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**Privatization of Warfare:
How Private Military Companies might have
affected Middle Eastern Conflicts**

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Acronyms Index

Full Name	Acronym/Abbreviation
Private Military Companies	PMC
Private Security Companies	PSC
Private Security Firms	PSF
High-Value-Target	HVT
High-Value	HV
Point of Interest	POI
Very Important Person	VIP
United Nations	UN
United States of America	U.S.
People's Republic of China	P.R.C.
Russian Federation	R.F.

Introduction to the Thesis

Introduction

An increasingly privatized world encompasses various aspects of relations: from socioeconomic and political ones to military aspects. The advent of the private sector into the conflicts of states is not a recent phenomenon. In fact, it spanned for hundreds of years. Mercenaries have always existed. Although, for how similar they might seem, they are quite different. As a matter of fact, as history progressed and so did technology, an inverse relationship of sorts rose. A comparison between mercenaries in the 1500s and a modern private operator creates a quite stark, explicative difference. The former would never be able to withstand the undeniable might of a state army, not even a direct confrontation. In juxtaposition, the latter would be capable of holding up to confrontations with a less powerful state. An economically predisposed company would be rife with military equipment that can be used to great effect. Hence, technology and the economic role of capitalism introduced a significant pawn, that of Private Military Companies. Moreover, lest the trend is completely reversed, private companies have historically acquired greater capacities than what mercenaries were capable of. Not yet fully adept in replacing a fully-fledged and state-owned army, especially that of a particularly powerful state, they still represent an aspect of international relations which is not that explored. These companies can be a threat when their clients utilize them in the right scenarios, with the right economic compensations.

The author of this thesis found it particularly compelling how the private military world is not as extensively discussed and analyzed as other elements of international relations. These privately owned companies are well-versed in combat proficiency. Therefore, they could represent uncharted territory in legal and political terms. Which is why it was decided that this dissertation will be dedicated to how the impact of private military companies might have, or might not have, affected certain conflicts. A division was necessary in order to create a coherent and logically-sound written production. The structure is as follows: Introduction as a quick overview of what this thesis represents, Chapter 1 as the fact-based chapter laying the groundwork for premises and evaluations, Chapter 2 starting with the Analytical Framework but then focusing on a description of the Case Studies, Chapter 3 as the analysis based on previous chapter findings, and finally the conclusion which acts as the finalized and succinct element of this thesis. Quite evidently none of this would be possible without a clear direction of argument on what the dissertation would look like. Thus, everything was based on the chosen case studies as the starting point. In the theoretical process, two premises laid the foundation for the choice of the case studies: firstly, that on a topic with relatively less literature and documents, it must have been necessary to pick less recent conflict where data and statistics have been well-digested and documented. Secondly, since the world of private companies is quite vast and agglomerates anything from western-based companies to eastern-based ones, it would have been overly demanding and frankly less precise to not concentrate on one aspect. Therefore, the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan became the best bets for a compromise between reliability and peculiarity. Both the conflicts saw the participation of the United States of America, in addition to both wars undergoing actions

by private companies with military background. Otherwise, more recent wars would have come at the cost of less literature and data reliability. Even given the substantial presence of those companies in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is not often thought of bringing them up at worst, or barely mentioning them at best. Hence, the birth of this final dissertation in exploring the real significance of these companies in surgical settings and not generalized ones. The purpose is not only to see how the private military companies have taken roles in state-centric wars, but also to reason their potential impact at larger scales. It is rather fundamental to discern why the private military sector is growing in its extent to influence modern warfare. Moreover, this not only presupposes a potential revision for the modus operandi of contemporary warfare, but also legal, political, and economic evaluations on the interplay between states and the private. Moreover, this reasoning would be conceded by a thorough analysis thanks to official authoritative documents, academic sources from journals to books to research papers, and reliable articles. Where possible, primary sources will be used. Although, considering the private nature of companies, and due to reasons of privacy, it is quite challenging to unveil the truth with a comprehensive analysis. Furthermore, the hypothesis was formulated based on a research question, which in turn was based on the case studies, together with the dependent and independent variables; all of which are put forth in the upcoming chapters. Lastly for the introduction to this thesis, it is important to note that all considerations and ideas of the author can either be confirmed or rejected based on the findings. Essentially, of vital importance are unbiased analyses that to the best of their abilities describe and comprehend the reality of the advent of Private Military Companies.

Chapter 1

Contextualization, Background, Definitions

1.0 Contextualization

Abraham Maslow’s pyramid of human needs greatly depicts the microlevel of societies, as much as it does the international affairs. A person, much like a state, needs security at the most basic and fundamental level of survival. An individual, similarly to a state, will go great lengths to achieve a comfortable degree of security. When the former requests it from the latter and the latter does not provide it, security issues arise. Even in the case of the state, it cannot always protect itself. In fact, suppose an American high value target in Baghdad at the height of the Iraq war, where every corner anticipates danger; here, safety by the United States cannot be guaranteed. This is where the private corporations steal the scene.

The presence of private intervention in state affairs is by no means innovative, lest centuries of usage are forgotten. In fact, since the concept of war emerged, so did the profession of mercenaries. Considered as the “world’s second oldest – profession”,¹ there are extensive documentations on their presence: from ancient Greece and Rome to the Middle Ages and Renaissance, to the 20th centuries with the birth for private companies acting as mercenaries, to finally the modern day.² A quite notable extensive conglomerate of mercenaries was in the 1700s and 1800s, through the East India Company which boasted a considerable private army for its protection.³ Interestingly enough, the engagement of mercenaries for state affairs in modern times is forbidden from the United Nations, C.N.888.2004.TREATIES-1: “International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing, and Training of Mercenaries”.⁴ What truly is fascinating is the lack of ratification by the world most dominant and influential countries: the United States of America (U.S.), People’s Republic of China (P.R.C.), and the Russian Federation (R.F.).⁵ It is not so obvious to preclude the presence, assistance, and direct involvement of private actors on behalf of states in recent belligerent events. This thesis will analyze exactly this, their role in the Middle East, focusing on two case studies: Iraq and Afghanistan.



¹ S. Percy, “Mercenaries”, Oxford Bibliographies, 11th May 2020, last accessed: March 10th 2023, <https://bit.ly/3Z201p3> .

² Ibid.

³ D. Bell, “private military company”, Encyclopedia Britannica, November 2nd 2016, last accessed: March 10th 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/private-military-firm> .

⁴ Secretary – General United Nations, “INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AGAINST THE RECRUITMENT, USE, FINANCING AND TRAINING OF MERCENARIES”, United Nations, New York 4th December 1989, last accessed: March 10th 2023, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/CN/2004/CN.888.2004-Eng.pdf> .

⁵ United Nations Convention, “International Convention against the Recruitment , Use, Financing, and Training of Mercenaries”, United Nations, New York 4th December 1989, last accessed: March 10th, https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=IND&mtdsg_no=XVIII-6&chapter=18&clang=en .

⁶ OnTheWorldMap, “Afghanistan”, last accessed: March 10th 2023, <https://ontheworldmap.com/afghanistan/> .

⁷ OnTheWorldMap, “Iraq”, last accessed: March 10th 2023, <https://ontheworldmap.com/iraq/> .

The private industry for security is a bulwark and must not go unnoticed. Especially the companies at the top, count thousands of personnel of what effectively can be denoted as a -private- standing army.⁸ Domestic security firms are also booming, two are the examples: “in Britain, the number of employees in the field rose from 10,000 in 1950 to 250,000 in 1976 ... there are more private guards than the state has uniformed active troops”.⁹ Moreover, in the US, once again domestically, “by 1972 the private security industry had almost twice as many employees and 1.5 times the budget of local, state, and federal police forces combined”.¹⁰ If these numbers were not surprising enough, in 1995, this industry gained a substantial \$52 billion a year,¹¹ together with an estimated 1,600,000 active private personnel. Shockingly enough, this number far surpasses that of standing armies of many if not all western states. Furthermore, it should be considered that this is data of 28 years ago. The likeliness of the increase of these numbers is not only a probability, but a certainty. These numbers do not cover statistics for Private Military Companies (PMCs), which operate mostly on foreign territory. A quick look at another set of data is equally telling for example, in 2007 the industry giants DynCorp, Blackwater, and Triple Canopy earned millions. In fact, “Blackwater earned over US \$472 million in revenue during the previous year, while Triple Canopy earned just over US\$59 million and DynCorp received approximately US\$39 millions”.¹² A deeper dive in these statistics will be later provided in the appropriate section.

A brief excursus on why the private sector boomed in the last decades is of uttermost importance. The cold war generated a paradox. As the world was divided in two, states were getting more and more powerful. Notwithstanding the felt consequences and still present aftermath of World War two, there could be no major conflict amongst the U.S. and the USSR; otherwise, it would create never seen before devastating effects for the world because of the nuclear arsenal at their disposal. Wars became more localized, and proxies were the norm. This is extremely relevant to the rise of PMCs: non-state actors such as international criminals, “terrorists”, and of course eventually PMCs, became capable of changing the relative power of the international social order.¹³ So while states, at least the nuclear-capable ones, engaged less and less into outright conflicts and global conflicts, the private actors started to plant their seeds. Despite their influence, what triggered further involvement is in the 1990s, the end of the cold war, globally causing 6 million army personnel to be unemployed due to the shrinking of army sizes.¹⁴ Subsequently, these same personnel who was used to a certain type of lifestyle, and a specialized set of skills, were up for grab. This is where the private industry started booming. The Cold War was indeed a period of general societal anxiety, distress, and continuous geopolitical struggle. Despite this, arguably, it brought

⁸ M. Van Creveld, *The Rise and the Decline of the State* (Cambridge University Press 26th June 2009), Chapter 6 “Decline of state 1972-”, page 404.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ M. Van Creveld, *The Rise and the Decline of the State*, page 405.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² F. Scott, *Private Security Companies during the Iraq War*. 1st ed. Taylor and Francis, 2015.

¹³ P.W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry and its ramifications for International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Winter, 2001-2002), page 193.

¹⁴ Ibid.

general stability. States knew that they either sided with the Trans-Atlantic, capitalist, American led block, or its Soviet, Communist counterpart. Key players were vastly distinguished and fewer than nowadays. Not only on a state-to-state basis, but also on a state-to-private level. It is open to debate to what extent, but it is clear that big tech, - technologically disposed company giants - has gained traction also in international relations and not in just a military sense.¹⁵ On the topic of technological giants and advancements, military operations are no longer elegant, Clausewitzian¹⁶ engagements with large number of soldiers, rather quick and swift strikes backed by incredibly sophisticated technological gear which rely on specialized personnel.¹⁷ Power derives from these military systems. If then such is coupled with higher interconnectedness through globalization, it is difficult not to see how private actors can get a hold on these pieces of equipment and by proxy gain power. The monopoly of violence by Weber, and the Hobbesian contractualism seem to become more and more obsolete concepts, at least to a certain degree. As previously presented, the security market is not only increasing, but flowering. States must seriously consider this potential arising issue where the private might surpass (if it has not done so already, that is) the historical hegemonic power of official standing armies. While out of scope for this dissertation, it is nonetheless compelling to consider whether or not a future dominated by private monopoly of violence will very much become a reality. If the current trends might persist, it will indeed happen.

One might ask why these private firms are so successful and highly sought after, but the answer is straightforward. Specifically for the companies, the economies of scale (mass production/acquiring of weaponry, equipment allows for more personnel who in turn bring further success and income) and low barriers of entry to the industry allow their flourishing. Traditional armies are vastly costlier to organize, deploy, and supplement.¹⁸ Whereas private companies, while maintaining similar level of success if not higher, require less spending. Additionally, Mercenaries and private firms, which are not the same, are specialized at one task and one task only: guarantees. They are negligent when it comes to rules of engagement, and preservation of human life. What matters is the safety of their clients and nothing else; except, personal financial gains of course.

1.1 Are Mercenaries Private Military Corporations?

In the everyday terminology, mercenaries are often confused and interchangeably used with Private Military Corporations. This is erroneous, a clear distinction must be well-defined. To explore their differences, it is important to understand them. A mercenary is “a soldier who fights for a foreign country or group for pay”.¹⁹ Immediately, the striking words are “soldier”, “fights”, “pay”. It can be extrapolated that a mercenary is a person

¹⁵ P. Apostolicas, “SILICON STATES: HOW TECH TITANS ARE ACQUIRING STATE-LIKE POWERS.” *Harvard International Review* 40, no. 4 (2019): page 18–21, last accessed: March 15th, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26917261> .

