

Forum: Disarmament & International Security

Issue: Managing the Impact of Private Military Contractors on Global Security

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PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

A warm welcome to GA1.

I am Joe, and it is a pleasure to be chairing for the first time, having been involved first in the QEMUN last year as a delegate for China in the security council. Due to my experience of being somewhat placed in the deep end for my first conference, I am fully aware that the processes can be sometimes confusing and intimidating, so feel free to email me beforehand with any questions you may have about the GA or the topic - and on the weekend itself my co-chair and I will be fully accommodating to mistakes, and help you learn from them. I hope to make this GA as welcoming and fun as possible to new delegates and as enriching as possible to more experienced delegates, and my aim for the end of the weekend is to have a group of committed and engaged delegates - having a great time.

This study guide will outline most of what you need to know about Private military contractors - and their previous effects on global security - it is crucial you know as much as you can about this topic before debating, so make sure you at least read the summary! This topic is one that you may not have much previous knowledge on, however this study guide will help you understand the whole picture and hopefully the role of your delegation and allied countries. Please do not use it for all of your research, instead use it as a jumping off point to do some more specific research for your delegation, as this could help you form a resolution, or amendment. Private Military contracts is a topic that covers modern and historical conflicts from many nations - and is something that is often overlooked in the media - so use this GA to educate yourself on the concept of the commercialisation of war - as for these PMCs it is a lucrative business. However, as it is a relatively new venture, we will be able to discuss contemporary issues such as conflicts in the Middle East, Europe and places like Sudan, Haiti and the DRC. As some of these issues are currently affecting people in the real world, and can be controversial I would urge delegates to be respectful and work together to create the best resolutions possible.

So from me and my Co-chair Eve,
Good luck and happy MUN-ing :)



TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Private Military Companies/Contractors have experienced a slight rise in media scrutiny recently, with PMCs like Wagner notoriously operating in the two most significant current global conflicts. However, Private military companies have grown significantly in recent years, outside of media scrutiny - providing services in low-intensity armed conflict and post-conflict nations such as Afghanistan, the Balkans, Colombia, the Congo, Iraq, Somalia, and Sudan. These conflicts are often overlooked by western media, and PMC action is similarly unmentioned, however their destabilising impact cannot be overlooked by this GA. Unregulated action has led to devastation in these areas, affecting thousands of civilian deaths and government destabilisation

Although a large majority of this study guide will focus on the wholly negative effects of PMCs on global security, it should be noted that the functions of this industry mainly are benign and it is only a small fraction of Private Military Contractors who go on to commit violations of human rights and destabilise national politics. Many nations rely on these industries for personal security, and benefit from these services. In the case of PMCs such as Executive Outcomes, their services have helped to prevent conflict, and paused the Angolan Civil war for years. This GA should explore the nuance of this industry, and each delegate should explore how their country has been affected or benefited from PMC action, and their likely inclination towards the industry. Delegates should also note the distinction between Private Security Companies and Private Military Contractors, a nuance which will be explored later in this study guide

However not only is their military operation in active conflicts destabilising to global security, similarly their unregulated presence on the global military market is extremely destabilising, with large countries such as the US and UK relying on them to wage war, and more significantly using the blurred lines between combat and combat support to avoid accountability. In conflicts such as Iraq as regular support workers and private contractors are frequently indistinguishable, nations are abusing this in order to circumvent international law. These three points of issue are key - their devastating impact on current conflict, the reliance of major states on PMCs, and states using them to avoid accountability. Delegates should explore not only short term solutions regulating PMCs but also the wider picture, considering the future of profit driven military action. Therefore, as a matter of urgency, delegates must establish ways to regulate the PMSC industry. PMSC involvement in all types of direct combat and combat support, in their widest sense, must be addressed by law as the industry's self-regulation is on the whole fuelled by profit and not ethics.

KEY TERMS

Private Military Contractors - Private individuals providing armed combat or security services for financial gain, however this official contracting by a company is used to allow individuals contracted to avoid the label of “Mercenary” disallowed by the Geneva Conventions, instead distinguishing themselves with the label “contractor”. These individuals and groups often work alongside other state affiliated military groups and can be employed by some states in order to obscure accountability for human rights violations, as will be explored later.

Private Military Companies - Companies who provide similar services to Government militaries, however they sell security and military services both internationally and domestically, and provide training and personal security to key governments, which has become a large part of the global military ecosystem, being heavily relied upon since the 1990s.

Private Security Contractors - Security contractors specifically specialise in security, as opposed to military services which this GA is focussing on. These services often overlap and the terminology is used interchangeably, especially as many military contractors use language around “security” to make their services seem more appealing, whereas in reality “security” specialists often engage with military and offensive action, as will be discussed later.

