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JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE

JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL

Utilization of Private Military Companies in the Contemporary International Security Environment

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Utilization of Private Military Companies in the Contemporary International Security Environment

by Oleksii Tsariuk

Colonel, Ukrainian Armed Forces

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes (or appropriate statement per the Academic Integrity Policy).

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Abstract

States utilize Private Military Companies (PMCs) as a convenient augmentation of their foreign policy toolbox to achieve specific effects on the International Security Environment (ISE). The differences in application of PMCs depends on the state's political system, rules of law, and the state's leader's perspectives. In the last forty years, PMCs are attributed in almost every military conflict. In some cases, states made a deliberate choice to utilize PMCs. In others, states developed a dependency on the private military and can no longer pursue foreign endeavors without PMCs. After the end of the Cold War, the expectation of peace caused total sequestration of armed forces worldwide, creating a situation where there were more security challenges than uniformed soldiers to respond. States unwilling to mobilize the national armed forces turned to PMCs as a solution. PMCs provide a low-cost, low-risk, and flexible option to expand the state's influence in the ISE while enabling plausible deniability in politically risky affairs and avoiding democratic processes. The United States and Russia are examined to compare and contrast utilization of PMCs in the contemporary ISE.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the fallen Ukrainian soldiers and officers, who sacrificed everything to protect our beloved motherland. Glory to Ukraine, Glory to Heroes!

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction 1

Thesis 5

Chapter 2: The Old Tool with the New Name 8

Dominance 9

Decline 12

Resurgence 14

Chapter 3: The Evolving Role of Private Military Companies in the International Security Environment 16

Predisposition of States to Use PMCs 17

Chapter 4: Case Studies (History, Personnel & Training Policy, Doctrine, Nature, Examples in conflicts) 23

Russian Federation 23

United States of America 31

Chapter 5: Considerations for the Contemporary Use of Private Military Companies 42

PMCs are Tools for the Foreign Policy to Pursue State's Interest by Other Means 42

PMCs Provide Strategic Effects on the ISE 43

States Differ in Their Utilization and Promotion of PMCs 45

Chapter 6: Conclusion 47

Bibliography 50

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the current international security environment, nation-states find it harder and harder to deploy national militaries abroad to pursue their political and strategic aims. In *Corporate Warriors*, P.W. Singer identifies three main reasons major industrial powers hesitate to employ national military might: 1) most of the potential military conflicts don't have a direct relation to the state's survival; 2) states' armed forces are created for large-scale state-on-state conventional conflict and seem inappropriate for limited engagements; and, 3) a casualty-averse mentality about conflicts that do not threaten the nation itself.[1] Thereby, Private Military Companies (PMCs) become a convenient option that allows governments to pursue policies by other means.

The term "Private Military Company" is a relatively new name for one of the oldest professions. History knows private warriors under many names - mercenaries, condottieri, privateers, and contractors. As Sean McFate suggested "most of military history is privatized, and mercenaries are as old as war itself."[2] From the time of Hannibal to the end of the French Revolution, anyone who could afford to hire an army could wage war for self-interest. Even the Papacy used mercenaries to eliminate threats to the church. However, the horrific destructiveness of the Thirty Years War solidified agreement by all sides that the use of armed violence would be legitimized and governed. The private market was, thus, monopolized by the new entities that emerged from the Peace at Westphalia – states.[3]

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[1] P. W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 58.

[2] Sean McFate, *Mercenaries and War: Understanding Private Armies Today* (National Defense University, 2019), 10.

[3] McFate, *Mercenaries and War*, 13.

For the next two hundred years, private military forces became an integral part of the international order. However, the clients were predominantly states. Following the French Revolution, changes occurred in state relations and hired warriors were no longer accepted amongst the ranks of the national armies. From the middle of the nineteenth century until the end of the Cold War, states wholly removed private military forces from their utility of force calculus.[4] Yet, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the use of private military forces re-emerged, evolved, and increased, introducing a new era of PMC's in the International Security Environment (ISE).

The United States and the United Kingdom are considered the countries where modern PMCs originated. The first modern PMC is considered the British company Watch Guard International founded in 1965. In the late 1980s, U.S. companies Vinnell and Military Professional Resources, Inc. followed the developing trend. Nowadays, many others are imitating the Western model and, in some cases, revolutionizing the employment of PMCs. Countries like Russia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Colombia produce PMCs that provide robust military capabilities for the highest bidder – typically with little regard to human rights, international law, or ethical behaviors.[5]

During the 1989 International Convention on Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries, the forty-year-old definition of mercenary was reintroduced.[6]

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[4] Christopher Kinsey, *Corporate Soldiers and International Security: The Rise of Private Military Companies* (London: Routledge, 2007), 34.

[5] McFate, *Mercenaries and War*, 23.

[6] "OHCHR | International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries," accessed May 26, 2021, https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/Mercenaries.aspx.

A mercenary is any person who: (a) is specially recruited locally or abroad in order to fight in an armed conflict; (b) is motivated to take part in the hostilities essentially by desire for private gain; (c) is neither a national of a party to the conflict nor a resident of territory controlled by a party to the conflict; (d) is not a member of the armed forces of a party to the conflict on official duty as a member of its armed forces.

However, the old definition is obsolete to apply to the modern style PMCs, because private military activities are not currently regulated by the international legal norms.[7] Currently, PMCs largely operate in the environment of failing states where host governmental systems are non-existent and laws cannot be enacted nor enforced for illegitimate PMC activity.[8] Furthermore, prosecution of hired PMCs proves difficult for client states due to geographical limitations of national legal systems.

In *The End of the Global?*, Aanchal Mann notes that " the state has played a vital role in this [the legitimization of PMC practices] in order, to gain advantages in geopolitical strategy and foreign policy."[9] This inclination of the modern state to use PMCs is influenced by a four key factors: low-cost, low-risk, flexibility, and plausible deniability. PMCs are low-cost due to the fact that states do not have to provide funding to train, retain, and maintain them. Additionally, funding is not required to be allocated in state budgets for pensions and medical care. A School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) monograph on the future of privatized warfare concluded that "for most of history, states have been impelled to use mercenaries due to constraints on their ability to extract the necessary money, manpower, and materiel for a citizen-military."[10]

Singer argues that the use of private companies allows governments to carry out actions that would not otherwise be possible, those that would not gain public or

[7] J. L. G. del Prado, "Private Military and Security Companies and the UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries," *Journal of Conflict and Security Law* 13, no. 3 (December 1, 2008), 429–50, https://doi.org/10.1093/jcsl/krp010, 440.

[8] Molly Dunigan, *Victory for Hire: Private Security Companies' Impact on Military Effectiveness.* (Stanford Security Studies, 2011), 72.

[9] Aanchal Mann, "Hired Guns" in *The End of the Global?* (Ijopec Publication, 2018), 197.

[10] Eric Peterson, "Future of Privatized Warfare" (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, School of Advanced Military Studies, United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2016), 66.

legislative approval.[11] The low-risk factor explains that use of PMCs permits states to avert public outcry, social movements, or even international judgment. Also, the use of PMCs sanctions states to avoid democratic challenges associated with employment of the national armed forces and empowers the executive branch of government without legislative (or judicial) oversight.

Some states are unable to resource a variety of military services, and because PMCs provide flexibility across the spectrum of joint functions, niche components can be acquired in the free market. Nowadays, private enterprises offer services in all warfighting domains: land, air, sea, cyber, and space. Additionally, PMCs can provide a wide array of advising and consulting services, ranging from tactical to strategic. For example, in 1995, the United States government hired Military Professional Resources, Incorporated (MPRI) to train the Bosnian military, which actually achieved two strategic purposes - to repel the Serbs and to thwart Iranian influence in Europe.[12]

Plausible deniability is the foremost feature for autocratic regimes to employ PMCs. This permits oppression of their own citizens, extraction of lucrative resources, and suppression of popular uprisings with no responsibility link to the regime. As McFate contends, "when a job is too politically risky, contractors are sometimes used because they can be disavowed if the mission fails."[13] Many countries are turning to PMCs to avoid accountability: Russia used PMCs in Ukraine and Syria; Nigeria employed PMCs to curtail Boko Haram; and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) practices privatized warfare

[11] P. W. Singer, "Outsourcing War," *Foreign Affairs*, January 28, 2009, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2005-03-01/outsourcing-war.

[12] Marcus Mohlin, "Commercialisation of Warfare and Shadow Wars: Private Military Companies as Strategic Tools," *St Antony's International Review* 9, no. 2 (2014), 24.

[13] McFate, *Mercenaries and War*, 25.

in Yemen. The failed state of Libya is one of the more recent cases of private military warfare, where countries like Turkey, Russia, and UAE fight for influence in the region by using hired guns and promoting instability while disregarding UN resolutions.[14]

Two diametrical case-studies will promote this research. Reader will first be introduced with the history, roots, and examples of the ways the United States and Russian Federation use PMCs. The thesis will then be further analyzed through three distinct statements using the case studies for comparison.

This analysis is determined to investigate ways states utilize PMCs. This paper considers the definition of PMC as: business organizations that provide professional military services that directly link to warfare in return for the monetary reward.[15] Professional military services include combat operations, strategic planning, intelligence, risk assessment, operational support, training, and technical skills.[16] Private military companies, military contracting companies and firms, private military security companies, organized mercenaries, contracted warriors, and other entities that provide the above listed services will be referred to as PMCs in this paper.

