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

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### **Abstract**

Private military companies have rapidly filled in many operational force capacities that national militaries now longer have the capabilities to fill natively. As such, PMCs have expanded their rosters as well as their services provided to fill in many roles, and have carried out many such roles such as logistics management, personal and site security, and some inherently state functions such as training indigenous security forces and interrogation of prisoners. This rise has impacted national militaries in many facets of their operations and abstract professional bases. The ability of the PMC to carry out operations at the same standard as regular soldiers but with higher pay has impacted how the regular soldier views their own place in the professional national military, and creates problems for the establishment as a whole. This thesis will discuss the Iraq War as a case study and the impact of PMCs on the war, as well as introduce the Huntingtonian theories of soldier professionalism and corporateness, and will also employ a critical Marxist perspective to analyse the role and impact of PMCs in the modern military convention and in civil-military relations.

**Keywords:** civil-military relations, private military companies, Iraq War, Samuel Huntington, military establishment, security contractors, Afghanistan, insurgency, counterinsurgency

**Range of Thesis:** 68 pages, 125 594 characters

## **Declaration of Authorship**

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled this thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature.
2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.
3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or the same degree.

Prague, 31st July 2020

**Connor Austman**



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## **1. Introduction**

The usage of private military contractors is gaining media and political attention, and has been a topic in the public consciousness since the beginning of the post-9/11 era.

Although it has been an area of military affairs that has its roots in the post-Second World War years, and indeed mercenaries have existed for centuries, if not millennia, the modern private military contractor began to take shape in the 1980's. Their usage presents a unique challenge in the post-Cold War and post-9/11 era, as the debate surrounding their usage takes many forms and several of them challenge conventional military culture. However, what exactly that term is can be vague, and is not a universal concept.

In the last decade, private military contractors employed by more powerful militaries, particularly Russia and the US, have taken up a scholarly and political prominence. In the ongoing conflict in Syria, Russia has now employed private security contractors while maintaining (eventually distancing from this statement) that any contractors were not affiliated with the Russian government.<sup>1</sup> This in itself would not be troubling, as other militaries have extensively used security contractors in the Middle Eastern conflicts of the post-9/11 era.<sup>2</sup> However, regulation has not necessarily kept up with usage. In the years prior to the Ukraine and Syrian conflicts, contractors usually took up security training and risk assessment roles, with these being undertaken by foreign contractors; consequently, physical security and combat operations were undertaken by locally-acquired contractors.<sup>3</sup> These

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<sup>1</sup> Sukhankin, Sergei, 2019, New Russian PMC Spotted in Syria: Potential Military Links and Implications. *academia.edu*. 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Huskey, Kristine A., 2010, The American Way: Private Military Contractors & US Law after 9/11. *SSRN Electronic Journal* [online]. 2010. Vol. 2, no. 8, p. 1-50.

<sup>3</sup> Benicsák, Petr, 2012, Advantages and Disadvantages of Private Military Companies. 2012. P. 9.

benefit the employer by reducing the risk to national troops and employing a policy of “pay to win,”<sup>4</sup> necessitating a reduction in the responsibility of a national soldier and their unit to a conflict and of a state to the well-being of the soldier (national or private).

The advent of military contractors taking up combat and invasive roles raises new questions about the legality of private military companies, and what sorts of implications this has for the conventional national soldier and the wider military culture. Effectively, military culture is experiencing a shift away from Wagnerian and Huntington’s original conceptions of violence within the state and military and of a corporatised attitude to the profession of the soldier<sup>5</sup> towards a decentralised and deregulated system of hiring small contractors to carry out short-term tasks that the military normally carries out at the cost of a diluted sense of the soldier’s profession.

By exploring what exactly entails a private security contractor and their effect on militaries they operate in and alongside, it is important to discuss the most common roles they operate under and contextualise these private companies. Many companies only provide certain specialised services to specific militaries, and very few have the specialisation or operational capacity to go into the field in combat alongside a military force. Contextualising the private soldier will build a foundation for understanding when discussing how the security contractors affect how the soldier’s profession is shaped and impacted by their actions.

### **1.1 Research Goals & Question**

The purpose of this dissertation is to discuss the usage of ‘mercenaries’ by militaries, and to evaluate their impact both on the militaries that hire them and on the conflicts they

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<sup>4</sup> Benicsák, Petr, 2012, Advantages and Disadvantages of Private Military Companies. 2012. P. 6, 10.

<sup>5</sup> Heinecken, Lindy. "Outsourcing Public Security." *Armed Forces & Society*. 2013.

engage in. The original inspiration for this thesis came from the usage of Wagner group contractors in Venezuela during the constitutional crisis of early 2019.<sup>6</sup> However, this thesis will not focus on any one particular region and its utilisation of private military contractors, or PMCs, rather focussing on the culture of the PMC at large in order to gain a broad picture of the “mercenary market,” if such a term can be utilised. This impact will also be assessed on localised conflicts and military interventions by state entities, but only briefly as supporting data.

The central question of this thesis is: “what is the impact of PMCs in the modern international relations arena, in military and political capacities, and how does their efficacy or lack thereof and new application in modern warfare affect the concept of the national military as a professional organisation?” Whilst broad, this question can be broken into two smaller questions:

- 1: How effective are PMCs at supporting and in some cases supplanting traditional national militaries? What is the effective analytical capacity for measuring such impact?
- 2: What do the new applications of PMCs, following the experiences of the Iraq and Afghan wars, mean for the traditional military? As such, are PMCs a threat to military values and international convention, or is there an interchange of ethics and values?

These two smaller questions will form the majority of the body of research in two sections, intended to be broken up for individual study, and the first question’s results will assist in the analysis of the second question.

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 forces. As such, the observations and analyses made will seek to prove that private military contractors are indirectly phasing into more and more usage and

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<sup>6</sup> Tsvetkova, Maria. “Exclusive: Kremlin-Linked Contractors Help Guard Venezuela's Maduro - Sources.” Reuters. 2019.

will replace a certain degree of traditional military operations entirely. This does not mean that PMCs will replace militaries; rather, it means that PMCs will increase their capacity to operate as a military unit alongside traditional soldiers, and the benefits of utilising such private forces will eventually outweigh the negatives, potentially driving more and more soldiers to take up a career in a PMC rather than staying with the national military, thus reducing the professional status of soldiers and altogether de-monopolising the hold on professionalism that traditional militaries hold.

To describe the thesis structure, it will begin by putting both the regular soldier and the private soldier into context so that the reader may have a frame of reference for the rest of the thesis. As well, just for clarity: the term “contractor” is used to refer to private soldiers on the payroll of the PMCs, while many interchangeable terms are used to describe soldiers in traditional state-based militaries, such as ‘regular soldier,’ ‘soldier,’ ‘state soldier,’ and ‘traditional soldier.’ Continuing on, a brief literature review will be provided, this will serve as an introduction to previous work conducted on the issue, and what works will be consulted for this thesis. For academic clarity, a theoretical framework and methodology section will be provided. The thesis will go over the two major theories consulted and applied, the Huntingtonian and critical Marxist theories, and they have their own sections. The bulk of the thesis will be the Iraq War case study, which will form the bulk of the Analysis section’s inspiration. Finally, after the analytical sections, a brief conclusion will outline the paper and provide some possible suggestions for future research.

## **2. Contextualising the Soldier’s Profession**

The concept of the soldier as a “professional” began to spread as militaries began to shift away from the use of conscripts in their armed forces and instead relied on highly

trained and flexible forces to make up the bulk, and often entirely, of the armed forces. This professionalism has become what the American Army terms as its “doctrine” in that their doctrine is composed of:

“fundamental principles, with supporting tactics, techniques, procedures, and terms and symbols, used for the conduct of operations and as a guide for actions of operating forces, and elements of the institutional force that directly support operations in support of national objectives.”<sup>7</sup>

The key distinguishing factor here is the point “as a guide for actions,” indicating that the soldier is bound to the doctrine, or the professional code, when conducting operations.

Soldiers in this light do not simply rely on tactics and orders; rather they rely on the previous as well as established traditions and codes of conduct that construct the modern soldier that governs not only how the soldier fights, but also how the soldier engages in non-combat activity. This creates some exclusivity to the profession, as soldiers trained by a military become familiar and proficient with the tactics and codes of conduct, and thus the military will pass them down to new soldiers as the generations progress.<sup>8</sup>

Samuel Huntington (1957) expresses that the development of the profession of the soldier was largely a response to the role that the military played in the affairs of the state. The American military was largely an undisciplined frontier force that could not reasonably be expected to fight any large conflicts, especially in the aftermath of the American Civil War up until the end of World War I, but also crucial was a period of withdrawal from civilian matters that the American government viewed crucial in order to build up the strength of the military.<sup>9</sup> However, it is crucially noted with evident parallels that at the end of the 19th

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<sup>7</sup> United States of America. Department of the Army. *Doctrine Primer*. 2019. P. 1-1.

<sup>8</sup> Heineken, Lindy. "Outsourcing Public Security." *Armed Forces & Society*. 2013, p. 631.

<sup>9</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. "The Creation of the American Military Profession." In *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil–Military Relations*, 227-9. 1957.

century, imperialism was the driving force behind the spread of industrialism and capitalism. The immediate post-Civil War period was marked by “business pacifism” as the US attempted to promote its economic interests purely by economic attractiveness alone, with the military attempting to stay out of economic affairs.<sup>10</sup> Coinciding with this period is a drop in funding for the military and standards dropping. However, as the US developed and obtained some overseas imperial holdings including Cuba and the Panama Canal, greater military spending and the reinforcement of the military as a means to guard American interests greatly increased the overall professional standards, including one officer remarking that American soldiers had effectively become “military monks” due to their separation from society.<sup>11</sup>

It is crucial to take note, however, that the separation of capitalism or economics and the military cannot be perfect. With the intervention of the military in national economic interests, and the shift to the soldier as a professional “military monk” that exists to serve as a soldier for their pay rather than for a nuanced and abstract notion of fighting for one’s country, economic interests seep into the consciousness of the soldier and society. This also becomes the departure point for the soldier of the Cold War as a national fighter defending the state’s interests into the current grey area of the soldier as a humanitarian and fighter simultaneously. As modern warfare involves the total destruction of both military and sociopolitical aspects of the state, responsibility is pushed onto the destructive/invading military to rebuild the destroyed state, lest a humanitarian crisis spiral out of control.<sup>12</sup> This also marks the growth of the professional security contractor and economic interests become indistinguishable from the national interest. This is evidenced by the Second Iraq War, in which then-Vice President Dick Cheney’s former employer of Haliburton accepted billions of

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<sup>10</sup> Huntington, " Creation of the American Military Profession." 222-3.

<sup>11</sup> Huntington, " Creation of the American Military Profession." 228.

<sup>12</sup> Meharg, Sarah Jane. "Post-War Reconstruction: Humanitarian Aid or Profit-Driven Activity?" *Peace Research*. P. 65. 2003.

dollars in defense contracts approved by Cheney himself,<sup>13</sup> and the United States' announcement that all post-war reconstruction efforts would be handled by the US and its companies will monopolise the effort to rebuild Iraq, and the US aimed to profit from the reconstruction.<sup>14</sup>

### **2.1 Discerning the Private Soldier and the Private Security Company**

The growth of private industry within and supplementing the military establishment is effectively the slow creep of the non-military sphere into the military sphere. Huntington made a point to discuss how the American military was in tatters after the Civil War and only was able to repair and grow again once economic interests became part of the national interest.<sup>15</sup> The British Imperial Army also was used for the protection of imperial economic interests, as evidenced by the Scramble for Africa and subsequent wars that followed, and the consolidation of India under the British crown after the failure of the British East India Company to hold and control the subcontinent.<sup>16</sup> From here, it becomes clear that the modern military became centred around protecting the national interest instead of protecting the nation-state from outside attackers, and that the idea of protecting economic interests became engrained in the military establishment when one investigates recent wars. With the Iraq War already mired in the quagmire that is American economic interests and war profiteering,<sup>17</sup> it comes as no surprise that private interests begin to infiltrate the military establishment, and it is at this point that the role of the private security contractor begins to expand.

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<sup>13</sup> Meharg. "Post-War Reconstruction." P. 67.

<sup>14</sup> Meharg. "Post-War Reconstruction." P. 69-70.

<sup>15</sup> Huntington, "Creation of the American Military Profession." 222.

<sup>16</sup> Magdoff, Harry. "Militarism and Imperialism." In *Imperialism: From the Colonial Age to the Present*, 198-204. 1978.

<sup>17</sup> Meharg. "Post-War Reconstruction." P. 69-70.

The majority of discussion surrounding PMCs involves the usage of such contractors as a “force multiplier.” A force multiplier is effectively any advantage that greatly increases the combat effectiveness of troops deployed or the increased advantage a military force has through new methods and additions. A force multiplier in antiquity would have increased battlefield damage capacity such as larger cannons or an advance in weapons technology such as the longbow for medieval England. The PMC is regarded as a force multiplier as the contractor provides a service with their own troops and ammunition to take on a role that otherwise the traditional commander would have had to coordinate with their own troops, own supply, and own logistics.<sup>18</sup> The largest usage of PMCs in Iraq was by far their usage as heavily armed security guards protecting military and civilian facilities that otherwise would have taken traditional military capacity to guard and maintain.<sup>19</sup>

PMCs take on many roles within military establishments. As the American military took steps to integrate many PMCs into their operational (not administrative) framework,<sup>20</sup> this led to an expansion of the operations and services that PMCs could carry out. Some contractors were tasked as drivers, some provided food services, and many provided logistics services and combat assistance.<sup>21</sup> In the Iraqi, Persian Gulf, and Bosnian wars, American and NATO/Coalition contractors almost never took part in direct combat operations, but this gradually increased as the scope of the operations, particularly in Iraq, expanded over time

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<sup>18</sup> Cotton, Petersohn, Dunigan, Burkhart, Zander-Cotugno, O’Connell, and Webber. "Do Private Security Contractors Play a Valuable Supporting Role to the U.S. Military as a Force Multiplier?" In *Hired Guns: Views About Armed Contractors in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, P. 45. 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Cotton et al. "Do Private Security Contractors Play a Valuable Supporting Role to the U.S. Military as a Force Multiplier?" P. 46.

<sup>20</sup> Cotton et al. "Do Private Security Contractors Play a Valuable Supporting Role to the U.S. Military as a Force Multiplier?" P. 45.

<sup>21</sup> Cotton, Petersohn, Dunigan, Burkhart, Zander-Cotugno, O’Connell, and Webber. "Do Private Security Contractors Provide Vital Surge Capacity and Critical Security Services?" In *Hired Guns: Views About Armed Contractors in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, P. 59. 2010.



alongside the general replacement of American troops by PMCs. The role of the PMC in these conflicts is not as the aggressor but as the defender and assistant to the main force.<sup>22</sup>

The view on the efficacy of security contractors is split and with due reason for such. Many such contractors at the individual level are highly trained soldiers, with graduates from the American Navy SEALs and Delta Force and the British Special Air/Boat Service, to only name a few of the elite forces that private security contractors draw from. At face value, it is clear that the PMC has access to a pool of top talent and is clearly able to provide an attractive work environment for many of these former national soldiers. However, the key difference between the national military and the private contractor is the motivation and incentive for profit.

