

## **Abstract**

In 1994, five hundred thousand to one million people were killed during the genocide in Rwanda.<sup>1</sup> Critiques soon emerged regarding the United Nations' (UN) inaction, accusing it of letting the genocide unfold. In the midst of this tragedy, Executive Outcomes (EO), a South African based private military company (PMC) suggested to intervene in Rwanda on behalf of the UN. However, the UN dismissed the idea of outsourcing peacekeeping to a private firm. The UN's inability to act decisively when wanting to deploy peacekeeping operations has led some to advocate the use of Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs), leading to a very energetic debate. The debate on the outsourcing of peacekeeping to PMSCs comes at a time of increased use of such companies by the UN. Although it has increased its use of PMSCs over the years, the UN's discourse vis-à-vis these companies is usually critical. In this thesis, we aim to observe whether the UN's discourse vis-à-vis PMSCs has evolved over time to match the practice of increased use, or whether the UN continues to classify these companies in negative terms. We also attempt to establish whether the anti-mercenary norm has an impact on the UN's use of PMSCs.

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<sup>1</sup> SURVIVORS FUND (SURF): Statistics; BROOKS, Doug. Could Executive Outcomes have ended the 1994 Rwandan Genocide?, p.1