



**Private military and security  
companies – from mercenaries  
to intelligence providers**

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## CONTENTS

Abstract	4
1. Introduction	5
2. Drivers of the market for force	6
3. Pmsc research	8
First Wave Literature	8
The Second Wave Literature	10
The Third Wave Literature	16
4. A fourth wave?	18
5. Conclusions	19
References	21

## **ABSTRACT**

This working paper examines some of the existing research into Private Military and Security Companies and identifies some paths for further research, which will accommodate the empirical evolution of this phenomenon. Private force has evolved from individual acts of mercenarism into a corporate variety, which is highly professional and legitimized by states. However, PMSCs no longer produce exclusively armed provisions, they also increasingly supply knowledge products to governments and commercial entities. In order to accommodate this shift academic research must further refine existing concepts of private force and engage in further empirical investigation and recognize that the changes taking place exceed those contained in the concept of the state monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. Rather, the power to author and influence perceptions through the marketing of risk and intelligence are the defining characteristics of a new generation of PMSCs.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Private sector augmentation has more or less always been a vital part of the defense architecture. For instance, when governments decide to purchase military equipment such as helicopters, fighter jets and UAVs, they contract with private companies on the development and supply of this hardware. Apart from some concerns over the possible existence of a military-industrial complex and the occasional corruption scandal, this private sector involvement in matters of state and war has sparked few concerns in the last few decades. More controversial has been the use of Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) in the exertion of force in for instance Iraq and Afghanistan. This sparked debate in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as it was seen as eroding the state monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. While private sector involvement in the research and development of military hardware is seen as a necessary arrangement in order to ensure a steady supply of high-grade equipment for national armies, the idea of having private companies exercising the state monopoly on the legitimate use of violence and ultimately having a state mandate to kill, seems both politically, legally and morally controversial. However, as especially the US use of PMSCs in Iraq and Afghanistan has shown, this is in some cases the order du jure of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Private sector augmentation in military and security provisions is increasingly seen as a viable policy for governments faced with budgetary constraints, demographic challenges and changing conditions for conflicts and war. In this climate where the market is moving into the high-politics area of the state a re-write of the famous statement by Carl von Clausewitz that “War is a mere continuation of politics by other means”, seems to be in order. War (and security) is now a continuation of the market

by other means. The market for private security and military provisions has evolved from individual soldiers of fortune to huge international conglomerates with a diverse range of both clients and products. The industry for these services is continuously morphing and diversifying. The first evolution was from military provisions into security and policing services, and now the industry is moving into non-material knowledge provisions such as intelligence.

This brief research paper has two objectives: Firstly, it briefly analyzes the broad tendencies in the research on Private Military and Security Companies in the context of the empirical developments in the PMSC industry. The empirical features of the industry as well as the contents of the academic research agenda have undergone profound changes since 1969 which is the chronological starting point for this paper. Three waves can be identified in PMSC literature the main themes of which will be analyzed in turn. Secondly, the paper identifies areas for further research, which will expand on existing literature and reflect the empirical development of private commercial security actors. In doing this, two arguments are made: Firstly that future research should also include a focus on non-material provisions such as intelligence, and secondly that private-for-private contractual relationships should also be an analytical focus. It argues that a new version of what Peter Singer has called *corporate warriors* is emerging within the area of private intelligence services. While previous waves of PMSC literature have focused on the armed services provided by PMSCs, this new dimension of the industry is based on the collection, analysis and sale of knowledge in the form of intelligence and risk management products.

## 2. DRIVERS OF THE MARKET FOR FORCE

PMSC literature is characterized by the absence of a distinct theoretical framework and in order to identify the facilitating factors for the private industry scholars have borrowed from social contract theory (Krahmann, 2010), and from overall neo-liberal and New Public Management frameworks. Conceptually, there is also a lack of consensus on how to define private companies specialized in military and security services. Some use the terms Private Military Firms (PMFs), some include 'security' in the term Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs), others distinguish on the basis of sub-sector, such as Private Maritime Security Companies (also abbreviated PMSCs). The terminology is at best imprecise and at worst confusing. The PMSC term also conflates the space between 'military' and 'security'. At the beginning of the second wave, the term Private Military Firm was employed, this later turned into PMSC as a sign of the blurring of the lines between the provision of military and security services. There are perhaps empirical justifications for the conceptual confusion. Demarking the boundaries between military companies and security companies is not a simple task; usually the companies are conglomerates that offer both military and security services. Some distinction can be made between the two categories, but it may be blurred at times.

Shearer (1998) defines military companies as entities that are designed to have a strategic impact, whereas private security companies are usually confined to specific areas and guard property and personnel (Shearer 1998b:24). Avant (2005) and Singer (2008) offer more functional definitions. Avant distinguishes on the basis of the type of contracts signed and Singer offers a distinction based on the battle space in which these services are provided. While there is an obvious difference between

providing security services within gated communities or running prisons, offering advice to and training for police forces in Iraq and military advice in Croatia or Saudi Arabia<sup>1</sup>, PMSCs challenge the traditional line of demarcation between the military sector (armies) and security (police forces) by applying their services in both spheres. Seeing as how many PMFs or PSCs have diverse market interests and are thus difficult to define as either security companies or military companies, this paper will use the term Private Military and Security Companies, *PMSCs*, with all its conceptual inaccuracy. In the last part of this paper, the term Private Intelligence Company (PIC) is introduced to denote a new generation of private force, namely the private entities who sell intelligence and risk management products and who are not engaged in armed services.

