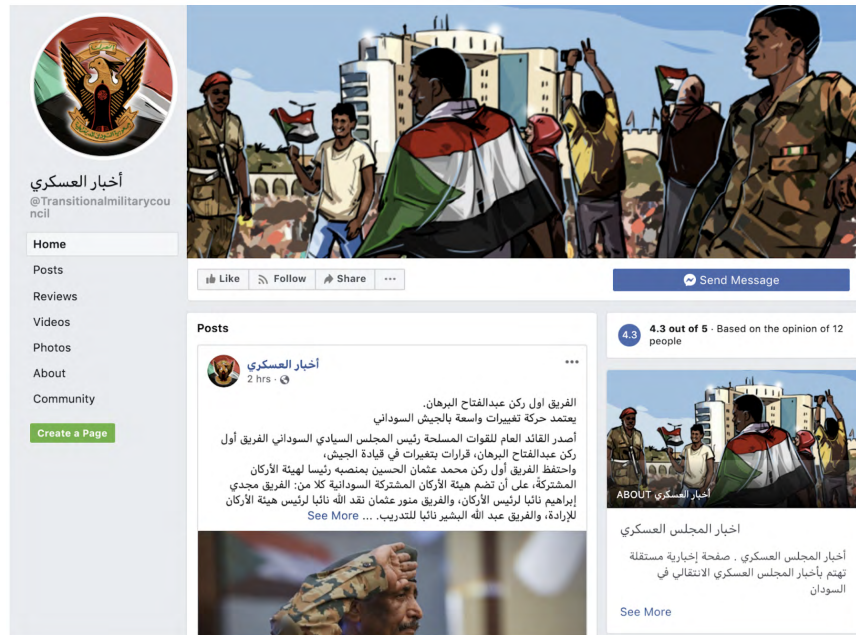


Figure 19: The Page facebook.com/Transitionalmilitarycouncil

Another Page in this category was **حزب الحركة الاتحادية** (translated to either the Federal Movement Party or the Unionist Movement Party), which was created on April 22, 2019, and last posted one day later. Like the Malagasy mining Page (see below), this Page had just 1 follower, and seems to have copied a similar site created several years earlier, sharing a profile photo and Page Name with [this Page](#). Another Page was facebook.com/LIBERALPARTYOFSU created on April 22, 2019. It also had just a handful of followers, and looked similar to an [older Page](#). It seemed to have posted the same types of news as the other Pages. Last, there was a Page called Sovereign Council News, created on August 15, 2019, just a few days before this Council took power.



Figure 20: The Page facebook.com/LIBERALPARTYOFSU



Figure 21: The Page أخبار المجلس السيادي ("Sovereign Council News").

### 3.3 Additional Content

One Page that stands out for an unusual posting pattern (see Figure 13) is Royal Crew News. This is the Sudan site that has been in existence the longest, and we are unsure exactly what its purpose is. Started in 2014, it was called Royal Crew Music. It changed names to Royal Crew News in December 2018,



around the time that the other Sudan Pages were created. It seems to have originally existed to promote the work of a musician, but switched to posting news similar to the other Pages in the cluster. It shared extensive content from Radio Africa. Interestingly, the musician has spent time in Russia since at least 2015. It is possible that Prigozhin-linked entities purchased this Page, though this seems unlikely given that it only has 5,000 followers.

Another Page that stood out as a deviation from the rest was "Sudan is Perfect" (translated), which posted funny photos with sometimes funny and sometimes misogynistic captions.



Figure 22: Example post from السودان تمام ("Sudan is Perfect"). The caption says that maybe the child had a dispute with his mother and decided to rely on himself.

Facebook shared with us Instagram accounts that are tied to these Sudan Pages. At least one is a Sudanese journalist affiliated with Khartoum Star who has spent time in Russia. Another is a musician that Royal Crew News promoted in its early days and who has also spent time in Russia. Interestingly, both the reporter and musician have ties to Sudanese mining. The reporter's Facebook profile says he is a PR manager at the Ministry of Minerals, and the musician's Facebook profile says he is a translator at Kush for Exploration & Production Co. Ltd., a Russian gold mining firm in Sudan.

## 4 Activities Targeting Central African Republic

The presence of Prigozhin-aligned companies in the Central African Republic (CAR) is well documented, and their activities in the country appear to be aligned with the Russian government's broad effort [to increase its power and influence in Africa](#). The CAR has been a particular focus for the Russian government. Its support for CAR President Faustin-Archange Touadéra's administration – which has struggled to wrest back control over parts of

the country from [local warlords](#) – has included [military assistance](#), [mineral-extraction deals](#), and [information operations](#). In May 2018, Touadéra met with President Putin at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, and in October 2019 he was one of the 43 African heads of state in Sochi for the first-ever [Russia-Africa Summit](#).

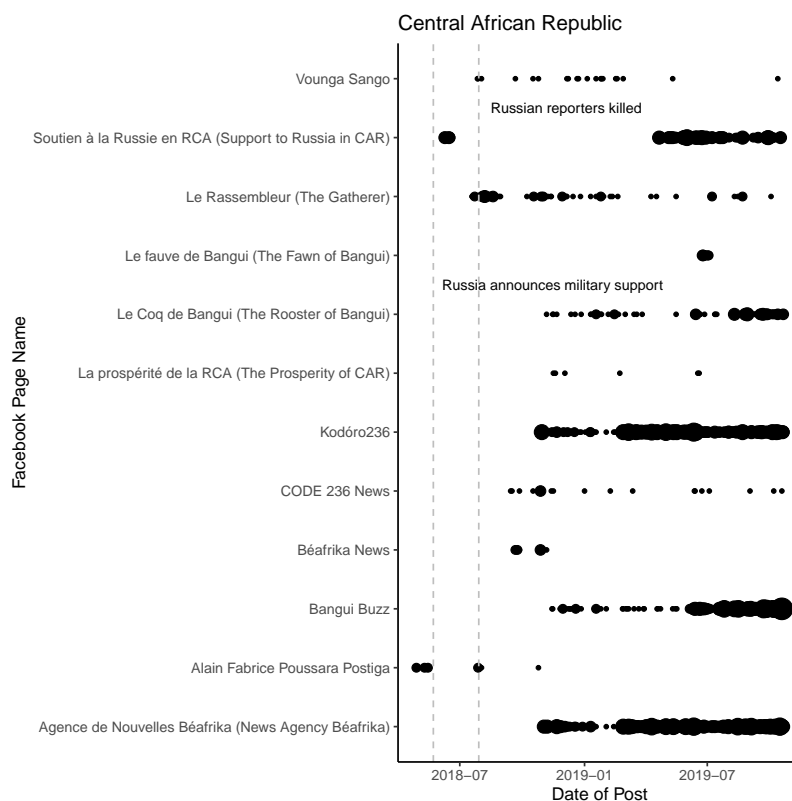


Figure 23: Posting frequency

Alongside the Russian government’s official operations in the CAR, Prigozhin and the Wagner Group have been in the country since 2018 pursuing their own agenda—parts of which align with the Russian government’s, and [parts of which do not](#). While it is well known that the Wagner Group has provided security in the CAR, serving as President Touadéra’s [personal security detail](#) and [protecting mining sites](#), it was not previously known that Prigozhin’s companies have been involved in influence operations as well. In March 2019 [The Daily Beast reported](#) on the suspicious similarities between pro-government Facebook Pages in the CAR and the Internet Research Agency’s operations in the United States in 2015-16, but there was no confirmed connection between these two initiatives. Facebook’s attribution of 13 Facebook Pages to Prigozhin’s companies confirms the Daily Beast’s reporting and sheds light on Prigozhin-linked influence operations in the CAR.