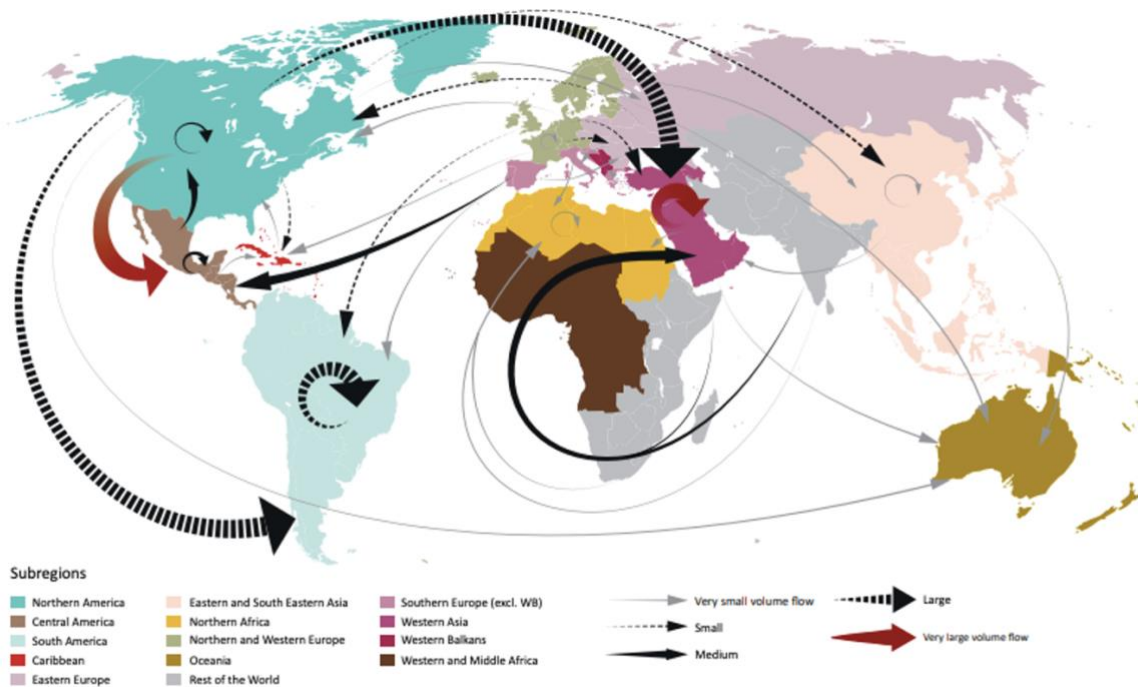
¹⁶ J. E. Shepard JR, *On War: Is Clausewitz still relevant?*, US Army War College, page 88.

¹⁷ P.W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry and its ramifications for International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Winter, 2001-2002), page 195.

¹⁸ Norwich University Online, “The Cost of U.S. Wars then and now”, Military History Norwich University Online, October 20th 2020, last accessed: March 15th, <https://online.norwich.edu/academic-programs/resources/cost-us-wars-then-and-now> .

¹⁹ Cambridge Dictionary, “mercenary”, last accessed: March 15th 2023, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/mercenary> .

capable of deploying into a belligerent scenario, who is combat-efficient, for a financial reward. As previously mentioned, they were vastly present throughout the course of history. One might argue that a gun-for-hire like a mercenary, is easily available nowadays thanks to the immense networking that comes with globalization. Not only in terms of availability of transport, communication, and origins of the mercenary, but also of guns and other equipment used by such. As a matter of fact, the black market for firearms runs rampant, in the hundreds of thousands.²⁰



Global data on the trafficking of firearms, by the UN in 2020.²¹

It is not surprising that the majority of gun flows derive from the United States, considering the particularly free use of firearms that characterizes it. Analytically speaking, the prominent Private Military Security Corporations (PMSCs) are mostly of American origin.

It is quite challenging to define what a Private Military Company is, as any scholars have varied opinions and definitions on this phenomenon. While in the upcoming section there will be an in-depth distinction of the various shades of a PMC, prior to it there shall be a word-for-word analysis of this term. According to the Warsaw Institute, this term describes the “independent corporations that trade military services through a wide range of opportunities they have due to their corporate nature”.²² This view agglomerates ideas behind the three words of PMC.

Firstly, “private” entails that individuals are completing the tasks. Thereby, states can make use of “individuals” to perform their needs, which obviously is cunning as it circumvents the placement of faults on the

²⁰ UNODC, Global Study on Firearms Trafficking, 2020 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.20.IV.1).

²¹ Ibid.

²² P. Wojciech, “The Awakening of Private Military Companies”, Warsaw Institute, 20/08/2020, last accessed: March 15th 2023, https://warsawinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/RS_08-2020_EN.pdf.

state itself; now the fault resides on the individual (and to an extent the company behind the individual). Secondly, “military” is what gives the connotation to the purpose of this phenomenon of PMCs. Additionally, it is important to shed on light on the implications of this word: not only these individuals perform military tasks, the likes of which include offensive and defensive missions, but it strongly denotes the background of these individuals. If they are not veterans or ex-soldiers, for the least they possess some form of military training. Thirdly, “companies” (or “corporations”) is the power load behind the individual. The company itself is what equips, supplies, and sustains their operators.²³ The company is the product of – by nature of the word - the capitalist and globalized enterprise. As later it will be detailed, the profits are nothing to glance over. Therefore, the world more or less reluctantly has to acquiesce the presence of profit-based military companies. Moreover, one can conceptualize the three words into: private (therefore individuals) as the *substance* since they are what constitutes the PMC, military as the *form* since they represent the specialization of the firm, and finally company as the *purpose* since ultimately the goal is economic. Now the larger picture is starting to make further sense: states - in particular those who are capable of outright financing them including but not limited to USA, Russia and China - make use of these companies because they are efficient, powerful, and advanced.²⁴ They boast no flag, no allegiance. This is both convenient for states, but not as much for the receiving end of these private military operations. They can be the underground network for states: anything ranging from intelligence to protection of high value targets to outright combat missions, coupled with advanced equipment (funded by profits), a mighty warhorse of availability of combat-ready helicopters, armored trucks, and tanks²⁵, PMCs are assets of incredible value.

Now that both mercenaries and PMCs are identifiable to a certain degree, it is possible to compare and contrast them.

1.1.1 Comparison: Mercenaries and PMCs

A first point of convergence between the concept of mercenaries and private military companies is the background of its members. If there is an overlap, in some sense identical, that would be role of military training. In order to perform missions for their clients, it is crystalline that expertise in firearms and combat is not only required but demanded by the contractors. Strike missions, protection and escort of VIPs, elimination of targets, sabotage and what not; all of these are military oriented. It is, however, debatable whether mercenaries are more so contracted for offensive-type missions²⁶ rather than for security and protection, with the latter being an important aspect of private companies as demonstrated earlier. Additionally, at some point of their career, members of these companies were mercenaries²⁷.

²³ P.W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry and its ramifications for International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Winter, 2001-2002), page 216.

²⁴ P. Wojciech, “The Awakening of Private Military Companies”, Warsaw Institute, 20th August 2020, last accessed: March 15th 2023, https://warsawinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/RS_08-2020_EN.pdf.

²⁵ F. Scott, *Private Security Companies during the Iraq War*. 1st ed. Taylor and Francis, 2015.

²⁶ B. Debusmann Jr, “Private military firms see demand in Ukraine”, BBC News, 9th March 2022, last accessed: March 15th 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-60669763>.

²⁷ P.W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry and its ramifications for International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Winter, 2001-2002), page 192.

Consequentially, the completion of these missions requires quite a considerable margin of profit.²⁸ A mercenary might or might not be part of a group or organization, so the income could or could not be only regarding the mercenary itself. Again, as alluded to earlier, the private industry of security and military operations is fruitful for those part of it, so the main purpose of mercenaries and companies alike is exactly that: to profit of their combat proficiency. Higher pay is often characteristic of more dangerous and deadly missions. The nature of capitalist enterprise is at full display: competition between firms (and mercenaries) derives from the desire to surpass others and gain a monopolistic competition of the market. As a matter of fact, this market is quite monopolistic at worst and oligarchic at best.

A final point of comparison is the lack of allegiance amongst the two. A mercenary is a gun for hire, there is no flag to salute, no patches to wear, no government to report to. Similarly, a military company has no country to pledge loyalty. What dictates any level of cooperation and trust between contractor and client is the deal. The higher the adherence to the contractor, the higher the trust between the parties. Rapidity and completion of the terms of the contract are what might create a form of allegiance and connection between the parties of the contract, unless a more financially fortunate client emerges. In fact, a binding contract is long term, and unless terms do not specifically forbid it, a mercenary or company can even abort a mission during its course.²⁹

1.1.2 Contrast: Mercenaries and PMCs

The differences far outweigh the similarities. Firstly, it is a question of structure and accountability. Assuming that a mercenary may either work as a lone wolf or be part of a group, in either case a Private Military/Security Company will nonetheless be more structured with specialized employees. Since there is an actual industry with real stocks, these companies have to be well designed, structured, and operational. Mercenaries do not worry about the stock market, they mostly “tend to demand payment in hard cash”.³⁰ This is far more telling than one cannot imagine. Stocks, shares are longer term than cash, and in the words of P.W. Singer, payment in cash and mercenaries “cannot be relied on beyond the short term”.³¹ Thus for Private Military Firms, it is not the people who matter but the structure they are within. A number of PMF employees have also been mercenaries at one time or another. These companies must build credibility which inevitably brings larger networking and reputation. In turn, reputation brings income. Moreover, private companies that operate on a real market are vastly more accountable than a lone mercenary or mercenary group. For example, Ulrich Petersohn, in his book “The Impact of Mercenaries and Private Military and Security Companies on Civil War Severity between 1946 and 2002”, calls mercenaries as in general “brutal and trigger-happy actors”.³² As it will be shown

²⁸ Professional Overseas Contractors, “Private military company pay vs army pay”, October 27 2017, last accessed: March 27th 2023, <https://www.your-poc.com/private-military-company-pay-vs-army-pay/>.

²⁹ F. Scott, *Private Security Companies during the Iraq War*. 1st ed. Taylor and Francis, 2015.

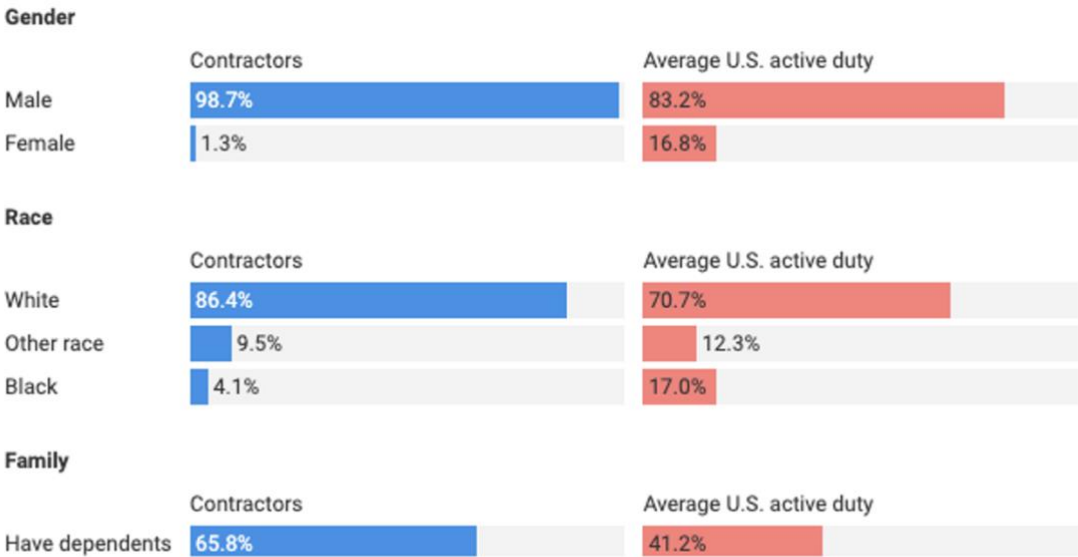
³⁰ W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry and its ramifications for International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Winter, 2001-2002), page 192.

³¹ Ibid.

³² U.Petersohn, *The Impact of Mercenaries and Private Military and Security Companies on Civil War Severity between 1946 and 2002*, International Interactions, 17th Jan. 2014, page 205.

in the upcoming section, companies such as Blackwater and DynCorp were and still are influential in their sector. Thus, if they were to disappear from the market, this would create great instability. They are incredibly more accountable than the mercenary counterpart, who theoretically could vanish from the market. Once again it is to point out that even if private companies are accountable for their actions, they still enjoy infinitely more arbitrary decision-making and flexibility than a state with its army; whom has to respect treaties, avoid war crimes, keep in mind alliances and much more. A private military company must keep in mind only its survival and that of its clients.

The scope of a private military company is larger than that of a mercenary group. Since these companies enjoy larger numbers, larger income, better equipment (including vehicles), their combat efficiency far succeeds that of a mercenary group. While quite blunt, an indicative analogy would be pairing up a drug cartel in a violent city, against the special forces of that same country. The former can still be equipped with powerful means, but it simply cannot compete against highly trained and funded special operatives on a 1:1 scenario. The efficiency of private military corporations is outstanding, with the death of clients not even reaching the double digits.³³ They are not an idea, they are service in a capitalist market. Therefore, a service must provide excellence to be successful; especially when dealing with contracts with states such as the United States of America; whom, knows the importance of these companies. This is reflected by an estimated projected increase to \$420 billion by 2029.³⁴



This table refers to data on “who” makes up the business of private contractors in the U.S.³⁵

³³ F. Scott, *Private Security Companies during the Iraq War*. 1st ed. Taylor and Francis, 2015.
³⁴ E. Stanton and J. Frank, “Can’t Do With, Can’t Do Without: The Use of Private Military Contractors in U.S. War Efforts”, University of Colorado Political Science, March 2nd 2020.
³⁵ L. Hood, “Who are the private contractors fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan? An inside look at this invisible military force”, The Conversation, March 14 2019, last accessed: March 27th 2023, <https://bit.ly/415fre2>.