Thesis

In the last fifty years, the phenomenon of private military force has reinvented itself and grown into a multi-billion industry. PMCs operate in virtually all contemporary conflicts. Some suggest that private military force gained so much influence in the ISE

[14] Trew Bel and Bourhan Rajaai, "Inside the Murky World of Libya's Mercenaries," Independent, June 16, 2020, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/libya-war-haftar-gna-syria-russia-wagner-uae-tripoli-a9566736.html.

[15] Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 8.

[16] Ibid.

that they should be considered as "secondary international actors."[17] In parallel, nation-states find it harder and harder to deploy national armed forces abroad to project their national interests. P.W. Singer argues that three main factors have influenced this pattern: 1) contemporary conflicts are not about state survival; 2) nation-states' armed forces are inappropriate for limited conflicts; and, 3) a casualty-averse mentality pervades modern state logic.[18] Other studies, show that states use their monopoly of violence to grant legitimacy onto a private military force in order to use them as a "weapon system tool," to evade democratic channels, and to facilitate the use of force.[19]

States utilize PMCs as a convenient augmentation of their foreign policy toolbox to achieve specific effects on the ISE. The difference in application of PMCs depends on the state's political system, rules of law, and state's leader's perspectives.

Through the analysis of case studies, this paper will demonstrate: 1) that PMCs are tools for foreign policy and can assist in the pursuit of national interests by other means; 2) that PMCs have strategic and operational effects, roles and impacts; and 3) that states differ in the way they utilize and promote PMCs.

Scholars debate the phenomenon of private military and security companies and their possible impact on the future of war and warfare, but most consider legality, nature, the roots of the phenomena, and to a lesser degree the analyses of how states are using the PMCs to pursue their interests. This paper also aims to understand the options and scope that PMCs present for nation-states, and to identify differences in application and contributing factors. The United States and Russia will be analyzed and compared to

[17] Anna Leander, "The Power to Construct International Security: On the Significance of Private Military Companies," 2005, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0305829805033003060 1.
[18] Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 58.
[19] Mann, 196

demonstrate different applications of PMCs in their pursuit of foreign policy objectives in the ISE.

Chapter 2: The Old Tool with the New Name

Historically, national armed forces consisting of citizen-soldiers is the exception rather than the rule. "Most of the military history is privatized, and mercenaries as old as war itself."[1] States' monopoly on violence is roughly 200 years old, but the phenomena of private warriors that fight for profit dates as far back as King Shulgi of Ur's army in Mesopotamia (2094-2047 BC).[2] Depending on the point in history, these private warriors operated as individual foreign fighters - mercenaries or highly organized groups, much like as the Xenophon's "Ten Thousand," a group of Greek soldiers, fought in the Persian civil war (401-400 BC).[3] But what unites them all is the idea of gaining profit for actual combat. The term "Private Military Company" is a relatively new name for one of the oldest professions, yet history knows private warriors under many names: mercenaries, condottieri, privateers, and contractors.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a historical overview of the different entities that provided warfighting capabilities for monetary reward. Three historical phases of privatized warfare categorize the historical overview: dominance, decline, and resurgence.[4] The dominance phase covers the period from the Feudal Era to the end of the French Revolution. After the French Revolution, the phenomena of mercenary forces fighting for monetary reward was marginalized by the new ideas of national citizen-based militaries and state's full control on organized violence, signifying the decline phase

[1] Sean McFate, *Mercenaries and War: Understanding Private Armies Today* (National Defense University, 2019), 10.

[2] Sean McFate, *The Modern Mercenary: Private Armies and What They Mean for World Order.* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 27.

[3] P. W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Cornell University Press, 2003), 21.

[4] Eric Peterson, "The Future of Privatized Warfare" (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, School of Advanced Military Studies United States Army Command and General Staff College, 2016), 6.

which lasted until the end of the Cold War. From the fall of the Soviets until present, the resurgence phase is where private military forces evolve into powerful actors in the ISE.[5]

Dominance

Hired warriors were common long before the Feudal Era, but this period symbolized the evolution of the phenomena of the mercenary and its relation to the ruling elites.[6] After the fall of the Roman Empire, Europe dove into the Dark Ages – a time with little to no governance. Feudal Era armies were built by the layered obligation of military service.[7] In Feudal society, a feudal lord offered his warriors (knights) a piece of land in return for military service. However, knights refused to fight for long periods of time and in distant endeavors, and as the scale and the duration of wars increased, the elites could not garner forces for successful campaigning.[8] During the Norman conquest of England in the eleventh century, William the Conqueror had insufficient nobles and knights to accomplish his intent, but he had resources, so half of his army were hired swords.[9]

The quest for political and economic advantages spawned mercenarism. By employing mercenaries, feudal rulers could quickly assemble a capable military power then disband it without the necessity to fund standing armies.[10] The economic benefits were multiplied, because the citizens proceeded with their business, and tax collection on which rulers relied to wage wars continued unimpeded. King Frederick William I argued

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[5] Anna Leander, *The Power to Construct International Security: On the Significance of Private Military Companies* (Millennium 33, no. 3 June 2005), 804.

[6] Peterson, "The Future of Privatized Warfare", 6.

[7] Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 22

[8] Sarah Percy, "The Changing Character of Private Force," in *The Changing Character of War*, ed. Hew Strachan and Sibylle Scheipers (Oxford University Press, 2011), 267.

[9] McFate, *Mercenaries and War*, 11.

[10] John A. Lynn, "The Evolution of Army Style in the Modern West, 800-2000," *The International History Review* 18, no. 3 (1996): 518.

that using his citizens for war would reduce tax returns and collapse his economy.[11] Leaders understood the motivational benefit of citizen armies, but economics reigned.[12]

Individual mercenaries began to transition themselves into private military organizations for two primary reasons. First, warfare was rapidly changing, demanding more skillful and disciplined infantry, cavalry, and archers. Hence, individual mercenaries organized into bands of warriors with specific capabilities, such as crossbow or pike.[13] Secondly, around 1400, as the scale of war increased, rulers relied on mercenary companies for efficiency – allowing the privatized groups to maintain responsibility for administration and organization.[14] Private military forces continued to grow in the ensuing centuries, and fully industrialized by the seventeenth century.

During the seventeenth century, major battles usually involved upwards of 50,000 combatants consisting primarily of private military forces.[15] Count Wallenstein became the richest man in Europe during the Thirty Years War by outfitting entire regiments and renting them for those in need of martial services.[16] These rental armies allowed rulers to wage war on an industrial level while avoiding prolonged administrative costs of regular armies, such as wounded warriors or military pensions.[17] The advent of privatized warfare "also lowered the barrier to entry the war while encouraging ever larger battles. Mercenaries never had it so good, or civilians so bad."[18]

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[11] Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (London: Routledge, 1983), https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=nlebk&AN=136654&site=ehost-live&scope=site&custid=s1123049, 9.

[12] Peterson, "The Future of Privatized Warfare", 17.

[13] Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 22.

[14] Peterson, "The Future of Privatized Warfare", 7.

[15] McFate, *Mercenaries and War*, 12.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 13.

[18] McFate, *Mercenaries and War*, 13.

The horror and devastation of the Thirty Years War forced rulers to reconsider the use of the mercenary enterprise. Namely, after the Peace of Westphalia, nation-states were recognized as the only international actors and it was decided that these new states maintained a monopoly on organized violence.[19] The phenomena of mercenaries did not cease to exist, but merely obtained a more national flavor. For instance, some German states like Prussia, Hesse and Saxony perceived their military establishments as a main source of economic recovery after the Thirty Years War.[20] Other states like France and Spanish Netherlands absorbed their private military entities into standing armies.[21]

During the same period, many states changed the mission of the private military force and guided them towards exploration and colonization. For instance, the Virginia Company of London was contracted by the British Crown to oversee security operations in the New World. Similarly, when the American colonies declared independence, the British Crown hired almost 30,000 troops from German principalities, like Hesse-Kassel, to augment the British Army in their attempt to suppress the revolt.[22] These differing tendencies demonstrated the growing monopolization of organized violence by nation-states. From the sixteenth century onward, the popularity of standing public armies rose, and the private force started to lose its importance and value.[23]

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[19] Bruce E. Stanley, *Outsourcing Security: Private Military Contractors and U.S. Foreign Policy.* (Potomac Books, an imprint of the University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 5.

[20] Joseph M Tribble, "The Mercenary Tradition and Conflict Privatization: A Revolutionary Shift in the Cyclical Nature of Mercenary Use," n.d., 22.

[21] McFate, *The Modern Mercenary: Private Armies and What They Mean for World Order, 32.*

[22] Singer, *Corporate Warriors*.

[23] McFate, *Mercenaries and War*, 32.

Decline

The French Revolution signified the decline of mercenarism because it finalized the state's control over violence implemented through nationalism aroused from patriotism.[24] The concept of patriotism was unconnected to military service in the seventeenth century.[25] After Napoleon's patriotic forces defeated hired Prussian and Austrian professionals, states realized that the old military system was defunct. The social contract reinforced by ideas of nationalism and patriotism united citizens and soldiers – the citizen army became the dominant military instrument and conscription was introduced to mobilize populations.[26] Inspired by revolutionary forces, European states copied the French system and altogether marginalized nonstate actors in warfare. [27]

At the same time, technological breakthroughs in firearms allowed for a substantial reduction in the time required for professional military training, furthering conscription of the national armies from the population masses.[28] Dr. Latzko follows that the advent of the rifled musket reduced conscript training time, but was effective only in mass infantry formations – so then armies grew so big that no mercenary companies could compete with or substitute them.[29] However, more skillful military professions, such as artillery or engineering, remained on the market because of the expertise and precision required as well as an unwillingness to share the intricacies of the professions.