Page name (translated)	Page creation date	Location of administrators	# of posts	Date of first post	Ave. # of all reactions	Ave. # of shares	Ave. # of comments
Agence de Nouvelles Béafrika (News Agency Béafrika) 2,266 followers	November 2, 2018	CAR (1), Madagascar (1)	711	2018-11-02	56	4	4
Kodóro236 1,224 followers	October 30, 2018	CAR (1), Madagascar (1)	586	2018-10-30	29	2	2
Bangui Buzz 666 followers	October 30, 2018	CAR (2), Madagascar (1)	419	2018-11-14	2	1	0
Soutien à la Russie en RCA (Support to Russia in CAR) 7,901 followers	June 9, 2018	CAR (3)	320	2018-06-09	27	10	4
Le Coq de Bangui (The Rooster of Bangui) 1,107 followers	November 2, 2018	No visible admins	110	2018-11-06	20	1	1
Le Rassembleur (The Gatherer) 486 followers	July 19, 2018	CAR (2)	73	2018-07-19	4	3	1
CODE 236 News 1,596 followers	October 30, 2018	CAR (1), Madagascar (1)	21	2018-09-14	3	1	0
Le fauve de Bangui (The Beast of Bangui) 47 followers	June 21, 2019	No visible admins	20	2019-06-24	0	0	0
Younga Sango 522 followers	July 23, 2018	No visible admins	20	2018-07-27	3	5	1
Béafrika News 358 followers	September 21, 2018	CAR (1), Madagascar (1)	12	2018-09-21	5	4	2
Citizen Page [redacted]	April 27, 2018	No visible admins	11	2018-04-28	0	0	0
La prospérité de la RCA (The Prosperity of CAR) 310 followers	November 16, 2018	Madagascar (1)	6	2018-11-16	174	9	16

Figure 24: Posting information for CAR Pages

These 13 Pages can be divided roughly into five categories: "news" Pages, devoted to political topics and current events in the CAR (7); Pages purporting to represent a politician or CAR citizen (2); sports Pages (1); social events Pages (2); and issue Pages (1). Below we analyze each of these groups and the tactics they reveal. The majority of these 13 Pages did not have the consistent publication patterns, interaction levels, or significant follower counts that would indicate wide reach. Three Pages—two "news" Pages and one issue Page—generated over 93% of interactions and over 70% of total posts.

Despite some thematic and stylistic differences indicating attempts to reach different audiences, the content that these Pages produced and shared was remarkably consistent. Nearly every Page hammered out content that extolled Touadéra, Russia, and the [Khartoum Agreement](#) (a recent peace agreement), and disparaged the UN and France. (There was one important exception, which we discuss below.) A great many posts appeared across the set of Pages, and even in cases in which a message was delivered in different words, the same images appeared. Like other Pages we reviewed, these Pages appeared to take content (at times paraphrased) from other sources, reuse materials without attribution, and post the same content several times.

#### 4.1 News Pages

Seven out of the 13 CAR Pages given to us by Facebook were "news" Pages. Of these seven, two generated by far the most content and gained the biggest audiences: these were "Kodóro236" and "Agence de Nouvelles Béafrika." Because these two Pages were the most significant in this group, our analysis focuses on them first.

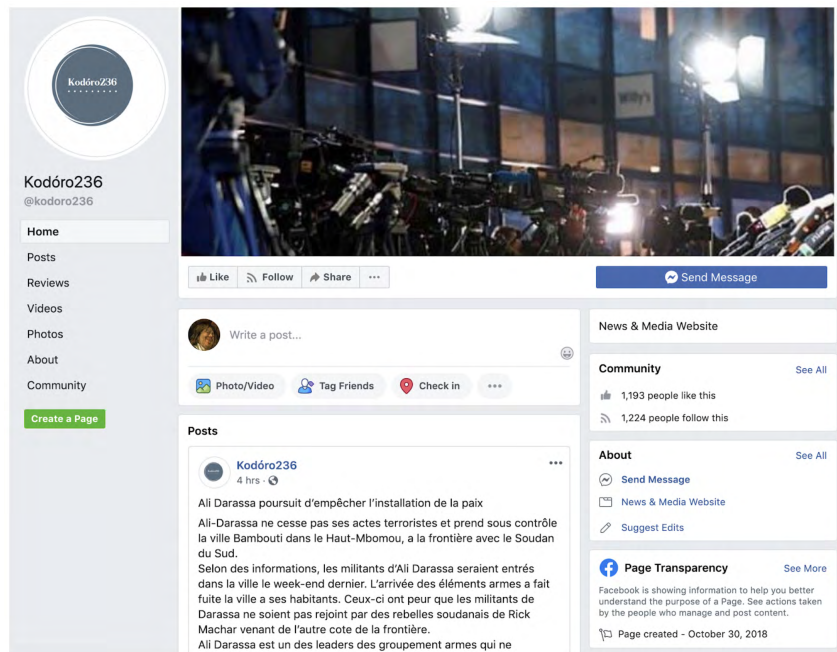


Figure 25: The "Kodóro236" Facebook Page

Between October 30, 2018 and October 24, 2019, "Kodóro236" posted 593 times, received approximately 19,600 interactions (reactions, comments, and shares), and accrued about 1,200 followers. The Page had two managers: one in the CAR and one in Madagascar.

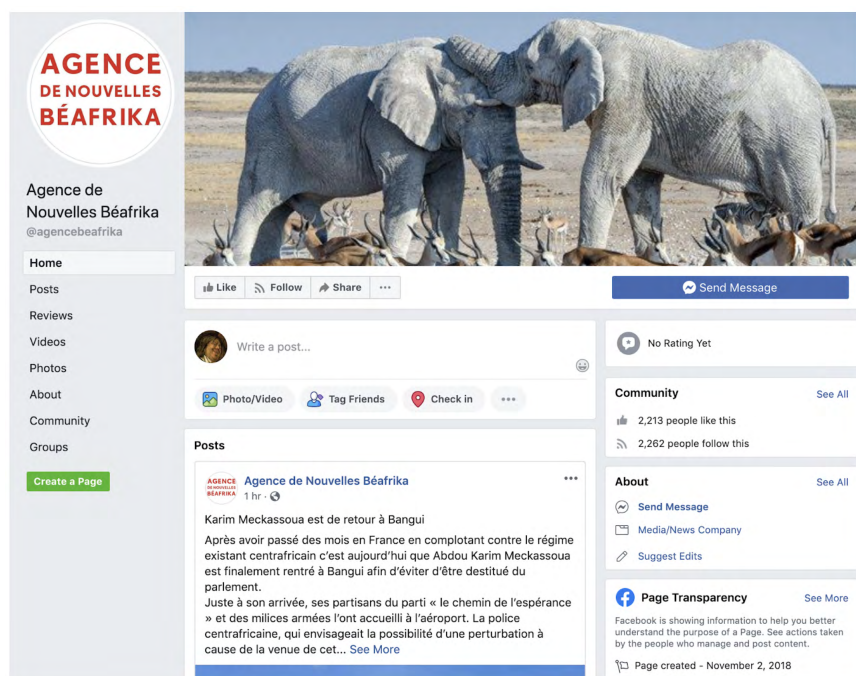


Figure 26: The "Agence de Nouvelles Béafrika" Facebook Page



The "Agence de Nouvelles Béafrika" Page had 2,262 followers as of October 24, 2019 and published 727 posts between November 2, 2018 and October 24, 2019. Like "Kodóro236," "Agence de Nouvelles Béafrika" had one Page manager in the CAR and one in Madagascar. Both of these Pages followed the same general line, although, like the rest of the CAR Pages, the style of their posts varied considerably.

One of the primary themes was the benefits brought to the CAR by Russia. These benefits were presented along a wide spectrum, including military support:



Figure 27: A post on "Kodóro236" arguing that, while the UN has hindered the development of the CAR Army, Russian trainers have helped turn it into an effective fighting force.

And cultural events:

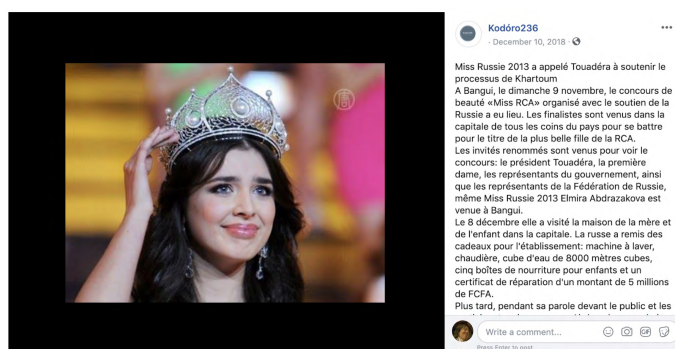


Figure 28: A post on "Kodóro236" about Miss Russia 2013's visit to the CAR and a beauty pageant, Miss Central African Republic, that was put on with the help of the Russian government.