In conclusion, one could argue that private military companies are made of mercenaries and veterans who can be considered as individuals, although, what distinguishes them, is the far more complex structure and sheer presence and impact of a company compared to a contractless mercenary.

1.2 Terminology

Truth be told, there is a vast array of definitions and shades of what so far was taken for granted as “Private Military Corporations”. These terms include Private Security Companies, Private Security Firms, Private Intelligence Companies, Private Consulting Firms, Military Support Firms, and Private Military Companies. These phenomena of companies are all paradoxically the same but different. Albeit a distinction which identifies clear-cut differences is between private companies which provide purely logistical aid and/or training with Private Military Companies in addition to Private Security Companies. In juxtaposition, the latter two (PMC + PSC), this thesis will argue, are at their core the same. While PSCs put at the center of their agenda the role of security, they unanimously end up performing similar - if not identical - tasks to PMCs; who in turn, place emphasis on the military aspect. Practically speaking, at the surface level, it would seem that PSCs are defensive-oriented, while PMCs are offensive-oriented. This idea is not still encompassing of all their structure and missions, therefore necessitates further investigation. Crucial is the mental note of how-to breakdown these companies that has to be kept when navigating through such industry. A valid breakdown consists of the following:

- *Nature*: The type of service offered is at the foundation of the company. Strictly speaking, this is arguably the most defining characteristic of military companies. As an example, a company offering logistical support is vastly different from one which offers combat capabilities. The nature of a military company can be divided into: armed intervention and active protection, peacekeeping (security), logistics, military, and police training.
- *Purpose*: The purpose of the company can be strictly economic or also have political undertones. This characteristic is the less diverse in this industry, given that the only way companies survive is through income gained from operations. However, it is not so obvious if there are political implications to their actions. As of now, there are no companies of relevant caliber mostly owned (in terms of shares) by a state. In juxtaposition, it can very much be that leaders of these companies might nurture a bond with certain clients, for example the US, and therefore also serve them for political interests. Economic compensation reigns supreme, but political ambition is never to be discarded even in industries. A military training-providing company might simply train troops, but a private military company like “Executive Outcomes” shifted an entire political landscape within two countries, as later explored.

- *Scope*: The relevance in the international sphere is given by the scope of the company. If it is confined to local or small interventions, it is unworthy of great analysis since it physically is not capable of leaving a mark through intervention. Thereby, if instead a military company is capable of providing full scale military operations for security, overthrowing, or support whatever it may be, then it is absolutely relevant of an analysis. DynCorp and Blackwater operated with considerable scale not in their homeland (the USA), but in foreign territory: Iraq and Afghanistan.
- *Clients*: Different types of clients have different types of requests, and the very nature of these clients also determines the relevance and differentiation of the various companies. If a client is a local police academy in need of training, it is considerably different from a deal struck with a state. Clients can be: States/non-state actors, NGOs, terrorist groups, privates.

1.2.1 Training, supplies, and logistics

Out of the private military industry, these companies offer the “mildest” of services. Writer Singer defines them as “military supply firms”³⁶, for example Brown and Root or Ronco. Their service is very straightforward, which is why it is easy to distinguish them from the other firms. What is offered is support to its client, namely states, in terms of intelligence and logistics. Similarly, yet different to a certain extent, are military consulting firms (MPRI, Vinnelli).³⁷ Support is still provided, although not in terms of logistics but in terms of training individuals for military/police skills. One can consider these services as passive, not active interventions. In a way, it can be seen as providing the information and skills necessary to the client to fight on its own; direct involvement into active combat is not part of this category of military companies. Intelligence is not to be undersold, as information is often key in military operations or the like. It ranges from intercepting calls, to locating strategic targets and locations, and general intel on the opposing side. Companies that operate in such manner are not as “known” as those in the following section - who are the bulwark of the industry - because of their limited service derivative of it being solely of supportive nature.

1.2.2 PSCs (and PSFs)

Private Security Companies are the main typology of this sector. As later it will be argued, there is little practical difference from Private Military Companies. However, at least in theory, PSCs are charged with security operations. These firms are completely capable of fielding a not-so-small army: military equipment, weaponry, and personnel. The better-equipped the fielded personnel, the higher the chance of success in protecting their clients or places of value, for example an embassy. In the context of this thesis, later analysis will favor the giants

³⁶ W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry and its ramifications for International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Winter, 2001-2002), page 200

³⁷ Ibid.

Blackwater and DynCorp, who did have a presence in Iraq and Afghanistan. The compelling fact is that Blackwater has a separate culture from DynCorp, one aggressive and the other contained. Their capabilities are outstanding for a company, in fact they are able to deploy even vehicles and convoys, if need be, to protect. Armed helicopters and ground armored vehicles are also part of their repertoire.³⁸

DynCorp is an absolute industry colossus when it comes to the private military industry. From a legal standpoint, its code of conduct and “ethics” (if these are applicable in their mission types), derive from a mix of the US law system and the country it operates in. A document of particular relevance is the “Uniformed Services Employment and Redeployment Rights Acts”.³⁹ The company leans heavily on transparency and privacy of data, who when contracting not only with clients but also with their own employees, the “Truth in Negotiation Act” must be withheld.⁴⁰ Author Daniel B. Smith, unlike others,⁴⁰ interestingly identifies it as a PMC and not a PSC. This thesis is on the same line of thought as it will be explained in the upcoming section. The roots of DynCorp derive from 1946’s Land and Air and California Eastern Airways. Decades later, in 2003, it was acquired by Computer Sciences Corporation (1 billion dollars), and then merged with Cerberus Capital management in 2010.⁴¹

DynCorp International turnover	
Year	Turnover
2006	\$1.96B
2007	\$2.08B
2008	\$2.13B
2009	\$3.10B
2010	\$3.60B
2011	\$3.70B

This table refers to D.B. Smith’s founding on DynCorp’s turnover (2015)⁴²

The company specializes itself in a vast number of services that it can easily offer to both private and public clients. Firstly, the field deployment of combat-ready and armed personnel; this, includes protection and surveillance of key targets (individuals, installations, infrastructure). Secondly, it offers intelligence in terms of interrogation tactics, counter-intelligence, and human intelligence. Thirdly, it also offered police training missions; by 2009, it trained 756 Iraqi police officers, 594 Afghani police officers, 25 Palestinian police, and 15 Sudanese. Interestingly enough, given that the US department of State was once again amongst its main clients, it is peculiar to see aid to Palestinians. Nevertheless, it also offers supplies and humanitarian help together with,

³⁸ A. Tekingunduz, “Are private military contractors any different from mercenaries?”, TRTWorld, last accessed: March 27th 2023, <https://bit.ly/3YPfV6I>.

³⁹ US office of Special Counsel, “USERRA Overview”.

⁴⁰ M. Gwinn, “Don’t run afoul of truth in Negotiations Act”, National Defense NDIA’s Business and technology Magazine, January 6th 2022 nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2022/6/1/dont-run-afoul-of-truth-in-negotiations-act

⁴¹ D. B. Smith, *Private Military Companies: Six Case Studies*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform 2015, Chapter: DynCorp International.

⁴² Ibid.

lastly, its own aerial industry. Therefore, this includes the maintenance, modification and direct upgrades and improvement for military services in addition to management of aerodromes. The sheer number of services that it offers, is nothing but a testament to the potential (and effective) might that private companies of military origins can field.

Blackwater was founded by businessman Erik Prince, who not-surprisingly was a former US Navy Seal. As earlier mentioned through purpose, a political substratum of interests can be present in these companies and, allegedly, Prince was affiliated in some way with the George W. Bush administration.⁴³ Affiliated or not, such administration was certainly making use of Blackwater. Erik Prince alone, has a net worth of 2 billion US dollars.⁴⁴ While figures vary, it definitely earned millions and perhaps 1 billion⁴⁵ (if not more) just during the Iraq War.⁴⁶ While originally it was named Blackwater, 1996/1997, it switched named to Xe Services in 2009 and once again to Academi in 2011.⁴⁷ This is not the end of the story, as later in 2014 Academi was acquired by Constellis (parent company of another PSC, Triple Canopy). A gripping analysis emerges from this, if they were so successful in their operations, a change of name (therefore rebranding) means that at least to some degree they are trying to distance themselves from their past. Yet, they still invoke their participation and success in past deployments. In fact, it is considered an elitist company, as some of core principles are: excellence, integrity management, dignity, teamwork, innovation.⁴⁸ Its might is clear when considering the several bases it has, from San Diego to Israel to Afghanistan. It can field automated systems together with drones. Blackwater (Academi) possesses an online store only available in the US, and Erik Prince stated that 90% of its company's income derived from the US government.⁴⁹ Finally, Blackwater offers a vast range of services: Aerospace, Emergency cases, Police training, Intelligence, and Field operations. As the reader can see, it is as if just this company is the agglomerate of a PMC (more offensive-oriented) in addition to military supply and consulting firms all in one package.

A quick overview of another colossus in the industry, Triple Canopy, further consolidates the military background of the employees in this sector. Founded in 2003, its founders were US army veterans, whom in fact were 80% of the total employment.⁵⁰ It translated into high proficiency in combat execution and training, with a total of: 68 000 trained members, 50 000 mobile security operations, and a grand total of 10 million guard hours.⁵¹

⁴³ A. Buncombe, "Erik Prince: Founder of mercenary group used by George W Bush in Iraq war 'to run for Senate'", October 10th 2017, last accessed: March 27th 2023, <https://bit.ly/3SfGbEO>.

⁴⁴ D. Letenyei, "Blackwater Founder Erik Prince Has a Net Worth of \$2 Billion", Market Realist August 26 2021, last accessed: March 27th 2023, <https://marketrealist.com/p/blackwater-founder-erik-prince-net-worth/>.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ K. Brannen, "Blackwater descendants are doing just fine", The Complex July 1st 2014, last accessed: March 27th 2023, <https://bit.ly/3XD2FRb>.

⁴⁷ D. B. Smith, *Private Military Companies: Six Case Studies*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform 2015, Chapter: Academi- Former – Blackwater.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ J. Scahill, "Secret Erik Prince Tape Exposed", The Nation., May 4th 2010, last accessed: March 27th 2023, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/secret-erik-prince-tape-exposed/>.

⁵⁰ D. B. Smith, *Private Military Companies: Six Case Studies*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform 2015, Chapter: Triple Canopy.

⁵¹ Ibid

Even if it did not break into the billions, according to Daniel B. Smith, the sheer scale of its operations is a testament of what a company of military nature is capable of.

1.2.3 PMCs: an umbrella term

While the acronym PMC stands for Private Military Company, therefore it underlines a *modus operandi* of offensive nature, it barely necessitates a differentiation from the Private Security Companies. Esteemed author of famous book *Corporate Warriors*, confirms that the categorization for these companies fails to set clear boundaries, for example the difference from Executive Outcomes and Blackwater.⁵² Since Blackwater's basics have been extensively reported, it is therefore a must to describe Executive Outcomes, a company which is often viewed as one of the major exponents of PMCs per se. Although, the main point of this paragraph is to note the fact that the conventional categorization of the private military industry is flawed: principally due to such companies being capable of diverse operations, ranging from logistical services to direct combat to protection. Hence, Blackwater can be a PSC, as well as a PMC, but can also offer training. Which is why the author of this thesis considers the term PMC as the most fitting for these firms, as the word "military" implies any and all actions of this nature: security or offensive or both. Instead, using PSCs as the umbrella term would not include the often-offensive actions that companies of this caliber can easily entertain.

Executive Outcomes is regarded as one of the most successful PMCs ever, thanks to its successful participation in Angola's and Sierra Leone's civil wars (1990s). It was contracted by such governments, and on their behalf, they annihilated the opposition.⁵³ Founded by ex-army men of the South African Defense Force (1989), following a decade of belligerent interventions, it discontinued its involvement in the African territories and disbanded.⁵⁴ Its intervention was so influential, that it forced rebels into negotiation in favor of Sierra Leone, in addition to the imposition of the Lusaka Protocol (1994) by Angola on the rebels.⁵⁵ Since its presence was lacking in Iraq and Afghanistan, this essay will not further report its counter-insurgency operations; as this PMC serves another purpose in the context of this essay's section, which is to identify what constitutes a PMC. An interesting happening is that of the South African Government. Following the military interventions of Executive Outcomes, this government chose to pass a piece of legislation which ultimately murdered the company: the Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act (1997) which requires consent of the government for the company to intervene.⁵⁶ Subsequently, two years later in 1999 it disbanded. What this suggests, is that Executive outcomes probably committed illegal actions and, to avoid persecution, it simply disbanded itself. Moreover, it demonstrates

⁵² W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry and its ramifications for International Security*, page 201.

⁵³ S. McFate, "Mercenaries and War: Understanding Private Armies Today", National Defense University Press, last accessed: March 27th 2023, <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/Article/2031922/mercenaries-and-war-understanding-private-armies-today/> .

⁵⁴ GlobalSecurity.org, Executive Outcomes, 1st May 2017, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/executive-outcomes.htm> .

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ M. Malan and J. Cillers, *Mercenaries and Mischief: The Regulation of Foreign Assistance bill*, Institute for Security Studies, September 1997, https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/paper_25.pdf

that unlike a state, a private company can just disappear. In addition to literal military assistance for its clients, Executive Outcomes had other missions: covert reconnaissance, protection of facilities, military training, recovery of equipment and military joint operations.⁵⁷ These mission types are exactly what the conventionally coined PSCs are capable of conducting. Which shows, that even with the inclusion of the archetypal company for the term PMC, it can easily overlap with a PSC.