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[24] Peterson, "The Future of Privatized Warfare", 10.
[25] McFate, *Mercenaries and War*, 12.
[26] Peterson, "The Future of Privatized Warfare", 10.
[27] Amy Eckert, *Outsourcing War: The Just War Tradition in the Age of Military Privatization.* (Cornell University Press, 2016), 65.
[28] Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 30.
[29] David A. Latzko, "Market for Mercenaries," Wilkes University, 1998.**Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**

Improvements in the administration of governments completely erased mercenaries from warfare. Larger armies required a centralized state apparatus and improved taxation system.[30] Usually, when campaigning season was over, mercenaries racketeered populations, mostly peasants, to survive. This severely undermined the state's ability to collect taxes and challenged the state's authority. As a result, a new normative system was created that outlawed mercenaries and sought prosecution.[31]

State survival depended on how quickly it could adopt new rules introduced by Napoleon and his levée en masse. Citizen armies became a new norm.[32] "The French Revolution's major changes – democracy (popular sovereignty), the state's achieving a monopoly on the use of violence, nationalism, social contract, universal conscription, and anti-mercenary norm – serve as the foundation for understanding the changes in the evolution of mercenarism."[33] The exceptions were states that rented out their military forces for profit, but not for the cause – such as the Hessians that were hired by the British Crown to fight the American rebellion.[34] In 1854, during the Crimean War, Great Britain outsourced 16,500 fighters that never fought because the war ended. This was the last documented case a state using hired foreign fighters in pursuit of national interest.[35]

During the twentieth century, nation-states were the primary international actors. All political disputes were solved either diplomatically or by waging war with national armies. For nearly 150 years, citizen armies dominated warfare, but changes in the Strategic Environment signified a new phase in the use of mercenaries – resurgence.

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[30] Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 30.
[31] Eckert, *Outsourcing War*, 65.
[32] Ibid., 31.
[33] Peterson, "The Future of Privatized Warfare", 10.
[34] McFate, *The Modern Mercenary*, 34.
[35] Ibid., 35.

Resurgence

The end of Cold War, globalization, and the rise of neoliberalism prompted nation-states to reconsider their approach to international relations and conflict, which thereby created conditions for the reintroduction of mercenaries in the ISE.[36] The two world wars had such a devastating effect in terms of human losses that nation-states started to reconsider the employment of private military actors to secure the population from the effects of wars.[37] PMC activities spiked after the end of the Cold War when the ISE collapsed.[38] Herfried Münkler, a scholar on new war theory, reinforced this notion by saying that the peaceful post-Cold War environment became just "a great illusion."[39] The collapse of the ISE created a security gap where PMCs were quick to fill the demand for military services, especially in failing states from the Balkans, Middle East, and Africa.

At the same time, Western nation-states saw an absence of a clear direct threat and no strategic competition. Accordingly, defense budgets were significantly reduced, which created opportunities for the PMC phenomenon.[40] The defense budget cuts caused massive military demobilization. Demobilization decreased the opportunities for career advancement, which consequently provided a labor pool for the PMCs industry. The influx of professional officers and soldiers significantly increased the expertise and quality of services for existing and newly found PMCs.[41] During this period, PMCs increased in size and number and their spectrum of the services broadened, while the price to employ them became increasingly affordable.

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[36] Peterson, "The Future of Privatized Warfare", 39.

[37] Joseph M Tribble, "The Mercenary Tradition and Conflict Privatization: A Revolutionary Shift in the Cyclical Nature of Mercenary Use," *Missouri State University*, Summer 2018, 26.

[38] Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 49.

[39] Herfried Münkler, *The New Wars*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Oxford: Polity, 2005), 22.

[40] Joseph M Tribble, "The Mercenary Tradition", 28.

[41] David Shearer, *Private Armies and Military Intervention*, Adelphi Paper 316 (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998).

The 1990s were replete with cases of entire units of elite soldiers that were decommissioned. The Soviet Alpha unit and the South African 32 Reconnaissance Battalion, when officially disbanded, kept the same structure and formed into PMCs.[42] Sometimes, whole functional areas were cut; the U.S. Army Materiel Command was cut by sixty percent.[43] In subsequent years unexpected interventions demanded these non-existence capabilities. Nation-states ended up paying billions of dollars for private military services that were historically resident in their armed forces.

Historian Alan Axelrod offers that PMCs grew in prominence not simply due to the end of Cold War and the resultant emergence of failing states.[44] Asymmetric threats, terrorism, and non-state actors created additional opportunities for PMCs. Fighting Al-Qaeda, rebels, proxies, drug cartels and other transnational criminal organizations required additional policing and military responses, and PMCs were able to satisfy both.[45] Some PMCs trained and worked for rebels and cartels, while other PMCs consulted, trained, and worked for governments.

The collapse of the ISE, rising asymmetric threats, demobilization, and the decommissioning of entire functional areas of national militaries created security gaps that facilitated promotion of PMCs. Most scholars suggest that nation-states benefitted from the lack of oversight and control of the growing PMC phenomena, thereby, did not support the development of such legal system that would regulate it. High demand on private military services made PMCs acceptable in the ISE as a developing norm.[46]

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[42] Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 53.
[43] Ibid., 53.
[44] Alan Axelrod, *Mercenaries: A Guide to Private Armies and Private Military Companies* (Thousand Oaks, California: CQ Press, 2014), 192.
[45] Alan Axelrod, *Mercenaries: A Guide to Private Armies and Private Military Companies*, 193.
[46] Ibid.

Chapter 3: The Evolving Role of Private Military Companies in the International Security Environment

This chapter attempts to answer the question of *why* PMCs have become such a convenient augmentation for the state's foreign and domestic policies and *why* the phenomena of PMCs is self-promoting. In the contemporary ISE nation-states experience difficulties with employment of the national armies to pursue national interests and foreign policy. Countries rely on PMCs to augment their capabilities to influence the ISE to implement their designed strategies. Some states lack certain capabilities and outsource out of necessity; others look for more cost-efficient solutions and outsource out of choice.[1] Latin American states recruit PMCs to fight drug cartels, Southeast Asian states use PMCs to enhance counter-terrorism capability, failed states seek private military assistance for stability operations to rebuild internal order, and multinational and non-government organizations employ PMCs in support of peacekeeping and humanitarian operations.[2] These variety of instances where states incorporate the phenomena of PMCs in their security calculus portends rapid growth in size and significance of the role of PMCs in the contemporary ISE.[3]

Michael Howard argues that "War, in short, has once more been denationalized. It has become, as it was in the eighteenth century, an affair of states and no longer of peoples."[4] Elaborating on this concept, Peterson suggests that a growing civil-military divide, an increasing state-society gap, a weakening of the anti-mercenary norm, and

[1] Eckert, *Outsourcing War*, 61.

[2] Erika Morris, "Private Warfare: History of the Increasing Dependency on Private Military Corporations and Implications," *Utah State University* Honors Program (2009).

[3] Ibid., 61.

[4] Michael Howard, "War and the Nation-State," *The MIT Press on Behalf of American Academy of Arts & Sciences Stable* 108, no. 4 (1979): 101–10, 106.

deterioration of national identity all combine to produce a situation very similar to the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries when mercenaries dominated the security environment.[5] Again, nation-states began to use non-state actors to project power which in turn proves the cyclical nature of the mercenary phenomenon.[6]

Three main factors drive states' current reliance on PMCs: 1) contemporary conflicts are not about state survival; 2) nation-states' armed forces are inappropriate for limited conflicts; and, 3) most nation-states have a casualty-averse mentality.[7] Others argue that states deliberately grant legitimacy to private military force in order to use them as a 'weapon system tool,' to evade democratic channels, and to utilize force more expediently.[8] In *The Modern Mercenary*, McFate suggests that modern PMCs offer the same military advantages they did two hundred years ago. They are on demand military forces, cheaper than public armies, can be safer than public armies, and provide specialized military skills and services.[9] McFate subsequently added the covert nature of PMCs and plausible deniability to the list of attributes.[10]

Predisposition of States to Use PMCs

In *The Utility of Force*, General Rupert Smith argues that inter-state industrial war no longer exists, replaced by a new type of war – war amongst people, where there are no clear battlefields and armies.[11] Mary Kaldor offers her interpretation of modern armed violent conflicts, where 'new wars' are conflicts that blur the distinction between war,

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[5] Peterson, "The Future of Privatized Warfare."
[6] Eckert, *Outsourcing War*, 62.
[7] P. W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry*, updated, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Cornell University Press, 2008), 56.
[8] Mann, 2018, 196
[9] McFate, *The Modern Mercenary*, 46-48.
[10] McFate, *Mercenaries and War*, 24-25.
[11] Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*, 1st Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 3-5.

organized crime and large-scale violations of human rights.[12] Wars amongst people and new wars also have other names that support war's ambiguous nature, such as hybrid war, asymmetric war, and grey zone conflict. The conventional national military forces are usually not fit for these types of wars and conflicts. Thereby, political leaders are unable to provide their military leaders with clear objectives and aims, which leads to prolonged conflict, and incurs extra expenses and more casualties. Casualties and expenses lead to the public outcry and demands for extraction. This in turn, usually compels the particular government to withdraw some of the troops, which is more politically acceptable. In these situations, nation-states turn their attention towards other means available to support national interests. PMCs are a luring option due to cost, risk, flexibility, and plausible deniability.

Because nation-states prefer to invest in the welfare of the state rather than security, they are monetarily challenged to meet the new security demands.[13] However, the amount of threats in the ISE is growing despite reductions in defense budgets and the number of uniformed soldiers.[14] As a result, states seek alternative options to address security demands and augment military capabilities. Renting is cheaper than owning in the short-term, and employment of PMCs presents significant fiscal advantages for states.

