

Role of Private Military Companies in Conflict

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Overview

Military contractors' involvement with private military companies (PMCs) has experienced a significant rise in recent decades. Since the end of the Cold War, a significant and lucrative private sector of international security has formed due to the restructuring of state military policies and budgets and the economic privatisation that has taken place.² In light of the proliferation of private military and security companies, it is essential to investigate the processes by which states have begun to privatise formerly public functions, such as security and defence. In 2010, the PMC business was reported to have employed one million people, and its total market value was over two hundred billion dollars.³ When it comes to providing support for its conventional troops, weak countries and international governmental organisations, such as the United Nations, are increasingly turning to private military contractors for assistance. The use of private military contractors, sometimes known as PMCs, is becoming increasingly widespread among businesses and organisations that are not for profit. This new security environment challenges the traditional Weberian conception of the state as the exclusive repository of authorised violence. As a result, issues are raised regarding the utility of privatising security and the consequences. This study attempts to describe PMCs' key functions and analyse their increased access to what was long regarded as the public domain monopoly. PMCs play an increasingly essential role in security today, and the purpose of this study is to characterise that role.

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² Kinsey, C., & Malcolm Hugh Patterson. (2012). *Contractors and war : the transformation of US expeditionary operations*. Stanford Security Studies, An Imprint Of Stanford University Press.

³ Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, Michel, C., & Brav, L. (2013). *The Practical guide to humanitarian law*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Background history of PMC

This condition has been mostly associated with clandestine mercenary operations throughout the 1960s and 1970s. At a time when this phenomenon was widely observed, the provisions on mercenaries included in Article 47 of the First Protocol Additional to the Geneva Convention of 1949 (hereinafter "Protocol I"), the "Convention on the Elimination of Mercenaries in Africa," and the "International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries" were all adopted.⁴ There has been an increase in highly professional businesses that openly trade their services, most frequently through websites. A few companies, like Executive Outcomes and Sandline, have participated in active combat operations in various nations worldwide. Executive Outcomes, which relied primarily on South African special forces members, supported the Angolan government's fight against the rebel movement known as UNITA.

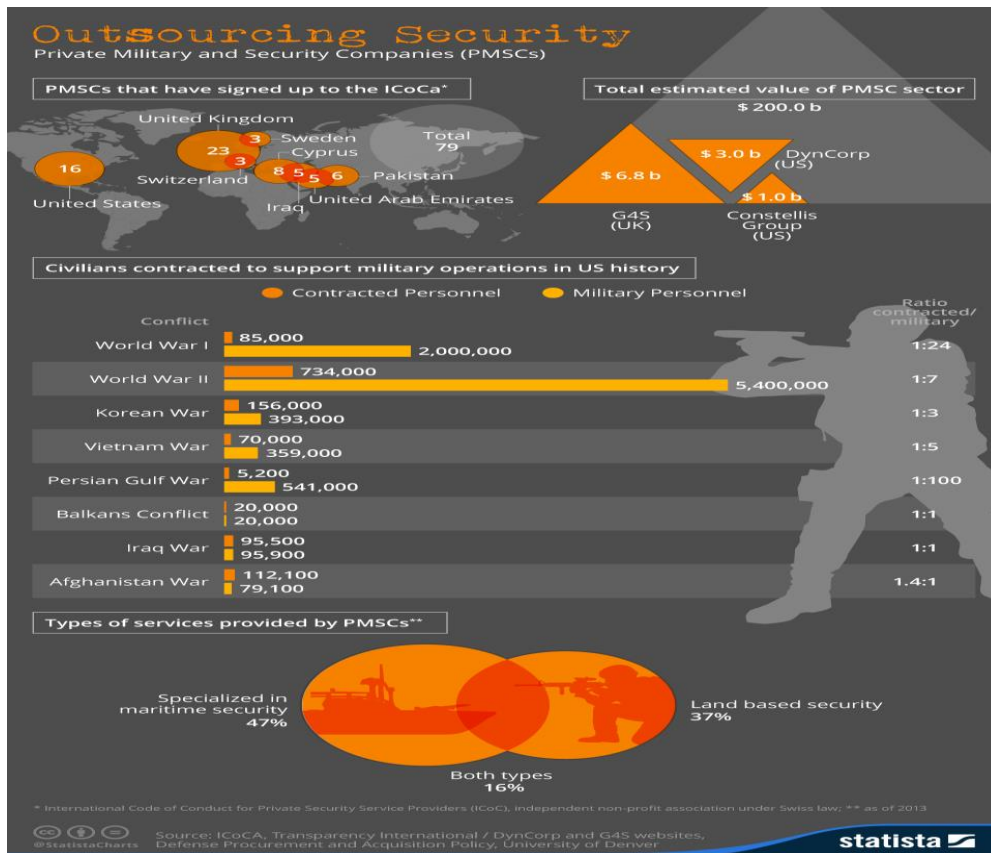
Additionally, Executive Outcomes assisted the authorities in Sierra Leone in their victory over the Revolutionary United Front and the subsequent return of the elected president to power. Sandline, a corporation that is related to Executive Outcomes and operates in the same industry, "admits to having undertaken six international operations since 1993," two of which were carried out in the countries of Papua New Guinea and Sierra Leone.⁵