1.2.4 Identifying the appropriate term

What is derived from companies of similar nature to Executive Outcomes, is that they deploy personnel in larger operations to hinder or overthrow, through force, a major armed opponent. Therefore, it can include: to crush rebellions, destabilize a government, and preemptive strikes. This thesis poses a question: the missions tasked to conventionally termed PSCs such as DynCorp, Triple Canopy, and to a certain extent Blackwater, are they not ultimately serving the purpose of crushing rebellions, destabilizing current establishments, and preemptively striking opponents of their clients? One of the most common missions for the previously mentioned companies was to protect HVTs (high-value targets) of the US government or their affiliates. Hence, simply the very presence and existence of these targets can cause a destabilizing force powerful enough to quash their competitors. If then the proactive shooting of Blackwater is added to the equation, the reader can truly see how distinguishing these companies does not bring much value. In conclusion, this thesis will not distinguish PMC from PSC - both for simplicity and efficiency in a so complicated field - because they overlap.

1.3 Legality of PMCs

In simple terms, PMCs are in a grey area when legality is taken into the equation. The United Nations, as mentioned in the beginning, does outlaw them – or at least the signatory members - however major powers did not sign. Notwithstanding such, any regular PMC would act as an affiliate of its client. Therefore, a contract signed between an PMC residing in the US will result in the former respecting the laws dictated by the latter. A practical example would be how contractually giants like DynCorp and Blackwater are indeed of American origin, so they must respect US federal law such as but not limited to: Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act of 2000, the Uniform Code of Military Justice, the Special Maritime and Territorial Jurisdiction Act, the US Arms Export Control Act of 1976, the War Crimes Act of 1996 and certain provisions of National Defense Authorization Acts from 2008 onward.⁵⁸ It is easily understood that the legal system on this matter is vague and rarely applied to persecute armed personnel who commit war crimes; in fact it has been reported that it is fairly frequent how PMC personnel has “little fear that their actions would ever come under serious legal scrutiny”.⁵⁹ It is fairly

⁵⁷ GlobalSecurity.org, Executive Outcomes, 1st May 2017, last accessed: March 27th 2023, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/executive-outcomes.htm> .

⁵⁸ US Congress, “H.R.4986 - National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008”, Congress.gov, 2007-2008, congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-bill/4986 .

⁵⁹ F. Scott, *Private Security Companies during the Iraq War*. 1st ed. Taylor and Francis, 2015..

comprehensible how lack of legislation and jurisdiction at a global level is one of the defining issues in regards to a future dominated by these firms, especially when considering that violent actions are often committed by them. A final introductory consideration on the legality of PMCs is about the actual contracts. Considering that the most common threats were numerous, quick insurgent strikes,⁶⁰ the contractors' protection of their clients was at the apex of the companies' interest. Thus, what is defined as "protection" can be bland and unprecise. One might argue that preemptive strikes, proactive shooting, and threats can all be valid due to a justification deriving from the contract itself. Namely, the infamous Blackwater company is well-known for their often-brutal proactivity in shooting any and all suspects that could be interpreted as hostile liabilities.⁶¹ If anything, Blackwater personnel is literally encouraged to operate in such manner. Currently, the main actors who are liable for charges of war crimes, murder, sexual misconduct etc... are the operators themselves. Perhaps there should be a push by international organizations, NGOs, and even the not-so-monolithic states to agree on binding international law that limits through precise wording the actions of PMCs. Perhaps a further sanctioning on the company as a whole, in addition to its client. As anticipated in an earlier section, Executive Outcomes was disbanded relatively soon - 2 years later - when the South African government actively legislated on foreign military intervention. It precluded the freedom that companies like this fathom so much, since consent was needed prior to an active intervention of such company. When laws try to hinder the private, they really do. Nonetheless, if their interest is to safeguard their long-term power potential, states must act on this issue. Granted, in the short-term states are yet to be dethroned from the most powerful single unit on earth, at least the developed ones, however this might not be the case in the future if military might and political influence of PMCs grows.

1.4 What does it lead to

Once the definitions, terms, and general understanding is clear, this leads to the central issue of this thesis. The main goal is to answer the research question in the most articulate, unbiased, and concise way possible. In the process of researching the various definitions, facts and events, the author of this thesis became more and more enveloped in the implications of the PMCs in their various involvements. This very research brought the author of this thesis to diving in the matter of a variegated opinions birthed by a multitude of authors: Fitzgerald Scott, Daniel B. Smith, Singer, and Jeremy Scahill; they contribute to the topic by asking questions of how the PMC are defining in their involvement, their capabilities, and limits all of which generated more and more questions. The answers did not surge immediately, therefore it vested itself in a necessity of even more research and analysis. Hence, the research question which surfaced and led to the creation of the following chapters is:

How did western-led Private Military Actors influence Middle Eastern Conflicts?

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ F. Scott, *Private Security Companies during the Iraq War*. 1st ed. Taylor and Francis, 2015.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Groundwork and Cases

2.0 Research Design

This thesis is written to answer its main research question. Thereby, it will do so through various methods. It will report relevant data in an unbiased manner. Consequently, a solid framework of facts and data is strictly necessary for a well-rounded assessment on the role of PMCs. Although, it cannot be hidden the fact that much of the availability of data is restricted and/or absent; this, is due to the private nature of these companies who often can and will not share sensitive documentation relative to their clients. What is quote on quote hidden to the public eye includes mission objectives, amount of money involved, methodology and conduct of the operation and participating operators. Obviously, the client contracting the company does have full access to all of the previously mentioned. Additionally, this essay will discuss relevant data and concepts in order to form a solid idea on the subject matter. Being a relatively new phenomenon in and of itself, when strictly taking into account PMCs, many acts of speculation are the norm of the day and often none is completely unfounded. Once again, this is due to the secrecy involved in these shadow operations. Finally, when the framework is set, an attentive analysis - in Chapter 3 - on points regarding the presence of PMCs in the two cases studies (Iraq, Afghanistan) will conclude this thesis with a much better idea of their true impact.

It all begins from the research question, which erects the entirety of this thesis: *How did western-led Private Military Actors influence Middle Eastern Conflicts?*

While the Middle-East was the theatre of numerous and bloody wars, it is not often widely recognized or even acknowledged that Private actors did indeed partake in these belligerent conflicts. To narrow down and conduct a better and precise analysis, there were taken two case studies as object of analysis: firstly, the war in Iraq, and secondly, the war in Afghanistan. The research question emphasizes the role of PMCs of western origin, since the author of this thesis is aware of non-western PMCs, for instance the Wagner Group⁶². However, they are out of scope for the purpose of this thesis. Additionally, the research question also places relative importance to the word “military” as indeed also non-lethal private actors of other sectors were hired in these conflicts. Consequently, they would be arguably unimportant for this thesis as what is of relevance are the private actors who had lethal impact in the aforementioned conflicts; therefore, this narrows down the research to PMCs.

An add element to this dissertation is the hypothesis. It will hereby be mentioned, with no final conclusive thought in mind. In fact, only following the case studies and their deriving analyses that the upcoming hypothesis will either be confirmed or denied: *Western deployed PMCs did impact the Middle Eastern Conflicts to a considerable amount through security and enforcement type missions in the Iraqi and Afghani wars.*

To be clearer, the terms security and enforcement are to be intended as two distinct methods deriving from mission types. Security indicates more so the protection of a place, person, or people – for instance a US ambassador- .

⁶² B. Katz and S. G. Jones and C. Doxsee and N. Harrington, “The Expansion of Russian Private Military Companies”, Center for Strategic and International Studies, September 2020, last accessed: April 13th 2023, <https://russianpmcs.csis.org/> .

Instead, enforcement missions are oriented towards either the preservation of relative stability in a region and/or the enforcement of stability in a region. For example, a PMC could be tasked to stabilize (clearly, through violent means if necessary) a city which is or will be of key importance. Subsequently, the reader must understand what the variables, dependent and independent, are so that they can be considered later on in the thesis. Starting with the independent variable, it being the one which is not influenced by any variables but rather is the one influencing other ones, are none other than the PMCs. The idea behind the hypothesis, is that these actors, when deployed, do make a difference. Whereas the dependent variable, therefore the variable which is influenced to a certain extent by the former, would be the Iraq War, and the Afghanistan War. To be more specific, the purpose is to discover if effectively the independent variable, the PMCs, have impacted these wars in some manner. By impact, it is included everything which affects the wars ranging from passive intervention and training to active involvement through combat. Lastly, the second half of the hypothesis “*through security and enforcement type missions*” is attempting to explain the “how” of the research question; therefore, how the PMCs influenced the war theatre in which they were contracted to act. In other words, how they influenced the wars in practical ways. Moreover, the choice of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars as case studies for this dissertation is not a mere coincidence, rather a conscious choice. These wars have been some of the most recent conflicts where the main Western utilizer of these private companies has participated. As will be later noted, the presence of private personnel was not only a consciously costly decision, but also a cause for the high amount of private presence in both wars. Logic would dictate that high levels of spending by the U.S. would indicate some important investment as a result of a particularly desired outcome. Hence, this outcome would appear to be the successful intervention of PMCs in favor of the U.S. In fact, the PMC intervention was in some way impactful as this category was under scrutiny of the international sphere following a bloody incident which will also be exposed in this chapter: Baghdad’s Bloody Sunday. Finally, this chapter will also set the pillars for an important doubt that must be addressed: to what extent do PMCs have effective agency in their operations, and is the US still the dominant force?

2.1 The War in Iraq: A contextualization

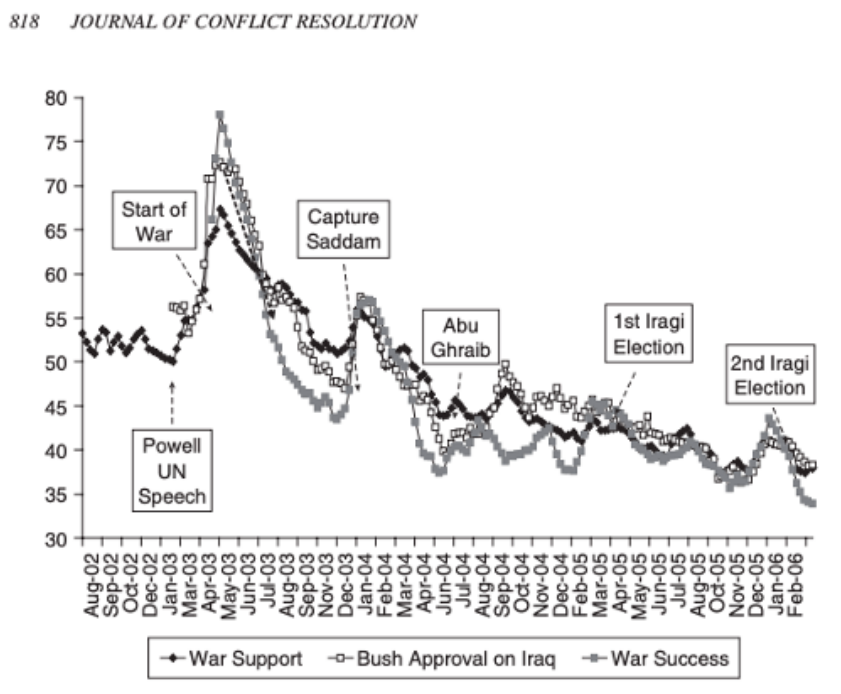
2.1.1 Origins

The war in Iraq (2003-2011), also known as the Second Gulf War has highly contested origins. Notwithstanding American transgression, this war followed the First Gulf War which, unlike this, was permitted and ratified by the United Nations.⁶³ As a matter of fact, President of the time George W. Bush (43rd President of the United States of America) was and still is blamed for justifying an unjust war. Firstly, a leader in a democratic country necessitates some form of public support⁶⁴, if not a majoritarian view on it. For this reason and that of

⁶³ W. H. Burns, “Security Council Resolution 678 and Persian Gulf Decision Making: Precarious Legitimacy.” no.3, American Journal of International Law 85, 1991, pages 516–35.

⁶⁴ E. Voeten, P. R. Brewer, *Public Opinion, the War in Iraq, and Presidential Accountability*, The George Washington University and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, page 810.

accountability, these leaders tend to pick wars which, at least in theory, are winnable⁶⁵. According to President Bush himself, the justification for the American declaration of war was to conduct “military operations” to “disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger”⁶⁶. In reality, what is speculated is that this war was not the consequence of honorable ideals of freedom and democracy, rather a product of economic and political gains.⁶⁷ Moreover, it was not an attempt to overthrow Saddam Hussein in and of itself, but rather an attempt at controlling what he possessed: for instance, Iraq’s Oil reserves.⁶⁸ It important to understand that the reasons behind the war were more or less obviously economic, which leads to the conclusion that the US was ready to thwart the Iraqi regime at any cost due to the value of its lands; more than enough as a reason to also deploy the private military companies. In fact, this was even publicly acknowledged by former Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, who declared that “The new Pentagon policy must draw heavily on the private sector, emphasize covert actions... and Greater use of Special Forces and contractors”⁶⁹. The reader should notice the use of the words “covert actions” and “contractors”, they go hand in hand and are purposefully stacked together.