These Pages also routinely posted content lauding President Touadéra—especially his efforts to establish peace in the country by means of the Khartoum Agreement—and Russian-CAR cooperation. For example, one post celebrating the one year "anniversary" of Russia's return to the CAR appeared at various times (and with various images) on several of the "news" Pages:



Figure 29: A post celebrating the one-year anniversary of Russia's return to the CAR. This post was on several of the Pages, including "Kodóro236" and "Agence de Nouvelles Béafrika."

These posts illustrate the rather formal, bureaucratic tone that we often find in these Pages, as if they originated at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, this was far from the only tone these Pages employed. For example, they also occasionally turned defensive, especially when scandals threatened to derail Russian efforts or impact the reputation of Wagner Group. In February 2019 [RFI published an article](#) reporting that the UN was investigating allegations of torture by Russian mercenaries. In response, several of the Wagner Pages, including "Kodóro236" and "Agence de Nouvelles Béafrika," published lengthy rebuttals of the RFI piece:

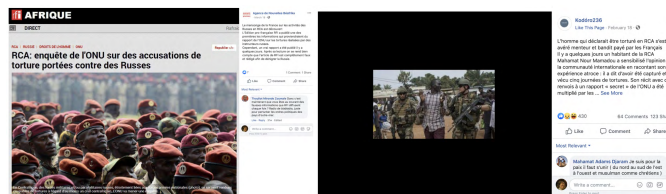


Figure 30: Posts rejecting allegations of torture committed by Russian mercenaries.

Likewise, when CNN published [a special report](#) on the Wagner Group's activities in Africa, "Agence de Nouvelles Béafrika" claimed that CNN's journalists were "bribing CAR residents for defamatory material" and republished the statement of Russia's ambassador to the CAR, Vladimir Titorenko, calling CNN's claims "fabrications":



Figure 31: Post on "Agence de Nouvelles Béafrika" conveying Titorenko's rejection of CNN's report.

Finally, these "news" Pages were not just consistently pro-Russian; they were also hostile to France and the UN.

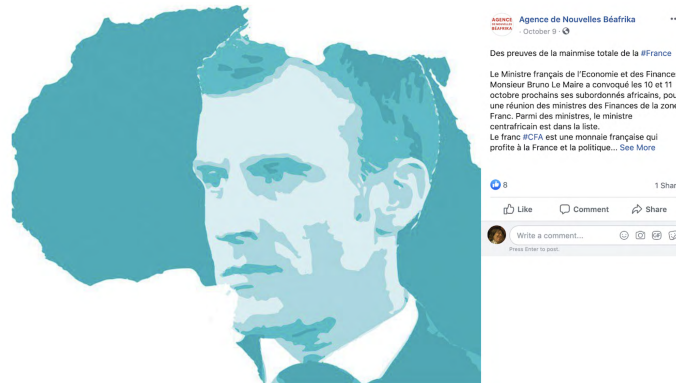


Figure 32: Post on "Agence de Nouvelles Béafrika" decrying France's "stranglehold" and calling on the CAR government not to attend France's "humiliating convocation" of the [CEMAC countries](#).

There were five other Pages in the set that also belonged to the "news" category. These Pages published less frequently and had fewer followers, but their content was generally very similar to that of "Kodóro236" and "Agence de Nouvelles Béafrika." These Pages were called "Bêafrika News," "Vounga Sango," "Le Rassembleur," "CODE 236 ACTU," and "Le Fauve de Bangui."

One of the things that stands out about these Pages is the degree to which their posts appear to be a grab bag of political content, by no means ideologically or stylistically consistent. The "CODE 236 ACTU" (Code 236 News) Page provides a good example of this, posting very sporadically (only 19 times in over a year) and switching from pro-Touadéra to pro-opposition content. In September 27, 2018, "CODE 236 ACTU" posted a transcription of Touavéra's speech at the UN without commentary:



Figure 33: Post on "CODE 236 ACTU" with transcription of President Touadéra's speech to the UN.

After eight months of relative quiet on the page, pro-opposition posts began appearing, including one opining that "TOUADERA doesn't know what to do, and besides is very badly advised, and that's why it would be

good if he went away in 2021!"



Figure 34: Pro-opposition post on "CODE 236 ACTU" in support of the E Zingo Biani movement.

These posts on "CODE 236 ACTU" were the only pro-opposition posts that we were able to find, but they illustrate a phenomenon observed on multiple Pages: a shift in tone and content that did not always line up with a clear ideological program. This was something we observed in the DRC Pages as well (see below).

## 4.2 Sports and Social Events Pages

In addition to the Pages purporting to be news sources, there were two Pages in the set that appeared to be events Pages. They were called "Bangui Buzz" and "Bangui BUZZ," with the latter appearing to be a second, abandoned version of the former. "Bangui Buzz" was created on October 30, 2018 and has two Page managers in the CAR and one in Madagascar. While it professed to be an "Entertainment" website, "Bangui Buzz" began by publishing content very similar to that of the News Pages described above. In April 2019 it switched to posting political memes (usually anti-France and anti-UN), and in June 2019 it ceased publishing political content for the most part, posting only generic memes at an accelerating rate. On October 19, 2019, "Bangui Buzz" published 19 memes, none of which received more than two reactions. Some of these memes were political, but most were generic.





Figure 35: An anti-Macron post on "Bangui Buzz." "Vladimir, I'm asking you for the last time to cancel the summit in Sochi, Africa has always been mine."

"Le Coq de Bangui" (The Bangui Rooster) was the only Page in the set that was designated as a "Sports" Page. Indeed, aside from a few political posts like those found on the News Pages, "Le Coq de Bangui" published mostly sports-related content. Some of these spotlighted Russian support for athletics in the CAR.



Figure 36: A post on "Le Coq de Bangui" highlighting "Russia day" at the Central African Federation for Bodybuilding and Fitness.

### 4.3 Politician and Individual Pages

We also reviewed two Pages that purported to represent people. One, called "La prospérité de la RCA" (Prosperity of the CAR), appeared to be set up to support the opposition politician [Anicet-Georges Dologuélé](#). The other claimed to represent an artist who appears to be a real CAR citizen, whose details we do not publish here out of privacy concerns. Neither of these Pages showed much activity or received much engagement. The Dologuélé Page, which was created in November 2018, had a Page manager in Madagascar, and the citizen Page was created in April 2018.

"La prospérité de la RCA" is an interesting exception in the CAR Pages. Although it published only four posts between November 2018 and October 2019, it was clearly created with the intent of imitating an oppositional political platform. This meant posting content that was critical of Touadéra, but it also meant criticising the Touadéra administration's growing connections with Russia and its hostility towards France:



Figure 37: Post on "La prospérité de la RCA" criticizing Touadéra for turning away from France. "As for Touadéra, he risks his country's future in having too much confidence in the unknowns coming from Russia."

These posts did not receive a lot of engagement, but some commenters did take the bait. "The obstacle is not Touad and Russia," one commenter wrote. "It's you and France! Touad and Russia can do fine if 'you' ['vous'] stop disrupting them unnecessarily. We want to advance please!"

The citizen Page published 11 posts between April 27, 2018 and October 25, 2018. These posts, political commentary which appeared to be copied from outside websites or reposted from elsewhere on Facebook, received almost no engagement. We have chosen not to give any further details about this Page to protect the individual's privacy.

In addition, the individual behind the profile claimed to be a journalist at Radio Lengo Songo, the radio station that is an important part of [Russia's information operations in the CAR](#).

#### 4.4 Issue Page

Another Page in the CAR set was explicitly devoted to boosting support for Russia in the CAR. This Page was called "Soutien à la Russie en RCA" (Support for Russia in the CAR). As its name suggests, this Page posted content in favor of Russia's efforts in the CAR and criticized opponents of Touadéra. It had three Page managers in the CAR and was created on June 9, 2018. Although this Page posted 332 times between June 9, 2018 and October 24, 2019—publishing as many as eight posts per day in June, 2019—it did not receive as much engagement as the "news" Pages we reviewed above. In all,

these 332 posts received 14,300 total interactions, most of which came in three spikes, in May, August, and October 2019.