A private security contractor is a private corporation providing military services, but this does not change that the main objective of the corporation is to increase profits and seek business. Therefore, some military officials have questioned whether the PMCs are providing the best value that can be provided. While they may have access to retired special operations soldiers, whether a PMC is actually carrying out orders to the highest degree possible is questionable due to the motivation of profit.<sup>23</sup> The national military operates on state budgets and does not operate for the purpose of profit; however as discussed earlier, if the *raison d'être* of the national military is to protect national interests and those interests are economic, then this distinction is blurred. However, a national military also operates with a chain of command that is accountable to the people of the state that it serves. Distinctively, a PMC does not operate with the same accountability. This is further complicated in that the PMC is

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<sup>22</sup> Cotton et al. "Do Private Security Contractors Provide Vital Surge Capacity and Critical Security Services?" P. 58.

<sup>23</sup> Cotton, Petersohn, Dunigan, Burkhart, Zander-Cotugno, O'Connell, and Webber. "Do Private Security Contractors Provide Skills and Services That the Armed Forces Lack?" In *Hired Guns: Views About Armed Contractors in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, P. 51-56. 2010

a private entity and theoretically should be bound by corporate law-yet in Iraq and Afghanistan the American military largely exempt their contractors from Iraqi civilian law and operated under a policy that the PMC is a military, not corporate, entity.<sup>24</sup> This creates moral and regulatory issues that necessitate a revisiting of regulation surrounding the usage of PMCs not only by individual states and statutes governing conflicts but also at the international level to ensure that the usage of PMCs is on an equal playing field for all conflict participants.

With the previous outline of the differences and capacities of the traditional and private soldiers, the following section will outline the existing literature discussing PMCs and their applications and uses. The literature draws heavily on Cold War theory, with practical analyses stemming from the experiences of the post-Cold War conflicts.

### **3. Literature Review**

To begin, as the crux of the thesis will revolve around the impact of PMC forces on national militaries, the works of Samuel Huntington and the successive field of civil-military relations form the basis of the argument. He argues that the basis for the modern Western military (as in, the US military as his main reference point) the individual soldier must be treated as a professional instead of a recruit, and that the profession of soldier or officer is of the same complexity and standards as that of a doctor or a lawyer.<sup>25</sup> Huntington also argued for the evolution of military matters alongside political and scientific development. This as such leads to applications and extensions of his writings into the modern era. Suzanne Nielsen writes about the experiences of the US army in Afghanistan and Iraq, and how the efficiencies of the military gained alongside Huntington's professionalism theory helps to

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<sup>24</sup> de Nevers, Renee. "Private Security Companies and the Laws of War." P. 170.

<sup>25</sup> Huntington, Samuel P, 1957, *The Soldier and the State*.

explain why the military occupation and stabilisation largely failed and cost trillions of dollars in retraining.<sup>26</sup>

Several authors also write about the new experiences of militaries in the 21st and compare back to Huntington's theories. Nielsen cites particularly Korb and Segal, who claim that the failure of the US government to institute the draft for Afghanistan and Iraq constituted a "moral outrage" and amounted to a military mounting a war at the financial and moral expense of the state that hosted it (the US Army).<sup>27</sup> This presents an interesting precedent for this thesis-discussing whether the modern military has detached itself from the state that hosts it may present fertile ground for PMCs to provide services, and an even greater opportunity for governments to downsize large military costs in favour of one-off payments to a smaller, highly trained PMC force.

Scott Efflandt discusses the implications of the expansion of usage of PMCs by the US military in both Iraq and Afghanistan, with great potential for this thesis. As PMCs were more likely to be engaged in combat and suffer casualties than regular military personnel,<sup>28</sup> they were more likely to be considered as combatants. This further conflicts with Huntington's assertion that soldiers should be state based-now contractors are considered combatants, and are already soldiers in their own right. The ability of these private soldiers to develop their own professional ethics and code of corporatism whilst serving alongside national soldiers presents a potential legal, political, and professional conflict for modern militaries as the battlefield evolves. Further, Stanley and Cox (2017) discuss the substitution

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<sup>26</sup> Nielsen, Suzanne C. 2012. "American Civil-Military Relations Today: The Continuing Relevance of Samuel P. Huntington's *The Soldier and the State*." *International Affairs*.

<sup>27</sup> Korb, Lawrence J. and Segal, David R., 2011, Manning & Financing the Twenty-First-Century All-Volunteer Force. *Daedalus* [online]. 2011. Vol. 140, no. 3, p. 75-87.

<sup>28</sup> Efflandt, Scott, 2014, Military Professionalism & Private Military Contractors. *Parameters*. 2014. P. 54.

of PMCs for national soldiers, and how the reduced accountability of these private soldiers is forcing the US Army to reconsider its role in conflict. They also discuss the potential future applications, as the National Guard and other services may be slowly replaced by PMCs, further affecting the role of traditional state-based militaries.<sup>29</sup>

Lindy Heinecken sees the expansion of PMCs as a result of the shift to neoliberal economic values and “New Public Management” of existing public services contracted out to private companies. She links both neoliberalism and the end of the Cold War as the catalysts for the growth of the PMC industry. After the Cold War, many militaries downsized by selling off equipment and releasing soldiers from contracts, which amounted to flooding the market with a “good.” As a result, these new unemployed turned to these PMCs that hired them and expanded their operations given the new body of labour and operational expertise they had just gained with little to no effort. But crucially, she links the growth of new communications technology to the necessity of militaries to hire civilian companies or employees to provide and operate the new technology. This mentality eventually expanded and militaries began to accept that non-national soldiers could carry out operations for their benefit. But she warns that every instance that a PMC is hired to carry out an operation, the military in question is hand-cuffing itself by not putting the money and resources into training their own capacities, thus reducing the overall effectiveness as well as the professionalism of its own soldiers. PMCs are a product of increased neoliberal consensus and the invasion of such a consensus erodes the core values of the professional and separate military in a state.<sup>30</sup>

The discussion surrounding the development of Russian PMCs is usually embedded in Western defence literature, however this is a fantastic resource. The Norwegian Defence

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<sup>29</sup> Stanley, Bruce and Cox, Dan, 2017, Substituting U.S. Troops for Private Military Contractors in Afghanistan. *E-International Relations*. 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Heinecken, Lindy. "Outsourcing Public Security." *Armed Forces & Society*. 2013.

Research Establishment published an excellent overview of many Russian PMCs, their origins, and their entanglement in the Russian state. In this case, it is clear to see that the application of PMCs is slightly different to the idea held by the Western military, that a PMC may be legitimately used to further the goals of Russia regardless of the motivations of the PMC itself.<sup>31</sup> The paper itself acknowledges that data can be hard to find, as the Russian government has been and will remain unlikely to publish information about the usage of PMCs in its foreign policy actions,<sup>32</sup> but this lack of data does not indicate a lack of evidence from other sources, such as frontline corporate and non-Russian (eg. Ukrainian) military media outlets.

In a case study that also serves as an inspiration for this thesis, it was reported that PMCs operating in Somalia had significant impacts on combat operations in conflict zones. However, the lack of accountability had a sociological effect on the populations of the regions they operated in.<sup>33</sup> As both security institutions and combat operations benefitted from the presence of PMCs otherwise, this raises the potential for insights about how to properly manage PMCs in conflict regions. Similarly, a policy advising document from the EU has reported on the actions and effectiveness of combat operations where PMCs were hired by an actor or a group of actors.<sup>34</sup> With the scope being quite large, from advising roles to policing/security roles, the data is spread quite thin, but with further research, much more

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<sup>31</sup> Østensen, Åse Gilje and Bukkvoll, Tor, *Russian Use of Private Military and Security Companies – the implications for European and Norwegian Security*. Norwegian Defence Research Establishment. 2018. P. 30.

<sup>32</sup> Østensen, Åse Gilje and Bukkvoll, Tor, *Russian Use of Private Military and Security Companies – the implications for European and Norwegian Security*. Norwegian Defence Research Establishment. 2018. P. 33-4.

<sup>33</sup> Grav, Ivar, *The Impact of Private Military and Security Companies on Somali Security Sector Institutions*. 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Krahmann, Elke and Friesendorf, Cornelius, 2011, *The Role of Private Security Companies (PSCs) in CSDP Missions and Operations*. Antwerp : European Union.

can be derived to create a dataset showing the efficacy (or not) of PMCs in their contracted roles.

PMCs have the potential for criminal action, as discussed by Rothe and Ross, where PMCs make conscious choices to break national or international law, and this can be a conscious, independent decision, or at the wishes of the actor employing the contractors. In this case, often the PMCs are originally tasked with private security (economic, personal, etc.) which then becomes a combat action once a decision to abandon legality is made.<sup>35</sup> This creates an interesting precedent for future research, in which the actions of PMCs are analysed as whether they fall within the outlined contract or within the legality of operations. As such, an in-depth review of PMC regulations should be laid out in order to support such an extensive dataset.

Finally, consultation of easily accessible defence policy documents (Canada and France) have no indicators of PMC usage. This creates an avenue of research: are the US and UK the only major NATO members that employ PMCs? The defence policies of France and Canada both emphasise a reliance on only the state military; yet there is no discussion about the expansion or regulation of PMCs.<sup>36</sup> This research avenue will form a minor aspect of the thesis, yet it is important to consult official policy surrounding PMCs as the majority of the regulations are at the UN level, where there is little opportunity for enforcement.

Before moving into a case study, the theoretical framework and methodologies will be laid out for reading clarity, as well as two sections devoted to explaining the relevant

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<sup>35</sup> Rothe, Dawn L. and Ross, Jeffrey Ian, 2009, Private Military Contractors, Crime, and the Terrain of Unaccountability. *Justice Quarterly*. 2009.

<sup>36</sup> MINISTÈRE DES ARMÉES, 2017, *REVUE STRATÉGIQUE DE DÉFENSE ET DE SÉCURITÉ NATIONALE*. Republic of France; NATIONAL DEFENCE, 2017, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*. Canada.

Huntingtonian and Marxist concepts that are used in the analysis. These two sections set the stage for a frame of reference for the rest of the thesis.

#### **4. Theoretical Framework**

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. Therefore, it is assumed that a power-imbalance created the demand for such a utility. As such, this thesis will assume a neo-Marxist assumption of international affairs, in that power and its imbalances are at the base of conflict. As it can be demonstrably shown (in the above brief literature review) that PMCs are largely a market-driven response, the author feels more assured in making this statement. This thesis will assess critically, rather than through conventional realist or liberal frameworks, the usage of PMCs and will assess both the non-Western and Western PMC usages equally. As such, the central question of this thesis remains: “How does the usage of private military contractors impact the modern battlefield, and in what ways is the usage by non-Western militaries a benefit or hindrance to modern military culture?”

Major themes and concepts of analysis will be multiple, and as such, careful care will be taken to ensure, or disprove, the relevancy of such concepts. One major concept will be discussing the interplay of non-state actors in relation to military interventions alongside counter-insurgency and asymmetrical warfare, such as Russia’s alleged signing of contracts with Syrian oil and gas corporations to contract out Russian PMCs in the fight against Islamic State to liberate economic assets.<sup>37</sup> As the focus of the thesis will be around asymmetrical

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<sup>37</sup> Østensen, Åse Gilje and Bukkvoll, Tor, *Russian Use of Private Military and Security Companies – the implications for European and Norwegian Security*. Norwegian Defence Research Establishment. 2018. P. 34.

conflicts, many of which involve fighting an insurgency, there will be a need to relate how a non-state actor can engage alongside national militaries.

The Huntingtonian concepts of military (soldier) professionalism will be discussed in great detail, and will be related back to frequently. As PMCs draw from national militaries which draw from these concepts, it will be necessary to discuss how the evolution and prominence of the private military has impacted on such concepts, and what national militaries are doing in order to adapt to new military realities.

#### **4.1 Methodology**

This thesis will endeavor to employ a largely qualitative methodology. Numerical statistics will be employed to further arguments and to lay a groundwork of understanding, but a heavy reliance on numerical quantification reduces the efficacy of the argument. Brief case studies will be employed as a more productive means of discussing these concepts, however overall the thesis will take on a directly analytical approach, especially by analysing first hand accounts and opinions. These primary sources will serve as the backbone for analysis with biases intact in order to provide a more thorough and multi-faceted argument.

When discussing the impact of PMCs on combat zones and operations, several hypothetical variables for study include: presence of PMCs vs non-presence; combative or supportive role of PMC; and employing actors in question. The last variable may or may not have an effect on the final outcome, which is anticipated to have multiple pathways and multiple conclusions, and most likely will be beyond the extent of the capacity for effective research outcomes of this thesis. The results of the analysis of the impact of PMCs on operations will assist in the analysis of their effect on military culture and the professionalism or perception of national militaries. Such variables to be studied will include: the actor in



question; the perception of military service in the actor's state; perception of PMCs by national military servicepeople; and a short comparison of military professionalism in the actor as per Huntington's assessment (conscription versus professional volunteer, for example). With these analytical variables in mind, it is hoped that a clear picture, or a stepping stone for further research, can be outlined.

### **5. The Huntingtonian Soldier: Professionalism and Conduct**

Just as this central idea was the crux of Samuel Huntington's book *The Soldier and the State*, so is it the central focal point of analysis for this thesis: the modern military soldier and officer are professionals of their craft, trained in their craft just as a carpenter or electrician would be. As well, the modern soldier and officer are tied to a certain professional code of conduct, which governs not only their individual actions but also how the military establishment is to interact with the civilian administration of the respective state. This section endeavours to briefly lay out what shall be referred to as the Huntingtonian concept of the soldier, and provide a basis for identifying how the modern PMC fits or doesn't into the concept of the professional soldier.

Huntington's concepts outline three major characteristics for the individual professional soldier and officer: *expertise, responsibility, and corporateness*. These characteristics are entrusted into those individuals who have demonstrated that are able to justly determine the application of state violence.<sup>38</sup>

*Expertise* entails the objective aspects of the soldier as a profession. This is being an expert at the craft, and should be expected to know how to operate the tools of such a trade to a high degree of competency. Also it includes the ability to learn and transmit such learned

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<sup>38</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. "Officership as a Profession." In *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, P. 14-5. 1957.

tools and techniques onto new individuals, so that the new generation of recruits or trainees may learn applicable skills instead of learning from scratch, so to speak.<sup>39</sup> The officer as well is expected to hold an even higher standard of professional expertise, not only able to contribute to the transmission of techniques and tools to new recruits, but also to contribute to the collective body of science surrounding the trade. The officer is expected to be the jack of all trades while also mastering that of the military profession, which includes planning, logistics, maintaining morale, and leadership.<sup>40</sup> These are just as much techniques of the body of professional knowledge as is the technique of firing an artillery shell or operating radio equipment.