As shown by the figure above, wartime support had its peaks and lows; ultimately, public consensus steeply declined.⁷⁰

Regarding its legality, there is none. If anything, it just proves that sometimes international law is not respected if one’s own country has the capabilities of being considered a superpower. The Charter of the United Nations is one, if not the, of the most important sources of law in the international relations. Therefore, signatory

⁶⁵ E. Voeten, P. R. Brewer, *Public Opinion, the War in Iraq, and Presidential Accountability* page 809.

⁶⁶ The Oval Office, “President Bush Addresses the Nation”, WhiteHouse Archives, March 19 2003, last accessed: April 13th 2023, <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/iraq/news/20030319-17.html>.

⁶⁷ N. J. Jhaveri, *Petroimperialism: US Oil Interests and the Iraq War*, Department of Geography University of Washington, 2004.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ J. Scahill, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World’s most powerful mercenary army*, Bold Type Books, May 27th 2008, page 51.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

countries should abide to it. Peculiar to think that there is not much of a difference between the UN Charter and domestic US law, since its senate ratifies it⁷¹; therefore, a violation of one is a violation of the other. Nonetheless, the prohibition of wars of aggression and the threat of use of force was discarded by the US, who, opted for military intervention in Iraq.⁷² The start of the war was described not for chance, but to demonstrate that the US is willing to go at lengths to gain what it deems necessary, even if it means breaking domestic and international law; something that, coincidentally, also PMCs are capable of doing.

2.1.2 Development

While the war itself is the at the focus of this dissertation, it is nonetheless important to define certain aspects of it as it surely will aid in the comprehension of the upcoming case studies. During the development of the Iraq War, one main element is extremely telling: the casualties. Given that in general, the US, never lost millions of soldiers in wars it participated⁷³, its highest death toll was totaled by the Second World War.⁷⁴ This is followed by the First World War, Vietnam and Korean wars. Once the scale is now understood, the number of American deaths in Iraq are nothing short of incomparable to the former conflicts. The numbers below, represent a new type of war. Technological advancements in the military and pharmaceutical sectors allowed for far less deaths and injuries. One could argue that the scale of the world wars was quite different, although it does not take away any credit from the progresses made. The great issue of modern wars, including Iraq, is that it often causes Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)⁷⁵ to its victims who then become overly aggressive, anxious, socially awkward or fearful.

<i>War/Conflict</i>	<i>Troops in Service (Deaths)</i>	<i>Troops in Service (wounded)</i>
World War 2	405 399	670 846
World War 1	116 516	204 002
Vietnam War	58 220	303 644
Korean War	36 574	103 294

U.S. casualties in their recent belligerent interventions⁷⁶

Operation Iraqi Freedom	4 411	31 951
Operation New Dawn	66	295
Operation Inherent Resolve	6	1

⁷¹ R. Kramer and R. Michalowski and D. Rothe, *The Supreme International Crime": How the U.S. War in Iraq Threatens the Rule of Law*, Social Justice 32, 2005, page 56.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ US Department of Defense – American Battlefield Trust, “Number of military fatalities in all major wars involving the United States from 1775 to 2022”, Statista, January 2nd 2023, last accessed: April 13th 2023, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1009819/total-us-military-fatalities-in-american-wars-1775-present/>.

⁷⁴ S. Thannhauser and C. Luehrs, *The Human and Financial Costs of Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq*, National Defense University, 2015, page 424.

⁷⁵ US Department of Veterans Affairs, “PTSD: National Center for PTSD”, last accessed: April 13th 2023, <https://bit.ly/3KhjDRt>.

⁷⁶ S. Thannhauser and C. Luehrs, “The Human and Financial Costs of Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq” – Annex A, National Defense University, 2015.

Operation Enduring freedom	2 351	20 069
Operation Freedom's Sentinel	2	24

U.S. casualties in their recent blliegerent Operations⁷⁷

It would seem that the civilian deaths are not as transparent nor as available, for obvious reasons, however it is known that the US soldiers did indulge in the deliberate killing of innocent civilians; the likes of which, more or less voluntarily, accounted for 1% of deaths⁷⁸. Even if this data could be completely illusive and say it would be ten times more, nevertheless it would be relatively low. The reader should keep this in mind when considering how overtly brutal the PMCs can be on innocent populations.

2.1.3 Aftermath

The success of the war is arbitrary, but not the failure; it manifests itself in several ways. The US has always been notorious in its willingness to spread democracy and freedom to other countries; the truthfulness of which is an arbitrary decision of the reader. This moral high ground became challenged by the war in Iraq. The treatment of the local population has not been exemplary, in addition to the clear intent of starting a war for economic purposes are more than enough to start doubting the genuine modus operandi of the US as the “benevolent” police of the world. National security of the US has not been positively impacted. In fact, it can be argued that the war on terror produced more terror, together with growing feeble relations in the Middle East, fulfilling the realist prophecy of the security dilemma⁷⁹. As a matter of fact, the intricate consequences of this war, according to the National Intelligence Estimate, could cause “a significant increase in the scale and scope of sectarian conflict in Iraq, intensify Sunni resistance to the Iraqi government, and have adverse consequences for national reconciliation”⁸⁰; furthermore, the problem of refugees is nothing to be overlooked. Only the more gullible would believe the superior ethics of Washington claiming that Saddam still possessed a major chemical weapons stockpile, a significant missile force, and active R&D programs for biological and nuclear weapons”⁸¹. The decision-making process behind this war was contort, the execution of a war in the 21st century contingency that is the Middle East, was underestimated. On a final note regarding the aftermath of Iraq, the words of an esteemed military historian are extremely valuable: Frederick W. Kagan claimed that one of the fundamental errors of the US involvement was that first it should have “fundamentally changed its views of war”, as it would not be “enough to consider how to simply pound the enemy into submission”⁸². He further claims that in wars aimed at “regime change”, it must also be taken into account the step of “transition from the defeated government

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ N. C. Crawford, *Civilian Death and Injury in the Iraq War, 2003-2013 Costs of War*, Boston University, March 2013.

⁷⁹ J. J. Collins, *Choosing War: The Decision to Invade Iraq and Its Aftermath*, Institute for National Strategic Studies National Defense University, page 1.

⁸⁰ Ibid, page 1.

⁸¹ Ibid, page 22.

⁸² F. W. Kagan, *War and Aftermath*, Policy Review – University of Florida, page 25.

to the new one”⁸³; essentially, Washington should have worked more on the diplomatic side of things – for instance talks of peacekeeping - . Clearly, regime change in and of itself was never the true reason of intervention.

For these reasons, the Iraq war is a fertile ground for case studies regarding Private Military Companies. The author of this paper ponders whether or not the actions by these companies are reflective of their clients (US and affiliates): belligerent actions or interest, not for change. Which in any case were often brutal and as already mentioned “pounding of the enemy”.

2.2 Case Study: Iraq

As already mentioned, Chapter 2’s focus is placed upon the case studies which are central to this dissertation. The analysis shall follow in the appropriate Chapter, it being Chapter 3. Therefore, this section is dedicated to the works of the PMCs in Iraq.

The time range of the private military operations spans from 2003 to 2009. The United States Government reached contracts with the PMCs, with these contracts being known as “the Department of State’s first and second Worldwide Personnel Protective Services Contracts (WPPS-1 and -2)”⁸⁴. The companies known as at-the-time Blackwater and DynCorp were tasked to protect US agents together with another private company known as Triple Canopy. The deals did specify their respective areas of interest, although this did not necessarily prevent them from providing operations which overlapped with the area of interest of another PMC. The area of operations were: of DynCorp was arguably the easiest as it was centralized around the largely and relatively secure cities in northern Iraq, such as Erbil and Kirkuk, meanwhile while Triple Canopy operated in southern Iraqi cities such as Basra and Tallil, and, finally, Blackwater acted in the “most unstable areas of Iraq, such as Baghdad, Ramadi, Najaf, Karbala and Al Hillah”; in addition to the latter providing and “close air support for Department of State security operations”⁸⁵. It is to be noted that private military presence is nothing short of astonishing; the number of private operators, reached the ratio of “one in ten” with the former being present every ten American personnel⁸⁶. This number is truly astonishing. Moreover, if it weren’t enough, by the end of the Iraq war estimates count 100000 private operators on the field, reaching a one-to-one ratio with their US army counterpart⁸⁷. Numbers this high are bound to cause tensions not only with the locals but also with the army men, thereby causing, more or less, accidental violent events.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ F. Scott, *Private Security Companies during the Iraq War*. 1st ed. Taylor and Francis, 2015.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ J. Scahill, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World’s most powerful mercenary army*, Bold Type Books, May 27th 2008, page 51.

⁸⁷ Ibid, page 53.

The prominent private companies in Iraq seemed therefore to be Blackwater and DynCorp, who apparently had different “cultures” in their rules of engagement. Thus, this will definitely become a peculiar point of analysis for Chapter 3. In any case, both companies were not only deployed at the same time but were also contracted by the same client, the US⁸⁸. All things considered, Blackwater were by far more ruthless than their DynCorp counterpart: the former “killed and injured more seriously far more people in Iraq”, in addition to having opened fire far more often, than the latter⁸⁹. Blackwater managed to manifest itself as the ruthless and efficient military company, this is thanks to it maintain a belligerent and rigorous standard that pushes for proactivity rather than reactivity; for instance, this is highly likely a factor that motivated its operators to use, or abuse, violence to their liking, under the umbrella of being proactive to save the life of the other party of the deal. This is supported by a literal standard that their operators were held up to: the abandoning of people they opened fire on, to make use of a lot of ammo, engage at larger distances where and if possible, and finally to not hesitate with the trigger finger amounting to higher frequency of shootings⁹⁰. DynCorp more quote on quote “peaceful” approach definitely integrated the idea that it still proves combat-ready with the idea that it is not the byproduct of mindless killing machines. As later on it will be argued, Blackwater put the security of its signatory clients before any ethic or moral standard; meanwhile, DynCorp did still retain some degree of “humanity” while carrying on their contract.

Two authors seem to disagree on the performance of Blackwater and DynCorp in wartimes. Firstly, author Molly Dunigan reaches a compelling argument when dealing with the situation in which armed forces of a state are forced to cooperate with private operators. In fact, private forces “tend to decrease military effectiveness ... in modern cases of PSC–military co-deployment”⁹¹. An example of this is precisely during the Iraq War, with reasons being: “combination of poor structural integration with state-based armed forces, a clash of identities, and disparate adherence to ethical standards and norms”⁹². Secondly, in total discordance is author Petersohn, in “The Effectiveness of Contracted Coalitions”. According to him, if the state (Iraq + US) armies are directly confronted with the private sector, he claimed that the latter were actually less aggressive and caused less friendly-fire casualties⁹³. Interestingly enough, the grounds for a claim which portrays Blackwater as the main actor of arguably one of the deadliest massacres during this conflict seems to be well-founded. A well-known book dives in-depth into this event, and Jeremy Scahill describes the “Blackwater forces at the center” of the “deadliest mercenary action” in Iraq since the beginning of its occupation⁹⁴. This dreaded event, is none other than Baghdad’s Bloody Sunday.

⁸⁸ F. Scott, *Private Security Companies during the Iraq War*. 1st ed. Taylor and Francis, 2015.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ F. Scott, *Private Security Companies during the Iraq War*. 1st ed. Taylor and Francis, 2015.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ J. Scahill, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World’s most powerful mercenary army*, Bold Type Books, May 27th 2008, page 2.

2.2.1 Baghdad's Bloody Sunday

In the year 2007, on the 23rd of May, there was supposed to be a diplomatic meeting in the City Hall of Amanat, the center of Baghdad, when something particularly dark manifested itself. The staff of the US Department of State was under severe threat by small arms fire⁹⁵, shots fired by numerous insurgents hidden in buildings that were in the proximity of the building. The PMC Blackwater tasked with the safeguard of the US personnel; counter fired. The opening of fire was done through hundreds of bullets to create suppressive fire, the likes of which, bought enough time to then escort the US clients into safety⁹⁶. Under these circumstances this would be indeed a sane reaction. Although considering what came next, what could have happened is spine-chilling.

There is a graphic warning for this section. Same year, some months later, on the 16th of September, a similar occurrence happened, yet much darker. A car bomb designated as “vehicle borne improvised explosive device (“VBIED”)⁹⁷ detonated in Baghdad at the Izdihar Compound where once again a meeting between an US diplomat and Iraqi officials was taking place⁹⁸. There, Tactical Support Team “Raven 23” was tasked with the immediate ensuring of the safety of the US diplomat; therefore entailing, his escort to a safe zone called Green Zone⁹⁹. They possessed 4 convoy vehicles, armed with turrets to be used by gunners. Furthermore, they were allowed to provide back-up fire support¹⁰⁰ for other Blackwater security teams. This could be done through their considerable equipment that they were armed with: “machine guns, grenade launchers, rifles and pistols”¹⁰¹. Raven 23 consisted of 5 men, all of which were charged and convicted for manslaughter, voluntary use of grenades and automatic fire in a civilian public space¹⁰². The mindless violence resulted in the cold-hearted manslaughter of 17 Iraqi civilians at Nisour Square: gaining its page in history as Baghdad's Bloody Sunday¹⁰³. “Don't shoot please” screamed traffic warden Khalaf, and soon after head parts of a “mother gripping her son” were “blowing up” right in front of him¹⁰⁴. All of the vehicles consequently opened indiscriminate automatic fire – by large caliber machine guns - in all directions thereby causing the destruction of 15 cars, in addition to the bodies of women, men, and children that were “strewn on the pavements and road”¹⁰⁵. Once again, Khalaf accounts the horrible mesh of bones, skin and metal from the dead civilians that were in the cars that were shot at in the brutal frenzy¹⁰⁶. There were dozens of witnesses who were shocked of the event, with this event holding the largest

⁹⁵ F. Scott, *Private Security Companies during the Iraq War*. 1st ed. Taylor and Francis, 2015,

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ RICARDO M. URBINA United States District Judge, *United States of America v. Paul A. Slough et al Defendants*, UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, December 31st 2009.