"Soutien à la Russie en RCA"'s content did not differ substantially from that of the other Pages we reviewed. One thing that distinguished it from other Pages was the frequency with which it published videos and commentary by Heritier Doneng, who is connected to a pro-government group known as the [Sharks of Central Africa](#), which has clashed with [É Zingo Biani](#). Doneng's harsh anti-opposition rhetoric exemplifies this Page, which is at times more strident than others in the Wagner CAR set. Notably, "Soutien à la Russie en RCA" published a 16-part diatribe against Dologuélé, the politician supported by the "La prospérité de la RCA" Page.



Figure 38: "Chapter 15" of an anti-Dologuélé diatribe on "Soutien à la Russie en RCA"

## 4.5 Takeaways

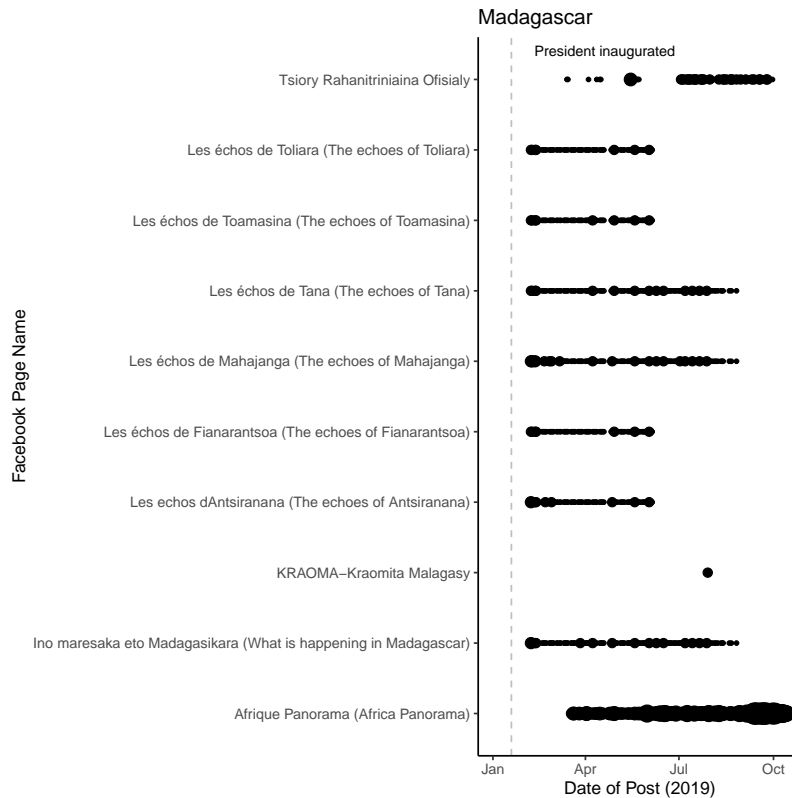
Although there was a surprising variety of content, including political orientations, and styles in the Pages targeting the CAR—especially compared with the Libya Pages described above—the direction and shape of the influence operation they indicate is clear. These Pages were intended to cheerlead and build support for the many things that the Russian government was doing in the CAR in 2018-2019. They also pretended to be organic CAR entities, and thus indicate something (to CAR citizens) about domestic support for Russia in the CAR. This support was supposed to cover everything from Russia's military support for Touadéra's administration (and its signature achievement, the Khartoum Agreement) to things like beauty contests and soccer tournaments. There was another angle to this operation as well. Many of these Pages went out of their way to disparage the UN and France, accusing the French in particular of attempting to "recolonize" the CAR.

Finally, we can observe a number of discrete strategies to support these aims. First, these Pages relied heavily on short articles that were rewritten or paraphrased from other CAR sources. It is difficult to quantify how much overlap there was, given that few of the posts used exactly the same wording,

but there is plenty of evidence that the same pieces of content were repackaged and used on many of these Pages. These short articles rarely gave sources or supporting evidence and bundled news and commentary. They almost never linked to outside websites, suggesting that this operation was not set up with a financial motivation. In all, these Pages were set up to resemble reliable sources of news in the fragmented media environment of the CAR. Second, many of these Pages switched from official-sounding posts to more informal content in mid-2019. In this respect the tactics resembled those [used by the Internet Research Agency](#) in operations targeting the US. Finally, despite the small amount of effort put into creating content for an opposition movement, these Pages were not primarily aimed at exacerbating divisions in CAR society. This distinguishes it from the IRA's well-documented operations to "[sow division](#)" in the US. On the contrary, these Pages were set up to unite the people of the CAR behind Touadéra's administration and its Russian partners.

## 5 Activities Targeting Madagascar

Wagner Group is known to have had a physical presence in Madagascar. In the 2018 presidential elections, they tried first [to support the pro-Russia incumbent](#); after he failed to reach the run-offs, Wagner then tried to [buy off](#) several other contenders, likely including the ultimate winner, Andry Rajoelina. The social-media component of Prigozhin-attributed activity includes a cluster of pro-government Malagasy news Pages, a politician Page, and a Page for a Malagasy mining corporation.



Page name (translated)	Creation date	Location of administrators	# of posts	Date of first post	Ave. # of all reactions	Ave. # of shares	Ave. # of comments
Afrique Panorama (Africa Panorama) 66,593 followers	March 18, 2019	Madagascar (6), South Africa (1)	794	2019-03-18	342	16	22
Les échos de Mahajanga (The echoes of Mahajanga) 29,411 followers	May 29, 2018	Madagascar (2)	159	2019-02-05	396	2	6
Ino maresaka eto Madagasikara (What is happening in Madagascar) 117,562 followers	May 8, 2018	Madagascar (3)	158	2019-02-05	839	7	19
Les échos de Tana (The echoes of Tana) 99,657 followers	May 7, 2018	Madagascar (2)	156	2019-02-05	567	4	10
Les échos d'Antsiranana (The echoes of Antsiranana) 33,202 followers	May 29, 2018	Madagascar (2)	94	2019-02-05	308	7	5
Les échos de Toamasina (The echoes of Toamasina) 33,985 followers	May 29, 2018	Madagascar (2)	94	2019-02-05	390	7	9
Les échos de Fianarantsoa (The echoes of Fianarantsoa) 48,874 followers	May 11, 2018	Madagascar (2)	93	2019-02-05	408	3	7
Les échos de Toliara (The echoes of Toliara) 31,395 followers	May 29 (2018)	Madagascar (2)	93	2019-02-05	478	8	8
Tsiory Rahanitriniaina Ofisialy 5,923 followers	March 14, 2019	Madagascar (1)	89	2019-03-14	300	1	3
KRAOMA-Kraomita Malagasy 1 follower	July 29, 2019	No visible admins	2	2019-07-29	0	0	0

Figure 39: Posting information for Madagascar Pages

## 5.1 News Pages

Six of the news Pages we reviewed had titles that followed a consistent naming format: "Les échos de (city in Madagascar)." Though the titles of the Pages were in French, the posts were in Malagasy. All of these Pages were created in May 2018, but first posted in February 2019, just two weeks after President Rajoelina's inauguration. The Pages posted content that read like government press releases, but were not strenuously anti-opposition. Interestingly, many of the "Les échos" Pages were no longer active by October 2019.

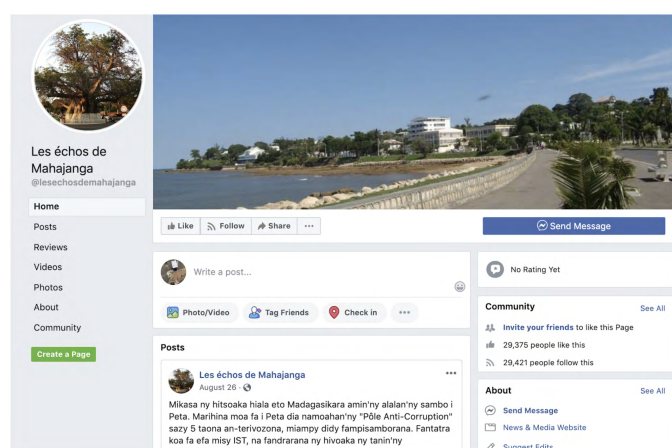


Figure 40: The Page "Les échos de Mahajanga." Mahajanga is a city in Madagascar. It last posted in August 2019.