Imprecise terminology, however, constitutes only one issue with the research into private force and security. Academically, there is no consensus on what kind of issue the use of private force and security is. Is it a state sovereignty matter? An international relations matter? A public policy or governance matter? A legal matter? A sociological matter? The answer is a very unscientific 'all of the above and then some'. The reason for that somewhat unhelpful answer is that private force cuts across the national and the transnational, through the private and the public. Unlike states, PMSCs are not limited to one national operational context, nor do they necessarily recruit their employees on the basis of a specific citizenship. In this way, they transcend conventional borders and ways of thinking about the use of force and security. A third problem with both

<sup>1</sup> DynCorp offered police training and advice in Iraq, while MPRI and Vinnell performed unarmed military advice services in Croatia and Saudi Arabia (Avant, 2005:17).

scholarly and journalistic research is a source problem. PMSCs are in many ways the stuff conspiracy theories are made of and in particular the Internet is overflowing with conspiracy theories about both the interests and the political reach of PMSCs. These, at times paranoid, depictions of PMSCs as a new version of the Military Industrial Complex and as gun-crazed maniacs stand in the way of informed discussions on the use of private sector argumentation in military and security debates, how to regulate them and what their impact is. For instance, the media attention surrounding the American PMSC Blackwater has created an image of private security as something associated with political ambitions, neoconservatives and human rights violations. However, this draws attention away from some of the subtler and relatively unnoted developments, such as the outsourcing of policing tasks to private security companies, private prisons and other less 'sensational' political decisions with impact on security architecture. It also draws attention away from smaller PMSCs who do not necessarily contract with states, but rather with other private companies, and who do not necessarily produce 'hard security' with guns and ammo, but rather supply their employers with information.

Volumes of literature have been dedicated to the question of 'why' a private market for force has emerged. In particular the end of the Cold War has been described as marking a particular watershed for the private sector as well as the emergence of low intensity conflicts, the loss of strategic interest in civil wars and ethnic conflicts, and the unwillingness of western governments to suffer casualties in international operations (Shearer 1998a; Singer 2005; Jäger and Kümmel 2007; Singer 2008). The end of the defining conflict of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 'end of history' carried with it a decrease in western defense budgets in the absence of clear and present threats. The cutbacks, especially in

the US, meant that state military professionals were now available for hire in the private sector (Singer 2008). With the Al Qaeda attacks on mainland USA in 2001 the need arose for this expertise now found in the private sector, which now sold back these services to the US government.

Apart from these imitate effects and the sudden need for a surge capacity, the private market for force has also been favored by two public sector and security trends: Firstly, the military downsizing of the 1990s took place in accordance with neo-liberal agendas of privatizations and New Public Management as public policy initiatives (Greve 2002:67; Singer 2008). Contracting private companies to provide security and military services is one aspect of this trend. Another aspect is the framing power it gives the private; rigid and ineffective state bureaucracies vs. a flexible and efficient private sector (Greve 2002:2; Mandel 2002:35; Avant 2005:35). Secondly, as analyzed in risk literature, is the idea of security as preventative and not restorative (Abrahamsen and Williams 2009:5). PMSCs market themselves on the basis of this idea; they quantify risks and help their employers guard against them. In this view, security is manageable thing that can be measured, operationalized and bought and sold. Accompanying risk literature is also an idea of increased risk adverseness. This drive for security creates an environment where security is subject to technical solutions (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011) and where the public initiative has fierce competition from the private sector: If you are not content with the protection that the public police force is providing, hire private security companies to guard your property. If your property or interests lie in states that do not have functioning or reliable police or security forces, you can hire an international security provider. Instead of threats stemming from nation states, in the form of conventional wars, an increasing num-

ber of threats to individual and collective security have been identified: Threats from natural disasters, declining supply of natural resources and international terror networks who have privatized the previous phenomena of state sponsored terrorism and concentrated it in the hands of 'venture capitalists' such as Osama Bin Laden (Ballard 2007:3).

These trends have professionalized the market for security and also created a new type of customer. For a time the predominant clientele for security and military services were states, who outsourced and privatized state functions. Now, private companies are also employing their services. The lines between the 'inside' and the 'outside' of states have become blurred and the state no longer has the complete monopoly on external relations, even if it still remains the most important link (Møller 2005:5). New actors are increasingly creating their own international / outside relations and the state has moved from government to governance in threat management (Rosén 2008:94). In other words, while a large proportion of the literature on PMSCs has dealt with the issue of a state-centric point of view, the maturation of the industry and its range of services now means that a closer look at private-private provisions seems warranted.

### 3. PMSC RESEARCH

Overall, the literature on PMSCs reflects the developments sketched out above. The literature has moved from being predominantly normative and centred on mercenarism in Africa in the first wave, through a state-centric focus and debates over the utility of states using PMSCs in the second wave, to the third wave where PMSCs are seen as treated as an element in security governance structures analyzed in terms of their wider impact on the state / society and public / private divides. The

focuses applied in the waves reflect the empirical developments of the periods and also the subsectors into which PMSCs have moved over the past six decades. The idea of waves in PMSC literature stems from Abrahamsen and Williams (2008) who introduced the notion of a first wave characterized by the condemnation of mercenaries (Abrahamsen and Williams 2008:132). This paper adds two waves to the analysis and traces the evolution in the scholarly treatment of private force with the corresponding evolution of the phenomenon.