⁹⁸ United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, *United States of America v. Paul Alvin Slough et al Appellees*, April 22nd 2011.

⁹⁹ Ibid..

¹⁰⁰ RICARDO M. URBINA United States District Judge, *United States of America v. Paul A. Slough et al Defendants*, UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, December 31st 2009, last accessed: April 17th 2023, https://ecf.dcd.uscourts.gov/cgi-bin/show_public_doc?2008cr0360-217 .

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² A. B. Lerner, “Ex-Blackwater guards sentenced for Baghdad ‘bloody Sunday’ shooting”, POLITICO, April 13th 2015, last accessed: April 17th 2023, <https://politi.co/3JXSiCu> .

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ J. Scahill, *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's most powerful mercenary army*, Bold Type Books, May 27th 2008, page 5.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

number of witnesses before an American criminal trial¹⁰⁷, scarring the earlier mentioned moral high ground of justice and freedom often held by US forces. Raven 23 included Paul Slough, Dustin Heard, Evan Liberty, Nicholas Slatten, and Jeremy Ridgeway; moreover, the Sniper Nicholas Slatten “was convicted of first-degree murder” and “sentenced to life in prison”¹⁰⁸. It is perhaps comforting to the reader that the perpetrators of this massacre are in prison, although what is to be considered is that this was a documented instance, numerous more are highly likely to have occurred.

2.2.2 A larger perspective on Blackwater and DynCorp

An incident like the one in the previous section might suggest considerable levels of inefficiency and brutality. While a response to this claim will be given, it will be done in the appropriate section and chapter. Moreover, observations of the following tables shall not concur, suggesting otherwise, with the previous claim. All analyses are conducted through the upcoming graphs, so as per referencing it necessitates just one citation.

Casualties inflicted by Blackwater and Dyncorp		
	Blackwater	DynCorp
Violent Incidents	428	78
Incidents in which firms used violence	353	60
Incidents in which firms fired weapons	342	59
Non-insurgent deaths	38	3
Insurgent deaths	33	8
Total deaths	71	11
Serious non-insurgent injuries	64	1
Serious insurgent injuries	58	4
Total Serious injuries	128	5

Kills from the two major PMCs, Blackwater and DynCorp¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ A. B. Lerner, “Ex-Blackwater guards sentenced for Baghdad ‘bloody Sunday’ shooting”, POLITICO, April 13th 2015, last accessed: April 17th 2023, <https://politi.co/3JXSiCu> .
¹⁰⁸ Ibid.
¹⁰⁹ F. Scott, *Private Security Companies during the Iraq War*. 1st ed. Taylor and Francis, 2015.

Casualties suffered by Blackwater and DynCorp		
	Blackwater	DynCorp
Encounters with insurgents	131	26
Attacks by insurgents	118	22
Security personnel deaths	20	14
Security personnel deaths per insurgent attack	0.17	0.64
Client deaths	0	0

Blackwater's and DynCorp's efficiencies in relation to clients¹¹⁰

What immediately sparks attention in the first table, is the stark difference in the cultures of the two main PMCs, Blackwater and DynCorp, whom are the most fundamental level share many similarities yet have different operational ideologies. For instance, Blackwater experienced almost four times (428) the amount of violent occurrences than DynCorp (78). As a consequence of these violent scenarios, most of the remaining values in the table are self-explanatory and derivative. Instances where weapons were shot (342), and where violence was used (353), are vastly numerically higher for Blackwater. This belligerent culture also brought particularly differentiated outcomes. DynCorp, once again, sets the standard of injuries extremely low, at a mere 5. Blackwater almost reaches a number 25 times higher than that. Prior to a jump to conclusions, the reader should be reminded that while Blackwater in practice was far more lenient with its guns-free approach, it was justified to a certain extent as their area of deployment was indeed the most violent and dangerous; a dangerous area both for them and their clients. Despite this consideration, the extent of the justification is up to the reader. Of particular astonishment, at least for the author of this paper, are not even the numbers of the first graph but rather those of the second, as a consequence of the data of first graph. As support of the claim that Blackwater was actually in more dangerous scenarios, they not only killed 38 insurgents, but they had 131 encounters with them of which 118 were attacks. Respectively, DynCorp had many less encounters and was less in danger. 20 were the deaths of Blackwater personnel, versus 14 of DynCorp. Thus, if one is to consider the number of attacks relative to personnel deaths, Blackwater seems to be more efficient in its tasks. While marginal, Blackwater had a rate of 0.17 security personnel deaths per encounter compared to 0.64. However, one can ultimately observe that what truly mattered were client deaths, and those were in both cases at a flat 0. Theoretically, this shows the uttermost efficiency in Iraq, at least for what they were hired for.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

2.3 The War in Afghanistan: A Contextualization

2.3.1 Origins of *Enduring Freedom*

The author of this thesis is aware of the Soviet intervention in the region, however since the purpose of this paper is to analyze the Western side of the issue, as a consequence of the western PMCs being the center point of reference for this dissertation, the Soviet side will not be covered. The War in Afghanistan has troubled origins; if one wants, dark origins. Starting from the bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (1998), these were conducted by an internationally designated terrorist group known as Al Qaeda¹¹¹. As a response, many states such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States have requested the Taliban surrender of Osama Bin Laden, one of the major targets. The Taliban refused. Thus, the United Nations passed a resolution aiding the US's need for active intervention. Even when backed to the corner, Taliban forces managed to escape into Iran and Pakistan.¹¹² The Afghan War that will follow will also be a theatre for PMCs and their intervention, the impact of which will later be analyzed in the appropriate chapter 3. Although, it is important to consider the fact that there would be an overlap of usage of PMC in both of the main wars that the US was carrying out in the Middle East: Iraq – as already discussed- and Afghanistan. In any case Northern Alliance's Commander Ahmed Shah Massoud - of a joint alliance against the Taliban and of which the USA took part - was later assassinated by the Taliban on September 9th. A mere two days later, the US would suffer its deadliest terrorist attack on its homeland: the infamous 9/11 Terrorist Attack.¹¹³ The operatives of Al Qaeda would cold-heartedly crash into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center through the piloting of several commercial planes into New York, Washington DC, and in Shanksville Pennsylvania.¹¹⁴ With tempestive rapidness, on October 2001, the US commenced a bombing campaign on Afghanistan.¹¹⁵

2.3.2 Development

In December of 2001, during intense combat, the US armed forces were a hair close to having the life of Osama Bin Laden¹¹⁶, militant religious founder of the internationally recognized terrorist group Al Qaeda. The overthrowing of the Taliban regime was occurring step by step, month by month. After military, political, and economic maneuvering for give or take two years, the Afghani and US forces have been picking apart the Taliban insurgents while simultaneously reinforcing a US-led puppet government in the region. In June of 2002, Hamid Karzai is the newly selected leader of the new transitional government; although, he immediately becomes target of insurgents. Fighting continues, Afghanistan now in a state of free-for-all, but in December 2003 the Afghan

¹¹¹ J. J. Collins, *Understanding War in Afghanistan*, Defense Department, October 11th 2011, last accessed: April 17th 2023, <https://bit.ly/3IK5cMx> .

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ S. G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan*, W. W. Norton & Company, April 12th 2010, page "Chronology", last accessed: April 17th 2023 <https://bit.ly/40HEPWm>

government commits to a constitution. By 2006, the US-led NATO alliance is expanding itself all over Afghanistan, from North to South, from West to East. By 2011, war between elements official Western armies and the surgical terrorist acts of Al Qaeda are still raging on, even after several political changes in the area. An interesting occurrence occurred on May 2, 2011. After ten years, the manhunt on Osama Bin Laden has come to an end. A highly qualified Special Forces team was tasked with the assassination of this incredibly valuable target. As the original – and archived – New York Times article announces¹¹⁷: “the leader of Al Qaeda responsible for the Sept. 11 attacks, was killed in a firefight during an operation he ordered Sunday inside Pakistan, ending a 10-year manhunt for the world’s most wanted terrorist. American officials were in possession of his body” Barack Obama said. It is to be noted, that he was killed on Pakistani territory; therefore, the latter was extremely irritated on the US, lashing out on it, claiming that the US unlawfully “disrespected international humanitarian law”¹¹⁸ as the Pakistani government was not notified prior to the event. This particular instance was mentioned, as it shows once again, just like in Iraq, that the US is not particularly interested in lawfulness when dealing with its interests. This will be re-stated in the following chapter.

2.3.3 Ending

As of the writing of this thesis, an extremely curious ending has come to the US’s Afghanistan War. After not one, but two decades of continuous bloody fights, it all went back to its original state. Current President Biden stated that the “counterterrorism” operations in the region are complete, despite the Taliban being back in power¹¹⁹. This would indicate interests beyond the veil of combatting terrorism. In juxtaposition, President Joe Biden admitted that the withdrawal of US troops was so “messy” because of the failure of Afghan security forces to “counter the Taliban”; additionally, thousands of Afghan people fled the country in fear of the new rising state¹²⁰. As a matter of fact, the international airport of Kabul hosted an evacuation which was, for the least, disorganized and chaotic. On The US, in the 30th of August of 2021, withdraws from Afghanistan. This marks the conclusion of a chapter in US history, in which wars were done abroad, according once again to Biden, that aimed at the “remake of other countries”¹²¹. The focus now seemed to shift on diplomacy, rather than military engagements.

¹¹⁷ H. Cooper, “Obama Announces Killing of Osama bin Laden”, Archived New York Times, May 1st 2011, last accessed: April 24th 2023, <https://archive.nytimes.com/thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/05/01/bin-laden-dead-u-s-official-says/> .

¹¹⁸ D. A. Wallace, *Operation Neptune’s Spear: The Lawful Killing of Osama Bin Laden*. Cambridge University Press, last accessed: April 24th 2023, <https://bit.ly/40MK3Qm> .

¹¹⁹ Council on Foreign Relations, “The U.S. War in Afghanistan”, 2023, last accessed: April 24th 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan> .

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

2.4 Case Study: Private Military in Afghanistan

The presence of PMCs in Afghanistan is once again for the most part due to Washington's policies. From 2002, "the contractual services" offered to more than 17 companies peaked at 107.9 billion US dollars.¹²² Just the supporting – private - staff members mounted to 6000¹²³. The US Department of Defense seems to be well aware of some sort of benefits with the integration between the private and the standing US Army; thereby resulting in such vast amounts of financial means spent on these contracts. The 6000 staff, more specifically 6147, are a slice of the total contractors (therefore including combat operative ones) that stack to a grand total of 16832¹²⁴ against 2500 US troops. These numbers refer to 2021. Since the year 2001, US reliance on the private companies has nothing but increased: everything from supportive roles to military and security operations have accompanied the Washington's army¹²⁵. This implies a strict need for coordination not only at a local and tactical level between the two exponents, but also a broader and enriched strategic view of the aims and actions to be achieved between US commanders and PMCs. The assessment of the performance not only of the US military, but also of private forces, proves to be not only challenging in the mildest sense, but also a consequent difficulty in avoiding unnecessary occurrences. Security governance is an extremely controversial, especially when the former process is entangled in foreign affairs and with privates. Moreover, the locals grew distrustful of the PMCs, and this negative perception stemmed from their destabilizing presence¹²⁶. This legit feeling of destabilization by the Afghani people, is mostly due to a "scant presence of information" on their nature and purpose¹²⁷. In addition to this, the private nature leads to a conclusion by the Afghani people that these contractors can operate above Afghan law¹²⁸. Several instances that will now follow provide a basis for these fears. An Afghan person, Abdul Wali, was being interrogated by David Passaro when the interrogation resulted in Wali's death; furthermore, as he was working for the CIA, he was just charged with brutal assault – 8 years in prison – and not murder (2003, Asadabad)¹²⁹. A similar case was that of a private contractor shooting his local interpreter after a verbal fight.¹³⁰ The aftermath was a simple and straightforward flight back to the US. Even if these are arguably isolated instances, a more important one was also a consequence of a PMC, in this case it was a British PMC called "ArmorGroup"¹³¹. The event happened during an operation known as the Azizabad raid: a total of 55 people were shot dead. They weren't armed militia, civilians were in the mix too. The killing-spree was clearly a result of strenuous defense of a deposit heavy weaponry and military equipment, as documented by a following US investigation. Thus, it could

¹²² R. Tiron and P. Murphy, "Biden's Afghan Exit Alarms Contractors Who Outnumber U.S. Troops", Bloomberg Government, April 23st 2021, <https://about.bgov.com/news/bidens-afghan-exit-alarms-contractors-who-outnumber-u-s-troops/>.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ G. C. Lovewine, *Outsourcing the Global War on Terrorism: Private Military Companies and American Intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan*, Springer, April 9th 2014, page 12, <https://bit.ly/3zmOSEI>.