One of the news Pages was called "Ino maresaka eto Madagasikara"



(What's happening in Madagascar). The posts were similarly slightly pro-government and posted in Malagasy. The Page, along with others, shared a cartoon portraying Russia as a bear saving Africa from Western hyenas. [The New York Times](#) wrote about [this cartoon](#) previously and attributed it to one of Prigozhin's companies. The Page has [an associated Twitter account](#).

One of the news Pages, "Afrique Panorama," had a description claiming to be "an online media that offers a comprehensive coverage of both Malagasy and African news." Facebook shows six administrators in Madagascar and one in South Africa. Like other operations by Russia-affiliated actors, it had a standalone website, [afriquepanorama.com](#) (an English-French bilingual pan-African news site), and an associated [Twitter account](#). [AfricaIntelligence.com](#) [has reported](#) that Prigozhin owns this site. The Page was created in March 2019, and the site was created in February 2019.

The website posts partisan content, such as [this article](#) ([archived version](#)) arguing that Libya would be better off with investment from Egyptian as opposed to German companies, and [this article](#) ([archived version](#)) from early October criticizing a presidential candidate in Mozambique.



Figure 41: An "Afrique Panorama" post about Libya that references "the weakness of the Government of National Accord," a theme that appears often in the Libya Pages.

## 5.2 Politician Page

The candidate Page was called "Tsiory Rahanitriniaina Official" (translated from Malagasy), and supported a parliamentary candidate by that name. The

first post, announcing his candidacy, received almost 5,000 likes. This Page was created in March 2019 and posted in Malagasy until the parliamentary elections in May, when [Rahanitriniaina lost](#). These posts were bolstering the candidacy of Rahanitriniaina. The Page recommenced posting – this time general Malagasy news stories in French — in July 2019. These posts could be considered pro-government, but not transparently so. The posts were often copied and pasted from local news articles, with the bottom of the post noting the source. The candidate posts received hundreds to thousands of likes, while the French news posts received about 20 likes. It is unclear whether this Page was part of a Russia-aligned strategy, or if perhaps an individual connected to a local social media operation managing some of the other Pages also managed this Page.



Figure 42: The "Tsiory Rahanitriniaina Ofisialy" Page. The Page last posted in September 2019.

### 5.3 Mining Page

Facebook also shared a Page called "KRAOMA-Kraomita Malagasy." This is a Madagascar state-owned mining company that entered into a [controversial agreement](#) with a Russian company called Ferrum Mining, with ties to Prigozhin. This Page had just one follower, never posted, and was created in July 2019. [An older KRAOMA-Kraomita Malagasy Page](#) exists with the same profile photo. This Page was created in 2016, and has a few thousand followers.



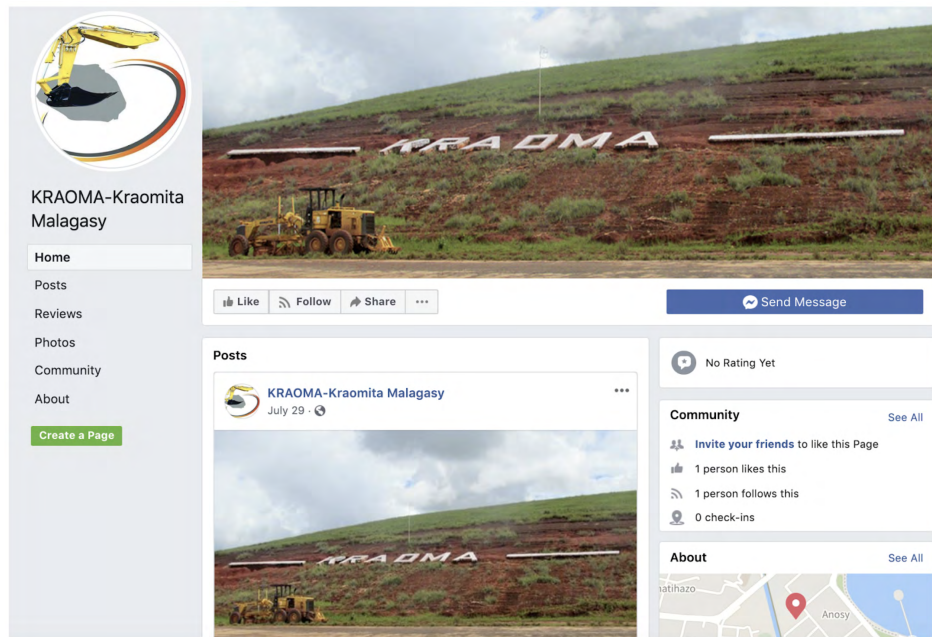


Figure 43: The "KRAOMA-Kraomita Malagasy" Page

## 5.4 Takeaways

This network included a number of Pages set up to resemble reliable local news sources and influence Malagasy public opinion in a pro-government direction. In this respect the Pages are aligned with Russian foreign policy, which has been supportive of President Rajoelina's administration. There was some diversity in the approaches of these "news" Pages; the "échos" Pages, for instance, were measured in their support for the government and their criticism of the opposition, while "Afrique Panorama" adopted a much more partisan tone. The relationship between this larger operation targeting Malagasy public opinion and the other Pages provided by Facebook, such as the candidate and company Pages, is unclear.

## 6 Activities Targeting Mozambique

On October 15, 2019 Mozambique held presidential and parliamentary elections. The ruling party, Frelimo, [won both by a landslide](#), with President Filipe Nyusi winning reelection. Frelimo also secured a majority in all provincial legislatures. The election was characterized by electoral violence and fraud, and the government refused to register thousands of election observers.

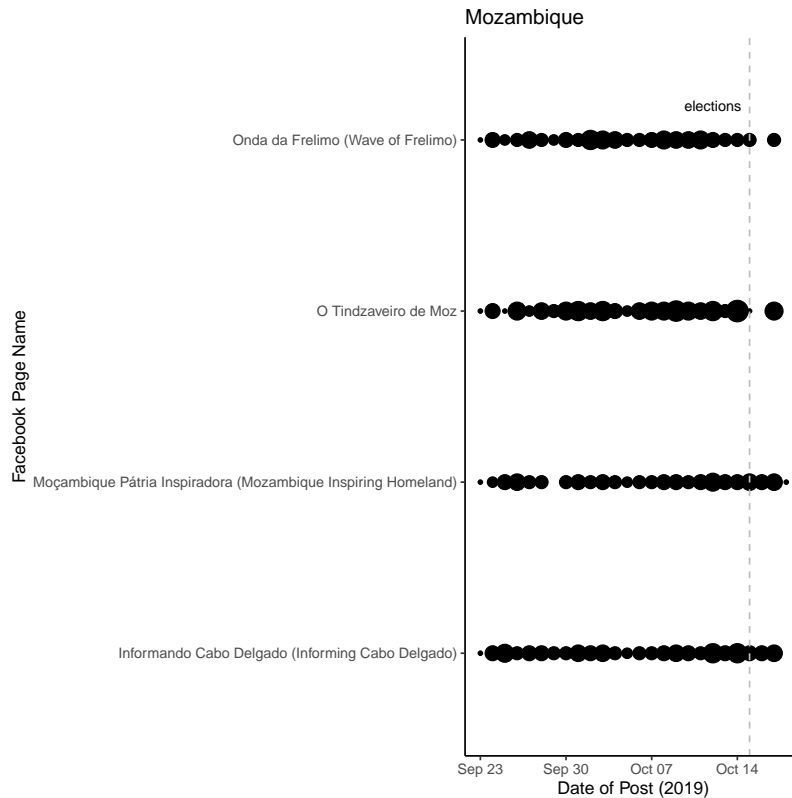


Figure 44: Posting frequency

Some of Russia's election meddling in Mozambique is known; the International Anticrisis Center discussed above [released polling data](#) – which is illegal in Mozambique – of unclear provenance suggesting Frelimo would win. We reviewed four Mozambique Facebook Pages and discuss the previously unknown role Prigozhin-linked entities played on social media in September and October 2019.