#### First Wave Literature

The *first wave*, focusing on individual acts of mercenarism especially in Africa started around 1960. This body of literature focuses on the undertaking of individual mercenaries and those of the Private Military Firms (PMFs) just emerging, such as Executive Outcomes and Sandline in Africa (Angola and Sierra Leone) as the 'scourge of the third world' (Arnold 1999). Today, the corporate variety of private force has taken over both empirically and analytically. In terms of conceptual refinement and theoretical development the first wave offered few insights or attempts at placing private force in broader security frameworks or phenomena. It did, however, situate private force as a phenomenon primarily found in third world states. For more, see (Thayer 1969; Burchett and Roebuck 1977; Abdel-Fatau Musah and Kayode Fayemi 1999; Arnold 1999).

The first wave in privatization of security literature primarily employed the term 'mercenaries' and the negative associations this term brought with it (Abrahamsen and Williams 2009) focusing on the negative cases that reinforced their preexisting prejudice on the matter of private force. Conceptually, the idea of 'private force' underwent tremendous changes in the 1990's and went from signifying individual 'soldiers of fortune' to encompassing organized and registered businesses (for more



on the phases in the evolution of mercenaries and Private Military Firms, see Singer, 2008). The basic understanding of mercenaries in this era seems to be summed up in the following:

He is smuggled from one crisis to another according to the laws of supply and demand; he is expensive to purchase and expendable once the crisis has passed' (Thayer 1969: 169).

Burchett and Roebuck (1977) are even less diplomatic in their characterization:

And so, from the inadequate, the discarded, the cruel, the bully, the unimaginative, the fantasist, the racist, and above all the greedy are recruited the human resources to make the war machine work (Burchett and Roebuck, 1977: 8).

These definitions still influence the perceptions of private force today. In the first wave in particular, the definition of mercenaries stands in the way of effective, objective and scientific analysis of private force. Burchett and Roebuck touch upon the possibility that states may employ mercenaries to carry out military operations which have no popular support and which are kept secret from the public. They also touch upon something that is more central to a third world context; that rulers may employ mercenaries to suppress their people and not risk arming and training them for fear that they may turn 'their arms and training on the tyrant' (Burchett and Roebuck 1977:7). Another recurrent theme in the first wave is an assumption of an underlying neocolonialism whereby mercenaries are predominantly white men acting on behalf of western governments to destabilize third world countries. However, as the noted by Burchett and Roebuck above and as apparent in the cases of Sandline and Executive Outcomes below, mercenaries or

their corporate variety PMSCs were just as often used by local rulers to enforce their own rule. Engaging briefly with the, at the time, emerging corporate structures (PMSCs) Arnold maintained that these organizations were set up in an attempt to give the ancient mercenary trade a "*vener of respectability*" and that this "*poses enormous potential problems for the future*" (Arnold 1999:124).

Empirically, the first wave saw the crystallization of the phenomenon of private force into corporate structures of PMFs or PMSCs; a corporate variety added to that of individual acts of mercenarism, of which there are still examples. Still focused on old patters of private force, the first wave literature seems to have been unable to appreciate the significance of this new empirical reality. The formal and professional organisation of private force into companies constitutes something qualitative new as compared to individual soldiers of fortune. Labelling all private force as mercenarism is not only a simplification, its is also a fallacy; "The inexact term 'mercenary' is often used as a term of opprobrium, applied to any police, military, or paramilitary which the user dislikes" (Adams 1999:104). The 1990s provided some empirical examples of the developments in private force and the evolution away from mercenarism in its individualised form. Two companies in particular became infamous for their involvement in local conflicts in this period, but as the examples will show, they do not necessarily underpin the underlying first wave assumption of neo-colonialism.

#### *Sandline International (SI) operations in the 1990s*

SI was contracted in 1997 by the government of Papua New Guinea (PNG) under the leadership of Prime Minister Julius Chan to stop a nine year armed independence movement in Bougainville, PNG. SI was hired to train and provide logistical support to the PNDFF

(Papua New Guinea Defense Force). The dealings between SI and the government of Julius Chan later caused the political scandal known as the “Sandline affair” (Isenberg 1997; Young 1997). In 1998 SI helped restore the elected president of Sierra Leone, Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, to power after he had been ousted the year before in a military coup perpetrated by officers of the Sierra Leone Army. Earlier diplomatic attempts by the US and other governments and a UNSC (United Nations Security Council) arms embargo had all failed to restore the elected government. Although depicted as a private security firm guarding mining and construction interests in the country, SI claims to have been asked by the British High Commissioner in Sierra Leone to help train and equip a local force capable of ousting the officers behind the coup with tacit support from the US government (Gurdon 1998; Adams 1999).

#### *Executive Outcome (EO) operations in Africa in the 1990s*

EO’s first major contract came in 1992 when two oil companies, Gulf Chevron and Sonagol, hired EO to protect their oil installations in Soyo, Angola. In 1993 EO soldiers supported by Angolan military retook the oil installations from the rebel group UNITA (The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola). Between 1993 and 1994 EO was contracted by the Angolan government to train 4,000 to 5,000 Angolan government troops and 30 pilots (Goulet 1997; Isenberg 1997; Pech 1997). In 1994, EO was contracted by the Angolan government to fight the UNITA under the leadership of Jonas Savimbi (1934-2002) and helped end Angola’s three year civil war by pushing UNITA and Savimbi to sign the Lusaka Protocol in November 1994. EO conducted direct military operations during the conflict (Isenberg 1997).