¹²⁶ G. C. Lovewine, *Outsourcing the Global War on Terrorism: Private Military Companies and American Intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan*, Springer, April 9th 2014, page 31, last accessed: April 24th 2023, <https://bit.ly/3zmOSEI>.

¹²⁷ Ibid, page 32.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid, page 35.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

be argued that in that case the importance of things, and not people, far outweighed any potential collateral damage on the behalf of civilians. Once again, confirming the Afghan dissidence of the PMC presence. Lastly another key point that is worth mentioning, is that the contracts outlast Washington's stay in Afghanistan. Obviously, this is by no means an overlook of the US government. Needless to say that the PMCs will continue operating in the region beyond 2021¹³² in either stabilization o destabilization operations, only time will tell. The Whitehouse's main justification for the PMC presence is that of counterterrorism¹³³, which, seems to be in total juxtaposition to Biden's claim of exactly the opposite: no more need for counterterrorism. Notwithstanding them not being within the scope of this paper, the presence of non-western PMCs, therefore of Russia and China will consequently increase.

¹³² S. Staderini, "PMCs: The future frontier of warfare in Afghanistan?", Grey Dynamics, January 8th 2022, last accessed: April 24th 2023, <https://greydynamics.com/pmcs-the-future-frontier-of-warfare-in-afghanistan/> .

¹³³ L. Billing, "The U.S. Is Leaving Afghanistan? Tell That to the Contractors. American firms capitalize on the withdrawal, moving in with hundreds of new jobs", *Intelligencer*, May 12th 2021, last accessed: April 24th 2023, <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2021/05/u-s-contractors-in-afghanistan-are-hiring-amid-withdrawal.html> .

Chapter 3

Analysis and Conclusions

3.1 Analysis: Violent Efficiency, Agency, Impact

As this dissertation is coming closer to its conclusion, the reader has now reached the third final chapter: Analyses of the relevant information that have been provided up until this moment. The Case studies the variables. The hypothesis, and the research question are all essential components of this thesis and they deserve their due critical analysis. Following the premises of this essay, the analysis will be conducted with particular care and attention so that the product will be as bias-free as possible, in addition to an insightful and engaging finale. This Chapter is structured in 3 main sections: the first one regarding the Violence and Efficiency of the Private Military Companies, a second one regarding the extent of the impact of these companies on the outcome of war, and finally a resolution of the query initially posed through the research question and the hypothesis. All claims are based on facts, data, and events explained so far in the thesis.

3.1.1. Violent Efficiency

Violence and efficiency are core elements of these companies. Their very nature is morally ambiguous, and the threshold between flat-out war crimes and simple duty to intervene is thin, malleable, or, if it all present. The purpose of the PMCs is dependent upon their contract, but usually violence is always present either in direct or indirect terms. For example, regarding the direct cases, Blackwater was tasked with the protection of the U.S. officials; which, involves the use of combat if necessary. Considering that both in Iraq (2003 – 2011) and Afghanistan (2001 – 2021) there was a war going on, there definitely was high potential for escalation to the usage of weaponry. In juxtaposition, a private company can simply be tasked with the teaching of combat tactics, training with arms, and other activities that even if the company in that moment was not conducting acts of violence, the teaching of such methods are for one ultimate goal of dominating who is against them. Hence, distinguishing the mere supplying of goods or training services to the client and performing violent actions they themselves would not be a comprehensive view on PMCs. Once more, it is to be stressed out that the presence of these companies is by proxy an expression of violence by the client of the companies. Most often the clients are states, such as the U.S. and UK, who make use of these PMCs as their workhorse to either reinforce or in some cases substitute the state-owned armies. These companies work in areas of conflict, it being any conflict ranging from a local dangerous neighborhood to the full-scale military intervention abroad. Therefore, there is one explanation for the reason why the presence of private companies of this sector suggests violence, that would be because they earn from it. As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, the U.S. quite literally spent billions of dollars to finance contractors¹³⁴. Although, while the presence of violence is omnipresent with these companies, the extent to which violence is integral in their intra-company culture certainly varies. The two most blatant examples were

¹³⁴ Bloomberg Government, "Army, Air Force, and Navy Marine budgets and contracting priorities", 2023. last accessed: May 28th 2023, <https://about.bgov.com/defense-budget-breakdown/#:~:text=Total%20defense%20on%20contractors,2020%20E%80%93%2024448.9%20Billion> .

Blackwater one side of the spectrum and DynCorp on the other side of it. Once again as reported earlier, Blackwater's culture was to promote proactivity¹³⁵. In other words, potentially dangerous scenarios are enough of a reason to preemptively mow down dozens of civilians if they cannot be identified as innocent with a rapid assessment. This is how the infamous Bloody Sunday (Baghdad, September 16th, 2007) came about. It is more than plausible that had DynCorp been tasked on that day, it would have been avoided. As a matter of fact, DynCorp's culture was more respectful of others¹³⁶ and did not promote the concept of proactivity, shooting of hundreds of bullets for covering fire, and shooting to kill. At the end of the day results were extremely similar, since both amounted to a 0% death rate (of their clients), while always being successful in their tasks. Clearly, this has an impact on their perceptions of their clients. These standards are set high for these companies, which explains the absurdly high amount of financing required to operate. Although, the violence and efficiency of these companies compromises the local populations who often are even more fearing of them than the actual armies. Moreover, a standard army while can be responsible for war crimes, it would seem that the psychological impact on civilians of PMCs is negative because of the perceived unhinged nature that their operators seem to possess. The Bloody Sunday was avoidable, but it did not matter. If anything, it was a showcase of strength. It was not of interest for, in that case Blackwater, to protect others other than their client. While it did warp into a legal case, Blackwater and their operations continued to persist. The reader should always bear in mind that these companies are unconcerned with morals, but rather are concerned with task completion. Thus, any state can take advantage of this aspect. It is a reoccurring issue even nowadays with more recent wars and other PMCs.

3.1.2. Impact

The impact of Private Military Companies is a reality; it is simply a matter of understanding the degree of impact that these companies provide in a given conflict; in the case of this thesis, in the conflicts of Iraq and Afghanistan. Regarding Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. forces had to cover various terrains both in the respective wars, but also at a grand level: there was a period of overlap between the war in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan. Hence, "reinforcements" were necessary. These reinforcements came under the flag of Private Military Companies. If the puzzle pieces are to be put together, one notices that the respect for international law was not at the forefront of the American interests, and, connecting to the earlier claim about Baghdad, there must have been numerous incidents where locals have suffered the wrath of the contractors. In addition, the deployment of these operators alleviated pressure on the American Forces who were occupied with their own battles. For example, the most impactful, arguably, role of the PMCs was that of locking down a zone and providing security services. This could come in form of transport, armed personnel, armed vehicles (of which they possessed attack helicopters too, as mentioned in the introduction) and overall security networks. Therefore, the PMCs are not only

¹³⁵ F. Scott, *Private Security Companies during the Iraq War*. 1st ed. Taylor and Francis, 2015.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*.

a matter of impacting “domestic politics”, but also “international relations and operational military needs too”¹³⁷. The very fact that these agencies have been deployed in “support of U.S. forces” in “Iraq and Afghanistan”¹³⁸ proves that for the least, the U.S. officials deem them influential and impactful to some extent; the extent of which, is dependent upon the usage and terms that they are deployed for. Moreover, the considerable impact that these companies might boast is due to the lack of particularly sanctioning legal consequences. As thoroughly reported in Chapter 2, Baghdad’s massacre did indeed bring about the arrest and condemnations of the operators who ruthlessly slaughtered the Iraqi civilians, but that killing frenzy did not lead to any major sanction the company itself. One could argue that the international lenses placed upon at-the-time Blackwater due to that massacre was a reasonable side-effect that they had to suffer. Although, subsequently their name has been changed several times to distance the company from that negative association. In fact, Blackwater became known as Xe, later Academi, and now as reported by their website, are part of a broader security “family” known as “Constellis”¹³⁹. A deeper dive at their allegedly officially released data is a direct show of their potential impact wherever they are deployed. In 2021, the agglomerate of Constellis, that includes all kinds of Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) ranging from Triple Canopy and Academi (former Blackwater) to Olive Group, gained in revenue a jaw-dropping 1.3 billion US dollars¹⁴⁰. In addition to this, in 2021, they have operated in more than 50 countries, with an outstanding force of 14 000 employees¹⁴¹. These numbers alone would be enough to consider it an army. Regarding Afghanistan, lest we consider smaller events as uninfluential, there has been an important private military presence in such region too. Once again, the cases earlier reported are not isolated events, in fact the population feared these companies for a reason. If anything, it proved that their presence was enough of an impact, psychologically speaking, to be feared. Not only that, the example of the operator who shot an interpreter simply because of misunderstandings, serves as evidence of a complete lack of care for national laws. In fact, he was simply sent back to the U.S. with little to no consequences. The United States and overall, the companies, are well-aware of the ratio between their marked impact in relation to a proportionally negligible legal consequences that their operators can face. In and of itself, this precludes any view that PMCs are of no impact and value. Securitization, intended in terms of maintaining solid levels of security through lethal and non-lethal methods, since the 1990s has become an increasingly privatized matter. This is true at national levels, but also at a broader scope in the international scope. Questionable decisions have been increasingly justified in the name of profit. To conclude this section, it is of particular relevance to lead into the following section: one element that allows for everything discussed so far, is the role of agency that is given, or perhaps taken, by these companies.

¹³⁷ G. C. Lovewine, *Outsourcing the Global War on Terrorism: Private Military Companies and American Intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan*, page 12.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Constellis Group, 2023, last accessed: May 28th 2023,

<https://www.constellis.com/#:~:text=The%20Constellis%20family%20of%20companies,Strategic%20Social%20and%20Edinburgh%20International>.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

3.1.3. Agency

This section argues the following claim: given that the in the relation between client and contractor, in this case the U.S. and the various American-based PMCs, the client tendentially beholds the leadership and power between the too, it is crucial to understand and not underestimate the level of agency that private companies can possess. Prior to an analysis, a brief explanation of it is meant by agency is necessary. In the context of this dissertation, agency is meant as the ability to be independent and to be capable of acting without considering the presence, opinion, and force of other actors in the area. The more agency an actor possesses, the more can be done without particular negative consequences. Lesser agency implies more accountability and less freedom of action, together with more thought being put on whether or not an action should be taken; instead, someone with more agency in a way has more authority. Once this is clear, the focus of the reader should shift the ambiguity of international relations. Notwithstanding the processes of international law, it would seem that with power comes agency. At the time of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the U.S. was the world's superpower if not hegemon. The assassination of Osama Bin Laden proves this¹⁴². In theory, American Navy SEALs, more specifically SEAL Team 6, operated on foreign soil without the permission of the recipient state; thus, the murder of Bin Laden was unlawful. Albeit this raid at Osama's compound in Abbottabad (Pakistan) proved to be a success for the U.S.¹⁴³. This fact is a great representation that mirrors the modus operandi of the PMCs in the conflicts they are deployed in. Respecting international law was only a secondary thought to both PMCs and the U.S., as power and might in a way excused their choices. In case it was not obvious enough, the agency of the companies derives from the agency of their client. Case and point: an American company breaks s responsible for human rights violation in Afghanistan, stay by torturing and killing an innocent, then that contractor is judged based on and by his country of origin, which for example could be the U.S. needless to mention that if the former not only was employed by the latter, and perhaps also requested by the latter, then it will never go against its own PMC unless backed to a corner by the all-seeing international eye. Thus, most of the times certain actions go unpunished and the operators, the likes of which are "protected" by their client the U.S., manage to work, and operate in the area. In fact, this works both ways: both for appearing to perform a task, and for disappearing once a task has been more or less successfully completed. The focus should not be on who has more agency, private companies, or a powerful sovereign state like Washington, rather how much is permitted under the helping hand of the latter. Realistically speaking, Washington does indeed enjoy more agency in its involvement with things, but the issue rises exactly due to its recognizability. A PMC's ability to operate in the shadows is what by far makes it an attractive alternative to getting work done with its own hands. Thus, the short answer is that indeed the United States has more agency simply due to its bulwark of forces and weight in the international relations. However, the longer

¹⁴² International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT). "The Death of Osama Bin Laden — Interview with ICT Senior Researchers." International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), 2012.

¹⁴³ Miller Seumas, "The Targeted Killing of Osama Bin Laden", Counter Terrorism Ethics.

answer is that it is much more complex than that: while the U.S. might have more agency, the PMCs have more freedom of action. Therefore, the two things go hand-in-hand; especially, when billions are poured as investment.