Countries like Iraq, Colombia, and Afghanistan that were plagued by violent conflict have a significantly increased number of private businesses operating within their borders. They engage in a variety of activities such as security surveillance, logistics, training, and the collection of intelligence, to name a few. According to some sources, contractors trained security

⁴ FAITE 1, A. (2004). Involvement of private contractors in armed conflict: implications under international humanitarian law. *Defence Studies*, 4(2), 166–183.

⁵ Prado, J. L. G. del. (2012, August 11). *The Role of Private Military and Security Companies in Modern Warfare – Impacts on Human Rights*. Archive.globalpolicy.org.

forces in Iraq, flew gunships in Colombia, trained civilian police in Bosnia and Kosovo, and provided security for Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai.⁶



Source: Statista

Some businesses have reached a very high degree of expertise; two examples are the American enterprises Airscan and Ronco. Airscan is in the business of conducting private aviation reconnaissance, and Ronco specialises in clearing minefields.⁷ PMCs can be categorised in many different ways because they come in such a wide variety of different forms, sizes, and configurations. As a direct consequence of this, the terms "private security company" and "private military company" are frequently interchanged with one another. It is feasible to divide

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ FAITE 1, A. (2004). Involvement of private contractors in armed conflict: implications under international humanitarian law. *Defence Studies*, 4(2), 166–183.

the work that they have done into the following three categories. There is a diverse assortment of military service companies available today, including those that serve on the front lines of combat, those that offer strategic advice and training, and those that support the armed forces in logistics, maintenance, and intelligence gathering. Some of these companies even provide intelligence support.

They could be recruited by business enterprises and humanitarian organisations to provide protection for the missions those organisations are working on.

Private Military Companies in Iraq and Afghanistan

In today's world, a great number of industrialised countries and developing countries are extremely reliant on the services provided by multinational private military contractors. According to a report published in 2011, the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan estimated that at least 117 billion dollars had been spent on contractors between October 2001 and 2011.⁸ According to the report, "contingency contracts for equipment, supplies, and support services" significantly increase the overall cost, bringing it up to "\$154 billion for the Department of Defense," "\$11 billion for the Department of State," and "\$7 billion for the United States Agency for International Development."⁹ "The number of companies, the scope of services offered, and the visibility of their operations" all mark a shift from the practices of the past and the unprecedented scale of PMSC use.¹⁰ According to research conducted in 2008, the United States government has employed or subcontracted the services of dozens of different American firms to provide security in Iraq.¹¹ As a consequence of this, the

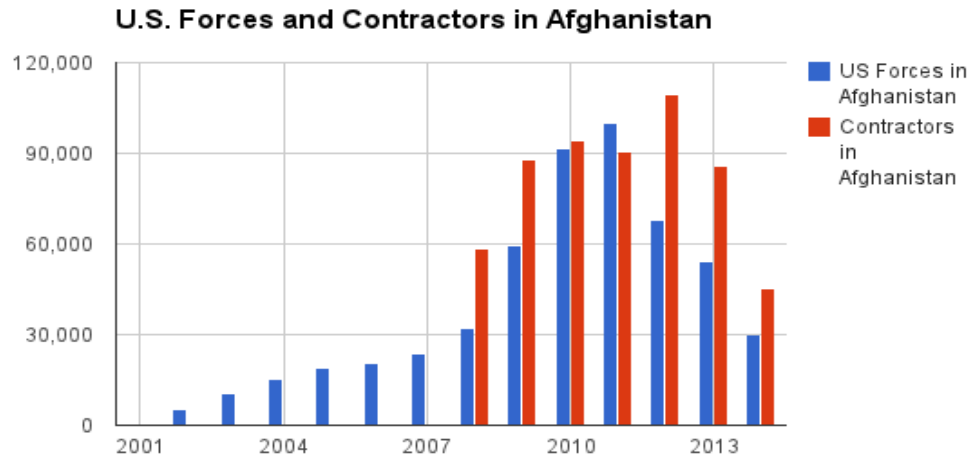
⁸ US Commission on Wartime Contracting. (2012). *At what risk? Correcting over-reliance on contractors in contingency operations*. Commission On Wartime Contracting In Iraq And Afghanistan.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Taulbee, J. L. (2002). The privatization of security: Modern conflict, globalization and weak states. *Civil Wars*, 5(2), 1–24.