Due to the nature of the soldier's profession, the soldier and the officer bear a heavy *responsibility* when carrying out their duties, and this responsibility is in the context of the persons or abstract entity that the soldier serves. As Huntington writes, the soldier has a social responsibility, for if the role of the military is to secure and protect the interests of the state and ensure the safety of the individuals living within the state, from which population the soldier is likely drawn from or joined willingly, then the soldier must ensure that he or she does not take up the profession as a means to secure financial remuneration, but that the soldier feels that they have a larger duty and a task to carry out, and must do so honestly.<sup>41</sup> The distinctiveness of the responsibility of the officer is multifold. Again, the officer must not be motivated to carry out his professional responsibilities for financial gain, as his or her particular expertise and skill carries an even higher social weight. The officer is not only responsible to the society and state to protect and defend, but also to the individual soldiers

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<sup>39</sup> Huntington. "Officership as a Profession." P. 8.

<sup>40</sup> Huntington. "Officership as a Profession." P. 11.

<sup>41</sup> Huntington. "Officership as a Profession." P. 9-10.

under their command, to protect them and also to the non-combatants, to ensure that they are protected from unnecessary and frivolous actions.<sup>42</sup>

Lastly, *corporateness* entails the code of conduct that soldiers operate within. This corporateness creates a sense of unity and honour, as well as moral codes and standards that new recruits must adhere to. Corporateness is the collective experience of all former and present adherents, and determines who is admitted and who is not. This is also, in a sense, a self-regulating body, that enforces standards and carries out punishments within its own ranks.<sup>43</sup> For the officer, the officer is legally and morally a representative of the corporate attitudes represented by the professional military establishment. As such, it is the task of the officer to seek to enforce the entrance restrictions, provide feedback regarding the evolution of the corporate entity of the military, and take on a much larger portion of the professional standards of the soldier as part of their everyday personality and lifestyle; an officer must become married to the profession, and strive to carry out the tasks and goals of the military as best as they know how and to uphold such standards as an example for all others within the establishment.<sup>44</sup>

Crucially, the military establishment is to be a separate institution from the state it represents. That is not to say that it must be outside control of the state; rather that the military is to be an institution separate from the political and economic processes of the state. The above three characteristics of the soldier and officer require that the military operate as an apolitical institution, only existing as an arm of the state and bound by a constitution or other norm prevalent in the state's governing processes. Huntington describes both subjective and objective civilian control practices, but the modern method concerns the objectivity of a

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<sup>42</sup> Huntington. "Officership as a Profession." P. 14-5.

<sup>43</sup> Huntington. "Officership as a Profession." P. 10.

<sup>44</sup> Huntington. "Officership as a Profession." P. 16.

civilian agency or government regulating the military establishment.<sup>45</sup> Objective civilian control of the military was clamoured for by military establishments including the American military, as it allowed for increased military control over internal affairs such as their own professional standards and operating as “military monks” so to speak; only concerned with their profession and kept away from politics, the military freely accepted civilian control via constitutional methods as a means of maximising their own professionalism.<sup>46</sup> But while the military recognises the authority of the civilian authority over its operations, part of the professional conduct of the military is to refuse to carry out unethical operations, to refrain from engaging in civilian political matters unless the safety of society or political practices is at risk, and to refuse to engage in practices that compromise the professional manner of the military. This can be interpreted widely, as this opens the door for limited military interventions into civilian affairs such as coup or taking sides in political matters. However, will be explored in the case study and analysis sections, the professionalism of the military is particularly compromised when the topic of PMCs is broached.

The ideal Huntingtonian military puts the needs of the state it exists to serve above the needs of itself. Such selfless service is key to maintaining the civilian-military partnership, and it means that the military must be excluded from many aspects of society. For the military, the state that it exists to protect must be the ultimate political authority, and it cannot question such an authority but it must also, through its duty, do everything it can to avoid “total war” otherwise the society it protects will cease to be and the military will be the

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<sup>45</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. "Power, Professionalism, and Ideology: Civil-Military Relations in Theory." In *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, P. 83-4. 1957.

<sup>46</sup> Huntington. "Power, Professionalism, and Ideology." P. 86.

dominant driving force of the state, as well as destroying the society in the process.<sup>47</sup> The military exists to serve the state,<sup>48</sup> and as such it must draw its power and strength (i.e. funding, supplies, and personnel) from the state it serves.<sup>49</sup> This includes not branching out into controlling sectors of the economy or political sphere, and being content to work with what is given to it; if the military needs more resources then it must obtain such resources through lobbying the civilian political administration and training its own soldiers.<sup>50</sup>

## **6. Marxist Critique: Considering the PMC as a Market Response**

Huntington's theories concerning the professional conducts and standards of the modern soldier define the soldier as an employee, or a public servant. The soldier is employed by a military that pays the soldier to provide his services to the military and in return is provided with remuneration for their work. While Huntington goes further into what the soldier *should* do in terms of training within professional standards and not going into the profession of a soldier for the sole purpose of the wage, in essence the soldier can still be reduced to several key roles: the soldier is a worker, a wage labourer, and the soldier is remunerated for the labour they provide. Karl Marx never did write a definitive work on the military as an establishment, mostly due to a combination of factors including that the modern military did not come about until nearly 70 years after his death and that most militaries during his lifetime were imperial armies formed for very different purposes than defense of society and protecting state interests.<sup>51</sup> However, Marx's combined body of work

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<sup>47</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. "The Military Mind: Conservative Realism of the Professional Military Ethic." In *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil–Military Relations*, P. 64. 1957.

<sup>48</sup> Huntington. "The Military Mind." P. 74.

<sup>49</sup> Huntington. "The Military Mind." P. 67.

<sup>50</sup> Huntington. "The Military Mind." P. 64-5.

<sup>51</sup> Coulomb, and Bellais. "The Marxist Analysis Of War And Military Expenditures, Between Certainty And Uncertainty." *Defence and Peace Economics*. P 353. 2008.

and the subsequent authors that followed have produced substantial literature regarding the militarisation of the (Western) world in the 20th century and the growth of the commercial arms industries.

Rosa Luxemburg discusses the problem of the military within the capitalist state, and particularly discusses at length the necessity of the military as an imperial arm of the state. The military seeks to preserve the capitalist and political classes, and perpetuates imperialism by defending and securing the interests of the states, whether it be through colonial interests or economic defense through military interventions,<sup>52</sup> which harks back to Huntington's discussion of the expansion of the American military establishment in developing its professionalism after the Civil War up until the First World War.<sup>53</sup> However, her critique includes a discussion of the problem of overaccumulation within capitalist societies: the expansion of the arms industry into private hands has essentially paved the way for exploitation and growth of the industry of violence application.<sup>54</sup> What this does, is the monopoly of violence as per Wagnerian and Huntingtonian theories is eroded, and the state loses control over the application of violence. Ideally, according to Huntington, the state monopolises violence and the tools necessary for its application. However, with the expansion of private arms producers, even if (and this is almost always the case) that the state is the largest consumer of weapons, the arms industry is decentralised away from state-military control.<sup>55</sup>

As these industries grow, they face the key issue of unfettered capitalism, which is the growth and overaccumulation issue that is particular pertinent for military-related industries.

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<sup>52</sup> Luxemburg, Rosa. "The Accumulation of Capital – An Anti-Critique." In *Rosa Luxemburg: Socialism or Barbarism: Selected Writings*, P. 192-3. 2010.

<sup>53</sup> Huntington, " Creation of the American Military Profession." 222-3.

<sup>54</sup> Luxemburg,. "The Accumulation of Capital." P. 191.

<sup>55</sup> Luxemburg,. "The Accumulation of Capital." P. 192-4.

In the West, with the exception of the United States due to its generous constitutional guarantee of the right to own personal firearms (with various restrictions at the state level regarding which types of firearms are allowed to be privately owned), the military and state police forces or national *gendarmerie* forces are largely the only legally permitted consumer for the arms industry. However, under capitalist economic models, a private enterprise needs to continue to expand not only in order to maintain its market place but also to fund its expansions to increase its share of the market. In a non-competitive market where there are multiple suppliers but only one consumer that can dictate the value of the products, the arms industry encounters a paradox where they cannot grow without increased state militarism,<sup>56</sup> which would contradict Huntingtonian professionalism. However, state military expenditures have largely absorbed the over- and underconsumption problem, as Western militaries during the Cold War kept expanding as the economies grew. This in turn strengthened the overall economy, as unemployment was kept down even with many states removing the need for conscription-based militaries. Military spending eventually became akin to a Keynesian counter-cyclical economic stimulus spending: military spending fuelled growth in the arms sectors, which fuelled military expansions which fuelled growth back into other sectors as well as the arms industry.<sup>57</sup>

Essentially, the underlying Marxist theoretical argument is that the expansion of the military establishment is fuelled by economics, and about growing sectors including the arms sectors in spite of typical market flows. It can be inferred from this, that the military's professionalism is threatened by capitalist expansionism into the military sphere due to the military needing to be kept separate from economic and political affairs in order to maintain

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<sup>56</sup> Smith, R. P. "Military Expenditure and Capitalism." *Cambridge Journal of Economics*. P. 65-8. 1977.

<sup>57</sup> Smith. "Military Expenditure and Capitalism." P. 67-8.

its professionalism. While the military is not directly involved in the increased commodification of the military and its tools, it benefits and suffers at the hands of the civilian directive to expand the military. The individual soldier has a price tag attached to them: all the tools that they become experts in are bought from an arms industry that continues to manufacture weapons and grow detached from the usual ebbs and flows of the civilian economy. This overconsumption by the military establishment is only sustainable while the military establishment continues to grow ahead of the arms industries that supply it: should this growth ever be interrupted, and a significant downsizing of the military occurs, then the arms industry will either shrink in response or it will find methods of redirecting its weapons and services into new sectors. As will be examined in the case study and analysis sections, this is very much what happened in the West, with the end of the Cold War serving as one of many catalysts for the growth of the PMC industry. In short: the factory supplies the market demands, and if the consumer shrinks its demands then the factory will find other consumers.

This section served to explain the theoretical basis for Marxist thought concerning the civilian-military relationship and the growth of the military establishment. While complicated and muddled, it serves as the basis for the author's interpretations concerning the expansion and justification for the growth of the PMC industry. The following section will be a case study of the Iraq War and the subsequent American and coalition occupation and reconstruction of the Iraqi state. The latter half of the case study will analyse the roles of the PMC in relation to the American military establishment and how market forces and demands shaped the role that PMCs eventually came to play in Iraq, and what effects this had on the professionalism of the American military establishment.



## **7. Case Study: the Iraq War as the Catalyst for PMC Growth**

The United State's invasion of Iraq in March 2003 and subsequent occupation and restructuring of the Iraqi state until the formal Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in 2011 may not have been the first post-Cold War conflict where a private military company was employed, however it marks the departure point for the American policy regarding their usage. As well, given the massive scope of the war, it is also notable for being the first war where private contractors outnumbered the American state forces.<sup>58</sup> This makes this war an excellent case study for this thesis' analytical contribution. The purpose of the case study is to outline in detail the extent and growth of the PMC as a collective, provide detailed examples of certain companies that rose to prominence and their lasting and continued effects on Iraqi society and the American military establishment, and run the gathered data through the above discussed Huntingtonian and Marxist principles.

The United States, along with the United Kingdom, Poland, and the Commonwealth of Australia, all participated in OIF. The combined stated troop strength for the major conflict phase of the operation was somewhere around 300, 000, with discrepancies due to the usage of Iraqi and Kurdish *peshmerga* opposition forces.<sup>59</sup> While this figure dropped after the end of the combat phase of the operation, with the average number of American troops present in Iraq between 2003 and 2009 hovering at 150, 000,<sup>60</sup> as the focus of the operations changed so did the composition of the forces in Iraqi territory.

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<sup>58</sup> Stanley, Bruce E. "Operation Iraqi Freedom." In *Outsourcing Security: Private Military Contractors and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 127. 2015.

<sup>59</sup> Dale, Catherine. "Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress." Congressional Research Service. P. 6-12. 2008; Belasco, Amy. "Troop Levels in the Afghan and Iraq Wars, FY2001-FY2012: Cost and Other Potential Issues." Congressional Research Service. 2009. P. 11

<sup>60</sup> Cotton et al, "Private Military and Security Contractors Are Not a New Phenomenon: A Brief History of Military Privatization." In *Hired Guns: Views About Armed Contractors in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, P. 13. 2010.

Many of the aspects and units involved in the invasion and subsequent occupation and reconstruction were involved in what can be known as “just in time” planning, and were very much part of the private security and arms industry boom at the tail end of the 1990’s.<sup>61</sup> Despite the extensive planning by the US military establishment for a second invasion of Iraq and removal of Saddam Hussein ever since the end of the First Gulf War and Hussein’s non-compliance with US and UN sanctions and impositions<sup>62</sup> (even including infiltration by CIA and CIA-affiliated units throughout 2002 and early 2003<sup>63</sup>) the eventual invasion allowed for flexibility regarding many support and security units. These support and security units were to be left to PMCs and were on an ad-hoc basis. Then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld dismantled and rebuilt many of the military establishment’s deployment techniques, ensuring that the usage of the rapidly growing PMC/contractor industry would be utilised on US missions and wars.<sup>64</sup> This extent is not to be underestimated, as in the First Gulf War there were ten American soldiers or staffers to every contractor, but during OIF the ratio averaged one to one.<sup>65</sup> For further context regarding this radical (and rapid) shift to employing contractors instead of American troops, in 2003 there were 10 000 armed contractors on the ground, less than 5% of all coalition troops - but by 2007 there were 160 000 contractors in all capacities working in Iraq, which is near equal to the amount of American soldiers in Iraq on deployment.<sup>66</sup>

PMCs and general contractors in Iraq took up many roles and were usually Anglo-American, Iraqi, or a mixture of both. The original ownership has a slight effect on the

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<sup>61</sup> Baker, Yousef K. "Global Capitalism and Iraq: the Making of a Neoliberal State." *International Review of Modern Sociology*. 2014. 128.

<sup>62</sup> Stanley. "Operation Iraqi Freedom." 125-6.

<sup>63</sup> Dale. "Operation Iraqi Freedom." P. 13-4.

<sup>64</sup> Klein, Naomi. In *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise Of Disaster Capitalism*. P. 377-8. 2007.

<sup>65</sup> Avant, Deborah D., and Renée De Nevers. "Military Contractors & the American Way of War." *Daedalus*. 90. 2011.