In 1995 EO was contracted by Sierra Leone’s government under the leadership of Valentine Strasser (1967-) to fight the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) which controlled large parts of the country’s natural resources exports. EO was hired to provide limited basic training, intelligence, combat assistance, and the use of its radar for night-time attacks. Within ten months peace was secured, enabling the nation to hold its first presidential election in 23 years in March 1996 (Goulet 1997; Isenberg 1997; Reno 1997). EO claims to have supplied men and expertise to seven countries in Africa, among them countries like Kenya and Uganda besides Angola and Sierra Leone. In 1998, EO further claimed to have negotiated with clients in Malawi, Mozambique and Sudan. In 1999 EO went “out of business” apparently in response to South Africa’s new laws banning mercenary activity by its nationals (Adams 1999).

While the examples of SI and EO show the evolution of private force into its corporate form, this does not mean that individual mercenarism is a thing of the past. In the Libyan civil war there were reported cases of African mercenaries in the employ of the Gaddafi regime (BBC.co.uk 2012). Instead of signifying the end of mercenarism, the 1990s heralded in a new era in which the private force in its corporate form was legitimized and employed by not only third world states, but by first world states.

#### **The Second Wave Literature**

Where the first wave literature was centered on individual acts of mercenarism and was only beginning to accommodate the corporate structures of private force, the second wave literature focuses exclusively on the corporate structures of private force and its implications for states. Western states employing PMSC services as part of foreign policy or military instruments were now increasingly included as

empirical focal points, and subsequently the debate on state sovereignty now encompasses both PMSCs' effect on consolidated western states as well as their impact on weaker state structures, such as Iraq or Afghanistan.

It is also during the second wave that debates on how to regulate the use of PMCs emerge. This is significant since it implies that private force is no longer widely condemned, but subject to a more pragmatic approach on the part of both scholars and political decision makers. During the second wave, the industry takes steps to establish itself as a professional and trustworthy partner of states, among other things through the establishment of trade associations such as the International Stability Operations Association (ISOA) formerly known as the International Peace Operations Association (IPOA) founded in 2001, and the British Association of Private Security Companies (BAPSC) in 2006. These and other similar trade associations organize and professionalize an industry, which is still predominantly met with suspicions of war profiteering and the negative associations ingrained in the label 'mercenary'.

Like Sandline and Executive Outcome of the 1990s, most PMSCs are operated and owned by former military personnel. The infamous Blackwater, since renamed Xe and currently Academi, was started by Eric Prince, a former Navy SEAL, who initially saw a market in providing high-grade training facilities for soldiers on the North Carolina / Virginia border in the US (Scahil 2008). While Sandline and Executive Outcome in the first wave were under contract with third world governments, western states in need of surge capacity and other types of services increasingly hired PMSCs during the second wave. The literature is correspondingly overall marked by widespread agreement that PMSCs constitute something qualitatively new in terms of their spread and organisation, even if PMSCs

after the Cold War share some features with the 'free companies' of the Middle-Ages (Singer 2008:22-23). Conceptually, it should be noted that the overall label 'PMSC' in this period also included companies which provided logistics and non-armed services. KBR Inc., for instance, with its services in engineering and construction, is more of a private military contractor, and not a private military and security company. The label 'PMSC' is therefore at times in the second wave, misleading.

While these misconceptions about the PMSC industry still flourish, scholars in the second wave found a need to engage in conceptual refinement in order to provide nuances to the definitions of private force by creating taxonomies and subcategories of the private industry in order to avoid the analytical pitfalls of the first wave. Singer (2008) offered his tip-of-the-spear taxonomy of PMSCs whereby private force is classified according to its proximity to the battlefield (Singer 2008:92-93). According to this classification, **military provider firms** are firms that provide battle services and have the closest proximity to the battlefield (Singer 2008:93-95). **Military consultant firms** provide advisory and training services, strategic, operational and organizational analysis and education, but do not operate on the battlefield (Singer, 2008:95-96), while the last element in Singer's typology is **Military Support Firms**, defined as firms that supply supplementary military services, such as non-lethal aid, assistance, logistics, intelligence, technical support and transportation (Singer 2008:97, 137). What is clear from the conceptual work undertaken by Singer is the fact that the PMSC industry covers a multitude of services and is not simply engaged with armed services. Singer's typology also seems to sketch out the future venues for business development for PMSCs; the third type of military services, the support services, based on skills which have both military and civilian applica-

tion, is the least controversial, the most difficult to regulate, and a market in which we should expect the most development (Adams 1999). These services have low capital bases and are knowledge intensive and based on technical skills. The market for intelligence services is one such example.

One significant difference between the first and the second waves is the debate over the utility of PMSCs as an instrument of states. Empirically, this debate was fed by especially the US use of contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan, and previous state uses of military and security outsourcing in Bosnia and in Africa in the 1990s. Unsurprisingly, PMSC interest organisations such as the International Peace Operations Associations (IPOA) have been vocal supporters of an increased use of the private initiative in low-intensity conflicts and conflicts where committing military forces lack popular support (Brooks 2000a; Brooks 2000b; Spearin 2001; Spearin 2006; Spearin 2007). Opponents of the state outsourcing policies in this area have voiced concerns over private armies as an instrument for the Executive branch of government, effectively cutting off parliamentary oversight structures, but also over potential waste of tax payers' money (Donahue 1989; Shearer 1998a; Shearer 1998b; Markusen 2003; Avant 2005; Singer 2005:4; Ballard 2007; Scahill 2008). A 2011 US congressional inquiry into outsourcing practices during the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan revealed an approximate waste of \$31 billion to \$60 billion dollars due to poor contract management and fraud (Congress 2011:32; Hodge 2011).