Page name (translated)	Creation date	Page administrator location	# of posts	Date of first post	Ave. # of all reactions	Ave. # of shares	Ave. # of comments
O Tindzaveiro de Moz 12,668 followers	September 23, 2019	Mozambique (3)	115	2019-09-23	1,123	26	52
Informando Cabo Delgado (Informing Cabo Delgado) 9,221 followers	September 23, 2019	Mozambique (1)	100	2019-09-23	811	4	22
Onda da Frelimo (Wave of Frelimo) 7,605 followers	September 23, 2019	Mozambique (3)	93	2019-09-23	1,206	6	34
Moçambique Pátria Inspiradora (Mozambique Inspiring Homeland) 9,566 followers	September 23, 2019	Mozambique (1)	87	2019-09-23	1,192	16	38

Figure 45: Posting information for Mozambique Pages

All four Pages were created on September 23, 2019, and often posted identical content. In the weeks leading up to the election they emphasized the government's success in fighting an Islamist insurgency in the province Cabo Delgado and highlighted government service provision. Some Pages were more explicit in their support for the ruling party. For example, a "Moçambique Pátria Inspiradora" post said: "We support Frelimo and Nyusi, it's our choice!" (translated). "Onda da Frelimo" (Wave of Frelimo) posted photos of Nyusi rallies. The Page "Informando Cabo Delgado" emphasized stories about the insurgency. There were negative stories about Renamo, the opposition party, as well as, for example, one claiming Renamo supporters had been arrested for attacking vehicles. After the election, the Pages highlighted positive aspects of election observation reports. All Pages had at least some degree of suspicious engagement, with each Page receiving at least 1,200 likes on their first similarly generic post welcoming users to the Page.



Figure 46: "Onda da Frelimo" Page

On October 9 one Page, "Moçambique Pátria Inspiradora," shared an untrue story claiming that the opposition Renamo party had signed an agreement with China allowing nuclear waste to be disposed of in Mozambique. The post received 2,200 likes, 71 comments, and 23 shares. Several Facebook users responded skeptically to this story, with one calling it fake news.

"Onda da Frelimo" sponsored a contest asking users to send the Page pictures of them doing good deeds. The winner would be published by the Page – though at the time of writing that does not appear to have happened – and receive a portrait made by "our artist." This Page also amplified findings from the illegal poll discussed above:

We also reviewed "O Tindzaveiro de Moz," a Page that focused on sports and culture. It was unique in that it linked out to seemingly authentic domestic news and culture sites.

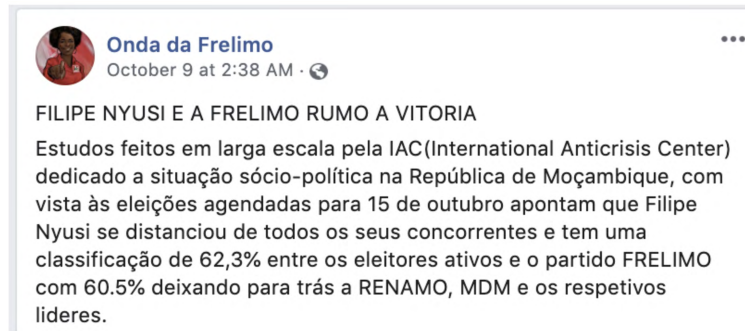
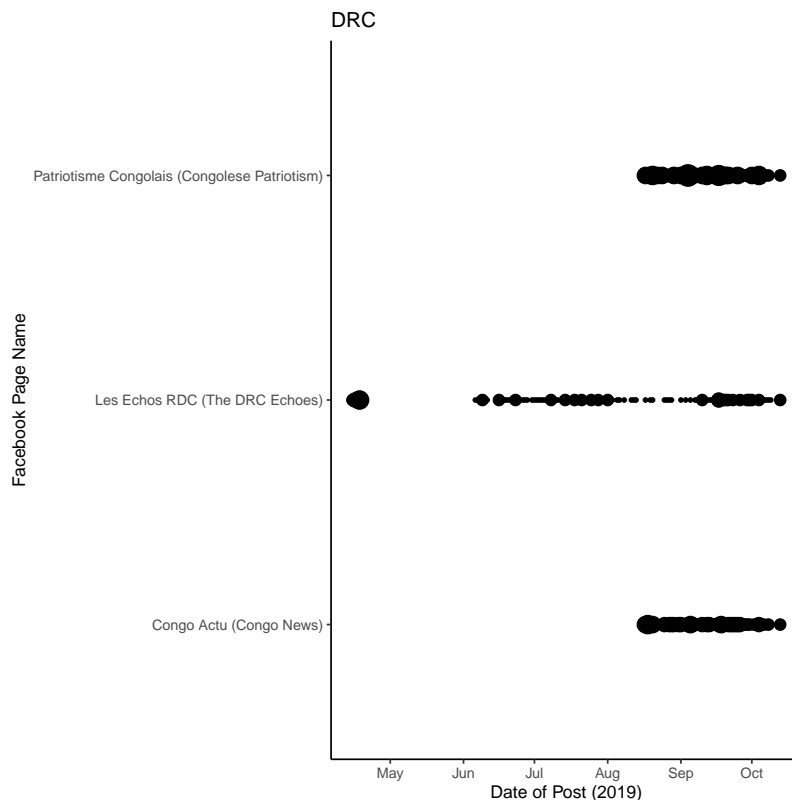


Figure 47: A post from "Onda da Frelimo" describing results of an illegal poll conducted by the International Anticrisis Center.



## 7 Activities Targeting Democratic Republic of Congo

The Pages provided to the Stanford Internet Observatory by Facebook included three Pages targeting the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). There have been indications of [Russian interest](#) in the DRC, and their heavy involvement in the neighboring Central African Republic (see above) is well documented.



These operations take place against the backdrop of a [fragile domestic political situation](#). After [contentious elections](#) in December 2018, in which opposition candidate Martin Fayulu and numerous observers claimed that [the vote count was manipulated](#), the DRC settled into an uneasy balance, in which Félix Tshisekedi governed as president while outgoing president Joseph Kabila's party retained a majority in the National Assembly, leading observers to speculate that he would [continue to rule behind the scenes](#). Russia played a significant role in establishing this political balance, having made it clear that [they would oppose](#) any further investigation into allegations of fraud recount attempts and effectively confirming Tshisekedi as President. Russia's ties with Tshisekedi and Kabila and its [interest in Congo's abundant natural resources](#) mean that it has a clear stake in this political process.

Page name (translated)	Creation date	Page administrator location	# of posts	Date of first post	Ave. # of all reactions	Ave. # of shares	Ave. # of comments
Patriotisme Congolais (Congolese Patriotism) 2,427 followers	August 16, 2019	Madagascar (1)	156	2019-08-17	944	9	13
Les Echos RDC (The DRC Echoes) 5,534 followers	April 15, 2019	Madagascar (2)	126	2019-04-15	628	11	17
Congo Actu (Congo News) 716 followers	August 17, 2019	Madagascar (1)	123	2019-08-17	749	7	12

Figure 48: Posting information for DRC Pages

The Pages provided by Facebook are not in clear alignment with this position. We analyze these Pages below, but, in contrast to the other countries covered in this report, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about what they indicate about the Prigozhin-linked operations in the DRC.

Two of the Pages, "Congo Actu" and "Patriotisme Congolais," were created one day apart in August 2019 and have clear commonalities. The other Page, "Les Echos RDC," was created earlier and differs in some significant ways. Our analysis begins with the first two before turning to "Les Echos RDC."

"Congo Actu" (Congo News) was created on August 17, 2019 and has one Page manager in Madagascar. Since then, the Page has published 123 posts and received 94,400 interactions.



Figure 49: "Congo Actu" Facebook Page

"Congo Actu" posted primarily neutral content and for the most part did not exhibit the hyper-partisan tendencies associated with the other influence operations covered in this report.



Figure 50: Neutral Fayulu post on "Congo Actu."