<sup>66</sup> Cotton et al, "Private Military and Security Contractors Are Not a New Phenomenon." 13.

role that the PMC/contractor is given by the coalition command, but is not a consequential factor. In short, there are three main roles that PMCs/contractors were employed in while on the ground: logistics, security, and reconstruction.

Logistics contractors in Iraq are often out of the spotlight when it comes to media and academic discussion, as these contractors perform essential roles in assuring the basic needs of soldiers and other contractors on the ground, such as food, laundry, base assembly, and fuel<sup>67</sup> - all menial but absolutely necessary for the functionality of any fighting force. In OIF and the occupation, 70 000 private contractors were employed both in logistics as well as weapons maintenance and acquisition roles.<sup>68</sup> The major contractor in OIF and the occupation was Kellogg, Brown & Root, the engineering subsidiary of Halliburton. KBR was responsible for the acquisition and supply of Iraqi oil to US military bases and later to the Iraqi population at large as a provisional means until Iraqi corporations were set up.<sup>69</sup> KBR was subsequently awarded over US\$7 billion in oil supply and development contracts during its operation in Iraq.<sup>70</sup> However, this good intent was squandered by KBR, as there were many indictments against KBR employees for charging much higher rates to Iraqi residents than they were to US bases, effectively price-gouging the Iraqi populace and economy with its own oil,<sup>71</sup> as well as a scheme where KBR and the US Army Corps of Engineers were to restore many capacities for oil production to the Iraqi Ministry of Oil, but squandered it. The provisional government established by the US and UK after the topple of Hussein was in charge of distributing contracts and funds for the reconstruction of Iraq, and in many cases,

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<sup>67</sup> Avant and De Nevers. "Military Contractors & the American Way of War." 89.

<sup>68</sup> Erwin, Sandra I. "For Contractors in War Zones, Business Will Keep Growing." National Defense. 2007.

<sup>69</sup> Allawi, Ali A. "A Marshall Plan for Iraq?" In *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace*, 252. 2007.

<sup>70</sup> Bhagwat, Niloufer. "War On Iraq: Business By Other Means." *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*. 115. 2006.

<sup>71</sup> Allawi. "A Marshall Plan for Iraq?" 252.

KBR and the Corps of Engineers refused to help develop Iraqi oil projects as a means of containing funding to KBR at the expense of Iraqi domestic production, through the years 2003-2004.<sup>72</sup> As a consequence, KBR and its parent company Halliburton are often presented as one of the negative effects of an expanded private corps of contractors when conducting occupation and reconstruction operations in a post-war zone.

However, simply because a company was operating on a logistics-related mission does not mean that the employees were unarmed. As will be a theme in the following reconstruction and security contractor sections, these private companies employ armed employees for their tasks just as an army would send soldiers on security detail instead of armed transport workers. The most famous incident of logistics-related employees coming under fire comes from Fallujah in March 2004, when four Blackwater employees, armed and transporting food and supplies for coalition forces, were ambushed and murdered. Whilst it is unknown who exactly ordered and carried out the murders on the employees, it is believed to be insurgents under the influence of al Qaeda or local affiliates.<sup>73</sup> However, and as will be addressed in the following sections, the safety of employees can often be compromised by the private motives of the PMC, which may have factored into the deaths of these Blackwater contractors.<sup>74</sup>

The role of the PMC when operating in the security capacity is usually limited and straightforward. However, almost all operations regarding security are restricted to defensive missions, such as personal escort missions and base or transport security. While the role of the security guard on paper is essentially identical in Iraq and in the US, in Iraq the providers

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<sup>72</sup> Allawi. "A Marshall Plan for Iraq?" 256.

<sup>73</sup> Dale. "Operation Iraqi Freedom." P. 45.

<sup>74</sup> Del Prado, José L. Gómez. "Impact on Human Rights of a New Non-State Actor: Private Military and Security Companies." *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*. P. 153. 2011.

of security services were often former military employees and heavily trained and/or skilled in the usage of personal weapons. In Iraq, many of the security providers

When discussing the roles and activities of reconstruction companies in Iraq, the line between reconstruction and security becomes severely blurred. “Reconstruction” itself in this sense refers not only to the act of rebuilding the Iraqi infrastructure and economy but also the Iraqi state apparatus and the security institutions. With the near-complete dismantling of the previous Iraqi state led by Hussein, and the imposition of a new government and security apparatus designed by the American military, major impetus fell onto the US to bear the brunt of the responsibility for shaping the new state. This transformation from an authoritarian, rentee state into an open market or neoliberal state was heavily influenced by well-positioned contractors in the Pentagon.<sup>75</sup> In Iraq, in the early stages security and policing responsibilities were nearly entirely contracted out at the behest of the US and British militaries. The American companies Vinnell Corporation and Dyncorp were awarded major contracts to train and supplement the Iraqi army and police forces respectively.<sup>76</sup>

### **7.1 PMCs and their Activities in Iraq**

When discussing reconstruction and the usage of PMCs, Halliburton and its subsidiaries are infamous in their dealings in Iraq, and will serve as a major focus for this section. As the United States’ viewpoint towards military operations and the states’ role in such operations changed during the 1990’s, the likelihood of large corporations gaining major ground and influence increased. Halliburton emerged not only as a major player in the Iraq

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<sup>75</sup> Bjork, Kjell, and Richard Jones. "Overcoming Dilemmas Created by the 21st Century Mercenaries: Conceptualising the Use of Private Security Companies in Iraq." *Third World Quarterly*. P. 778. 2005.

<sup>76</sup> Holmqvist, Caroline. “Private Security and the ‘Efficient’ State.” *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, 2005. P. 24.

reconstruction phase due to its sheer size, but also due to its influence with then-Vice President Dick Cheney, who was CEO of Halliburton prior to attaining office. While the major agencies involved in the reconstruction and humanitarian effort after the major combat phase ended were the Coalition Provisional Authority, USAID, and the US Army Corps of Engineers, all three of these agencies contracted the work out to PMCs and other contractors for lucrative deals.<sup>77</sup> Halliburton and its subsidiaries were major beneficiaries of such contracts, numbering into the billions of dollars. Halliburton has been accused of mishandling funds and funneling money into investors' pockets throughout their operation in the occupation. This is crucial to note for this thesis: as will be addressed later, the mindsets of the neoliberal state with deregulation of the economy and allocation of public services into private hands combined with a lack of regulation of the private security industry has led to a dangerous combination in Iraq, where major corporations such as Halliburton were able to flaunt their contractual duties in many instances while raking in millions and billions of (often taxpayer) money.<sup>78</sup>

Deregulation of the economy, in particular the military-industrial sectors and both as a theoretical and practical standpoint, encourages the growth of the PMC while also encouraging the mishandling of funds and resources, as was demonstrated in Iraq by many contractors. The CPA was accused (rightly so, as demonstrated above) of mishandling funds meant for reconstruction efforts and allocating such funds into corporations such as KBR which massively mishandled the funds and falsely reported the services it provided and

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<sup>77</sup> Fitzsimmons, Scott P. "First Round of Iraq Reconstruction Contracts Provide Insight into Agency Authority, Misunderstood Procurement Techniques." *Administrative Law Review*. 219. 2004.

<sup>78</sup> Doran, Christopher. "Reconstruction and Corruption: The Halliburton and Bechtel Contracts." In *Making the World Safe for Capitalism: How Iraq Threatened the US Economic Empire and Had to Be Destroyed*. 2012.

resources it used.<sup>79</sup> The legal frameworks surrounding the usage and operations of PMCs in Iraq is muddy at best, and especially worsened by perceptions by employees of the Department of State in the US when surveyed that showed a certain belief that PMCs operate without legal consequence in spite of operating within US military legal frameworks.<sup>80</sup> This disbelief can be attributed to the above mentioned cases of mishandling funds and resources and the alleged corruption of PMCs, but also in regards to the personal actions of contractors on the ground. PMCs in Iraq have been accused of adding an extra layer of confusion to the legal process by further subcontracting positions to individuals. In essence, the PMC is contracted by the CPA or US military to undertake a mission, whether it be logistic, reconstruction, or security. Then, the PMC turns around and subcontracts individual missions to individual contractors it has on its payroll. Therefore, the contractors that complete the missions are operating for the US government on the payroll of their PMC of choice while the PMC can hire and fire contractors at will.<sup>81</sup> This process then leaves the actual selection of the contractor very nearly out of the hands of the US military or the CPA. Further worsened by this muddy practice is the state of the rights of the individual contractors themselves. If a contractor is employed in a freelance manner, then the US military or CPA has no ability to ensure that the employee or contractor is paid an appropriate wage for their work. While it is commonly known that the vast majority of PMC contractors are former military employees now employed in reconstruction or security roles, this lack of oversight of wages and benefits creates a major dispute in the quality of the employees. In the free market

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<sup>79</sup> Mockaitis, Thomas R. Report, "Soldiers of Misfortune?" Strategic Studies Institute. P. 6. 2014.

<sup>80</sup> Cotton, Petersohn, Dunigan, Burkhart, Zander-Cotugno, O'Connell, and Webber. "Summary of Findings and Policy Recommendations." In *Hired Guns: Views About Armed Contractors in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, 65. 2010.

<sup>81</sup> Brooks, Doug, and Jim Shevlin. "Reconsidering Battlefield Contractors." *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 6, no. 2 (2005): 105; Holmqvist, "Private Security and the 'Efficient' State." P. 31.

system, hypothetically speaking, high wages and benefits encourage the highly talented to seek employment with the offering entity. As such, when the PMC is offering low wages, then the quality of the contractors themselves will be low. When the wages are high, the PMC will be able to attract the best talent, even from the special forces sector of the traditional military. This creates problems that will be discussed in the analytical section, but in Iraq this created a two-fold problem: one, that the contractors sent on missions may be of “low-talent,” and are not employed by a military for an unknown reason; and two, that a brain drain is created away from the traditional military into the ranks of lucrative PMC contracts.<sup>82</sup>

The above collected data does almost nothing to speak of the societal impact of the US occupation and reconstruction of Iraq, especially of the impact of US and CPA contracted PMCs and their operations. As will be a recurring point of discussion, the legislation surrounding the usage of security contractors at many levels of jurisdiction is contradictory at best, and in Iraq the legal authority to regulate and prosecute PMCs was often unknown or unwilling to apply legal frameworks. The legal status of a PMC and the framework for prosecution of said PMC was often dependent on who the contractor is: the Department of State often contracted separately from the Department of Defense, and often the CPA had no authority to prosecute or regulate either contracted party.<sup>83</sup> Between 2003 and 2008, all contractors except for Iraqi contractors were immune from prosecution under Iraqi and CPA law.<sup>84</sup> While this changed in 2009 with the handover of legal authority under the Status of Forces Agreement, giving the Iraqi government the legal right to regulate and prosecute PMCs under contract by the US, this was often only applied to DoD contractors, as the Status of Forces Agreement simultaneously made vague the descriptions of which contractors that

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<sup>82</sup> Holmqvist, “Private Security and the ‘Efficient’ State.” P. 32.

<sup>83</sup> Cotton et al, "Private Military and Security Contractors Are Not a New Phenomenon: A Brief History of Military Privatization." P. 16-7.

<sup>84</sup> Cotton et al, "Private Military[...] Contractors Are Not a New Phenomenon." P. 15.



fell under Iraqi law and which fell under American jurisdiction. The SOFA agreement also specified two classes of security entities with different legal authority applied to the respective class: the US' military and civilian assets and elements, which operate within accordance of Iraqi law but retains jurisdiction to prosecute its own members separate from Iraqi law; and US-contracted PMCs, which is a legal grey zone of jurisdiction falling to separate authorities depending on the operations carried out and the contracting agency, as well as the nationality of the contractor in question.<sup>85</sup> However, as was noted in a Congressional Research Report, the term in the SOFA agreement "US Forces" only applies to those American troops and personnel under operation by the DoD, excluding the DoS from the agreement entirely-which also excludes all contractors under the employ of the DoS.<sup>86</sup> As such, several articles of SOFA are now rendered extremely vague by this exception to the agreement. In particular, while Article 10 allows for the ability of US Forces to contract who they wish as long as it is within the confines of US law and Iraqi authorities are informed of all contractors.<sup>87</sup> However, article 12 concerns the right of the Iraqi state to prosecute all major and premeditated crimes committed by off-duty and off-base US Forces and its civilians elements as well as the prosecution of US contractors-but it is made deliberately vague whether these contractors are *all* PMCs under the employ of the US or whether it is only DoD contractors.<sup>88</sup>

This seemingly deliberate air of vagueness surrounding the jurisdiction of US and US-contracted third country contractors contributes to a major perception of acting with impunity. There are a few incidents in which contractors opened fire on Iraqi civilians, with

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<sup>85</sup> Congressional Research Service, and R. Chuck Mason, U.S.-Iraq Withdrawal/Status of Forces Agreement: Issues for Congressional Oversight §. 7-5700. P. 7. 2009.

<sup>86</sup> CRS, and Mason, U.S.-Iraq Withdrawal/Status of Forces Agreement. P. 7-8.

<sup>87</sup> Issa, Sahar, Jenan Hussein, and Hussein Kadhim, trans. "Unofficial Translation of U.S.-Iraq Troop Agreement from the Arabic Text." Article 10. 2008.

<sup>88</sup> Issa, Hussein, and Kadhim, trans. " U.S.-Iraq Troop Agreement." Article 12.

numerous speculated causes for such actions. Several contractors on the payroll of Blackwater (later Xe) working for State Department officials carrying out security detail were either fired upon or opened fire themselves on Iraqi civilians in Nisour Square in Baghdad in 2007. 17 civilians were killed in the incident, and at the time US Forces and contractors were immune from prosecution under Iraqi law. While these contractors were eventually prosecuted under US jurisdiction, it took months before such processes began.<sup>89</sup> In an incident where the contractors faced no legal processes, employees of Triple Canopy were reported to open fire on Iraqi civilians for the sole purpose of leisure and sport,<sup>90</sup> as morally revolting such an idea can be. A general at the time remarked how contractors were running wild in Iraq with impunity, marking just how prevalent these acts were and possibly indicating that many more occurred without the public's knowledge.<sup>91</sup> A major stumbling block for truly uncovering the real extent of these violent incidents with civilians is that the American Freedom of Information Act does not cover PMC contracts, so it is impossible to discern even how many contractors are active.<sup>92</sup>

The Iraq War and occupation was, at the time, the most reported on and televised conflict in history. While the Vietnam War had up to that point been the most covered war and had the greatest impact on the American and Western publics, the role of the media in the Iraq war had a profoundly opposite effect. Former American generals were trained in perception management and instructed to talk to the home-soil media, as a means of literally managing the American public's perception of the war. By providing so-called "expert

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<sup>89</sup> Cotton, et. al. "Have Private Security Contractors Had an Adverse Effect on Local Iraqis' Perceptions of the Entire Occupying Force Because of the Legal Impunity with Which They Operated in Iraq Prior to 2009?" In *Hired Guns: Views About Armed Contractors in Operation Iraqi Freedom*, P. 25-6. 2010.