The focus on PMSCs as a policy issue and the debates over how to manage contracts and how to regulate PMSC use of force inevitably led to discussions over the implications for state sovereignty (see for instance (Verkuil 2007) as well as to analyzes of the characteristics of states most likely to engage in outsourc-

ing practice in the military sphere (Krahmann 2010). Instead of an exclusively negative view of PMSCs, some contributors explored the venues for positive PMSC involvement in state military and international intervention. However, there is an inherent inability to look beyond the state as the primary object of reference in the second wave. Correspondingly this wave is inherently state-centric in its focus on the erosion of state power: Both the erosion of state power in established democracies and the disruptive effects the introduction of these entities has on unconsolidated states and unstable third world countries.

The state-centric perspective seems to be a necessary stage for the research into PMSCs to go through, after all the dominant empirical development of this era was the increase in western states use of private force in military conflicts. The empirical phenomenon of state outsourcing practices correspondingly guided the choice of theory in the second wave. For this reason, the second wave literature encompasses several themes which all handle the same problems: What are the pros and cons of security privatization and what are the consequences for state authority and sovereignty?

Scholars like Singer (2008), Kramer (2007), Ortiz (2007a), Mandel (2002), Avant (2005), Krahmann (2010) and Thomson (1994) all trace the use of private military force back to antiquity, thereby demonstrating that private military force is in essence not new, rather the novelty lies in the scope and the number of private companies. This constitutes an important lesson from the second wave literature; the relationship between state sovereignty and private force is not a new one; rather it is a dynamic that has played out for centuries. The establishment of the national state and the principle of sovereignty may have changed the way we perceive this relationship and the concepts we use to describe it, but private force

precedes this and is therefore not as much of an anomaly as one might think.

### *Iraq and Afghanistan*

What was perhaps an anomaly was the extent of private sector involvement in the two US-led wars in the 2000s. Empirically, especially the US government's use of contractors during its involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan provided insights into the range of services that private contractors were now beginning to provide. Services rendered included anything from kitchen workers, laundry services and mechanics to convoy protection and interrogation services in the Abu Ghraib prison. Empirically and conceptually, this muddling together of services makes it difficult to assess the extent of the armed services relative to the more mundane services such as laundry. In the aftermath of the wars, even estimating the exact number of contractors and contracts has proved extremely difficult.

In August 2011, a US Senate Bi-partisan Commission on Wartime Contracting published a report on the US use of contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan over the period of 2002-2011. The following table and statistics are taken from the report entitled: *'Transforming Wartime Contracting – Controlling Costs, Reducing Risks'* (Congress 2011).

As shown in table 1, the total number of contractor workers, U.S. nationals, local na-

tionals, and third-country nationals employed in Iraq and Afghanistan as of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010 was 262,631. Total spending on contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan over the period of 2002 to mid-2011 amounted to 192.5 billion dollars (Congress 2011). According to a 2011 Congressional Research Service Report, Department of Defense (DoD) numbers showed that in Afghanistan, as of March 2011, there were 90,339 DoD contractor personnel, compared to approximately 99,800 uniformed personnel. According to the same report, in Iraq, as of March 2011, there were 64,253 DoD contractor personnel compared to 45,660 uniformed personnel in-country (Schwartz and Swain 2011:2). The figures paint a picture of a U.S military architecture, increasingly dependent on private sector augmentation to perform its duties. It may also suggest that the risk involved in fighting wars is being privatized.

### *The Pros and Cons of Contracting*

The state-centric perspective of the second wave literature meant a preoccupation with the functional and strategic arguments for or against privatizing security. The proponents and opponents of the privatization of security largely disagree on the utility of privatizations to the state; does privatization benefit or cripple the state and by using which parameters can and should this be measured? (See for instance, (Shearer 1998a; Singer 2005;

Table 1. Defense, State, and USAID contractor personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan as of March 31, 2010

	<b>Defense</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>USAID</b>	<b>Total</b>
U.S. nationals	40,800	4,322	805	45,927
Local nationals	95,692	10,194	32,621	138,507
Third-country nationals	71,061	4,734	1,193	76,988
Unknown	---	60	1,149	1,209
<b>Total</b>	<b>207,553</b>	<b>19,310</b>	<b>35,768</b>	<b>262,631</b>

**Source:** GAO Report 11-1, *"Iraq and Afghanistan: Defense, State, and USAID Face Continued Challenges in Tracking Contracts, Assistance Instruments, and Associated Personnel,"* October 2010, 44-45.

Ballard 2007; Henriksen 2008; Scahill 2008; Krahnmann 2010). Proponents of state use of PMSCs present two main arguments in the literature:

- The use of PMSCs benefits the state and the authority of the state through a more efficient use of resources and enables an activist foreign- and security policy, by lowering the political costs of involvement (Henriksen, 2008). According to this view, PMFs are a valuable resource in solving humanitarian problems in Africa (Shearer 1998a; Shearer 1998b; Brooks 2000a; Brooks 2000b; MTF 2006:5; Henriksen 2008). For further readings on the use of PMSCs in interventions in weak states see: (Brooks 2000a; Spearin 2001; Abdel Fatau 2002; Bjork and Jones 2005; Bures 2005; Baker and Gumedze 2007; Grofe 2007; Hough 2007; Kinsey 2007; von Boemcken 2007; Zedeck 2007; Ortiz 2008; Percy 2009).
- PMSCs enable either overt or covert by-proxy involvement in conflicts and situations where direct state involvement is not an option ((Shearer 1998a; Singer 2005:4; Ballard 2007; Scahill 2008).

