



## Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Connor Austman

Title: Discussing the Impact of Private Military and Security Companies on New Political and Military Realities

Programme/year: International Security Studies/2020

Author of Evaluation (second reader): prof. Oldřich Bureš

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
<b>Major Criteria</b>			
	Research question, definition of objectives	<b>10</b>	8
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	<b>30</b>	17
	Methodology, analysis, argument	<b>40</b>	28
<i>Total</i>		<b>80</b>	
<b>Minor Criteria</b>			
	Sources	<b>10</b>	3
	Style	<b>5</b>	5
	Formal requirements	<b>5</b>	5
<i>Total</i>		<b>20</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>	66

### Evaluation

Major criteria:

The thesis attempts to cover a topic which has already received plenty of scholarly attention. Unfortunately, the author has not reviewed many of the existing books and journal articles which discuss the issues covered in the thesis. Specifically, Peter Singer, Anna Leander, Rita Abrahamsen, Joakim Berndtsson, Chris Kinsey, or Christopher Spearin to name but the most well know scholars which extensively covered the PMSCs' topics directly linked to the reviewed thesis. In addition, while citing a few of their articles, the thesis also completely neglects the insights from key books from several other PMSCs authors, including Elke



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Krahmann, Deborah Avant, Molly Dunigan or Ulrich Petersohn. As a consequence, the author offers a very incomplete account of both the rise of PMSCs in general and their activities in Iraq in particular. He also makes numerous claims which have been already debunked in the existing scholarship. To list just a few of these from the thesis:

“This dissertation hypothesises through deductive reasoning that modern private security contractors are a by-product of a post-Cold War world and the lack of a unified purpose for traditional armed force.” (p. 10)

“The majority of discussion surrounding PMCs involves the usage of such contractors as a ‘force multiplier.’ (p. 15)

“This thesis will take up the position that the emergence of PMC forces utilised by state militaries is a response to a demand, in a sort of market-value proposition.” (p. 22)

Albeit at times briefly and randomly venturing to Russian PMSCs and beyond Iraq, the author also makes the already discarded assumption that there is just a single neoliberal/US/Anglo-Saxon PMCs market. Again, the existing literature shows otherwise, there are many different local PMSCs markets in different parts of the world.

The existing literature also highlights the need to be very precise when it comes to definitions and typologies. The author, unfortunately never really defines the key terms used in the thesis, including PMCs, PMSCs, mercenaries, and contractors.

Due to the failure to properly engage the existing PMSCs literature, the thesis contains several empirical claims which are simply factually incorrect, e.g. “There is no new legislation concerning the usage of PMCs, and the most high profile of war and conflict legislation - the Geneva Convention – has been easily avoided by PMCs.”

I could continue with the list of other problematic and/or already challenged claims made in the thesis regarding PMSCs’ efficiency, accountability, impact of democracy, society and the military profession. Instead, I prefer to give the author a hint for getting up-to-date on the state-of-art on PMSCs by providing links to two research handbooks:

<https://www.routledge.com/Routledge-Handbook-of-Private-Security-Studies/Abrahamsen-Leander/p/book/9780415729352>



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<https://www.routledge.com/The-Routledge-Research-Companion-to-Security-Outsourcing/Berndtsson-Kinsey/p/book/9781472426833>

A potentially novel addition of the thesis lies in the attempt at providing a Marxist perspective. While there is a substantial body of literature offering a critical security perspective on security privatization and PMSCs (which again the author unfortunately mostly failed to engage with), I am not aware of a genuine Marxist account. Unfortunately, the thesis does not really offer one either. There is a brief discussion of Marxist thought concerning the civilian-military relationship and the growth of the military establishment in thesis, but as the author admitted, it is quite “muddled” (p. 31). As such, the author was not really able to link Marxist thought to the scholarship on PMSCs in a consistent and comprehensive fashion.

Minor criteria:

The thesis title in the SIS is not the same as the one at the title page of the submitted thesis - “Examining the Growth of Private Military Contractors and their Applications in State Stability in Latin America“ versus “Discussing the Impact of Private Military and Security Companies on New Political and Military Realities.“ The content of the thesis does not discuss Latin America at all.

Overall evaluation:

The thesis still meets the general requirements for this type of work. The author has arguably attempted to cover a complex topic from a different theoretical perspective, which would be tricky even with a proper engagement of the existing literature on PMSCs. I, therefore, recommend the thesis to be defended.

Suggested grade:

**D1**

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Bm'.