<sup>90</sup> Cotton, et. al. "Have Private Security Contractors Had an Adverse Effect...?" P. 26.

<sup>91</sup> Cotton, et. al. "Have Private Security Contractors Had an Adverse Effect...?" P. 26.

<sup>92</sup> Johnston, Karli. "Private Military Contractors: Lessons Learned in Iraq and Increased Accountability in Afghanistan." *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*. P. 97. 2009.

insights,” this creates a ‘cult of the expert’ - a phenomenon where people willingly differ to those who they determine to be an accredited expert.<sup>93</sup> By creating such air of expertise, it makes the dominant line of explanation - such as a bloodless conflict of protecting an oppressed people with clearly defined good and bad actors, and a war without civilian casualties<sup>94</sup> - these generals serve as “message force multipliers.”<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, two studies conducted in 2006 focused on media articles and photographs from members of the media that were “embedded” with US military units. At the beginning of the invasion, there were over 900 embedded media and 150 non-embedded media - the embedded media produced content that was much more in favour of the actions of the US military.<sup>96</sup> These stories that were in favour of the US invasion were also the articles that were more frequently printed in American media - to the detriment of those non-embedded media,<sup>97</sup> who often recorded pieces that were much more sympathetic to the goings-ons of Iraqi life and used many more Iraqi sources than the embedded media.<sup>98</sup> This phenomenon has been called collective self-censorship, where the media as a whole is participating in the act of largely sending articles and images that paint the invasion in a positive light, and also largely ignore the horrors or inconvenient truths of war.<sup>99</sup> Reportedly, the media members that did attempt to send accurate images or articles were either ignored by the largest of American media outlets such as *USA Today*, which exclusively published articles from embedded reporters.<sup>100</sup> What this all essentially means is that the Iraq War, while not subject to typical military censorship

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<sup>93</sup> Wood, Matthew. “The ‘Cult of the Expert.’” Chapter. In *Hyper-Active Governance: How Governments Manage the Politics of Expertise*. 2019.

<sup>94</sup> Otterman, Hil, and Wilson. “Censoring Civilians.” P. 111-3.

<sup>95</sup> Otterman, Hil, and Wilson. “Censoring Civilians.” P. 113.

<sup>96</sup> Otterman, Michael, Richard Hil, and Paul R. Wilson. “Censoring Civilians.” In *Erasing Iraq: the Human Costs of Carnage*, P. 105. 2010.

<sup>97</sup> Otterman, Hil, and Wilson. “Censoring Civilians.” P. 106.

<sup>98</sup> Otterman, Hil, and Wilson. “Censoring Civilians.” P. 105.

<sup>99</sup> Otterman, Hil, and Wilson. “Censoring Civilians.” P. 109-10.

<sup>100</sup> Otterman, Hil, and Wilson. “Censoring Civilians.” P. 106.

associated with the Cold War and the Second World War (although official censorship did occur on occasion in order to create a sanitised, positive view for the American public<sup>101</sup>) became a war of perception management much more than it was a war of humanitarian intervention or resource acquisition. This intense scrutiny creates immense problems for the PMCs operating during the war - but the heavy perception management by the American military media arm is also an area of opportunity.

If the American military and civilian establishments are working to secure positive perceptions of the war and occupation, then the American military and Iraqi occupation authorities must therefore work to secure the image of the troops themselves. Normally, if troops and officers were abiding by the Huntingtonian concepts of working for the safety and security of the people and society they are sworn to serve, then such image securitisation would be unnecessary. However, as will be elaborated at the end of this case study, PMCs and their contractors are not necessarily bound by these principles. Therefore, this creates the climate and the perception that the PMCs are able to act without worry of punishment or legal indictment. Especially pertinent is the case of the Blackwater contractors that were ambushed and killed by civilians in Fallujah in 2004. These contractors were running a logistics mission, however Blackwater contractors had earned a reputation for lawlessness and acting rashly by that point in the occupation (“combined with the company’s attitude in ignoring Iraqi law and customs,”)<sup>102</sup> and when combined with the incapacity of Iraqi civilians to differentiate between traditional American soldiers and hired contractors,<sup>103</sup> the motives for such a killing or retaliation cannot ever be clear. However, the American military

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<sup>101</sup> Otterman, Hil, and Wilson. “Censoring Civilians.” P. 112.

<sup>102</sup> Kovach, Christopher M. “Cowboys in the Middle East: Private Security Companies and the Imperfect Reach of the United States Criminal Justice System.” *Connections*. P. 19. 2010.

<sup>103</sup> Kovach. “Cowboys in the Middle East.” P. 19.

establishment covered for the contractors: by stating that “we will pacify that city,”<sup>104</sup> American generals ruled that PMCs and their freelance contractors counted as American military personnel worthy of retributive missions and vengeful violence. The power difference here between the American military and Iraqi civilians is not to be understated; in much of Marxist thought (discussed by Huntington) power differentials - usually in terms of class<sup>105</sup> - are the main aspects of conflict, and in the case of the PMCs, the power differential is especially asymmetric: instead of privatised soldiers seeking or solving conflict, the US military guarantees the safety or vengeance of all its operators, regular or contractor. This policy increases the divide between the average Iraqi and the American military - if the average Iraqi is unable to tell the difference between a traditional American soldier and a contractor (who were often outfitted with better weapons than regular American soldiers<sup>106</sup>) then the average Iraqi will not differentiate between PMC contractors and American soldiers. Both operate for the same cause, and this dynamic creates two classes: the power holders (contractors who rarely face punitive measures), and the disempowered (the Iraqi civilian unable to resist without direct action). Therefore, because PMCs were running amok causing violence and death and not facing disciplinary action in Iraq, American forces and contractors were vulnerable to attacks from Iraqi civilians and insurgents alike.

However, within the US military during the Iraq War and occupation, attitudes towards the contractors that fought and served alongside traditional military personnel differed wildly from that of the Iraqi civilian. In the first extensive study of US military personnel and the Department of Army Civilian employees’ perceptions of civilian

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<sup>104</sup> Otterman, Hil, and Wilson. “Censoring Civilians.” P. 120.

<sup>105</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. "Power, Professionalism, and Ideology: Civil-Military Relations in Theory." In *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, P. 92. 1957.

<sup>106</sup> Kovach. "Cowboys in the Middle East." P. 19.

contractors, many of those surveyed actually viewed their experiences with contractors as mostly positive, or no different from their experiences with other units they worked with, but also expressing some crucial issues that contractors add to the mix, overall taking an attitude of ambivalence.<sup>107</sup> The major stand-out statement that surveyed employees agreed with, “Contractors allow military to operate more effectively” resulted in a 74% agreement rate from military personnel, and 62% from DAC employees<sup>108</sup> - initially this rate of agreement is surprising, as one could hypothesise that personnel would think the opposite, that contractors are outsiders taking over military operations and increase the organisational capacity necessary in exchange for budget savings. However, open-ended responses to qualitative survey questions paint a different picture. Stand-out responses include that individuals respect the experience that contractors bring. A large proportion, if not an overwhelming percentage, of PMC employees and contractors are former military personnel themselves, and that experience or perception of experience brings an air of legitimacy that currently-serving military personnel respect.<sup>109</sup> But repeatedly cited as a negative aspect of PMCs and contractors is the high rate of pay, viewed as unfair. To directly quote a US soldier,

“Most civilian contractors are great. Many have prior service or are retired military. The large paychecks although joked about under the breath really hurts because the contractor getting the large pay is getting it at the expense of my and my comrades [sic] blood”<sup>110</sup>

Only 13% of military personnel, and 16% of DAC employees, perceived that using contractors was cheaper than utilising existing trained military personnel and employees instead of contractors.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Kelty, Ryan, and Alex Bierman. “Ambivalence on the Front Lines.” *Armed Forces & Society*. P. 21. 2012.

<sup>108</sup> Kelty and Bierman. “Ambivalence on the Front Lines.” P. 11, Table 1.

<sup>109</sup> Kelty and Bierman. “Ambivalence on the Front Lines.” P. 15-6.

<sup>110</sup> Kelty and Bierman. “Ambivalence on the Front Lines.” P. 16.

<sup>111</sup> Kelty and Bierman. “Ambivalence on the Front Lines.” P. 11, Table 1.

Continuing with military perceptions of contractors, the ambivalence factor continues when social perceptions of contractors are considered. Contractors were perceived to have better pay overall (contractors could expect to be paid between \$500 and \$1500 per day in 2004<sup>112</sup>) and better ability to negotiate their employment contracts, but then lacked when it came to employment benefits.<sup>113</sup> Determining the exact contract and benefits of the individual contractor in comparison with the average military personnel is difficult due to the non-coverage of PMCs by the Freedom of Information act, and while this may be viewed as a limitation of this thesis and grounds for future research, for the sake of simplicity it will be deduced from previous research that contractors hold similar freelance contracts to other freelance workers in the non-military economy, and receive higher pay in lieu of employment benefits that the military affords to its soldiers and employees such as military-provided health care Tricare.<sup>114</sup>

Other social perceptions, and a very important set of perceptions at that, include the perception that PMCs: work just as hard as regular soldiers; perform to the same level of expertise; increase the operational flexibility of the military; and free up soldiers for offensive operations. These are contrasted with negative perceptions (or a lack of agreement with a positive perception) such as: very low perception that contractors increase the efficiency (not effectivity) of the military; contractors decrease morale among soldiers; contractors are less committed and less motivated than regular soldiers; and soldiers are uncomfortable with and would rather not work alongside contractors.<sup>115</sup> While statistically all the perceptions listed above would cancel out each other and afford the “ambivalent” attitude, these negative

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<sup>112</sup> Barstow, David, James Glanz, Richard A. Opiel, and Kate Zernike. “Security Companies: Shadow Soldiers in Iraq.” New York Times, 2004.

<sup>113</sup> Kelty and Bierman. “Ambivalence on the Front Lines.” P. 14, Table 3.

<sup>114</sup> House Armed Services, and Duncan Hunter. Bill, congress.gov §. H.R.5122 - John Warner National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007.

<sup>115</sup> Kelty and Bierman. “Ambivalence on the Front Lines.” P. 11, Table 1.

perceptions are integral when discussing the role of contractors alongside soldiers. There are many factors that encourage or discourage the efficiency and performance of PMCs, and the most prominent of these factors is the intra-sector competition for contractors. While this will be discussed in much further depth in the Analysis section, it certainly contributes to regular soldiers' negative perceptions of contractors when combined with the Huntingtonian and Marxist theories of this thesis: a soldier is not supposed to be motivated by the paycheque in order to take on the soldier's profession; a contractor is motivated by the opportunity to cash in on war, and as such is a detriment to the soldier that he or she works alongside regardless if the usage of the PMC and its contractors helps with the overall budget and improves the efficacy of the military in its operations. As one soldier in Afghanistan reported:

“Perception of civilian contractors is that they get paid more for doing the same work as soldiers. They also get the added benefit of potentially living off base with a better vehicle than soldiers get to use. I've seen some of them work just as hard as soldiers, but that is not the norm. I feel that because of the aforementioned perceptions, contractors tend to detract from the mission and erode unit cohesiveness.”<sup>116</sup>

While the US military as a whole clearly saw benefits to employing and slowly increasing the share of PMCs on the ground in Iraq to a near-equal proportion to its regular personnel, the soldiers on the ground clearly saw both advantages and disadvantages to the employment of PMCs. If these perceptions at the “lower levels” of the military establishment were so mixed, then what was the motivation of those at the “upper levels” to continue to contract out and grow the PMC presence in Iraq? This closing segment of the case study will go over the motivations of such decisions, and evaluate the PMCs based on the Huntingtonian and Marxist principles discussed in the previous sections.

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<sup>116</sup> Kelty and Bierman. “Ambivalence on the Front Lines.” P. 16.



## 7.2 Analysis of PMCs in Iraq

The primary motivation, at least on the surface level of analysis, for the increase of PMC employment in Iraq for the US military and government, was as response to the downsizing of the military in the 1990's and the need to rapidly expand the capacity of the military when on the ground.<sup>117</sup> The US military was reportedly struggling to carry out the necessary operations on the scale needed to fend off a violent insurgency after the fall of Saddam Hussein, and as a response to such a new necessity, began to recruit and contract PMCs en masse.<sup>118</sup> Therefore, instead of rapidly training and expanding existing capacities - an extremely expensive undertaking for the military, and an especially time-consuming process given the rapidity of changing situations on the ground in Iraq - the military turned to PMCs to fill those operational capacity gaps, essentially turning a temporary solution into standard policy.<sup>119</sup> A secondary justification for the regular downsizing and expansion of PMC contracts is the growing social cost of large wars and occupations. While the economic cost in the upper levels of the military believe that PMCs are cheaper than training its own soldiers, the social costs of young soldier deaths and replacing used or destroyed equipment is extremely high. Therefore, contractors take some of the stress off the military by reducing US military deaths both in number and through prevention;<sup>120</sup> at the beginning of the Iraq war, nearly all the contractors were veteran soldiers who had seen some form of combat, with a non-insignificant portion coming from various Special Forces units across the West.<sup>121</sup> In conjunction, the expansion of PMC usage allows for a certain amount of operational independence. Instead of relying on smaller allies to take on separate roles aside from the

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<sup>117</sup> Barstow, Glanz, Opiel, and Zernike. "Security Companies: Shadow Soldiers in Iraq."

<sup>118</sup> Avant and De Nevers. "Military Contractors & the American Way of War." P. 89.

<sup>119</sup> Avant and De Nevers. "Military Contractors & the American Way of War." P. 92.

<sup>120</sup> Johnston. "Private Military Contractors." P. 95.

<sup>121</sup> Government Accountability Office. Report, "*Rebuilding Iraq: Actions Needed to Improve Use of Private Security Providers.*" 2005.

primary operational objective, now the US military can simply contract out the necessary operations that it no longer has the capacity to do without sacrificing needed forces from flash points.<sup>122</sup>

However, the downsizing of the military was also a response to the end of the Cold War, and therefore was an economic response as well as a political-security response. A large military force deterrent was no longer necessary, and between the wars against Hussein's Iraq, the US military downsized its army by close to 300 000 personnel.<sup>123</sup> This led to a desire for what some in the Pentagon and the American civilian military administration deemed a was "light, lethal and mobile"<sup>124</sup> combat force. The economic aspect comes with then-Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld's assertion that the Pentagon was bogged down with bureaucracy that hindered its capacity for true operational efficiency, and that the military should act "more like venture capitalists."<sup>125</sup> This is furthered by a later assertion that the DoD should only perform the duties that cannot be found in the private sector. Namely, these are offensive capacities, as currently PMCs are prohibited from engaging in offensive actions without incriminating themselves in both international and US law. Any other duty that can be found in the PMC sector should be contracted out in order to make the US military a lean fighting force, able to focus only on the most primary of tasks, and leave the security, logistics, and reconstruction duties to the PMCs that have padded their ranks with now-unemployed Special Forces and regular soldiers.<sup>126</sup>

The assertion by Rumsfeld, that the Pentagon should act as "venture capitalists" is a puzzling assertion when combined with Huntingtonian professionalism theory. A major

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<sup>122</sup> Johnston. "Private Military Contractors." P. 95.