Skeptics, on the other hand, argue that this by-proxy use of contractors constitutes a democratic problem. For instance, contractor fatalities are not included in the official US statistics on the fatalities in Iraq or Afghanistan, nor is it believed that all companies officially report their casualties. The before-mentioned US Senate Bi-partisan Commission on Wartime Contracting concluded that no definitive accounting for federal civilian-employee deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan can be located (Congress 2011:31), but that “Between June 2009 and March 2011, contractor deaths in both Iraq and Afghanistan exceeded military deaths” (-Congress 2011:31). The lack of transparen-

cy into the number of casualties has political implications; the number of casualties is used as a measure of success and failure (Schooner 2008:79). For this reason, apart from the human tragedies, the lack of information on this issue inhibits parliamentary oversight of the use of force by the executive branch, just as it constitutes a democratic problem in terms of the citizenry (Avant, 2005). Control over the exercise of legitimate violence slides out of the hands of the elected officials and into the market, where it is difficult to re-establish democratic control over action take in the name of the state (Singer 2005). The shifting of risks onto contractors has led Schooner to conclude that “the military, in effect, is privatizing the ultimate sacrifice” (Nordland 2011).

Concerns have also been voiced over outsourcing practices leading to an increased risk of waste and fraud and that contract management is not a sufficient guard against this problem. Cases from Iraq especially, have shown that US government agencies have not been successful in ensuring proper contract management (Singer 2005:3). Another concern is the recruitment practices of PMSCs (Singer 2005:4). Are individual contractors properly trained, are they sufficiently psychologically robust, are they evaluated and, just as important, are they given accurate protection equipment to perform their duties? (Scahill 2008). Military personnel have also pointed to practical problems such as the lack of radio communication between private contractors and military convoys using the same roads in Iraq. Not being able to communicate and identify traffic could increase the risk of blue-on-blue fire. Some also point out that the use of PMSCs challenges military uniqueness and drains expertise from the armed forces; private contractors are usually better paid than their state employed counterparts (Singer 2005: 6).

A particularly wicked problem highlighted is the problem of the legal status of the individ-

ual contractors, and the implication for states wanting to prosecute contractors (Singer 2005: 5). This problem found empirical exemplification with the shooting of 17 civilians in Nisour Square in Baghdad in 2007 by Blackwater operatives protecting a US diplomatic convoy (Tavernise and Bowley 2007), (Tavernise 2007). Before leaving office as head of the Coalition Provisional Authority in 2004, Paul Bremer signed Coalition Provisional Authority Order 17 extending immunity from Iraqi law to all contractors working under contract with the US (Wright 2004). This effectively eliminated all chances of criminal charges being brought against the Blackwater operatives in an Iraqi court of law. Instead the episode was investigated by US authorities (FBI.gov).

Yet another set of concerns have been raised that outsourcing certain services may also lead to the military losing the ability to produce these services all together and that military structures end up depending on a private supplier who produces the service at a higher cost and at lower quality (Markusen 2003). Privatization of services in itself does not guarantee quality or lower costs, rather competition is the primary factor in ensuring efficiency. However, army-related activities make it difficult to sustain competition (Markusen 2003:471). The dynamics are as follows: When a contract is awarded to a private company, the state loses its in-house capability and expertise. This has dual consequences:

Firstly, it means the state is no longer able to compete with the private contractors and a monopoly arises. Secondly, it means that the state is not able to enforce or monitor contracts due to the lack of expertise in benchmarking services (Markusen 2003:471). The US Senate Bi-partisan Commission on War-time Contracting also voiced concerns over how contracts were awarded:

Agencies' procedures failed to generate effective competition. The government awarded a large logistics-support contract that ran for a decade without a re-competition, with cost-reimbursable task orders that were not subject to competition. For different reasons, its replacement contract also failed to provide effective competition' (Congress 2011:75), (see also Donahue (1989).

Under these conditions efficiency is bound to drop over time. Furthermore there is the risk of "corruption and capture of government by contractors, even to the extent of altering national defense and military policy" (Markusen 2003: 472). On the short term leasing or buying a service is cheaper than maintaining an in-house capability, but on the long term, it will take even more resources to rebuild that capability (Singer 2005; Ballard 2007:14) .

As apparent from the above, the main focus of the second wave rested with the involvement of PMSCs in military conflicts. This was no doubt driven by the empirical developments of the 2000s characterized by extensive PMSC involvement in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The second wave moved PMSC literature out of the normative decrying of mercenarism and into the area of state policies and management. Whereas the first wave seemed to call for a ban to private force, the second wave applied a more pragmatic perspective and explored the conditions under which the state monopoly on the legitimate use of violence could safely be outsourced to private actors. The second wave also raised some pressing questions about the impact of outsourcing practices on oversight procedures and democratic accountability, which will most likely only become more relevant as military and security outsourcing evolves.

### The Third Wave Literature

The third wave literature broadens its focus to include wider security practices of PMSCs and not only military functions. In terms of theoretical development, scholars writing in the third wave place the phenomenon of PMSCs in a wider security governance framework, broad theoretical deliberations about the post-modern state and the blurring of the lines of demarcation between the state and the private sector.

The third wave increasingly uses sociological approaches to capture the wider changes to security in state and society; this is also where the concept of risk is merged with the production of PMSCs. Security and privatisation are seen as cases of production and reproduction of ties and perceptions of threats and security solution in both the public and the private sphere. In terms of the analytical object, the third wave of literature departs from the second wave by not focusing on the state or the market, but rather on specific fields of security, what constitutes these fields, how power is distributed, who is empowered or disempowered by the structures (Bigo 2002; Leander 2005). Security is here understood as a field of production inhabited by actors, rather than an *a priori* function of the state.