Geneva Conventions - Four treaties and three protocols, specifically dealing with the treatment of civilians and Prisoners of war. The significance of The Geneva Conventions in this study guide is that the use and recruitment of mercenaries are legally forbidden by the 1989 International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries.

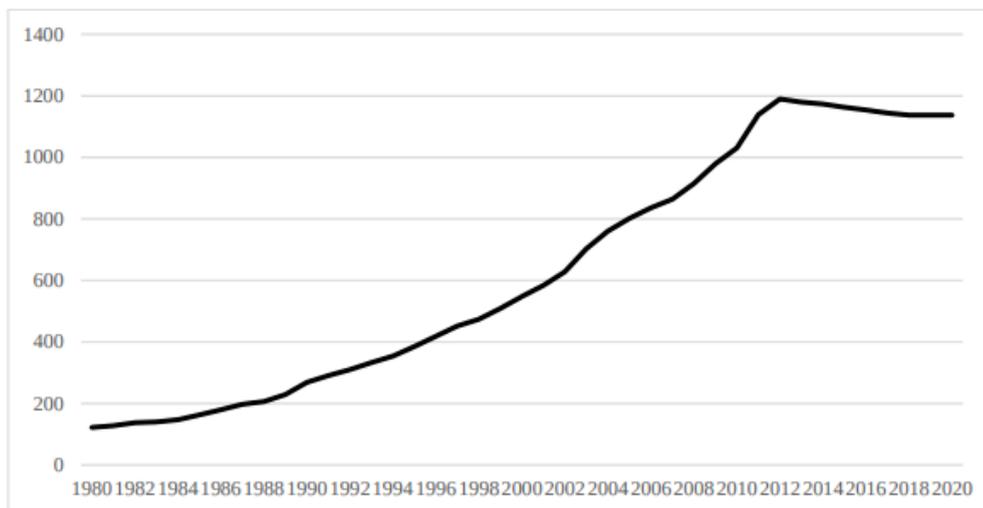
Global Security - This encompasses all of the action taken by international groups such as the EU and UN to secure peace and mutual survival and safety. This encompasses actions like Treaties, military actions and diplomatic treaties. Over time, and increased globalisation and military involvement, it has evolved to contain several types of interrelated world crises that are threatening survival. It includes everything from traditional or conventional military power to climate change and religion.

Mercenary - Outsiders to a conflict, not affiliated with any official military, working for any country or official who pays them. They have been outlawed by the UN, however the line between mercenaries and Private military contractors is blurred due to their similar nature, and so PMCs have been trying to distance themselves from this label to “contractors”, however this has not fully replaced the mercenary role in conflict.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Military Privatisation - Vantage Market Research estimates the global market of private military and security services are at \$258 bn in 2022 and predicted to rise to \$446 Bn by the year 2030. This is clearly a lucrative market, and one that has been growing in an increasingly unstable and globalised world. This is where the conflict between profit and ethics comes - as this business is so clearly profitable and unregulated, business models are not required to account for ethics, and so often avoid accountability. The Rise and fall of PMCs in this graph show a slight rise around 2001 - 2008 which can be attributed to the Iraq war, and beyond that the afghanistan war - conflicts of which peaked in 2013-14 signalling the end of UN and US involvement. The makeup of these PMCs are clearly dominated by the US and UK due to Iraq and Afghanistan however - "The current trend is led by four countries that account for about 70% of the PM[S]C market: United States, United Kingdom, China, and South Africa." - the rise of Chinese PMCs is exponential - with estimates that China operates more than 20 PMCs internationally and 7,000 internationally. This could be of concern, as information about the goal and intent of these PMCs is unknown, and often Chinese PMCs are extremely hard to find information about. This could make the issue of PMC and State accountability much worse, if international bodies are unaware of the dealing and workings of these contractors.

Figure 1: The Number of PMSCs Across the Globe, By Year



Ethics and Semantics - In high intensity, crowded and urban conflicts such as Iraq, defensive and offensive roles become inherently blurred, including distinctions between civilians and combatants. This clearly shows that security and defence provision necessarily includes violent engagement, and that PMCs that use the label "security" providers are not necessarily only providing defence.