First, the PMC option allows states to reallocate precious funding required to retain and maintain standing military units. According to the U.S. Congressional Budget Office, the cost to maintain an infantry unit in Iraq was approximately $110 million while

[12] Mary Kaldor, *New & Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*, Third edition (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), 2.

[13] Peterson, "The Future of Privatized Warfare", 49.

[14] Bruce E. Stanley, *Outsourcing Security: Private Military Contractors and U.S. Foreign Policy.* (Potomac Books, an imprint of the University of Nebraska Press, 2015),15.

a PMC for the same time and task costs a comparative $99 million. However, when the mission is complete and the U.S. infantry unit returns home, it still costs $60 million to sustain it while the cost of the PMC is zero.[15] Secondly, outsourcing to PMCs allows regular military units to concentrate on warfare and avoid diluting expertise due to myriad of mission sets.[16] For instance, KBR, a U.S. PMC, was contracted to assume a predominance of U.S. logistic and security operations in Iraq, which allowed more military units to focus on combat actions and related tasks. Lastly, hiring PMCs alleviates virtually all governmental costs associated with casualties and veterans' affairs. Veteran treatment is a significant cost, especially considering the difficulty of estimating future requirements during preparation for war. These three factors prove the economic advantages of employing PMCs over regular troops. However, cost in not the only benefit derived from the use of PMCs.

War and conflict pose inherent political risk, especially if the nation itself is not threatened. With the increasing complexity in the ISE, states may either reconsider their foreign ambitions or seek more efficient options to security challenges. PMCs allow states to keep the same level of involvement in geopolitics while decreasing risk associated with introducing armed forces. In the aftermath of WWII, Korea, and Vietnam, states, especially western states, developed an intolerance to casualties in missions abroad.[17] However, PMCs are not considered in official casualty reports

[15] McFate, *The Modern Mercenary*, 46-47.

[16] Deborah C. Kidwell, *Public War, Private Fight? The United States and Private Military Companies*, Third printing edition (S.l.: lulu.com, 2011), 28.

[17] Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 58.

because their employees do not count as 'boots on the ground'.[18] Mann suggests that PMCs help to avoid such democratic challenges.[19]

In democratic governments, the legislative branch represents the people and exercises authority over the employment of the armed forces. Utilizing PMCs gives the executive branch more autonomy in the decision to go to war or proceed with warring practices and reduces the influence of the legislative branch.[20] Because PMCs attract less media attention and oversight than employment of armed forces, public dissent can be mitigated.[21] Perry argues that a mixed force of contractors and regular military personnel does not require a high level of social support.[22] In essence, PMCs are a low risk option for the state because they avoid official casualties, are not categorized as 'boots on the ground,' empower the executive branch, and minimize public dissent.

Despite the fact that today, most states prefer to spend their resources on improvement of social welfare, PMCs create an ability to purchase required capability on demand. Private military and security enterprises offer a range of services in all warfighting domains – land, air, sea, cyber, and space, and PMCs provide flexibility across the spectrum of joint functions: intelligence, information, command and control, fires, movement and maneuver, protection, and sustainment.[23] Private companies also now provide a host of advising and consulting services. With PMCs, states pay for the

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[18] McFate, *Mercenaries and War*, 24.

[19] Aanchal Mann, "Hired Guns," 196.

[20] Elke Krahmann, *States, Citizens and the Privatisation of Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 239.

[21] David Perry, "Purchasing Power: Is Defense Privatization a New Form of Military Mobilization?" Phd Candidate (Department of Political Science, Carleton University, 2011), https://www.cpsa-acsp.ca/papers-2011/Perry.pdf, 17.

[22] David Perry, "Purchasing Power", 17.

[23] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations," (Washington DC, January 17, 2017), xiii.

services they require and when they require them, saving money on research and development of military capabilities.

Modern warfare is technology driven; there is no need for large standing armies to annihilate the enemy of the state.[24] As result, states seek technological advantages, and non-state groups can be superior in the technology arena due to market competition.[25] Orientation on the global market and access to superior technologies allows PMCs to provide high-tech services that are lacking or nonexistent in modern militaries.

During long campaigns, outsourcing to the private sector also facilitates flexibility in mobilization and recruitment measures for states' militaries. PMCs decrease associated risks and can be an alternative source of manpower that can assist with mobilization and mitigate the recruitment gap.[26] In summary, PMCs are a flexible option for the states because they offer capabilities and services across all joint functions and all domains, they possess, or can more quickly acquire, superior technologies, and reduce political risks associated with deploying troops abroad.

Plausible deniability is the ability to disavow participation in illegal or unethical events due to absence of clear evidence.[27] As Mohlin argues, "it stands clear that the use of PMCs by states in world politics gives world leaders a possibility to seem disconnected from specific region when they, in fact, are deeply involved."[28] Plausible deniability is one of the main reasons why the PMC phenomenon is growing. Deployed

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[24] John A. Lynn, "The Evolution of Army Style in the Modern West, 800-2000," *The International History Review* 18, no. 3 (1996): 505–45, 537.

[25] Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 63.

[26] David Perry, "Purchasing Power", 15.

[27] Political Dictionary, March 27, 2013, https://politicaldictionary.com/words/plausible-deniability/.

[28] Marcus Mohlin, "Commercialization of Warfare and Shadow Wars: Private Military Companies as Strategic Tools," *St Antony's International Review* 9, no. 2 (2014): 24–38, 34.

armed forces or covert operatives cannot be left behind and can always be traced back to the state of origin, making PMCs an alluring alternative.[29]

Additionally, for politically risky affairs, like Russia's use of PMCs in Ukraine and Syria where it is hard to deny involvement completely, PMCs become a tool of misinterpretation. Utilization of PMCs in this context allows states to conduct covert operations and obscure intent, thus gauging international reaction. It took quite some time for the United Nations (UN) to gather a coalition response to the Russian incursion in Crimea because all the facts revolved around "little green men," not the Russian military. When the response materialized, it was too late; the Russians had already facilitated the referendum. Plausible deniability is a key characteristic of PMC usage, and a handy tool in the foreign policy toolbox because it allows states to deny involvement and delays the reaction of external international players.

The historical overview and discussion of the factors that make PMCs appealing are imperative for understanding the PMC phenomenon, with the factors justifying *why* nation-states choose to delegate some of their monopoly over the employment of military force to private actors. This paper now presents two case studies to determine the differences in ways they utilize PMCs and facilitates the discussion of considerations for contemporary use of PMCs.

[29] McFate, *Mercenaries and War*, 25.

Chapter 4: Case Studies

(History, Personnel & Training Policy, Doctrine, Nature, Examples in conflicts)

Following the Cold War, the discord created by social, ideological, and political factors impacted the ability of states to mobilize resources needed for war or conflict. Carl von Clausewitz argued that "war is the continuation of [the state's] politics by other means."[1] States that are unable to marshal the required resources from their societies for this continuation of foreign politics contract PMCs. PMCs become means to influence the ISE, either by augmenting national armed forces or as a stand-alone force. This chapter examines two diametrically diverse cases of PMC employment – the United States and the Russian Federation. Each country's utility of PMCs is examined through history, personnel policies, nature, doctrine, and examples of respective PMCs in conflicts. The case studies will inform the final chapter by providing essential background information to afford comparison and analysis. The two cases represent two distinct patterns where history and factors of the PMC phenomenon had different impacts on security developments.

Russian Federation

Russia's use of PMCs in pursuit of national interest has become particularly controversial after Crimea and Syria. Existence of and participation in PMCs illegal in Russia, which makes it even more interesting. For Russian leadership, PMCs are a specialized instrument of foreign policy that has a special status, designed to support their ambitions and endeavors.

[1] Carl von Clausewitz, Michael Howard, and Peter Paret, *On War* (New York, N.Y. [etc.: Knopf, 1993), 99.

The employment of PMCs as a continuation of state politics by other means is not new for Russia, dating as far back as the sixteenth century. Russia employed PMCs for military operations during the Livonian War (1558-1583) where the Tsardom of Russia successfully fought the alliance of Nordic states for control over what is now Latvia and Estonia.[2] The famous Russian traveler Yermak Timofeyevich used a semi-private military contingent of Cossacks to conquer Siberia in 1582-1584.[3] Prior to the Revolution in 1917, Russia employed PMCs domestically to suppress revolts and to quell public discontent, and during the Soviet era, so called "military instructors" were used in promoting Russian national interests in the Third World.[4] Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia revolutionized its use of private military force.

Russia traditionally treasured the Weberian model, where the state had a complete monopoly on the use of violence.[5] However, the fall of the Soviet Union naturally led to a reduction in the size of Russian military and intelligence services (the KGB and/or GRU), leaving former soldiers and officers in search of employment at home and abroad.[6] In 1992, President Yeltsin passed a federal law legalizing private *security* companies (private *military* companies are illegal still today in Russia). Yeltsin's action promoted the industry and played an important role in protecting businesses and individuals during the domestic turmoil created from the collapse of the Soviet Union.[7]

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[2] Sergey Sukhankin, "War, Business and Ideology: How Russian Private Military Contractors Pursue Moscow's Interests," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2019, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3622075, 14.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., 1.

[5] Åse Gilje Østensen and Tor Bukkvoll, "Russian Use of Private Military and Security Companies," *CMI FFI-RAPPORT*, September 11, 2018, 53, 13.