<sup>123</sup> Johnston. "Private Military Contractors." P. 95.

<sup>124</sup> Johnston. "Private Military Contractors." P. 95, from Ignatieff, Michael "Virtual War." In *Virtual War: Kosovo and Beyond.I*

<sup>125</sup> Johnston. "Private Military Contractors." P. 95.

<sup>126</sup> Johnston. "Private Military Contractors." P. 95-6.

aspect of Huntingtonian theory includes that the soldier and the officer put the profession's honour and codes above personal gain,<sup>127</sup> and Rumsfeld's venture capitalist assertion contradicts what Huntington states a strong, professional must and mustn't do: a military should draw its strength from the state it serves, and must act as a defensive organisation. For the US military in Iraq to decide to operate as venture capitalists brings about the potential that the military will seek to turn a profit and put motives other than the primary objective ahead of all else. This was demonstrated by the initial contracting out of many contracts to Halliburton and KBR, which then-VP Dick Cheney served as CEO of prior to joining office. As well, in studies done on the efficiency of PMCs in Iraq, running the military as venture capitalists had often detrimental effects on the quality of operational capacity. In Iraq there were three kinds of contracts offered out to PMCs, with varying levels of reimbursement or profit and encouragement for performance. These types are times and materials, cost plus, and firm fixed.<sup>128</sup> Time and materials reimbursed the PMC outright and provided very low incentive for the PMC to send experienced contractors and perform well; cost plus guaranteed a certain margin of profit alongside reimbursement, which raised the level of incentive for the PMC, and firm fixed provided incentives depending on the outcome of the operation, which led to the highest incentives for the PMC to send strong, well-experienced contractors to complete the operation.<sup>129</sup> It can be said that the US military operates on time and materials contracts, for comparison's sake, as it has fixed employee costs and has a budget to draw from to outfit its forces. The military instead relies on its training and professionalism to perform well in its operations. However, in a market competition context,

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<sup>127</sup> Huntington. "The Military Mind." P. 65.

<sup>128</sup> Tkach, Benjamin. "Private Military and Security Companies, Contract Structure, Market Competition, and Violence in Iraq." *Conflict Management and Peace Science*. P. 9, Table 1. 2017.

<sup>129</sup> Tkach. "Private Military and Security Companies." P. 9.

using PMCs for military tasks undermines military professionalism. By forcing companies to compete for contracts and needing incentives to get the best contractors and outcomes, the US military in Iraq compromised both on its professional standards, as was demonstrated by the survey in soldier attitudes towards PMCs and the view that morale was affected by the presence of PMCs. If soldiers feel that their jobs are being sold off to contractors, then the natural conclusion is that the military does not have the capacity to train its own soldiers to perform such tasks, and this was explicitly confirmed by the attitudes towards the military of the Bush administration in the pre-OIF era.<sup>130</sup> A study showed that, as intra-PMC sector competition increased, the likelihood of attacks by Iraqi insurgent decreased due to the increased incentives to send experienced contractors; simultaneously when PMCs are given contractual free reign or given few incentives or operate in a low-competitive or non-competitive market, the likelihood of insurgent attacks increased significantly.<sup>131</sup>

The above paragraph will form the basis for the assertion that the usage of PMCs in Iraq, and subsequent incentivisation of such PMCs to perform well, completely contradicts the Huntingtonian professionalism theory. This is further proved by the survey statement where soldiers felt that even though contractors performed well in the field, they felt that morale was lower when working alongside contractors. When the professional nature is violated by contractors, as they are soldiers of fortune and work for gain rather than defending the state, the state soldier feels wronged by the state he or she is supposed to protect, and perceives weakness. The marketisation and competition aspect confirms the assertion, as well as demonstrates that market capitalism should remain separate from the fundamental aspects of the military establishment. The power imbalance created by the impunity of the PMCs also goes with the Marxist critique, that power imbalance is the basis

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<sup>130</sup> Johnston. "Private Military Contractors." P. 95.

<sup>131</sup> Tkach. "Private Military and Security Companies." P. 17.

for conflict. Iraqis were unable to differentiate between contractor and soldier, so when one committed atrocities, there would be no differentiation for retribution. The Iraqi is rendered powerless and defenseless against the contractor, which only worsens the impact of the impunity.

By 2011, the formal end of the Iraq War, PMC contractors exceeded the amount of US state forces. In 2010, the last actual combat personnel left Iraq, and in 2011, only personnel participating in training the Iraqi army and security services remained.<sup>132</sup> However, most of this task was carried out by various PMC contractors under the supervision of senior US military personnel, which is essentially to state that PMCs retained their role in the post-war Iraqi security theatre. The transition of the American military presence in Iraq from a large and monopolised fighting force into a lean force that supplements its force capacity with PMCs became complete, as with the full withdrawal, hardly any formal American military personnel. The reconstruction of Iraq had been largely completed by PMCs, and the remaining military presence was to be taken up by PMCs.

This case study attempted to outline the Iraq War from the standpoint of the contractor. It outlined why the PMCs and their contractors came to outnumber US and coalition personnel by 2007, and many perceptions were discussed about the usage and presence of contractors alongside military personnel. While not an exhaustive discussion, as such an exhaustive case study would require a separate dissertation, it has attempted to paint as broad of a picture possible to provide the basis for the following analytical section. In this next section, the research question and its subsections will be revisited, with data from the case study used to provide a general analysis and will be accompanied by supporting data

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<sup>132</sup> Palau-Loverdos, Jordi, and Leticia Armendáriz. "The Privatization of Warfare, Violence and Private Military & Security Companies: A Factual and Legal Approach to Human Rights Abuses by PMSC in Iraq." P. 30. 2011.

from other experiences with PMCs. Alongside such supporting data, all data will be run through the above mentioned Huntingtonian professionalism theory and the Marxist critique, in order to demonstrate the theoretical compliance with the assertions of the analysis. As stated in the beginning of this thesis, the central question is: *“what is the impact of PMCs in the modern international relations arena, in military and political capacities, and how does their efficacy or lack thereof and new application in modern warfare affect the concept of the national military as a professional organisation?”* As discussed, this question would be examined by breaking it into two smaller questions, and will form the first two analysis sections. After the first two sections are completed, a third section will draw upon the content of the first and second analyses and answer the main question.

## **8. Analysis I**

The first question to be addressed is: *how effective are PMCs at supporting and in some cases supplanting traditional national militaries? What is the effective analytical capacity for measuring such impact?* As was observed in the Iraq War case study, there was certainly a case to be made that the upper levels of the US military and civilian administrations believed that PMCs were more effective battlefield components, as PMCs outnumbered traditional military personnel by 2007. Measuring such a concept as “effectiveness” is, however, qualitative and subjective in nature. Perceptions by soldiers and officers as well as media and academic reports of the work that PMCs carried out will be useful for addressing such effectiveness.

PMCs are certainly very effective on paper at supporting the military force they are contracted by. As mentioned, many contractors in the West were former Special Forces operators from many countries, and many others have previous military experience and training. Additionally, the hiring of contractors from the host state (i.e. the state that is experiencing the conflict) is an effective means of supporting the military force. Local contractors can be hired immediately upon arrival, and are cheaper than Western contractors as there are largely no costs for accommodation or transporting them to the conflict zone, and their effectiveness is multiplied when one considers that the hiring of such contractors puts money back into the local economy.<sup>133</sup> However, this last point must be taken with a grain of salt, so to speak. The “creating jobs” argument is flimsy at best, due to the very nature of the work carried out by the contractor. The typical contractor receives no benefits from the PMC aside from a paycheque, and the risk to the individual can be very high, such so that if the person is injured, then they are unable to work and have no income while injured - contrary to the traditional soldier, who will receive treatment and paycheques. If the contractor dies, then the job is lost entirely, and any dependents such as family lose a source of income with no security from the state. Which, this source of revenue for the local contractor may be negligible anyway, as it was reported that the PMC Eryns paid Iraqi contractors defending oil plants roughly US\$4 a day, whereas the South African contractors in Eryns’ employ were paid US\$5 000 a month - roughly US\$167 a day.<sup>134</sup> Neoliberal economics accepts at a baseline, the wage is tied to the quality of work provided - the wage is an incentive. As was shown in the case study, quality of work performed by PMCs in Iraq increased when the contract provided more incentive for the PMC to hire and send higher-quality contractors to

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<sup>133</sup> Palau-Loverdos and Armendáriz. “The Privatization of Warfare, Violence and Private Military & Security Companies.” P. 40.

<sup>134</sup> Palau-Loverdos and Armendáriz. “The Privatization of Warfare, Violence and Private Military & Security Companies.” P. 41.

complete the mission, especially if there was a significant risk to the PMC's revenue if the operation was not carried out to a high standard.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, if the local contractors are not paid an appropriate wage for the work they do, then they are likely to not perform to a high standard, and as such the "creating jobs" argument for the usage of PMCs is invalid.

Experiences from other conflicts show that PMCs may not be more effective at supporting militaries and security providers than using traditional personnel. In a study on the experiences with PMCs in the Balkan states in the 1990's, PMCs were found to struggle to actively support local police forces in providing security for the local area. This was due to an inherent issue with employing contractors or multiple contractors in a given region: they largely only have communication with one entity, and do not have the means to cooperate with each other or with non-hiring entities. This creates confusion on the ground, as in Albania where contractors were hired from PMCs by local businesses seeking to gain security in the social turmoil following the collapse of the communist regime. The contractors were not integrated in any way with the local police, and had to develop informal relationships.<sup>136</sup> Not only does this divide the share of societal security between the state entity and private interest (compromising the Weberian monopoly of power) but reduces the overall effectiveness of security forces as a whole. At the same time, the salaries for these contractors was very low compared to the cost paid to the PMC - which was reflected in unmotivated and unprofessional work.<sup>137</sup> This sets a very negative precedent for the usage of PMCs in unstable societal environments, where basic necessities such as cooperation with other security entities is crucial for executing an operation to a high standard.

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<sup>135</sup> Tkach. "Private Military and Security Companies." P. 9.

<sup>136</sup> Çami, Ola, Rositsa Dzhekova, Arjan Dyrnishi, Donika Emini, Anton Kojouharev, Marko Milošević, Predrag Petrović, and Mentor Vrajolli. "Private Security in Practice: Case Studies from Southeast Europe." Edited by Franziska Klopfer and Nelleke van Amstel. P. 18. 2016.

<sup>137</sup> Çami, et al. "Private Security in Practice." P. 20.



As was discussed in the case study, many PMCs and their contractors were largely immune from legal punishment. There are few instances of PMC contractors facing legal action for their actions while on a mission. The Nisour Square massacre is the most prominent example of contractors facing legal action, where a former contractor was only in 2019 sentenced to life in prison in the US for his role in the massacre.<sup>138</sup> The lack of accountability for PMCs is compounded by the negative effects that PMCs have on local populations and individual soldiers. Soldiers were surveyed and it was found that they were uncomfortable working alongside contractors, while simultaneously agreeing that their training and experience was valuable for the overall mission.<sup>139</sup> As well, if contractors are perceived as unprofessional and rash by local populations,<sup>140</sup> then the effectiveness of utilising PMCs is decreased as such contractors cannot do anything than complete missions while also hurting the military's public image. The legal apparatus that should hold PMCs accountable to state and international authorities is largely unable to prosecute PMCs. In the Iraq War, PMCs were given free reign and were largely protected from conviction by US military jurisdiction, and after the handover to the Iraqi government in 2009, the SOFA agreement was deliberately vague in order to potentially protect PMCs. Blackwater troops were reintroduced to the Iraqi battlefield a mere four days after the Nisour Massacre,<sup>141</sup> indicating both a desperation on the side of the US military to get troops into the field for operations and the callousness of the military in handing out contractors. This also shows that the US military was willing to sacrifice its own corporateness for the sake of greater occupational capacity. It can be argued, as some scholars have done, that the real reason

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<sup>138</sup> Khalil, Ashraf. "Ex-Blackwater Contractor Sentenced to Life in Iraq Shootings." *Military Times*. Military Times, August 14, 2019.

<sup>139</sup> Kelty and Bierman. "Ambivalence on the Front Lines." P. 11, Table 1.

<sup>140</sup> Singer, Peter W. "The Dark Truth about Blackwater." Brookings. 2017.

<sup>141</sup> Chapman, Katherin J. "The Untouchables: Private Military Contractors' Criminal Accountability under the UCMJ." P. 1052. 2010.

behind this was an ideological commitment to scaling down the military and increasing the privatised share of military functions,<sup>142</sup> and as such this negates the potential question as to why the US military wouldn't simply ask its allies for a greater personnel contribution in order to cover gaps in its own capacity and not be forced to resort to PMCs. However, it is crucial to note that the American public was very sensitive to large commitments to foreign wars, so by using PMCs, the tradeoff between loss of professionalism and saving face with the American public was necessary. However, the perception that PMCs are part of occupying/invading forces has not gone away, as experiences from the Iraq and Afghan wars have shown that locals do not make distinctions between whether a soldier is a contractor or a regular.<sup>143</sup> As long as PMCs cannot be held accountable under law - PMCs were exempted through several quirks of the Geneva convention as they were labelled as 'national warring entities' and therefore allowed in combat<sup>144</sup> - and as long as militaries refuse to maintain the necessary capacity to carry out all operations that have been delegated to PMCs, then professionalism will always be the tradeoff.

Unprofessional conduct negates the effectiveness of contractors and PMCs.

Blackwater contractors were especially feared in Iraq, for their unprofessional conduct and unpredictability. It is this unprofessional conduct that stems from a greater core issue that the traditional military soldier does not face: the highest level of accountability for the individual contractor is the corporate boss at the top of the chain of command.<sup>145</sup> While on mission, the contractor is accountable to the commanding officer of a unit or command centre, but if something goes wrong, then the contractor is held accountable by the PMC and will result in

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<sup>142</sup> Khawaja, Noor-ul-Ain. "Human Rights Violations Under US Occupation in Iraq: An Analysis." 2012.

<sup>143</sup> Chapman. "The Untouchables." P. 1052.

<sup>144</sup> Chapman. "The Untouchables." P. 1066.