¹¹ United States. Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction. (2008). *Agencies need improved financial data reporting for private security contractors*. Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction.

United States government has already committed a number of billions of dollars to assist an industry that is beset by major defects and issues.



Source: Private Security Monitor

The PMC industry, which offers a diverse array of services, is comprised of approximately ten thousand individuals that are employed there. The United States Army has turned to private military and security companies in Iraq and Afghanistan for assistance with a variety of tasks. These tasks include the construction of military bases, the preparation of food for the armed forces, the security of U.S. military bases, and the management of weapons and training for new Iraqi forces. According to the Department of Defense's sources, the number of the United States military contractors outnumbers the number of uniformed military forces serving in Afghanistan and Iraq (145,000). The majority of American workers in these two countries were independent contractors, accounting for 52% of all American workers.¹²

¹² Françoise Bouchet-Saulnier, Michel, C., & Brav, L. (2013). *The Practical guide to humanitarian law*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Benefitting from the War

The fact that private military companies make money out of war is the first and most evident issue with these companies. When it comes to this quality, mercenaries and PMSCs share a lot of similarities with one another. On the other hand, we ought to discuss whether or not profiting from armed conflict is a morally acceptable practice. Because of the existence of perverse incentives brought about by making a living off of war, I have reason to assume that the correct response is "yes." PMSCs are not the only market-driven forces that profit from war; in fact, there is a great deal of other market-driven forces. The manufacture of weaponry, which is an essential component of the industrial-military complex, is responsible for the annual generation of several billions of dollars. The United States Army has a steady stream of work due to the existence of wars and other dangers to the national interest of the United States.¹³ However, given that the private military industry operates as a corporation rather than a department of the United States government, it is subject to a different and distinct set of incentives. Weberian arguments that a state is "the sole repository of the legitimate coercive force." are undermined when it is acknowledged that non-state entities give military backing.¹⁴ According to Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski's explanation, private military and security companies (PMSCs) benefit from the existence of security concerns regardless of who the threat is intended to target.¹⁵ As a direct consequence of this, the goals, objectives, and core values of the government may not necessarily coincide with those of the firms that the government contracts with.¹⁶ Because it is common knowledge that PMSCs will support the opposing side in a conflict, these organisations do play a part in the escalation of conflicts. Because they are profit-driven commercial entities exclusively accountable to their shareholders, they can also