[6] Asymmetric Warfare Group, "Russian Private Military Companies" (Johns Hopkins: Applied Physics Laboratory, April 2020), https://publicintelligence.net/awg-russian-private-military-companies/, 8.

[7] Asymmetric Warfare Group, "Russian Private Military Companies", 8.

The Soviet military machine transitioned as well. Some elite units with marketable skillsets reconstituted themselves as 'readymade' PMCs.[8] The PMC, "Alfa Group," was created out of an elite Federal Security Service (FSB) antiterrorist special unit.[9] Many former Russian soldiers and officers gained employment with international PMCs offering a diverse array of protective services, while others worked as pilots and technicians for PMCs with air capabilities.[10] By the dawn of the millennium, thousands of former Russian military personnel worked as private contractors in countries such as Angola, Chad, Ethiopia, and Sudan offering a range of military and training services to the highest bidder.[11]

In the early 2000s, as Russia stabilized domestically, private security companies were allowed to work abroad to protect Russian infrastructure, conduct anti-piracy and demining activities, and provide security services in Iraq.[12] President Vladimir Putin and his administration began to consider PMCs as a geopolitical tool. Since 2008, Russia has used PMCs as an instrument to continue politics through other means in Georgia, Ukraine, Suria, Libya, Central African Republic, Venezuela, and Sudan.[13]

Russian PMCs and its training widely differs from case to case.[14] PMCs that operate abroad vary in organizational structure and equipment. Depending on the environment, conditions and purpose, Russian PMCs operate differently, and each case

[8] Bukkvoll and Østensen, "The Emergence of Russian Private Military Companies, 2.
[9] Ibid., 3.
[10] Tor Bukkvoll and Åse G. Østensen, "The Emergence of Russian Private Military Companies: A New Tool of Clandestine Warfare," *Special Operations Journal* 6, no. 1 (January 2, 2020): 1–17, https://doi.org/10.1080/23296151.2020.1740528, 1.
[11] Asymmetric Warfare Group, "Russian Private Military Companies", 8.
[12] Ibid., 10.
[13] "Not So Private Military and Security Companies," think tank, CSIS, September 25, 2020, https://www.csis.org/blogs/post-soviet-post/not-so-private-military-and-security-companies.
[14] Andrew S Bowen, "Russian Private Military Companies (PMCs)," *Congressional Research Service (CRS)*, September 16, 2020, 3.

should be considered as unique. When operating on behalf of the Russian Ministry of Defense, integrated with the Russian military, Russian PMCs are generally well-equipped and organized. However, in cases when Russian PMCs operate independently, and equipment is provided by the host country (employer) – it can be rusty and obsolete.[15]

Russian PMCs generally recruit Russian citizens with military or security experience, athough, external recruitment has recently increased due to near-border or internal conflicts, such as Chechnya, Georgia, and Eastern Ukraine.[16] The Ukrainian Security Service claims that the Russian PMC, Wagner Group, recruits from all former republics of Soviet Union and from Serbia.[17] Most PMCs in Russia have strict fitness and marksmanship requirements for candidates, but appear to lower the requirement if situation is urgent.[18] Some are highly trained and represent the former Russian elite military or intelligence services. There is a tendency that Russian PMCs use qualified personnel for specific missions and replace them over time with cheaper colleagues. This process avoids unnecessary losses of elites but also creates opportunities for gaining experience by the new assets.

The rapid emergence of Russian PMCs complemented newly developed military doctrine and strategy regarding the use and role of non-state actors and it related to the concept of operations in grey zone – hybrid warfare that was introduced by Russian General Chief of Staff in 2013.[19] According to the U.S. Treasury Department report on the new Russian military doctrine, "Russia relies on a highly sophisticated apparatus

[15] Asymmetric Warfare Group, "Russian Private Military Companies", 16.
[16] Ibid., 16.
[17] Ibid., 16.
[18] Ibid., 16.
[19] Molly K. Mckew, "The Gerasimov Doctrine," POLITICO Magazine, accessed November 11, 2020, https://politi.co/2KZQlKd.

consisting of state and non-state agents and proxies, decades of experience carrying out influence operations around the globe, and the strategic direction of Russian President Vladimir Putin."[20] Russian strategists define hybrid warfare as a smooth congregation of soft and hard powers, guiding all possible instruments of national power into one purpose.[21] They combine conventional warfare and information operations with other unconventional concepts. PMCs are those unconventional or asymmetric aspects that promote untraditional forms of foreign influence. PMCs, thus, serve as a Russian foreign policy tool that operate in close connection with other government agencies to facilitate Russian national interests.[22] Some U.S. reports indicate that, depending on the situation, Russia can utilize PMCs to set the right battlefield conditions, and increase its power projection in existing conflicts.[23]

PMCs are absent from Russian military doctrine, mentioned only as a foreign threat.[24] However, western scholars identify four potential benefits that the Russian state seeks from the utilization of PMCs. The first is deniability. PMCs allow Russia to deny involvement in actions.[25] The sophisticated capabilities of contemporary Great Powers do not allow Russia to completely deny involvement, however, use of PMCs complements Russian strategy to confuse and postpone attribution. This facilitates disruption of an adequate international response and minimizes the political costs. The next benefit is a casualty avoidance. PMC personnel are considered expendable, and their losses are largely unknown to the public.[26] The Russian state avoids domestic outcry towards

[20] Bowen, "Russian Private Military Companies (PMCs)."
[21] Ibid.
[22] Bukkvoll and Østensen, "The Emergence of Russian Private Military Companies."
[23] Bowen, "Russian Private Military Companies (PMCs).
[24] Østensen and Bukkvoll, "Russian Use of Private Military and Security Companies", 28.
[25] Bowen, "Russian Private Military Companies (PMCs).
[26] Ibid.

foreign endeavors by mitigating official casualty rates. The third benefit is the ability to deploy and withdrawal rapidly.[27] PMCs provide a high level of flexibility in terms of number, location, specificity, and employment options for Russian government. Lastly, PMCs are low cost.[28] They generally do not require Russia to provide logistical support, after-action treatment, or funding for sustainment and training. These four benefits attributed to Russian PMCs fully reflect the four factors that describe the overall inclination of states to utilize PMCs.

Despite documented facts of Russian PMCs operating in Georgia (2008) and in Ukraine (2014-2016), the true revelation of Russian private military warfare happened in Syria . Russian PMCs were present in Syria since 2014 augmenting Assad's military capabilities. However, on February 7, 2018, a U.S. special forces team fighting ISIL in the region, was attacked by an unknown group of hostiles. 500 attackers with artillery, armored personnel carriers and T-72 battle tanks were Russian PMC Wagner Group.[29] U.S. efforts required four hours and multiple waves of Reaper drones, F-22, F-15, B-52, AC-130 gunships, and AH-64 Apache helicopters to force the PMC to retreat.[30] Russian officials claimed no involvement, and as a result more than 200 men of PMC Wagner died for nothing.[31] Anonymous Russian military sources described the situation as a one guided by private interests to seize oil rich areas.[32] This is a poignant example demonstrating the dual nature of Russian PMCs. PMCs in Russia are not private, despite

[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] McFate, *Mercenaries and War*, 1.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Bukkvoll and Østensen, "The Emergence of Russian Private Military Companies."
[32] McFate, *Mercenaries and War*, 3.

the fact that they belong to private Russian citizens, and Russian PMCs will not intentionally contradict the will of Putin.[33]

PMCs are illegal in Russia but operate above the law due to protection from the Russian elite. Russian law "explicitly prohibits creation or participation in armed formations that are not stipulated by a federal law."[34] Despite their illegal status, Russian PMCs promote Russian political reach in multiple regions worldwide. Every PMC in Russia has patronage to Russian security or intelligence agencies. Often, the rivalry and competition for the new job prompts internal tension between the services that results in arrests and disposition.[35] A U.S. Treasury Department report identifies the Wagner Group as "a designated Russian Ministry of Defense proxy force" even though it belongs to a private citizen.[36] This highlights the dual nature of Russian PMCs – semi-private, yet semi-governmental.

In the last ten years, involvement of Russian PMCs in the disruption of the ISE is well documented in Ukraine, Syria, Libya, Central African Republic (CAR), Sudan, and Venezuela. These cases represent the variety of missions that Russian PMCs facilitate on behalf of and in cooperation with the Russian government. In Ukraine, PMCs played a crucial role in the Russian invasion of Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, taking part in direct combat operations. They trained, consulted with, and oversaw the separatist movement, acting under the guidance and oversight of the GRU (the Main Military Intelligence Directorate) and the FSB (Internal Security Service, the heir of KGB). When some of the

[33] Ibid.

[34] "PMC RUSH: RUSSIAN PRIVATE ARMIES," International Volunteer Community, Inform Napalm, 2018, http://informnapalm.rocks/pmc_rush.

[35] Bowen, "Russian Private Military Companies (PMCs).

[36] Ibid.

separatist leaders became uncontrolled, there is evidence of PMCs involved in elimination and subsequent staging to place the blame on the Ukrainian secret services.[37]

In Syria, Russian PMCs are involved in a diverse spectrum of operations from private security of commercial oil fields to combat, including direct action against U.S. forces. All activities are coordinated by the Russian MoD and Russian elite. PMCs also train and advise Syrian armed forces. The quality of personnel involved reflect the importance of the Syrian operation to the Russian government and is a clear indicator of who exactly the PMCs are working for.[38]

In Libya, Russian PMCs facilitated the seizure of the state from internationally recognized authorities. PMCs deployed air defense systems and combat aircraft. In support of the Libyan National Army leader Khalifa Haftar, Russian PMCs trained and advised rebel forces. Russian PMCs also took part in direct combat operations for key terrain and infrastructure.[39]

In CAR and Venezuela, Russian PMCs were deployed to guarantee personal protection of governmental leaders and smuggle illegal commodities (armaments) for the local markets (CAR and Venezuela are under the UN arms embargo). In Sudan and CAR, Russian PMCs are involved in fighting rebels for diamond and gold mining, and to ensure security for Russian mining contracts.[40] In Sudan, CAR, and Venezuela Russian PMCs train local forces aligned to the strategic advice of the state's leadership.