Human Rights Violations - PMCs often operate with extremely limited state supervision and offer services such as interrogation and strategic intelligence, services that can and have been accused of leading to activities that break international law such as torture and violations of freedom of movement. PMCs who were involved in the torture and killing of civilians in Iraq were not sanctioned or brought before a court of justice for their actions. This is due to PMCs again holding a space in between public and private military actions, and domestic and external security, and the difficulty of sanctioning and conviction.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

Country	Groups and Impact
US (indirectly regulated by arms control)	Airscan, Academi, AISC, Custer Battles, JSC, KBR, MAG Aerospace, MPRI Inc, MVM inc, Northbridge, Northrop Grumman, Titan, Raetheon, Triple Canopy, Vinnell (some dissolved) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have been used in the US department of defence consultancy, CIA consultancy, Iraq and oil, Operating in the middle east and the americas, Consulting and Advisory services and training.
UK (unregulated)	G4s, IIL, Sandline, Rubicon, Aegis, Erinys (some dissolved) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Used in conflicts like Iraq, or for specialist contracts
Russia	E.N.O.T, Fasel, Patriot, Redut, Slavonic Corps, Wagner (Now not operating as a PMC)
Australia	Paladin, Unity Resources Group
South Africa	Executive Outcomes - Alongside a large Private security sector
France	GEOS
Germany	Asgaard
Poland	European security academy
Turkey	SADAT
Peru	Defion
Gibraltar	STTEP
Spain	UC Global
Israel	Lordan-Levdan

China	China Allegedly operates more than 20 PMCs internationally and 7,000 internationally, although access to information about these PMCs is limited
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Many of these groups, especially those involved in the UK, US and Russia have been accused of firing on civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Ukraine. Whilst these countries allow these PMCs to operate within their system, and use them in their own conflicts such as the US and UK in Iraq, and Russia, other countries hire PMCs in their conflicts, or are victims of PMCs

VICTIMS OF PMCs

- **Sudan**, the **DRC**, **Mozambique** are all victims of the Wagner group as well as other african nations,
- **Sudan** has been accused of trying to suppress minorities and political rivals using PMCs
- **Sierra Leone** has had a south african PMC “Executive Outcomes” committing atrocities in their country
- Several PMCs have had operations in **Iraq**, many of them have been accused of war crimes
- **Ukraine** has been under attack from the Russian Wagner group, before it converted to the Russian army
- Although not confirmed the Chinese PMC FSG has been rumoured to be currently involved with civilians in the **DRC**
- An American PMC “DynCorp” has been under a RICO charge due to its behaviour in **Bosnia**
- Many American PMCs operated in **Afghanistan** during the Afghanistan war making up a large amount of the armed forces there
- Israel has hired PMCs in their ongoing conflict in **Palestine**, and many groups operating in Gaza have posted online their activities in occupied territories
- A group of US mercenaries assassinated the **Haitian** head of state
- The UAE has paid for assassinations in **Yemen** and other neighbouring countries

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

Event	Date	Implication
ASIS (American Society for Industrial Security) Established	1955	This international corporation created the foundations for an international military industry

Geneva Convention Established	1949	The Geneva Convention created the basis for conventions like enshrining human rights and establishing war crimes, both being key knock on effects of PMC activity
First PMC set up -	1965	Ex SAS officer David Stirling and John Woodhouse established WatchGuard (now dissolved) - the first operating PMC, using skills and knowledge from WW1
UN Special Rapporteur on the use of mercenaries	1987	This Special Rapporteur was appointed and was able to gain information from governments and companies to “identify the characteristics and methods of mercenarism as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination.”
Geneva Convention criminalising Mercenaries was enacted	2001	This was a key event in PMC operation, creating a distinction between PMCs, PSCs and Mercenaries, and created a shift within the industry to commercialise and try to distance from the term “mercenary ”
UN establishment of a group Succeeding the Special Rapporteur	2005	This UN group is composed of five independent experts, of balanced geographical representation
UN Guidelines on the Use of Armed Security Services from Private Security Companies	2012	This Guideline outlined the distinction between PMCs and Mercenaries in much higher detail than before, this was at the peak of PMC activity.
European Parliament resolution on PMCs	2021	This resolution underlines current threats of PMCs and highlights the operation of the Wagner group in Ukraine
Wagner Group disbanded	2024	After the helicopter crash of key Wagner Group members, the members allegedly ceased private operations and transferred to the russian state military

CURRENT THREATS

The current threats of Private security are an unregulated and unsanctionable group of contractors, eluding accountability, and allowing states to do the same. Current conflicts such as the onslaught of Palestinian and Israeli civilians, the invasion of Ukraine, alongside other conflicts, such as Myanmar, Maghreb and Sudan, and other unstable post war states such as Afghanistan, Colombia, Somalia, Syria, Yemen and Haiti. These conflicts are at a critical moment and PMCs risk the loss of state accountability and risk further loss of life.

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