Figure 51: Neutral Tshisekedi post on "Congo Actu."

There was one exception to this neutrality, however. Joseph Kabila routinely came in for criticism on "Congo Actu" and was derided as a "puppet-master" of sorts—the individual behind the scenes who was responsible for the country's problems.



Figure 52: Anti-Kabila post on "Congo Actu." "Kabila wants to abuse everyone's credulity," it reads.

"Congo Actu" shares this anti-Kabila slant with the other Pages targeting the DRC, which are described below.

The Page had engagement statistics suggesting inauthentic behavior. Its first post, for instance, received 1,183 reactions—despite the fact that, at its peak, the Page had only 716 followers. The majority of the Page's 94,400 interactions came during its first two weeks:

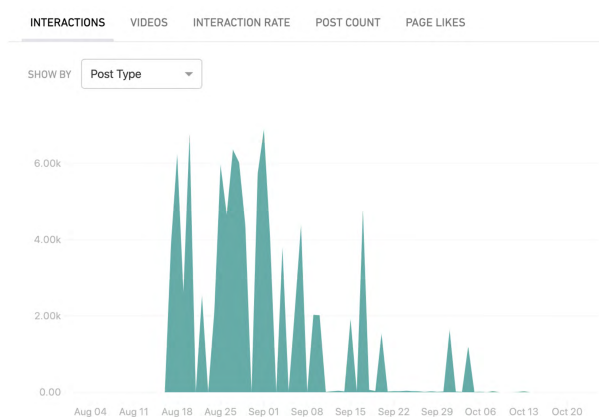


Figure 53: Timeline of engagement for the "Congo Actu" Page. Source: Crowd-Tangle.

Another Page in the set was called "Patriotisme Congolais" (Congolese Patriotism). This Page, which was created on August 16, 2019, had one Page manager in Madagascar. At time of writing, it had published 157 posts, received over 150,000 interactions, and gained 2,427 followers.



Figure 54: The "Patriotisme Congolais" Page

At first, "Patriotisme Congolais" published general content about the DRC's culture, natural beauty, and economy. These posts resembled those produced by national offices of tourism. With time, however, the Page shifted to anti-Kabila content, such as this post condemning Kabila for not providing free



education in the country:



Figure 55: An anti-Kabila post on "Patriotisme Congolais."

Another Page in the set, called "Les Echos RDC" (Echoes DRC), had a different approach. This Page, which was created earlier than the others, on April 15, 2019, and had two page Managers in Madagascar, often posted the kind of colloquial, meme-like content seen on some CAR Pages (see above) before switching, in September 2019, to more neutral content, similar to that found on "Congo Actu." Notably, the Page had a pronounced anti-Tshisekedi slant before this pivot.



Figure 56: "Les Echos RDC" Page

This Page posted 127 times between April 15, 2019 and October 24, 2019, had 5,533 followers, and received 82,900 interactions. Most of these interactions occurred in a large spike immediately after the Page's creation:

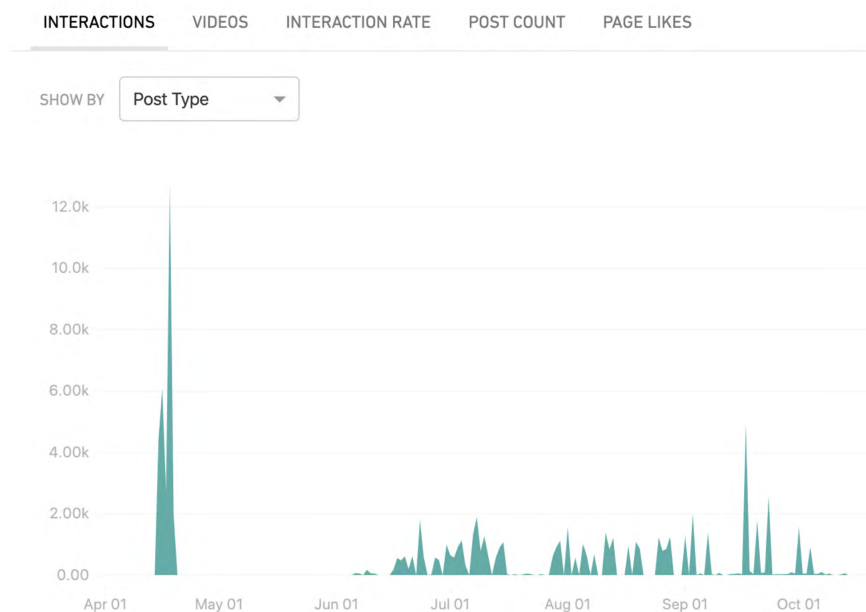


Figure 57: Engagement statistics for "Les Echos RDC". Source: CrowdTangle.

The Les Echos RDC Page was notable for its initial hostility to Tshisekedi. Some of these early posts were mocking:



Figure 58: Anti-Tshisekedi post on "Les Echos RDC"

While others featured apparently original cartoons deriding Tshisekedi and Kabila:



Figure 59: Cartoon from "Les Echos RDC." "You mean the President actually has to do work?" Tshisekedi is pictured saying on the right.

There were also a large number of anti-American posts, along with posts criticizing Tshisekedi for [pursuing closer ties with the US](#).

In September, Les Echos RDC began posting content that was favorable to Tshisekedi:



Figure 60: "Les Echos RDC" post with content favorable to Tshisekedi.

This change came approximately one month after the Congo Actu and Patriotisme Congolais Pages were created.

## 7.1 Takeaways

Because of the inconsistency in content and tone we observe in these Pages, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the goals their creators might have had in mind. These Pages are at times critical of Tshisekedi and Kabila, but they are not distinctly in favor of their main opponents, Fayulu and [Moïse Katumbi](#). Nor do these Pages show consistent positions vis-à-vis Russia, the US, or the UN. Across the three Pages, there were only two posts that mentioned Russia. Both were published on October 23, 2019, and shared the same Russian-made cartoon about Russia's benevolent intentions in Africa that also appeared on the Madagascar Page "Ino maresaka eto Madagasikara":

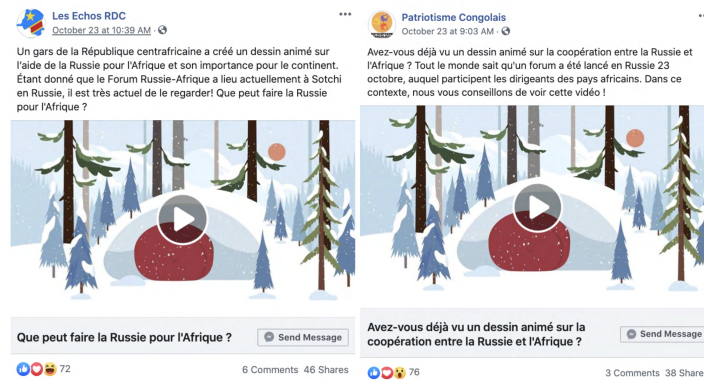


Figure 61: The Russian-made animated film for children was posted on two of the three DRC Pages.

Even here, however, we do not observe consistency, as "Congo Actu" did not post the video.

In general, it does not seem that these Pages were set up as part of a Russian government-aligned operation, given their frequently changing tone. However, it is difficult to say even this with certainty. There is a great deal of political infighting in the DRC, and perhaps the most likely explanation is that these Pages were created to boost and criticize different individuals as the political winds shifted. Further investigation into these Pages might reveal more about what they were intended to accomplish.

## 7.2 General Pages

Facebook also shared with us the Page for "AFRIC - Association for Free Research and International Cooperation," a Page that says it "is a community of independent researchers, experts and activists." Existing reporting ties [this organization](#) to Russia, and shows that AFRIC was involved in elections in [South Africa](#), [Madagascar](#), [DRC](#), and [Zimbabwe](#). The inclusion of AFRIC in the set of Pages Facebook shared suggests that the Page has the same upstream actor – likely Prigozhin – as the other Pages. The model of creating a fake or malign think tank is reflective of both Internet Research Agency and GRU information operations.