[37] Bowen, "Russian Private Military Companies (PMCs).
[38] Ibid.
[39] Bowen, "Russian Private Military Companies (PMCs).
[40] Ibid.

United States of America

The complexity of describing the case of the U.S. PMC industry lies in the perception that not all U.S. military-related contractors are PMCs. Most U.S. contractors are associated with the concept of Operational Contract Support (OCS). According to JP 4-10, OCS is the process that ensures support of combatant commander operations through the arrangement of commercial resources.[41] OCS is usually associated with services, supplies and construction operations, however, some of the contractors may subcontract PMCs for security purposes. This considers all private and civilian enterprises that are employed or funded by the U.S. government to provide consulting, training, security, and other services associated with warfighting as PMCs.

Americans were first introduced to PMCs during the Revolutionary War in 1776. The Continental Army employed PMCs for training and advising missions. [42] The most prominent foreign soldier who fought with Americans was German Baron Von Steuben.[43] Also 800 vessels were commissioned as privateers to disrupt British shipping operations.[44] After the American Revolution and until the beginning of the Second World War, American PMCs embodied only enterprises that provided logistic and support services to the American armed forces.[45]

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[41] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Joint Publication 4-10: Operational Contract Support," (Washington DC, March 4, 2019), ix.

[42] Anthony Mockler, *Mercenaries* (London: Macdonald & Co, 1970), 127.

[43] "Foreign Fighters for the American Cause of Independence," American Battlefield Trust, January 25, 2017, https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/foreign-fighters-american-cause-independence.

[44] John Frayler, "The American Revolution," Salem Maritime National Historic Site, US Department of the Interior, accessed December 17, 2020, https://www.nps.gov/revwar/about_the_revolution/privateers.html.

[45] Phillip Andrew Roughton, "Public Wars, Private Warriors: An Analysis of Private Military Contractors in American Foreign and Domestic Policy" (Political Science, Charlestone, Illinois, Eastern Illinois University, 2014), 26-30.

Prior to America's direct involvement in WWII, the US Government granted contracts to domestic PMCs to provide maintenance and logistic services to allies in North America and the Middle East.[46] Prior to the Korean War, the US had drawn down its standing military after WWII and did not have as many soldiers. Thereby, this led to more contracts with PMCs to support operations alongside military troops.[47] Since the Korean War, contracting PMCs to support uniformed troops in theaters of war and conflict has become standard practice for the United States.

The Cold War opened new opportunities for the development of American PMCs. During the 1950s and 1960s, federally funded research and development centers (FFRDC) were created, and the Pentagon committed to delegate more military capabilities to private actors. The Applied Physics Laboratory of Johns Hopkins University and RAND started as consulting and think tank corporations that worked for the Department of Defense.[48] FFRDCs provided military advise and consultations on variety of topics from force development to professional military education. Today, there is a number of U.S. PMCs that provide strategic advising and consulting for a global variety of state and non-state actors.

During the unpopular war in Vietnam, the U.S. Government relied heavily on PMCs for essential services that traditionally belonged to the uniformed personnel. PMCs like Brown and Root and J.A. Johns Corporation were contracted for construction, base

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[46] Deborah C. Kidwell, *Public War, Private Fight? The United States and Private Military Companies.*, Global War on Terrorism, Occasional Paper 12 (Combat Studies Institute Press, 2005), 13.

[47] Kidwell, *Public War, Private Fight?*, 15.

[48] John Whiteclay Chambers, *The Oxford Companion to American Military History. [EBook]* (Oxford University Press, 1999), https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,url,uid&db=cat04199a&AN=ndu.942195&site=eds-live&scope=site, 185.

operations, and transportation.[49] The United States funded and equipped Korean, Thai, and Filipino soldiers to fight the Vietcong.[50] While not considered as PMCs, these cases represent the earliest examples of U.S. Government 'contracts' for direct actions conducted by non-governmental actors. Some scholars believe they have enough data to suggest that in the 1970s and 1980s the Central Intelligence Agency utilized a number of British PMCs for covert operations in Congo, Angola, Afghanistan, Nicaragua.[51] During the Cold War, U.S. PMCs diversified the variety of services they offered, ranging from strictly logistical to military consulting, training, security, and some direct action.

Following the Cold War and the associated reduction of U.S. force strength, the U.S. private military industry exploited domestic defense market opportunities and became more deeply involved in U.S. foreign policy.[52] In the early 1990s, U.S. PMCs were employed by the Saudi Arabian government for a variety of assignments to bolster Saudi military capabilities as a part of the national strategy to protect U.S. interests in the Middle East. During the fragmentation of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, U.S. PMCs played a significant role, where corporations such as Kellogg, Brown and Root built bases and other military infrastructure for U.S. and NATO forces.[53] Other PMCs assisted the U.S. Government in projecting its influence without being directly involved.

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[49] Kidwell, *Public War, Private Fight?*, 16.

[50] Michael Lee Lanning, *Mercenaries: Soldiers of Fortune, from Ancient Greece to Today's Private Military Companies.* (Ballantine Books, 2005), 143.

[51] Tony Geraghty, *Soldiers of Fortune: A History of the Mercenary in Modern Warfare* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2009), 6-7.

[52] David Shearer, *Private Armies and Military Intervention*, Adelphi Paper 316 (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998), 34.

[53] Thomas R. Mockaitis, *Soldiers of Misfortune?* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2014), 6.

The terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001 and the ensuing Global War on Terrorism stimulated the PMC industry to unseen proportion.[54] Eric Prince's Blackwater was one U.S. PMC that greatly benefitted from the war on terror. Blackwater secured contracts to improve security capabilities of the U.S. Navy, FBI, and Departments of Treasury and Energy; it was also one of the first to build upon the idea of PMCs providing armed security for military installations while the all-volunteer force conducted combat missions or operations.[55]

During the invasion of Iraq, the U.S. Government planned for a short and decisive campaign. The plan was to invade, then transfer authority to interim government and leave as soon as possible.[56] However, the Iraqi state collapsed, and Iraq quickly destabilized. By the end of 2003, coalition forces witnessed a full-blown counter insurgency.[57] Considering the ongoing military campaign in Afghanistan, U.S. Armed Forces were overstretched.[58] The 2004 presidential election presented too much political risk to commit more troops, so the administration decided to "surge contractors."[59] With the growth of the insurgency in Iraq, the number of PMCs grew accordingly. Debora Avant suggests that in 2004 the United States utilized 150,000 to 170,000 private employees in the theater.[60] The ratio of contractors to military personnel reached a

[54] Jeremy Scahill, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army* (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2007), 104.
[55] Scahill, *Blackwater*, 105.
[56] Mockaitis, *Soldiers of Misfortune?*, 8-9.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 244-245.
[59] Mockaitis, *Soldiers of Misfortune?*, 9.
[60] Deborah D. Avant and Renée de Nevers, "Military Contractors & the American Way of War," *Daedalus* 140, no. 3 (2011), 94.

historic peak of nearly 1 to 1 (190,000 contractors to 200,000 troops) in 2009.[61] More military contractors died in the Middle East since 2001 than uniformed personnel (8,000 U.S. contractors killed, compared to 7,000 service members).[62] From the start of both wars and until today, U.S. PMCs virtually replaced regular troops for training and advising missions. PMCs trained Iraqi and Afghan police, military, and other security agencies, and advised Iraqi and Afghan Governments on the police and military force structure, legal systems and intelligence services.[63]

The training and personnel policies of U.S. PMCs are similar to their Russian counterparts. Depending on the mission, theater environment, and host nation legal requirements, U.S. PMCs operate with varied force structures and are equipped accordingly. However, the demographics between personnel that directly work for U.S. PMCs and those of host nation or third-party PMCs subcontracted by U.S. companies are significantly different.

According to a recent study about demographics of U.S. and U.K. PMCs in Iraq, 185 American PMC employees (US citizens) were killed in Iraq between 2003 and 2016.[64] The data shows that most of the U.S. PMC personnel are professionals with prior experience and skills. At the same time there are other pool of employees that are utilized by U.S. government.

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[61] "Contractors' Support of U.S. Operations in Iraq," Congressional Budget Office (Congress of the United States, August 2008), https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/110th-congress-2007-2008/reports/08-12-iraqcontractors.pdf, 12.

[62] Heidi, "The Growth of the 'Camo Economy,'" 1.

[63] Avant and de Nevers, "Military Contractors & the American Way of War," 91.

[64] Ori Swed et al., "The Corporate War Dead: New Perspectives on the Demographics of American and British Contractors," *Armed Forces & Society* 46, no. 1 (January 2020): 3–24, https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X18811375.