<sup>145</sup> Singer. "The Dark Truth about Blackwater."

not getting more operations. The military is not able to hold individual contractors accountable for their actions - as the military does not pick out the individual contractors during the hiring process.<sup>146</sup> The PMC is able to deploy and withdraw personnel and even its own services very quickly - which is due to their private, for-profit nature. They can also accept, reject, and return contracts at will - something that the military is unable to do.<sup>147</sup> This completely ignores the professional standards of the traditional military - the sheer nature of being a for-profit operator or company undermines the military's corporate conduct. Those contracted may have once been soldiers, but now their service is no longer tied to the long tradition of the officer tradition and corporate military organisation, and they no longer are required to be motivated by the defense of the society they serve. In essence, as Peter Singer wrote, contractors are motivated insofar as "they get their client from point A to B, not whether they win Iraqi hearts and minds along the way."<sup>148</sup> This reduces the overall effectivity of using the PMC's services as opposed to training and deploying traditional soldiers, as using soldiers that are not committed or held accountable to the central mission (in the Iraq War, this was rebuilding the country and halting the insurgency by winning over hearts and minds) and are unprofessional in their conduct undermines the mission.

The last two metrics for assessing the effectiveness of PMCs at supporting and supplanting traditional militaries will be the operational capacity and quality of contractors on the battlefield, juxtaposed by battlefield casualties. As was discussed earlier, regular soldiers were surveyed and found that PMC contractors performed excellent work on a mission objective level, and worked just as hard as regular troops. This came with perceptions that contractors were paid more and were unruly,<sup>149</sup> as well as real experiences of many locals

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<sup>146</sup> Tkach. "Private Military and Security Companies." P. 7-8.

<sup>147</sup> Burge, Robert A. "Effectiveness and Efficiencies of Private Military Corporations." P. 37.

<sup>148</sup> Singer. "The Dark Truth about Blackwater."

<sup>149</sup> Kelyt and Bierman. "Ambivalence on the Front Lines." P. 11, Table 1.

with contractors that showed that contractors could be harsh and unmotivated to perform quality work or adhere to anything but the mission they were paid to carry out.<sup>150</sup> However, it has been noted during the research phase for this thesis that there are very few reports of contractors failing to carry out a mission. It is pertinent to note that some key mission failures would include the logistics escort team of Blackwater contractors that were murdered in Fallujah in 2004, and the Nisour Square Massacre contractors in 2007 on US State Department protection duty, as these led to contractor and civilian deaths respectively. What makes it especially difficult to assess mission failures is that many militaries don't keep track of contractor casualties. This is due to the fact that contractors are not formally military personnel, and even though they can be listed as many titles such as 'civilian contractors' or 'security contractors' among others, the deaths are largely the responsibility of the PMCs themselves to keep track of. As of 2019, more contractors have died in Afghanistan than American soldiers, with the revised figures standing at 3800 contractor deaths compared to 2300 American soldiers and 1100 NATO and other coalition soldiers.<sup>151</sup> It is hard to state whether these are due to the sheer numbers of contractors (security contractors only make up 10-20% of all contractors in Afghanistan,<sup>152</sup> and actual troop strength around 13 000 US personnel<sup>153</sup>) or due to mission failures. Therefore, it is inconclusive whether there is enough data to make an assessment about contractor effectiveness depending on deaths and mission failures. However, it will be noted that mission failures are rarely reported unless they involve contractor or civilian deaths, and due to the nature of PMCs in that they can refuse contracts at will, their effectiveness is handicapped - they are not accountable to the military

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<sup>150</sup> Singer. "The Dark Truth about Blackwater."

<sup>151</sup> Ioanes, Ellen. "More US Contractors Have Died in Afghanistan than US Troops - but the Pentagon Doesn't Keep Track." Business Insider. 2019.

<sup>152</sup> Swed, Ori, and Thomas Crosbie. "Who Are the Private Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan?" Military Times. 2019.

<sup>153</sup> Ioanes. "More US Contractors Have Died in Afghanistan than US Troops"

for any failures, and it is the military, not the PMC, that must deal with any consequences from a mission failure.

As such, in response to the question, this thesis will assert that while PMCs and contractors provide crucial force multiplication effects - their flexibility for short-term operations and their ability to hire contractors from many regions and attract ‘top talent’ being their main advantages over the traditional military - they are ineffective for a long-term military strategy. The factors for measuring their effectiveness include the professional capacity, their experience in battle and through training, the flexibility of the PMC, and real experiences with PMCs in war zones. As has been demonstrated, contractors and PMCs have been effective at carrying out operations but have been ineffective at achieving the grander operational objectives, and have had trouble integrating alongside traditional militaries. They also struggle to meet the professional criteria outlined by Huntingtonian - while they may be professional soldiers, they are only professional in name. In purpose, they are motivated by money and not by obligation and corporateness. They fit the Marxist critique, that their purpose is through corporate greed and market forces dictate the accountability and effectiveness of the PMC in providing high-quality work. Traditional militaries would be better off maintaining their own capacities to carry out such duties as logistics, reconstruction, and security as then the military can guarantee its own quality of work and ensure that all of its soldiers are aligned in vision and purpose. This is naturally more resource-intensive on the state hosting the military, but this is a better tradeoff for unified purpose instead of sacrificing professionalism and grand mission objective attainment for flexibility and budget savings.

## **8.1 Analysis II**

The second question for analysis is: *what do the new applications of PMCs, following the experiences of the Iraq and Afghan wars, mean for the traditional military? As such, are PMCs a threat to military values and international convention, or is there an interchange of ethics and values?* Due to the extensive usage of PMCs in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the traditional military is heavily impacted by large scale-backs imposed on it by the end of the Cold War and ideological commitments by civilian administrations, in particular the US government under the Bush administration<sup>154</sup> and was not reversed by the subsequent administrations.<sup>155</sup> The reduction of the US military after the Cold War has allowed for PMCs to have such a large impact on the US military establishment, especially given the 30% reduction of troop strength.<sup>156</sup> This creates an opportunity for PMCs to fill in the gaps, which is exactly what happened. Most prominently was Halliburton, which through its connections with Dick Cheney, was able to secure lucrative contracts for itself and its subsidiaries. Blackwater as well, with its former Navy SEAL and founder Erik Prince, grew substantially in the Bush administration era.

However, PMCs made the most impact on the military establishment due to the changing battlefield conditions of the post-9/11 political arena. Thomas Mockaitis writes that “the dramatic increase in government contractors in general, and PMSCs in particular, resulted from the contrast between the war the Pentagon expected to fight in Iraq and the one it actually got.”<sup>157</sup> The reduction in overall force capacity combined with the realisation that the Iraq War would not be a quick invasion and toppling of Hussein but a decade-long military commitment to counter an insurgency with rapidly evolving developments both in

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<sup>154</sup> Khawaja. "Human Rights Violations Under US Occupation in Iraq."

<sup>155</sup> Swed and Crosbie. "Who Are the Private Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan?"

<sup>156</sup> Johnston. "Private Military Contractors." P. 95.

<sup>157</sup> Mockaitis. "Soldiers of Misfortune?" P. 8.

the social and in the security realms, necessitated the rapid acquisition of PMCs to supplement the whole force. 150 000 contractors were present in Iraq in 2007, with at least 13 500 of those being explicitly security contractors.<sup>158</sup> In Afghanistan, President Obama increased the US presence by 30 000 US military personnel in order to fight the Taliban insurgency. In 2009, there were an estimated 26 000 PMC contractors,<sup>159</sup> many of them coming from much shadier organisations and having much less stringent hiring processes than Blackwater used in Iraq, to the point where some identities are untraceable.<sup>160</sup>

PMCs have also impacted other militaries besides the US. Perhaps the US' most strategically important partner, in many arenas but especially from a security standpoint, Canada has also taken a similar path towards privatising much of its military down to a few "core capacities." Canada and the US maintain several integrated Special Forces units, and some of these soldiers have gone on into the employ of PMCs including Blackwater. The Canadian civilian administration under Jean Chretien in the 1990's took a similar path to the US, scaling down its military capacities as a large autonomous military was no longer necessary. As the Canadian military was never close to a similar force strength of the Americans, the downsizing was not as dramatic as it was in the US. The Canadian military downsized many of its logistic and support operations alongside cutting ground forces.<sup>161</sup> Canada's military is internationally renowned for its high professional standards and its commitment to peacekeeping operations globally and conflict resolution methods instead of interventionism,<sup>162</sup> but in Afghanistan Canada came to rely heavily on PMCs to provide many

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<sup>158</sup> Mockaitis. "Soldiers of Misfortune?" P. 10-1.

<sup>159</sup> Mockaitis. "Soldiers of Misfortune?" P. 32.

<sup>160</sup> Swed and Crosbie. "Who Are the Private Contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan?"

<sup>161</sup> Perry, David. "The Privatization of the Canadian Military: Afghanistan and Beyond." *International Journal* P. 688. 2009.

<sup>162</sup> Barnes, Bruce E. "Re-imagining Canadian and United States Foreign Policies." *Peace Research*. P. 35. 2011.

functions, most prominently in capacities that the Canadian military does not have since the downsizing: logistics, strategic lift, theatre aviation support, and site security.<sup>163</sup> This revelation that the Canadian military also employed contractors in similar veins as the US utilised ultimately shows that the US is not an outlier but the vanguard of a shift to utilising PMC capacities instead of maintaining national capacities.

Russia has begun to utilise PMCs in its campaigns in its sphere of influence, however the usage of PMCs is largely shadowy and opposite to the standard Western usage. While this thesis definitely did not favour the usage of PMCs by the American military establishment, it must be noted that the Russian government and military heavily utilise the Wagner Group in its recent operations. Wagner Group is a semi-state owned entity, and operates as a force instead of the Russian military. Russia utilises a mandatory military draft, and while Russia downsized its military after the Cold War, it was not for the same ideological reasons as the US but due to the economic collapse and dissolution of the USSR, which then necessitated a reorganisation of Russia's security and defence priorities.<sup>164</sup> Wagner Group is the result of many years of negotiations, mergers, expansions, and deals with those at the very top of the Russian oligarchic pyramid including Vladimir Putin, and is integrated into the Russian military establishment. Its contractors are largely retired career army soldiers and former *spetsnaz* operatives, and Wagner has been accused of and has formally participated in military operations in eastern Ukraine and in Syria.<sup>165</sup> Wagner has created a new opportunity for the Russian military, in that the usage of a PMC instead of national forces creates a

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<sup>163</sup> Perry. "The Privatization of the Canadian Military." P. 691.

<sup>164</sup> Rondeaux, Candace. "Russian Military Reorganization, Modernization & The Market for Private Force." In *Decoding the Wagner Group: Analyzing the Role of Private Military Security Contractors in Russian Proxy Warfare*. Report. New America, 2019.

<sup>165</sup> Rondeaux, Candace. "Tracing Wagner's Roots." In *Decoding the Wagner Group: Analyzing the Role of Private Military Security Contractors in Russian Proxy Warfare*. Report. New America, P. 6-7. 2019.



deliberately vague atmosphere around its deployment: Wagner group contractors were deployed in eastern Ukraine as a means of organising and assisting the rebel forces in Donbas,<sup>166</sup> and in Syria as the main operating force to such an extent that Wagner contractors took much higher casualties than the Russian military.<sup>167</sup> This new usage of a PMC as the main arm of the military is unprecedented in the West, and is completely antithetical to Huntingtonian professionalism theory: these contractors are operating in the employ of a semi-state owned entity and operate for the sole purpose of monetary remuneration., and on top of this - the Russian military has compromised itself by allowing Wagner contractors to act in its stead, when the military should play the leading role in defending Russian interests. However, stating that Wagner contractors are only motivated by financial interests is a blanket statement and not entirely true: there are reports of some contractors belonging to Russian neo-Nazi groups,<sup>168</sup> which further compromises the Huntingtonian theory, and would do so regardless if the contractors were members of the Russian military or the Wagner group.

Largely, the expansion of the PMC industry has led to an entrenchment of PMC presence in battlefields. Changes to military composition have not occurred, and militaries are largely still relying on PMCs and contractors to provide essential services, and such services that have traditionally been considered “inherently state functions,”<sup>169</sup> have now been contracted out to PMCs. Whether it’s Wagner group carrying out entire operations for

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<sup>166</sup> Rondeaux, Candace. “From Deir Ezzor to Donbas and Back Again.” In *Decoding the Wagner Group: Analyzing the Role of Private Military Security Contractors in Russian Proxy Warfare*. Report. New America, P. 51-2. 2019.

<sup>167</sup> Reynolds, Nathaniel. *Putin’s Not-So-Secret Mercenaries: Patronage, Geopolitics, and the Wagner Group*. Report. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. P 11. 2019.

<sup>168</sup> Rondeaux. “Tracing Wagner’s Roots.” P. 6.

<sup>169</sup> Palau-Loverdos and Armendáriz. “The Privatization of Warfare, Violence and Private Military & Security Companies.” P. 46.

the Russian state's interests, or American-contracted PMCs running interrogation methods,<sup>170</sup> the traditional military has come to accept that PMCs are a part of the new experience in the modern battlefield. The experiences of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Ukraine have shown that PMCs are more than capable of integrating with traditional militaries, and the advantages of using flexible units only when a military needs them appear to outweigh the disadvantages of a reduction in overall force capacity, reduced professionalism, and a lack of accountability for actions that may undermine mission objectives.

As discussed earlier, PMCs and contractors do not align with Huntington's theory, as they are motivated by financial gain instead of service to a state and a people. However, the question of whether PMCs pose a threat to the military establishment and its values is difficult to discern. In the West, it is clear that Blackwater and Triple Canopy are not attempting a hostile takeover of the US military, a preposterous suggestion. However, one way that PMCs have indeed threatened the military values of Huntington is through the issue of wages. Well-paid contractors, often better equipped than their regular counterparts, are very attractive to the individual soldier. Salaries of contractors upwards of \$500 a day<sup>171</sup> combined with the perception that regular soldiers are paid much less and sacrificing themselves while the contractors come in to do a similar job and get paid much higher with less accountability and chain of command<sup>172</sup> is infectious. Soldiers have been finishing their contracts and joining PMCs because of the high pay, and their exposure to contractors may make them resent their training and the military establishment. Many soldiers already questioned their deployment to Iraq, and as such it was necessary for the Pentagon to manage

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<sup>170</sup> Palau-Loverdos and Armendáriz. "The Privatization of Warfare, Violence and Private Military & Security Companies." P. 47.

<sup>171</sup> Barstow, Glanz, Oppel, and Zernike. "Security Companies."

<sup>172</sup> Kelty and Bierman. "Ambivalence on the Front Lines." P. 11, Table 1.

the public's perception of the invasion.<sup>173</sup> Militaries already expend lots of labour and resources into training new soldiers; for these soldiers to carry out their contracts and then upon completion join a PMC for high salaries in the same conflicts they were originally sent to is not a tenable business model. Rumsfeld's wish for a Pentagon that operates like venture capitalists could eventually spell greater rates of "brain drain" from national militaries, as PMC values infect the military. A worst case future scenario would see soldiers joining the military at large rates only to join the PMC as soon as they could, with incredibly high turnover rates in militaries to the point where contractors are the dominant force on the battlefield.