Moving away from the idea that the privatization of security is something which happens to the state, and that rather the state is an active part of the instigation and implementation of this trend, allows for a much more flexible analysis of the privatization issue. Exclusively viewing security privatization through the prism of state monopoly on violence ignores the additional effects of privatization on social, economic and international relations, just as the idea of the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence is treated as a fact, rather than a construct. Looking at the issue from a different perspective than that of state centrism makes it possible to engage actively with the

practices of PMSCs and how these change the construction of dichotomies such as national/international, market/state, military/security. Also, instead of a one-eyed focus on the armed practices of PMSCs the third wave includes hypotheses on non-material aspects of PMSC resources and activities, as well as of how they create a market around their capabilities. For instance, Leander (2005) argues that PMSCs possess *epistemic power*. By virtue of their inclusion into the field of security, PMSCs shape security policies, they do not merely implement them (Leander 2005:804). PMSCs influence the security discourse through agenda-control, the power to shape preferences and identities (lobbyism) and through the reproduction of a highly specialized field of security, in which the 'experts' facilitate a technical, managerial and military understanding of the area which empowers PMSCs (Leander 2005:822). Abrahamsen and Williams (2009) couple the concept of declining state authority over force with the rearticulating of the private/public and the local/global distinction; security has been depolitized and turned into a "technical problem amenable to private solution" (Abrahamsen and Williams 2009:5). Also empowering private military and security actors is a general shift in the perception of security; non-state actors are legitimated as security providers and security is no longer about threats, but about identifying and managing risks:

Risk is not simply a synonym for danger; it is a particular way of thinking about and responding to potential dangers. It is preventative, not restorative. Primarily actuarial and calculative, it works by designing and controlling spaces, through the collection of statistics and the production of categories of danger, and by surveillance. Risk is, therefore, a way of approaching security that can be deployed by private



actors just as effectively as by public ones. (Abrahamsen and Williams 2009:5).

In this way, the occurrence of the private security sector is the expression of "shifts in social and political life and in economic structures" (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011:59). The construction of the responsible security consumer and the neo-liberal governance has resulted in the pluralization of security actors and governance, which cannot be thought of as an extension of the state (ibid.:69). Private security actors have their own objectives and practices, by which they shape and reshape security architecture.

Unlike the second wave contributors who focus mainly on the market as a entity subject to its profit-making logics, Abrahamsen and Williams interject that the corporate nature of the PMSCs not only increases the range of services that they offer, it also means that they possess the material and *ideational* capacity to operate globally (ibid.). They operate under different constraints compared to states, and are not bound to one territory. PMSCs are part of complex security networks that combine public and private, global and local actors into entities that are not confined to a national setting, rather they are part of global security assemblages (Abrahamsen and Williams 2009:6).

In order to capture the complexity of the private sector involvement in security and its involvement with states Abrahamsen and Williams call for a fusion between approaches in international relations, sociology and criminology (Abrahamsen and Williams 2008:141). One example of how private security practices merge with these approaches is found in the security conglomerate G4S and the outsourcing of policing practices in the UK. In 2012 the UK Lincolnshire Police Authority announced plans to contract with G4S on the construction and running of police stations.

G4S employees would take over all functions shy of making arrests (Plimmer and Warrell 2012). However, the process of outsourcing and bidding on the 200 million pound contract ground to a halt when G4S was unable to fulfill another of its high prestige contracts in 2012 – providing security for the 2012 Olympic Games in London. In 2011 G4S was awarded the contract to provide security services for the 2012 Olympic Games. Under the contract G4S was to supply 13,700 security guards for the games, but failed to fulfill its obligations. Instead the UK government had to call in 3,500 military personnel to provide security, leaving the G4S reputation in tatters and a loss of 70 million pounds (BBC.co.uk 2012; BBC.co.uk 2013). Outsourcing security for a major sporting event is not the only outsourcing experiment undertaken by British authorities. The private security company XFor has been issuing fines for littering on behalf of British councils leading to an increase in the number of issued fines from 727 in 1997 to 63,883 in 2012 (Davey and Lynch 2013). Accusations are emerging that the councils may have treated the outsourcing of fines as a cash cow through incentivizing the private contractors to issue as many fines as possible (Davey and Lynch 2013).

The main contribution of the third wave was putting private force into a wider societal context and defining PMSCs as impacting on both military and security dimensions. Theoretically, the application of sociological frameworks, such as the notion of security as a field of practice, was essential in capturing the empirical breadth and depth of the phenomenon of private force. As should be clear from this overview of the main waves of PMSC literature, academic scholarship and research into private force has undergone a rapid evolution mirroring the devolution of the empirical phenomenon itself. The industry has moved from military provisions to security and policing

services and the relationship between state and market is becoming increasingly blurred. This means there is still work to be done theoretically, conceptually and empirically. This paper does not aim at solving the conceptual issues inherent in the literature, rather it adds a new concept to the mix; *private intelligence companies*. By adding this it also points to a new area of empirical interest, namely that of private intelligence provisions.