U.S. PMCs are market driven enterprises, so they subcontract to whoever has just enough proficiency to do the job. The developing world provides a predominance of the subcontractors that U.S. PMCs seek in order to keep profitable margins. The background and ethnic composition of subcontractors make them look more like a mercenaries than professional companies, and in most cases local subcontractors have a negative impact on the mission.[65] According to the U.S. Army CENTCOM census in 2008, out of the whole pool of 190,200 contractors in Iraq, 38,700 were U.S. citizens, 70,500 were Iraqis, and 81,000 were third country nationals.[66] A June 2010 Congressional Report presented instances when local guards were sharing information with Taliban about movements and routines of the US military; or local private security providers were paying bribes to warring parties to conduct their operations; or other local providers were outfitted and managed by warlords that had direct interest in prolongation of the conflict and contradicted the existing mission of U.S. forces on the ground.[67]

Since the birth of the Nation, the U.S. government has struggled to oversee military contracting. In 1798, Congress passed a law that guided the government's contracting oversight through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[68] After WWI, the National Defense Act of 1920 transferred contracting authority to the military agencies.[69] Before entry into WWII, the United States had already supported allies with maintenance and other services in North Africa and the Middle East through military contracts.[70] After a number of U.S. citizens were killed while on overseas contract duties, Congress

[65] Tea Cimini, "The Invisible Army: Explaining Private Military and Security Companies," *International Relations*, August 2, 2018, 4/14.
[66] Tea Cimini, "The Invisible Army," 4/14.
[67] Mockaitis, *Soldiers of Misfortune?*, 34-36.
[68] Stanley, *Outsourcing Security*, 37.
[69] Kidwell, *Public War, Private Fight?*, 13.
[70] Ibid.

passed the Defense Base Act in 1941 that provided insurance in case of injury or death.[71] The 1941 Act presented the first indication of PMCs becoming a legal and doctrinal norm.[72]

In 1950, the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) had the biggest impact on the legal perception of U.S. PMCs. The UCMJ stated that all those that accompany the U.S. Armed Forces in the field (exercises, war zones) are subject to the same rules and laws as military personnel.[73] In 1957, the Supreme Court ruled as unconstitutional the prosecution of civilians under military law.[74] However, in 1970, a civilian accused of war crimes was acquitted by military court based on the notion of a different definition of war in the civil court and that of UCMJ.[75] These precedents created legal niches for PMC employees, allowing them to act with little to no legal regulation. In 2000, Congress again attempted to regulate PMCs by passing the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act (MEJA) which demands that DoD-contracted employees who commit a crime must return to the US and be tried under the U.S. law.[76] However, MEJA applies to DoD only; PMCs employed by other U.S. agencies do not fall under this law.

In 2008, after the Nisour Square massacre, where Blackwater employees killed 17 Iraqi civilians, Congress created the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan with the purpose of examining the contracting system.[77] The commission, however, did little to improve oversight of PMCs. The Pentagon also took a number of

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[71] Roughton, "Public Wars, Private Warriors," 56.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Marc Lindemann, "Civilian Contractors under Military Law," *Army War College, Carlisle, PA*, 2007, 86.
[75] Ibid., 87.
[76] Lindemann, "Civilian Contractors under Military Law," 86.
[77] Thomas R. Mockaitis, *Soldiers of Misfortune?* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2014), 23.

steps in the last two decades to improve management and oversight of PMCs. In October 2008, the U.S. Army created the Army Contracting Command, and DoD assigned more Primary Contracting Officers to improve management and oversight.[78] Additionally, the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act required DoD and the State Department to ensure all PMCs provide details of their operations in advance to military commanders. Despite all the efforts to create a system to oversee and control PMCs, little change was effected and U.S. law failed to create the legal system of accountability for PMC employees in warzones and operational theaters.

Unlike Russian PMCs that are semi-private and officially illegal, U.S. PMCs are legally registered and openly advertise their services. PMC personnel in United States are officially employed under a defined corporate structure, and work under established terms and conditions with a sense of accountability to the company. [79] The company, in turn, has responsibilities to its clients that are designated in official contracts.[80]

The Neutrality Act of 1937 banned the recruitment of mercenaries within the United States, but being a mercenary was not recognized as a criminal offense.[81] Seemingly, the United States is willing to grant PMC employees and mercenaries the same status and protection as other combatants.[82] It appears, that the Neutrality Act of 1937 somehow explains the unwillingness of the U.S. legal system to produce an effective law to prosecute PMC employees while on mission in the war zones.[83]

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[78] Mockaitis, *Soldiers of Misfortune?*, 23.
[79] Shearer, *Private Armies and Military Intervention*, 21.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Shearer, *Private Armies and Military Intervention*, 20
[82] Ibid.
[83] See subchapter Doctrine.

Stanley, Shearer and Mockaitis all agree that there are four factors that contribute to the heavy reliance of the U.S. government to use PMCs in warzones.[84] After the end of Cold War, the drastic reduction in U.S. troop levels required other means to replace or reinforce national troops. The decreased National Defense Budget forced the government to be more cost effective and delegate some of the capabilities to the private sector. The growing number of global conflicts and humanitarian emergencies created demand in security requirements that could only filled by PMCs.

U.S. PMCs have a close link with DoD and constitute a significant portion of the U.S. military industrial complex. This close link also relates to the fact that a number of U.S. administration officials and retired high ranking military personnel created new PMCs or serve in PMC leadership positions which results in better contracts and facilitates involvement in U.S. foreign policy.[85] Recently, Senator Elizabeth Warren and Representative Jack Speier initiated the DoD Ethics and Anti-Corruption Act of 2019. The purpose of the legislation is to limit the influence of senior military officers hired by military industrial corporations immediately following retirement to help manage future contracts.[86]

The military sequestration associated with the end of Cold War did not correspond to the number of U.S. military commitments in the world. The statistics display a drastic increase of operational events and contingency operations that involved the U.S. Army and the U.S. Marine Corps. From 1960 to 1991, the Army conducted 10

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[84] Stanley, *Outsourcing Security*, 195-197; Shearer, *Private Armies and Military Intervention*, 22-23; Mockaitis, *Soldiers of Misfortune?*, 6-12.

[85] Shearer, *Private Armies and Military Intervention*, 34-35.

[86] Elizabeth Warren and Jackie Speier, "DoD Ethics and Anti-Corruption Act of 2019," accessed December 21, 2020, https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/DoD%20Ethics%20and%20Anti-Corruption%20Act%20One-Pager%20FINAL.pdf.

operational events, compared to twenty-six from 1991 to 1998. The Marine Corps conducted fifteen contingency operations from 1982 to 1989, and sixty-two from 1989 to 1998.[87] The overall lack of available troops to cover the foreign commitments created another point that contributed to promotion of PMCs in the United States.

In the early 1990s, U.S. PMCs were heavily involved in the Middle East, providing a cost-effective way to secure American national interests in the oil-rich region. Under a $163.3 million contract with Vinnell, more that 1,000 employees, mostly former U.S. Army and Special Forces personnel, assisted with modernizing the Kingdom's National Guard.[88] At the same time, BDM trained the Saudi Air Force and Army.[89] SAIC trained the Saudi Navy and the consulting firm, Booz-Allen and Hamilton, developed the Saudi Marine Corps.[90] All of the mentioned contracts earned the reputation for the U.S. PMCs and facilitated growth.

From 1994-1996, the U.S. government deployed MPRI personnel as civilian observers to the UN Observer Mission in Bosnia, Montenegro, and Serbia.[91] Later in 1998-1999, MRPI provided consulting and training, and arming of the Croatian and Bosnian Governments.[92] MPRI successfully executed the Equip and Train U.S. Government program for the Bosnian and Croatian Armed Forces to a level that allowed them to repulse Serbian interventions. During the 1990s, U.S. PMCs also were contracted for training missions in Sri Lanka, Angola, Peru, Rwanda, Taiwan, and Sweden.[93]

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[87] McFate, *The Modern Mercenary*, 43-44.
[88] Shearer, *Private Armies and Military Intervention*, 35.
[89] Shearer, *Private Armies and Military Intervention*, 35.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Jakkie Cilliers and Ian Douglas, "Chapter 6: The Military as Business – Military Professional Resources, Incorporated," n.d., 12, 118.
[92] Marcus Mohlin, "Commercialisation of Warfare and Shadow Wars: Private Military Companies as Strategic Tools," *St Antony's International Review* 9, no. 2 (2014), 33-34.
[93] Cilliers and Douglas, "The Military as Business," 111.

Before the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, PMCs did not participate in counter insurgency operations. However, during these wars, the U.S. government developed a heavy reliance on PMCs in war zones. In 2007, the Director of the Private Security Company Association of Iraq suggested that 181 PMCs were employed in the country with more that 48,000 armed employees.[94]

[94] Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 245.

Chapter 5: Considerations for the Contemporary Use of Private Military Companies

This chapter analyzes the case studies presented in the previous chapter. This paper's thesis is further examined through three complimentary sub-statements using the case studies: *1) PMCs are tools of foreign policy to pursue state's interests by other means; 2) PMCs yield strategic effects on the ISE; and 3) states differ in their utilization and promotion of PMCs*. By comparing the United States and Russia in context of these three lenses, a better understanding of PMC usage in the current and future strategic environments is gained.

PMCs are Tools for the Foreign Policy to Pursue State's Interest by Other Means

PMCs have played a unique and significant role in Russia's foreign policy since the war in Ukraine. After the fight between Russian PMC Wagner Group and the U.S. Special Forces in Syria, they started to draw even more public and scientific attention. Being very diverse in the functions and services offered, Russian PMCs provide the Kremlin a convenient foreign policy tool. The tool facilitates the promotion of the Russian national interests where conventional military options are not compelling or where it bears a high political risk. PMCs help facilitate Russian hybrid operations by providing plausible deniability and spreading confusion in the ISE.[1]

U.S. PMCs also have a distinctive role in the American history. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the U.S. government utilized national PMCs in every conflict or war. However, unlike Russian PMCs, the U.S. contracts PMCs as flexible force multipliers,

[1] Andrew S Bowen, "Russian Private Military Companies (PMCs)," *Congressional Research Service (CRS)*, September 16, 2020, 3.

augmenting, and in some instances substituting, for U.S. troops. In Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States relied heavily on PMCs to continue operations while drawing down troop strength. U.S. PMCs have also been instrumental in promoting U.S. national interests by building capacities and military support of allies and partners.