In this case, there is no value exchange between the PMCs and the militaries. For one, at the very base level of argument, contractors were originally trained by their respective militaries, therefore these soldiers carry many of the values they were taught during training, which includes many aspects of Huntington's corporate theory. If anything, there should be a flow of Huntingtonian values into PMCs. But, the issue now lies with the PMCs themselves. They are corporate entities, driven by market forces and profit margins, instead of serving a state and society. PMCs responded to market forces when militaries downsized and needed to expand their force capacity. As an aside, this thesis has incorporated data from authors who have described PMCs as "force multipliers" for military establishments. However, given that the militaries in question downsized prior to 9/11 as a response to global geopolitical events and for economic and ideological reasons,<sup>174</sup> this assertion is untrue as militaries traditionally had capacities to take care of their own logistics and provide their own security, and such downsizing was relatively voluntary by the civilian administration. Therefore, the usage PMCs is more accurately described as "force capacity expansion," as the default force

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<sup>173</sup> Otterman, Hil, and Wilson. "Censoring Civilians."

<sup>174</sup> Khawaja. "Human Rights Violations Under US Occupation in Iraq."

capacity is a lean and mobile force.<sup>175</sup> PMCs have filled this lack of force capacity, and as they do not pretend to be traditional military units (they are profit entities; the military should not be profit driven), and as such due to their corporate interests and flexibility to accept and reject contracts at will, they do not need to let Huntingtonian values permeate throughout the organisation.

The last major method of PMCs impacting the military establishment is through legal conventions. Normally, the Geneva Convention covers the act of mercenarism, which is de jure outlawed for the individual, and states are normally prohibited from employing mercenaries - as long as the state in question has adopted all the necessary legislation pertaining to the acquisition and deployment of mercenaries.<sup>176</sup> As defined by the Geneva convention, a mercenary is person who:

- “(a) is specially recruited locally or abroad in order to fight in an armed conflict;
- (b) does, in fact, take a direct part in the hostilities;
- (c) is motivated to take part in the hostilities essentially by the desire for private gain and, in fact, is promised, by or on behalf of a Party to the conflict, material compensation substantially in excess of that promised or paid to combatants of similar ranks and functions in the armed forces of that Party;
- (d) is neither a national of a Party to the conflict nor a resident of territory controlled by a Party to the conflict;
- (e) is not a member of the armed forces of a Party to the conflict; and
- (f) has not been sent by a State which is not a Party to the conflict on official duty as a member of its armed forces.”<sup>177</sup>

While these criteria seem to be expansive and would cover the PMC, many PMCs and contractors can flout these restrictions. Only point C applies to the PMC; the rest do not, as

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<sup>175</sup> Johnston. "Private Military Contractors." P. 95.

<sup>176</sup> Palau-Loverdos and Armendáriz. "The Privatization of Warfare, Violence and Private Military & Security Companies." P. 60.

<sup>177</sup> Palau-Loverdos and Armendáriz. "The Privatization of Warfare, Violence and Private Military & Security Companies." P. 59.

the terms are vague but also specific. PMCs do not “fight” in conflict zones, they are defensive actors, and as such do not take part in hostile actions. Rather, they are (officially) brought in by a state to carry out defensive operations and are not allowed to carry out offensive actions. These two criteria already disqualify American, Iraqi, and coalition contractors in Iraq. It can be argued that third-country nationals that did not participate in the Iraq War (such as South Africans) may be in violation of the Convention - however, they would be covered by points E and F, as they do not belong to a coalition military and were not sent by a non-participating administration (i.e. South Africa did not send its own contractors).<sup>178</sup> As such, if international law cannot cover the usage of PMCs and normal state law does not sufficiently cover their usage - as was argued in the case study - then PMCs do form a threat to the international security arena, as it can be more complicated to challenge a state on their usage of PMCs and actually seeing results from such an accusation may not ever occur. PMCs are well-versed in their legal restrictions, but as has been demonstrated, any laws that do regulate their usage are regularly flouted and likely will continue to be flouted.

Ultimately, PMCs do not represent a direct threat to military values as discussed by Huntington. However, they pose an indirect threat in that other soldiers may see the value of joining the PMC in contravention of the principles and corporate values they were taught during their training by their officership. What the recent applications of PMCs will mean for the traditional military is a further reliance on PMCs to carry out the necessary tasks for combating insurgencies and assisting with post-conflict state reconstruction, and this will come at the cost of sustained professionalism and further reliance on entities that do not answer to the traditional chain of command or share the same values and grand mission

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<sup>178</sup> Palau-Loverdos and Armendáriz. “The Privatization of Warfare, Violence and Private Military & Security Companies.” P. 60.

objectives. It could also mean less reliance on military partnerships (as was demonstrated when the US opted to hire PMCs instead of asking its allies, both within NATO and without, for additional support contributions), but ultimately it will mean an entrenchment of the PMC in the military establishment, which will contradict Huntington's theories as well as the Weberian notion of sovereign violence application.

## **8.2 Analysis III and Results**

Lastly, this thesis will answer the central question by drawing on the above two analytical sections: *what is the impact of PMCs in the modern international relations arena, in military and political capacities, and how does their efficacy or lack thereof and new application in modern warfare affect the concept of the national military as a professional organisation?* As has been demonstrated, PMCs and their usage is an incredibly nuanced topic. Their usage comes with many advantages and disadvantages. As has been done previously, the Huntingtonian and critical Marxist lenses will be applied for a full picture.

The military impacts of PMCs are numerous. They filled a void that was created in the 1990's when Western militaries demilitarised and scaled down their existing force capacities, as militaries no longer possessed the capacities needed for operating a long-term counterinsurgency mission and reconstructing failed or destroyed states. These PMCs were a cheaper and more flexible option for these now-lean and rapidly deployed militaries: they could provide needed troops and supplies at a moments notice, and often had their own resources to draw upon that they sourced privately. Their impact is such that militaries began to entrust PMCs with "inherently state functions" which came to include reconstruction, prisoner management and interrogation, training local military and associated security units, and in the case of Russia and the Wagner Group, operating fully-integrated into military

units. The impact of PMCs in providing these services to a standard acceptable to military establishments is evident in one statistic proving their success: PMCs and their contractors, in all capacities, matched the amount of US troops in Iraq in 2007. This statistics is unprecedented: there were roughly 150 000 contractors on US agency contracts, performing all the functions a military needs, including logistics, reconstruction, and personnel and site security. This means that the total US force, contracted and regular, was over 300 000. By sheer numbers, this is enough to concern that the US military establishment strongly believed in the idea that contractors were the future of the US military. This idea is so prevalent, that long-time proponents of peacekeeping mission Canada also adopted and heavily utilised PMCs for their mission in Kandahar, in contravention of its military's own ideas surrounding deployment of forces as well as Huntington's theories.

The main political impacts of PMCs are twofold. Firstly, they are politically easier to deploy than it is to deploy traditional soldiers on long missions. In both the Iraq and Afghan wars, it has been shown that the US public, and by extension Western publics, are sensitive to soldier deaths and losses. Soldiers themselves were often critical or unsure of the role that they were playing in that theatre of conflict. This sensitivity to conflict deaths of regular soldiers was such that the Pentagon felt the need to employ top-level generals in perception management, and embedded members of the media directly into American military units in order to paint a positive image of the invasion of Iraq. By utilising PMCs, civilian administrations eased the pain on society. Contractor casualties were treated very differently than regular military casualties: these no longer were images of "good men and women" dying for their country on a noble mission. Rather, contractors were soldiers who volunteered for a PMC to earn their fortune. This incredibly dehumanising description of the contractor is backed up by the perception that PMCs were rough and tumble cowboys, and a lawless

bunch.<sup>179</sup> This is where PMCs have had the greatest impact politically: they have taken the brunt of the focus off of the traditional military, and the fact that contractor deaths are not recorded or covered by the Freedom of Information Act speaks volumes as to how deep of an impact they have made - by appearing to act in the shadows and out of sight. By appearing to have had a light impact, they have had a heavy impact in that the military can act lightly and allow PMCs to erase most of the public pressure when it comes to operational casualties. Secondly, PMCs have politically impacted the international relations arena by being able to consistently skirt around existing legislation aimed at curtailing their use. Simultaneously, they have been able to operate almost freely and without repercussions for decades. There are very few cases of PMCs or contractors being held accountable for their actions. In all the research performed for this thesis, not once was there an account of a civilian administration protesting the usage of contractors and PMC in any arena of conflict. This is due to how heavily dependent the major players are in using PMCs. 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.

While the efficacy of the PMC is nuanced, this thesis takes the stance that PMCs are not an effective tool of conflict. While they may be effective for military and civilian administrations in supplementing their force capacity, this is a self-imposed issue. National militaries downsized as a reaction to a changing geopolitical reality and in part to comply with an ideological commitment by their civilian administration. If these changes had not been made, then there would not be such force capacity shortfalls and PMCs would not have had to be employed. It cannot be stated that the ideological commitment factor could be avoided; a military does not (and, according to Huntingtonian theory, should not) have a

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<sup>179</sup> Singer. "The Dark Truth about Blackwater."



voice in how the civilian administration runs the state until the issue of too much power over the military is brought to the fore. However, PMCs are ineffective precisely for the fact that they are having a negative effect on the military establishment. The core of the national soldier and officer, that they are soldiers bound to their service to the state and the society they hail from and performs their duties without thought for monetary gain, is being eroded by the proliferation and attractiveness of PMCs. A lack of accountability and chain of command, combined with much higher salaries than the average soldier can expect, naturally is demoralising for the regular soldier. If the soldier begins to see themselves as a worker instead of an upholder of the military profession, then the soldier will begin to question why they are fighting and potentially dying for a military that does not pay them enough. However, in Marxist thought, this is encouraged. But, through the Marxist critique, we can see that the soldier is a highly valued worker within society, and would agree that the Huntingtonian values of corporatism and respect for the craft need to be upheld. The PMC is still the negative aspect of this relationship: the PMC is a corporate entity that is seeking to profit off of conflict, and the state is paying such PMCs to carry out the essential work of the state. Simultaneously, the state is allowing PMCs to run amok and cause chaos in conflict zones; therefore, while the PMC is the bad actor for exploiting the state and exercising their power over innocents, the state military is also the bad actor in that it is allowing the PMCs to operate as they are and for not respecting the soldiers they employ enough in order to keep them satisfied.

Ultimately, the traditional military as a professional organisation is suffering due to the employ of PMCs. Their usage flouts international convention, they do not abide with Huntingtonian theories of the soldier as a profession, and they are a marketised option with only the thought of exploitation for wealth and are not accountable to traditional militaries.

While their usage as a short-term solution and in limited circumstances can possibly be justified, they have entrenched themselves into military thought. They are effective in carrying out their missions, but they are ineffective as a long-term solution to force capacity shortfalls. As such, they are detrimental to the soldier profession, and are ineffective to have on the battlefield.

## **9. Conclusion and Future Considerations**

This thesis aimed to discuss the impacts and problems posed by the usage of private military companies and their armed contractors by national militaries in augmenting their regular forces in conflict zones. While mercenaries and organised private military companies have existed for centuries, if not millennia, it is after the Second World War that PMCs began to expand in number. After the Cold War and the advent of regime collapse in Eastern Europe and a move to neoliberal economic models in the West, PMC usage by the West began to rapidly expand as Western militaries needed to draw upon the private sector to provide for force capacities that they no longer were able to supply natively. With the rise of PMC usage came many problems on the battlefield as well as speaking in the abstract of what it means to take up the vocation of the soldier and the officer.

This thesis drew heavily on the principles of Samuel Huntington, especially on his theories surrounding the professional nature of the soldier and the corporateness of the military establishment. As such, the soldier must be held (and must hold themselves) to high standards both within the military establishment as well as within society, in order to create an “order of military monks,” so to speak, that do not interfere with civilian political affairs and are able to operate in a professional manner that benefits the state and society they are trained and sworn to serve. The usage of PMCs greatly impacts this ideal, as PMCs and

contractors are private entities driven by profit and the bottom line, instead of the ideals of the military establishment they are contracted to. As such, they have negative impacts on the soldiers they work alongside as well as the missions and societies they operate in. Such negative impacts include reduced morale of regular soldiers, rash contractors operating out of control, and causing fear and paranoia among local populations that causes many to blame the entire military force, increasing the difficulty of completing the grand objective.

This thesis also took a critical Marxist perspective of analysing PMCs. PMCs are largely a product of neoliberal reforms in the West that led to the downsizing of militaries, and operate based on profit motives. These soldiers for hire create feelings of envy and class-consciousness among the regular soldiers due to their high salaries: normally this would be a positive, to spread class consciousness, however the individual regular soldier is fighting for a non-wealth motivation, and the PMC contractor also creates, through their rash actions and heavy-handedness, a power imbalance between the soldier and the civilian. Such power imbalances are what lead to inequality and further insurgency (particularly in Iraq), therefore the PMCs are only worsening the problem and also creating a brain drain of soldiers away from the professional military and into the ranks of the profiteering PMCs.

This thesis finally suggests that the usage of PMCs is ineffective in overall military strategy. They are ubiquitously deployed onto the battlefield, where it is either overlooked that they are operating illegally or legislated locally that PMCs may operate illegally. The PMCs and their rapid growth to fill the many shortfalls that modern militaries have in their force capacity has entrenched their usage in modern military convention. As well, legislation at all levels of governance has not been able to keep up with the rising usage of PMCs, and existing legislation at the international level is insufficient to properly govern their usage. As such, PMCs are ineffective when considering long-term military development that benefits

the state and also does not compromise either the Huntingtonian values or the Marxist views of power imbalances.

This thesis did have to work with a number of limitations. Firstly, many aspects of the usage of PMCs are largely hidden, as they are not covered by Freedom of Information Acts, and PMC casualties are not covered by the American government officially. Many statistics used do not conflict, however they are from secondary sources or from academic sources that were present for portions of a conflict writing about their experiences and estimations. As well, none of the companies or militaries contacted (Including DynCorp, Aegis Defence Services, the Canadian Forces, and the French Army) responded to enquiries surrounding their operations and capabilities. It would have been excellent to “hear straight from the horse’s mouth,” however this was not possible for this thesis.

Drawing upon the previous paragraph, follow-up research could be conducted with qualitative interviews with PMC employees and military establishments, in order to provide a primary overview of what they can provide in terms of security services and the military’s learned experiences alongside PMCs. While there was a great source used for determining perceptions by American soldiers in Iraq about PMCs, a potential inroad for future research would be a follow up to that study in more recent years, as well as a study on civilian attitudes in conflict zones where there is a heavy usage of PMCs. While this may be much more risky to the academic willing to carry out such research, it would certainly benefit the existing literature to be able to speak with hard data about how PMCs have impacted the lives of civilians on the same scale as the Kelty and Bierman survey.

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