#### 4.A FOURTH WAVE?

Previous waves of PMSC literature have provided insights into the dynamics of the market for force and the impact of this on state structures and state sovereignty. They have done so with regard to both military provisions and security provisions. This section argues that the empirical development of the private military and security industry now warrants a closer look at knowledge provisions, in the form of intelligence services provided by private intelligence companies (PICs). For some reason the third tier of Singer's tip-of-the-spear taxonomy, the intelligence and technical solutions providers, has not received as much attention as the PMSCs who carry weapons. However, research into intelligence companies would provide a link with the hypotheses set forward by Leander: that PMSCs possess epistemic power. Collecting and analyzing intelligence material for policy makers or for private companies can be seen as a distinct form of epistemic power impacting on decision making.

Companies such as Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Booz Allen Hamilton, and SAIC already supply both collection of hardware and analytical intelligence products to official US intelligence production (Shorrocks 2008). The state-private contractual relationships in intelligence have also been the subject of journalistic investigation: It took the Washington

Post two years of research and trawling through US budgets and records to penetrate the veil of secrecy surrounding intelligence contracts (Priest and Arkin 2010). The 'Top Secret America Washington Investigation' from 2010 estimated that approximately 854,000 people had top-secret security clearances and that the CIA had contracts with 114 private companies, while The Department of Homeland Security had contracts with an estimated 318 private companies (Priest and Arkin 2010). These contracts are not limited to the provisions of hardware; contracts in intelligence analysis have also been awarded to private contractors (ibid.).

There are signs that the area of analytical private intelligence provision may be 'the next big thing' for PMSCs. For instance, in 2011 former employees of Blackwater announced the formation of a new private intelligence company named 'Jellyfish' identifying its clients as corporate decision makers (Ackerman 2011). Their company website states that: "Jellyfish provides innovative analytic support to foster a better understanding of economic, political and military theaters of operation" (Jellyfish 2013).

While contracting with states may be big business, the PIC industry also markets its knowledge products to the commercial sector as elements in risk management and investment protection. Older companies such as Control Risks emerged out of the market for Kidnap & Ransom services in the 1970s, but now also supply private companies with a wide range of intelligence products (Risk 2013). Strategic Forecasting, Inc., more commonly known as Stratfor, has been open for business since 1996 and is perhaps the best-known example of a private intelligence provider. Other similar intelligence and risk management companies have arisen around the problem of international maritime piracy, such as Risk Intelligence (Riskintelligence.eu 2012) and Dryad Maritime Intelligence (Dryad 2012).

An overall characteristic of this new type of PMSC is the marketing of knowledge products aimed at equipping corporate decision makers to make smart decisions and protect their assets, but also at identifying business opportunities and dangers, as well as key people of interest when a company is thinking of setting up shop outside their normal geographical area. Companies such as Dryad and Risk Intelligence market their products to state bodies and clients alike (Dryad 2012; Riskintelligence.eu 2012). State structures seem to in some cases create markets for these privately supplied intelligence and investigative services, for instance through anti-corruption and anti-bribery legislation, such as the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1977 and the UK Bribery Act 2010, which creates a need for due diligence services in private businesses. These companies are less centered on hard security provisions and armed protection and more focused on providing knowledge and advice. Consequently, as noted by Adams (1999), they are less controversial and the need to regulate them is less apparent.

However, knowledge, advice and intelligence can be seen as elements of productive power (see for instance, Barnett and Duvall (2005) for a study on the forms of power), which makes their production no less interesting from an international relations or a political science point of view. That these companies market their products to both state and corporate clients, also should not make them less interesting academically. Additionally, like PMSCs, many of the PICs employ former military personnel and law enforcement personnel and perform their services with reference to state legislation making them an interesting object for analysis in governance literature.

With this new evolution of private force into the area of knowledge production, what is needed is an in-depth understanding of the interplay between state and market in intelli-

gence provisions. Inherent in both the second and partially the third wave literature is a focus on the state as the primary client of PMSC services, but private-private exchanges should not be neglected. PMSCs are marketing both protection and intelligence services to private sector clients such as shipping firms transiting cargo through high-risk waters. While state actors do provide intelligence and protection assistance to ships transiting through pirate-infested areas, state actors can only do so much to protect commercial traffic. Consequently, maritime piracy mitigation seems to be an area in which conventional lines between state and market provisions are blurring. The question is, what the impact of this reconstitution of security exchanges is? Also needed, is a focus into how these companies market themselves, their self-styling and self-perceptions and the way they interact with states in terms of contracts, but also in more symbolic ways. For instance, does the state inhibit private sector intelligence practices or facilitate it, and what are the wider implications of PIC activities in terms of for instance privacy, information security and threat perception?

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The private industry for force and security is undergoing a rapid evolution, ever morphing and forming ties with other parts of private commercial life. This broadening both in terms of depth and breadth of private actors in military and security services will have a profound impact on traditional concepts of security, intelligence as well as on the relationship between states and citizens. This brief working paper has taken stock of the empirical developments in the market for PMSCs and the corresponding academic attempts at developing concepts and theories to analyze these developments.

By identifying where we have been, it has identified where we need to go in order to gain more insights into the dynamics and workings of the private industry for force and security. Since the first writings on private force in the 1960s to the latest writings on private security in the current decade focus has shifted from mercenarism to corporate versions of private force, from military services to security and policing services. Nature and markets abhor vacuums and there is no reason to expect PMSCs to go away anytime soon. Rather, the industry is finding new areas to apply its skills such as intelligence and information security, which are less controversial and less visible than armed services. As a consequence this paper has argued, that there is a need to focus more on the knowledge production facets of PMSCs, which have seen rapid development in recent years, instead of getting bogged down in more debates on state sovereignty and private military provisions. The paper has also argued for a new venue of research into the private-private exchanges between PMSCs and commercial companies in order to better understand the next generation of private security providers.

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