Both countries use PMCs as a tool in their respective foreign policies. PMCs decrease the cost and risk associated with pursuing national objectives. Russian leadership appears emboldened by the success of PMC involvement in Ukraine, Syria, and Venezuela. Such a rapid development proves that PMCs obtained the special place in Russian foreign policy. At the same time, the U.S government with its long history of the PMC utilization in foreign endeavors shows no sign of waning. The unending wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have amplified the casualty averse mentality, which indicates the potential for even greater PMC involvement in pursuit of U.S. foreign affairs. PMCs are more likely to be involved where the United States chooses to intervene in 'rough' states.

PMCs Provide Strategic Effects on the ISE

Due to new developments in Russian military doctrine and strategy about the participation of the non-state actors in contemporary conflicts, it is hard to prove that PMCs as a separate tool has a strategic effect on the ISE. However, Russian PMCs that are employed in coordination with Russian military forces and other non-state actors like militias, rebels, volunteers, and criminals definitely had and will have a strategic impact on the ISE. Arguably, plausible deniability alone can generate strategic impacts. For instance, in Crimea, Russian PMCs created conditions for disruption of the international response and condemnation to the situation, which allowed the Kremlin to stage the referendum and turn the situation against Ukraine. The Ukrainian case demonstrates

another utility of PMCs, where regular troops can be disguised as PMCs for political deniability.

Recent crises reinforce this strategic applicability of Russian PMCs. In both Venezuela and Libya, the Russians managed to disrupt internationally supported regime changes, largely through employment of PMCs. Potentially, Russian PMCs, due to an eagerness to participate in direct combat operations, can be employed to seize and hold strategic infrastructure, create footholds for Russian forces, disrupt international humanitarian and peacekeeping operations, and supply states under embargo. In summary, Russian PMCs generate operational impacts on the ISE, however, history has instances when that impact had strategic effects.

U.S. PMCs generally serve as a force multiplier for U.S. forces or other government agencies. Their purpose is to provide an operational impact on a mission. However, today, it is hard to imagine the United States in a conflict or war without PMCs. The surge in Iraq in 2007 would have been impossible without the involvement of PMCs. Thereby, one can say that U.S. PMCs provide operational capabilities that facilitate strategic effects on the ISE. In some cases, U.S. PMCs have had a strategic effect by itself. In 1994, the U.S. government contracted MPRI to equip and train the Croatian army.[2] In result, it influenced the balance of power in Europe by mitigating Iran's influence in Balkans. MPRI is the rare case, where the U.S. PMC provided strategic effect on the ISE.

[2] Mohlin, "Commercialisation of Warfare and Shadow Wars."

In both cases and on the most of instances, PMCs serve as operational amplifiers for strategic objectives. However, there are cases when it is difficult to draw a clear line between operational and strategic effects of PMC contribution. It is clear, however, that PMCs have become a necessity for projection of influences in the ISE.

States Differ in Their Utilization and Promotion of PMCs

In Russia, PMCs are illegal but above the law because the Russian elite own and operate them and constantly compete for new assignments. Russian PMCs are an emulation of their Western counterparts. They are low cost, low risk, flexible and ensure plausible deniability. They are not private, but artificially created entities to enable Russian power reach in the ISE. Some analysists suggest that by carrying out state assignments Russian PMCs buy privileges to pursue other financial opportunities. (i.e. February 2018 attempted seizure of Syrian oil fields by Wagner Group without coordinating with the Kremlin).

There is no evidence that Russian state is willing to legalize PMCs. This fact supports the idea that Russian leadership is willing to use it and keep full control over PMCs activities. Russia utilizes and promotes PMCs for its geopolitical desires, influencing the ISE while denying attribution. Russian leaders use PMCs as a disposable tool with a near-limitless regenerative recruitment pool within its geographic periphery (Abkhazia, Ossetia, Transdniestria, Nagorno-Karabakh, Ukraine, Yugoslavia, Chechnya, Dagestan). The Russian private military industry is growing in parallel with Russian ambitions in the world.

In the United States, PMCs are legal corporations, many of which are on the world stock markets. However, it is hard to get data about private military contractors,

mainly because of proprietary information. Despite the fact that those companies act as proxies of the state, they are not legally obliged to share information with the public on their actions, organization or labor force. At the same time, the utility of PMCs has allowed the Executive Branch of the United States to exercise advantage over Congress in decisions to employ force and influence foreign policy. Since the U.S. government does not count PMC employees as part of their official numbers on the ground, it can deploy more people than its official reports portray.[3]

The United States promotes PMCs by developing a dependency on their services. PMCs follow and support U.S. troops and agencies around the world. America simply cannot go to war without PMCs anymore.

Both cases are unique in their own way. Russia is using its semi-private military companies to proceed with actions that otherwise could not be conducted by official Russian armed forces due to political sensitivity or illegal nature. Russian PMCs are willing to participate in the direct actions and risk heavy casualties. On the contrary, U.S. PMCs are private corporations that are contracted by the state. Usually, the U.S. government employs PMCs to augment existing capabilities or, in some cases, substitute lack of capacity. U.S. PMCs are defensive in nature and there are no known instances where private contractors conducted offensive actions on behalf of the U.S. government.

The United States values PMCs as a way to augment the national armed forces or facilitate training of partnering military forces. Russia perceives PMCs as a fighting party to conceal official military involvement. So, the prominent difference between the two states is either ‘with’ or ‘instead’ of the national armed forces.

[3] McFate, “America’s Addiction to Mercenaries.”

Chapter 6: Conclusion

States utilize private military companies as a convenient augmentation to their foreign policy toolbox, thereby, PMCs have a specific impact on the international security environment. The difference in application of PMCs depends on factors such as political systems, rules of law, and state's leader's perspectives. This research sought to test this thesis by first understanding and explaining the history and logic of privatized warfare through the evolution of the phenomenon, highlighted in its three phases– dominance, decline, and resurgence. History reveals an interesting pattern, that citizen armies are more of an aberration rather than rule.

PMCs were then analyzed in relation to the nation-state in order to understand why this phenomenon has an evolving role in the International Security Environment. The benefits that PMCs provide to the state (low cost, low risk, flexible and plausible deniability) expand the state's strategic and operational reach in the ISE. Unregulated by international law, the private military industry is rapidly growing fast globally. Nation-states, which have previously been consumers of PMCs' services, have now started to develop the industry regionally with a willingness to compete in the world market, offering more services and capabilities or better prices and conditions.

The analysis of the case studies reveals differences in history, policies, doctrine, and nature of two diametrical states – Russia and the United States. As the findings demonstrate, utilization of PMCs for the Russian government is a conscious and deliberate choice. While PMCs are absent in official Russian doctrine, they are very much incorporated in hybrid warfare as non-state actors. PMCs allow the Kremlin to operate in the gray zone while avoiding attribution to avoid political risk. PMCs in Russia

are illegal, and the Kremlin uses this fact to ensure additional control over their activity. Russian PMCs are prone to and specialized in direct combat actions, serving as organized mercenaries working for and controlled by the state.

Conversely, the United States depends on PMCs to such an extent that it can be considered "a strategic vulnerability."[1] For the U.S. it is not a choice, but rather a necessity. The U.S. government wrestles with legislation to oversee PMCs, which are fully legal private enterprises, balancing demands of corporate America with the legalities of warfare. U.S. PMCs facilitate the minimization of official casualties which assuages public opinion regarding foreign endeavors. However, the U.S. government does not control PMCs, only contracts them by designating conditions and requirements.

In most cases, PMCs generate operational level effects on the ISE, but because there are other actors and variables in the same environment, it is hard to measure the exact effect PMCs generate in any particular situation. There are, however, clear examples where the employment of PMCs produced strategic effects. For instance, Russia's use of PMCs in Venezuela facilitated Maduro's grip on power which had a strategic impact and prevented a power shift in South America. The United States utilized PMCs to assist Bosnia and Croatia in building their own armed forces, which led to the fall of Yugoslavia and dissuaded Iranian influence in the Balkans.

In both states, the use of PMCs skirts democratic channels and simplifies the utility of force. PMCs are complimentary tools for foreign policy to pursue national objectives by other means. Russia is more aggressive in this matter due to the manpower availability in post-Soviet states and the shadowy nature of the industry. The United

[1] McFate, *Mercenaries and War*.

States is likely to see more and more PMC involvement in peripheral national interests and politically risky interventions due to focusing the U.S. Armed Forces on Great Power Competition.

This research concentrated on the PMCs that provide 'boots on the ground' services, fully acknowledging that the industry is capable of providing services in all warfighting domains. Cyber and space services provided by private military enterprises are growing in number and accessibility. The private military industry denounces borders and follows profit as it has historically, and soon will act as a separate actor in the ISE. When PMCs go borderless, they potentially become a threat even for host countries. As noted, "War, in short, has once more been denationalized. It has become, as it was the eighteenth century, an affair of states and no longer of peoples."[2]

[2] Michael Howard, "War and the Nation-State," *The MIT Press on Behalf of American Academy of Arts & Sciences Stable* 108, no. 4 (1979): 101–10, 106.

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