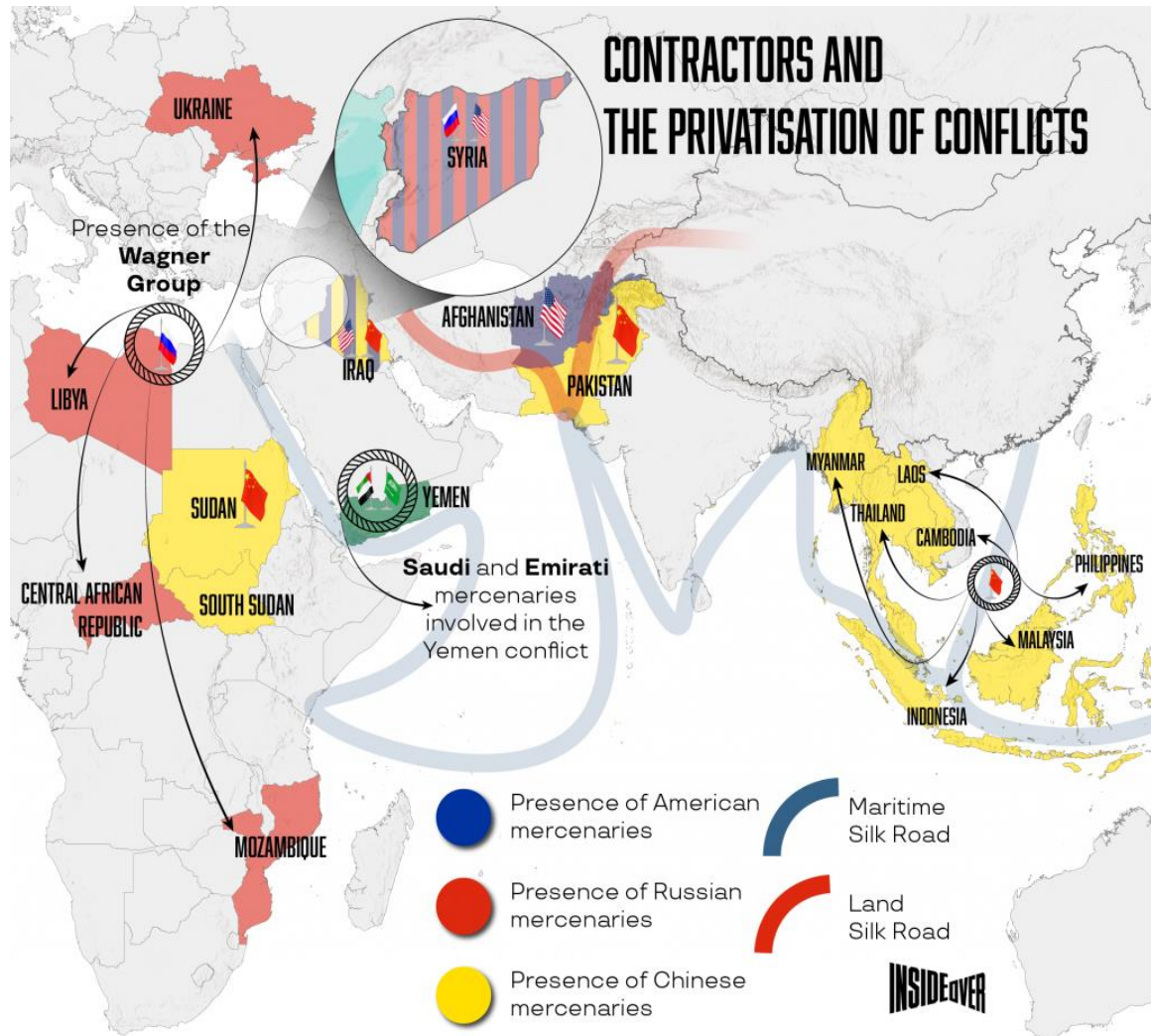
¹³ Cimini, T. (2018, August 2). *The Invisible Army: Explaining Private Military and Security Companies*. E-International Relations. https://www.e-ir.info/2018/08/02/the-invisible-army-explaining-private-military-and-security-companies/#_ftn30

¹⁴ Bjork, K., & Jones, R. (2005). Overcoming Dilemmas Created by the 21st Century Mercenaries: conceptualising the use of private security companies in Iraq. *Third World Quarterly*, 26(4-5), 777–796.

¹⁵ Akcinaroglu, S., & Radziszewski, E. (2012). Private Military Companies, Opportunities, and Termination of Civil Wars in Africa. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 57(5), 795–821. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002712449325>

¹⁶ Ibid.

provide services to legitimate and illegitimate actors.¹⁷ This gives them the ability to provide services to both groups. According to Taulbee, if you have the appropriate connections and enough money, you might be able to acquire cutting-edge military skills.¹⁸



Source: *Insideover*

¹⁷ Cimini, T. (2018, August 2). *The Invisible Army: Explaining Private Military and Security Companies*. E-International Relations. https://www.e-ir.info/2018/08/02/the-invisible-army-explaining-private-military-and-security-companies/#_ftn30

¹⁸ Taulbee, J. L. (2002). The privatization of security: Modern conflict, globalization and weak states. *Civil Wars*, 5(2), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698240208402501>

Conclusion

It is not a new phenomenon that there is a relationship between the public and private sectors in the provision of security. This relationship has existed for a long time. As a result of the influence of the neoliberal ethic, the position of the state has shifted, and the concept of security has been transformed into a managerial, technical, and depoliticised reaction to crimes and violence in today's outsourcing of security, which is characterised by certain characteristics (corporate form). As a direct result of this tendency, there has been a rise in the level of worry regarding privatisation's influence on the sovereignty of states and individuals. Additionally, the influx of military professionals into politics, their lack of responsibility, and the weak monitoring provided by public contracting agencies contribute to a reduction in transparency and democratic balances, which could eventually weaken the public's capability to conduct military operations. Because PMCs appear to be detrimental to the organisation and mission of the military, they may be perceived as a danger to the efficiency of the military. The aspect of this study that focuses on the epistemic ramifications induced by PMCs is the one that we consider to be the most essential. According to our point of view, the real danger to the autonomy of individuals comes from the widespread commercialisation of security knowledge. If the state loses the ability to think for itself and instead relies on PMCs to provide security understanding, an ironic situation may arise. In this scenario, the security domain will see an increase in the number of private actors. At the same time, the scope of the legitimate normative functions of the state will become more limited.