Interestingly, the "Kodóro236" Page (CAR) shared an AFRIC survey ([live](#), [archived](#)) seemingly seeking public opinion on the Khartoum Agreement, but transparently attempting to persuade. The survey included the leading question "Do you know that pivotal peace negotiations in the Central African Republic between the Government and politico-military groups are under way in Khartoum?" (translated), along with "If there is no peace, there will be many casualties among the population. Does the Central African Republic need new victims and a new war?"



## Bonjour ! Nous menons une enquête sur le sujet d'actualité politique: «Les négociations de paix à Khartoum».

L'Association AFRIC (<https://afric.online/fr/>) mène une enquête d'opinion publique. Les résultats seront publiés sur le site d'AFRIC. Participez s'il vous plaît et dites-nous votre opinion sur la situation dans le pays. L'enquête est anonyme.

\* Required

Savez-vous que des négociations charnières de paix en République centrafricaine entre le Gouvernement et les groupes politico-militaires sont en cours à Khartoum? \*

☐ Oui

☐ Non

Figure 62: Excerpt from the [AFRIC survey](#)

We reviewed four other Pages that were general geopolitical news Pages, some with an African focus. These Pages began posting around June 2019, and most were actively posting in October. Three of these Pages posted almost identical content, with one Page posting in French ("Géopolitique inédite"), another in English ("Entertaining Geopolitics"), and the third in Russian ("Entertaining Geopolitics," translated from Russian). These Pages linked out to iacenters.com, a pseudo-International Crisis Group-type organization that some observers suggest is a front for Wagner employees in Africa. A typical post from these Pages would have four global news headlines.

Last, we reviewed facebook.com/africanists, with the title "African Studies" (translated from Russian). This Page posted general news and popular interest stories on Africa; its About page translates as all "All about the Black Continent." It has an associated [Telegram account](#).

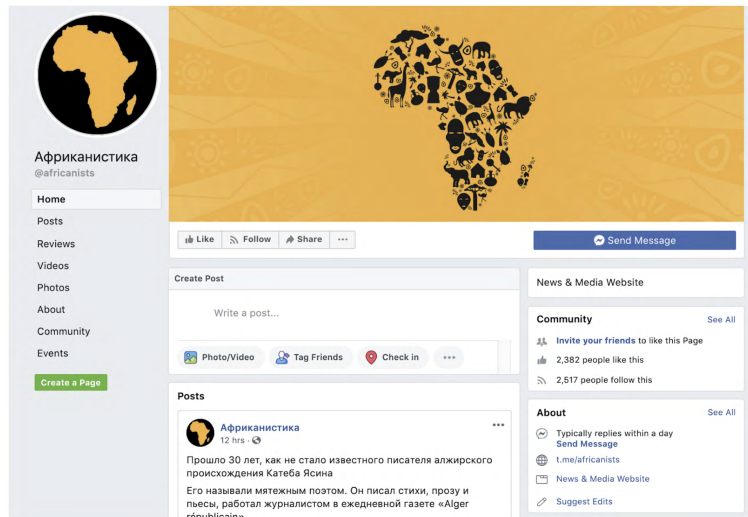


Figure 63: "African Studies" Page.

## 8 Conclusion

With the help of the Facebook Threat Intel team, the Stanford Internet Observatory identified and analyzed a large network of Facebook Pages that were engaged in a broad, long-term influence operation targeting African countries. This network spanned 73 Pages and six countries: Libya, Sudan, the Central African Republic, Madagascar, Mozambique, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In total these Pages posted more than 48,800 times, received more than 9.7 million interactions on these posts, and were liked by over 1.7 million accounts. More information about engagement is necessary to determine how many people these Pages reached, but it is likely that this number reaches into the many millions.

Facebook has attributed this network of Pages to companies tied to Yevgeny Prigozhin, the Russian oligarch who funded the Internet Research Agency. This attribution aligns with analysis done by the Stanford Internet Observatory, which, based on information provided by the Dossier Center, tied a cluster of Libya-oriented Pages to Prigozhin's Wagner Group. Subsequent Page data provided by Facebook allowed us to expand our investigation of this network to five more countries and 63 more Pages.

These Pages produced almost universally positive coverage of Russia's activities in these countries and disparaged the UN, France, Turkey, Qatar, and the Libyan Government of National Accord, most often while purporting to be local news sources. In other cases, they purported to represent individual politicians or opposition groups, in addition to non-political Pages, such as athletics- or culture-related entities. They also embraced a variety of tactics, from lengthy news-related posts, often copied or paraphrased from other Facebook Pages, to the kinds of virality-aspiring memes associated with the IRA. And they took advantage of context-relevant social media, such as WhatsApp and Telegram to reach and expand their audiences.

Considered as a whole, these clusters of Pages were intended to foster

unity around Russia-aligned actors and politicians. This distinguishes it from the IRA's operations in the US, which involved creating diametrically opposed groups and encouraging them to clash. There were some exceptions to this—these Pages were not completely ideologically uniform—but the majority of content they produced was pointed in this direction. In order for this operation to be effective, these Pages had to appear to be authentic sources of information. There is evidence that the Page creators used local content creators possibly to lend the Pages authenticity and to make their inauthentic nature harder to detect. This is another significant difference from the IRA operation, which was run out of St. Petersburg. In this respect, this operation was not only a glimpse into what Prigozhin and his companies are doing in Africa but a hint as to what shapes these operations might take in the future.

## 9 Appendix: Links to Archived Pages

### Libya:

- [archived version of Libya News Network](#)
- [archived version of Fezzan News Network](#)
- [archived version of Tripoli News Network](#)
- [archived version of Falcons of the Conqueror](#)
- [archived version of Libya First](#)
- [archived version of Libya Gaddafi](#)
- [archived version of Cyrenaica News Network](#)
- [archived version of Libyan National People](#)
- [archived version of Libya Libya](#)
- [archived version of Voice of Libya](#)
- [archived version of Knights of Libya](#)

### Sudan:

- [archived version of Radio Africa](#)
- [archived version of Star of Khartoum](#)
- [archived version of SUDAN DAILY](#)
- [archived version of Sudan Daily](#)
- [archived version of Radio Africa-political in sudan](#)
- [archived version of Echo of the Nile](#)
- [archived version of Darfur Urgent](#)
- [archived version of Mahdi does not Agree](#)
- [archived version of Sudan is Complete](#)
- [archived version of Military News](#)
- [archived version of Sovereign Council News](#)
- [archived version of Sudan with Other Eyes](#)
- [archived version of Khartoum Star](#)
- [archived version of Radio Africa-social live](#)
- [archived version of Royal Crew news](#)
- [archived version of My News Network](#)
- [archived version of Radio Africa-politics](#)
- [archived version of Radio Africa-sport](#)
- [archived version of Sudanese Liberal Party](#)

[archived version of Radio Africa-Sudan](#)  
[archived version of Federal Movement Party](#)

Central African Republic:

[archived version of Agence de Nouvelles Béafrika](#)  
[archived version of Kodoro236](#)  
[archived version of Bangui Buzz](#)  
[archived version of Soutien à la Russie en RCA](#)  
[archived version of Le Coq de Bangui](#)  
[archived version of Le Rassembleur](#)  
[archived version of CODE 236 News](#)  
[archived version of Le fauve de Bangui](#)  
[archived version of Younga Sango](#)  
[archived version of Béafrika News](#)  
[archived version of La prospérité de la RCA](#)

Madagascar:

[archived version of Afrique Panorama](#)  
[archived version of Les échos de Mahajanga](#)  
[archived version of Ino maresaka eto Madagasikara](#)  
[archived version of Les échos de Tana](#)  
[archived version of Les échos de Toamasina](#)  
[archived version of Les échos de Fianarantsoa](#)  
[archived version of Les échos de Toliara](#)  
[archived version of Tsiory Rahanitriniaina Ofisialy](#)  
[archived version of KRAOMA-Kraomita Malagasy](#)

Mozambique:

[archived version of O Tindzaveiro de Moz](#)  
[archived version of Informando Cabo Delgado](#)  
[archived version of Onda da Frelimo](#)  
[archived version of Moçambique Pátria Inspiradora](#)

Democratic Republic of Congo:

[archived version of Patriotisme Congolais](#)  
[archived version of Les Echos RDC](#)  
[archived version of Congo Actu](#)