3.2 Hypothesis Answered

The time has come to conclude the chapter through the direct answering of the focal points of such dissertation: the hypothesis and the research question. This section is dedicated to the former. As reminder of the original hypothesis formulated by the author, it states that: *Western deployed PMCs did impact the Middle Eastern Conflicts to a considerable amount through security and enforcement type missions in the Iraqi and Afghani wars.* Considering the fact that this hypothesis was thought, formulated, and written prior to a in-depth research of facts and analyzes offered by this thesis, it is fairly accurate. In fact, one could say that it can be accepted for the most part. Once again, the terms “security” and “enforcement” type missions refer to the grand majority of the operations conducted by the private companies, as it includes both the escort and protection of HV (high value) targets, and the enforcement of stabilization in a given area of interest. The independent variable, which would be the “western deployed PMCs” is indeed molding in some shape or form the dependent variables; of which, both through various methodology including security and enforcement missions. The Middle Eastern conflicts of Iraq and Afghanistan, therefore the dependent variables, were indeed affected by PMCs. Insofar as that aspect, the hypothesis is accepted and not denied. Although, what is further open to discussion is the extent of which these companies were capable of overturning a conflict. Some readers might believe that these case studies were already in the favor of the U.S., and the PMCs only enhanced the already favorable tides. Other readers might believe that these events were firstly not in the favor of the U.S., and that the PMCs did nothing particularly decisive if not to hinder what could have been even further loss by Washington. In some ways, both readings are correct. Therefore: that the extent to which the companies were influential lays in the middle ground between the two views. Thus, given that in the long-term the Iraq and Afghan wars were an overall net-negative for Washington, the companies acted as a force multiplier. More specifically, their presence was only beneficiary for the U.S. and surely, they prevented further losses; moreover, the total interventions by these companies were influential to a certain extent. To put it bluntly, they took off weight from the already tired and tense shoulders of the U.S. forces. Additionally, the author came to the conclusion that the word “considerable” is the main issue with the hypothesis. A more comprehensive hypothesis would thereby be written as: *Western deployed PMCs did impact the Middle Eastern Conflicts of Iraq and Afghanistan to a certain extent, through security and enforcement type missions, but were not capable of overturning the outcomes.* Now, this holistic hypothesis considers both sides of the argument in which the impact of PMCs is taken into consideration but is not overestimated and is therefore an improved hypothesis. Yet, regarding the influence of these companies, it could have been of a greater impact if they were deployed for exactly that reason: to have a greater impact. Effectively if they would have been paid to concentrate

more on the target-acquisition, tracking, and target elimination of any and all opponents to Washington's forces than the impact could have been even more significant. The issue arising from this line of thought would be the coordination and strategy issues that would rise in what effectively amounts to two separate armies.

3.3 Research Question Answered

The research question of this essay can now follow with a well-rounded answer to it; lest it is not forgotten that other interpretations would be of equal value, granted that they are based on equally factual data. In fact, the reader is welcomed to challenge the conclusions of this dissertation, perhaps reaching an even better finalized answer. To remind the reader of what the research question is, it will be hereby be reposed: *How did western-led Private Military Actors influence Middle Eastern Conflicts?*

The extensive influence of the PMCs in the Middle Eastern conflicts is a matter of identifying the degree to which one considers certain actions more important than others. Furthermore, this research question presupposes an important detail: the word "how" does implicitly state that, indeed, there was a pragmatic impact caused by the PMCs. In accordance with the research question, this essay extensively proves that there were interventions that impacted the Iraq and Afghanistan war by such companies. Thus, now that the implicit premise has been exposed, there can be an analysis and answer to the question. The PMCs (of western origin) impacted the conflicts in two macro sectors: passive support and active engagement. The former describes the background logistical support ranging from equipment, training, to intelligence. Whereas the latter is about the active deployment of operators in the various POIs (points of interest). Of course, active engagements also entail the shootings on innocent civilians of the respective 2 wars proposed. Their intervention is mostly positive if one is to consider their clients. Innocent deaths aside, what they were tasked for was accomplished and with particular efficiency. A reduced care for the circumstances is what allows these companies to be unchained and particularly attractive to states, who in turn, do have more constraints at least in theory. Besides, international law should be generally respected, but arguably states through proxy (i.e., PMCS) or they themselves tend to disregard it fairly often. This is especially true when considering other conflicts, even more recent ones. Furthermore, the scope of the impact is an interesting point of analysis. Clearly there was passive and active intervention, but the scope of these operations is what ultimately could answer the question. Essentially, if the scope of the PMCs was to be preside concentrated areas without a macro military and economic strategy, then the impact of the "how" is lesser. Instead, if the various contracts and the various PMCs have been tasked with in different operational areas with a strategy in mind, the impact is greater. This essay would like to remind the reader that Blackwater and DynCorp were indeed the main companies, but they were not the only ones contracted and each had their operational sectors (often overlapping). Hence, if these puzzle pieces are to be concatenated it would be logical to conclude that

indeed the latter claim, of a grand strategy including the PMCs, is the more suitable one. If this were true it means that the private companies were an integral part of the conflict and suddenly the “how” assumes even greater relevance. Needless to mention that access to official documents and contracts by the U.S. would further solve the research question, however they are not available as of now. Thus, this dissertation demonstrates that not only the PMCs were influential and impactful through the already explained means, but they were impactful to a good extent in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Conclusion

4.1 General Recap

The Conclusion to this thesis is intended to summarize the previous findings; in addition, some final remarks will be brought to the table. By doing so, it will require the presence of a concise: overview, restatement of the main objective, and the theoretical process that led to the finalization and response to such objective. Once these points are addressed, the chapter shall conclude with final considerations and observations. The purpose of the latter is to better inform the reader on how this essay can be bettered, both in its theoretical framework, and in a practical sense. Not only it is logical to ponder on these elements, but it is a must seeing the delicate topic and theme onto which this essay rests upon.

The author of this thesis divided it into 5 main chapters: an Introduction to the thesis, Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 3, and finally the Conclusion. Respectively: the Introduction served as an ample and broad starting point from which to then funnel the thesis; therefore, it aimed at familiarizing the reader with the main topic of this thesis (PMCs) and how it became relevant. Then, the following chapter was thought as the foundational groundwork given its purposes to define, explain, and clarify future potential doubts. Here, the concept of Private Military Companies was introduced, discussed, and analyzed the differences of the various shades of this industry from its relevance on the international market to the different equipment and intents of the companies. Thus, a fundamental premise and necessary generalization on the use of “PMC” (and not for example “PSC”) was born. In addition, particular importance was placed on the companies Blackwater and DynCorp, together with the U.S, the 3 main actors of this thesis. The chapter ended with a connection to the research question: *How did western-led Private Military Actors influence Middle Eastern Conflicts?* The next chapter began with an explanation of the research design. In fact, it was explained how the independent variable came to be in form of the PMCs, while the dependent variable in form of the two conflicts: Iraq and Afghanistan. These were purposefully chosen conflicts not only due to them relating to the geographical area proposed in the research question, also because of their relevance in terms of PMC intervention. The idea was to judge whether or not these conflicts were shaped in some way, lesser or greater, by the independent variable (PMCs). In the same chapter, the hypothesis was first described and proposed: *Western deployed PMCs did impact the Middle Eastern Conflicts to a considerable amount through security and enforcement type missions in the Iraqi and Afghani wars.* Lastly regarding Chapter 2, it contextualized and described the two case studies: the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. The presence of the case studies in this chapter was purely descriptive, as it served as a contextualization for the reader. Then, Chapter 3, was the analytical bulwark of the thesis. Through different analyses, it was argued and discovered that the presence of Private Military Companies was indeed influential to a certain extent, as through supportive and security operations they aided the U.S. forces, although they were not decisive. Additionally, it was found that they could not be decisive to a greater extent since they were contracted more in terms of defensive and counter-offensive

means, rather than full-scale assaults. Lastly, the Conclusion is intended to conclude with final remarks and considerations coupled with potential suggestions on the improvement of the dissertation.

4.2 Final Considerations

Since the main objective of this dissertation was to dive deeper into “how” PMCs might have played a role in the Middle Eastern Conflicts, where its main client the U.S. intervened, this section will serve to the reader as a conclusive hat to the findings. Firstly, it must be clear that this thesis did indeed, through its findings, confirm the fact that PMCs played a role in the conflicts and there is no denying it. Secondly, the degree of participation by the private companies was substantial relative to the U.S presence, however the degree of influence that these companies exerted is left purposefully open to the interpretation of whom who reads. Something such as “influence” cannot be easily quantified. In fact, the former concept is worthy of a dissertation on its own. It can be argued that influence can be intended in terms of the on-the-field impact such as but not limited to: mission success, number of deaths, kills, and amount of mission deployment. In fact, the purpose of this essay was to confirm how the PMCs intervened, and that would be through acts of support such as training and logistics in addition to security enforcement. Recalling the analysis of Chapter 3, the efficiency rates, that is lack of death of the client, were almost immaculate. Therefore, in that sense, the influence was outstanding. In juxtaposition, considering the grand scale of those wars, ultimately both Iraq and Afghanistan were not complete successes for Washington. If not, one could go far as calling them failures. Although, there is certainly no attribution nor causation between the failures of the American intervention and the PMCs. In practical terms, PMCs are to be perceived as a role of support the extent of which derives from the contracts. If they would have been tasked with more offensive-based missions, then perhaps the “how” and the influence would have been altered.

The basis of these considerations is derivative on the conflicts previously stated. Hence, a follow-up to this dissertation would be to consider other settings where PMCs have been used and analyze their impact, together with their methods, that is the how. This thesis is aware of the presence of other clients such as the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the Russian Federation (RF), who also make use of PMCs. This is most certainly observable in the recent Ukrainian conflict, through the usage of the Wagner Group PMC. The RF has extensively relied on it, and it will definitely be compelling its further impact on the outcome of the war. Moreover, another compelling analysis could be written, as an extension to this thesis, on contemporary uses by Western States and compare them to the less recent conflicts brought by this thesis. What will be a constant hindering to any and all dissertations which zero-in on the PMC element, is the lack of official documentation by these private companies. Considering that they are not public, not everything is disclosed. Additionally, neither the clients would be interested in disclosing too many details regarding this topic. Needless to say, an even more

comprehensive analysis necessitates classified intel. Notwithstanding this, an optimal analysis can be concluded with further data from different settings. Collecting data on how these companies operate and how influential they are in other conflicts would lead to a buildup of trends, similarities, and perhaps identifiable cultures of their methods that are more reliable. The release of further documentation, press releases, official statements all by both clients and companies would have surely improved this dissertation. Additionally, the author looks forward to further literature and data on this rising phenomenon: Private Military Companies.

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Summary

Introduzione

Il mondo delle relazioni internazionali si sposta sempre più verso il processo di privatizzazione, comprendendo: aspetti socioeconomici, politici e militari. La crescente influenza del settore privato nei conflitti tra stati non è un fenomeno recente. Anzi, la presenza dei mercenari è sempre andata di pari passo al concetto di guerra fin dalla sua nascita. Un grande uso di mercenari nacque con l'antica roma. Anche se, per quanto possano sembrare simili, i mercenari nel senso più classico e le compagnie militari private odierne sono particolarmente diverse. Con il progredire della storia e della tecnologia, il settore privato è riuscito a lucrare sulla violenza, mettendo insieme tanti mercenari. Di conseguenza un mercenario del 1500 sarebbe visto come lupo solitario. D'altro canto, un moderno operatore privato fa parte di un'organizzazione decisamente più complessa. Questa complessità è quasi paragonabile all'organizzazione di un esercito regolare e statale. Mentre un gruppo di mercenari verrebbe schiacciato dalla potenza di un esercito; invece, una compagnia di grande calibro sarebbe in grado di reggere il confronto con un esercito meno potente. Una compagnia privata economicamente predisposta sarebbe ricca di attrezzature militari che possono essere utilizzate con grande efficacia. Ciò fa riflettere sul fatto che la tecnologia e il sistema capitalista hanno introdotto una pedina importante, quella delle Compagnie Militari Private. Inoltre, per evitare che la tendenza si inverta completamente, le compagnie private hanno storicamente acquisito capacità maggiori di quelle di cui erano capaci i mercenari. Non ancora pienamente in grado di sostituire un esercito completo e statale, soprattutto quello di uno Stato particolarmente potente, esse rappresentano comunque un aspetto delle relazioni internazionali poco esplorato. Queste compagnie possono essere una minaccia quando i loro clienti le utilizzano negli scenari tattico-belliche giuste, con le giuste compensazioni economiche.

L'autore di questa tesi trova particolarmente interessante, il fatto che l'industria militare privata non sia stata così ampiamente discussa ed analizzata in maniera approfondita, come altri temi nelle relazioni internazionali. Pertanto, potrebbero rappresentare un campo inesplorato in termini legali e politici. Per questo motivo l'autore ha deciso di dedicare la presente dissertazione all'impatto che le compagnie militari private avrebbero potuto, o non avrebbero potuto avere, su alcuni conflitti.

La divisione della tesi in capitoli e sezioni era necessaria per creare una produzione scritta coerente e logica: l'Introduzione come rapida panoramica di ciò che questa tesi rappresenta, il Capitolo 1 è basato sui fatti che pongono le basi per le premesse e le valutazioni, il Capitolo 2 che inizia con il quadro analitico ma che in seguito poi si concentrerà sulla descrizione dei casi studio, il Capitolo 3 come analisi basata sui risultati dei capitoli precedenti e infine la conclusione che funge da elemento finale e sintetico di questa tesi. È evidente che tutto questo non sarebbe stato possibile senza una chiara argomentazione su ciò che la tesi si concentra. Pertanto, tutto si è basato sui casi di studio scelti come punto di partenza. Nel processo teorico, due premesse hanno gettato le basi per la scelta dei casi studio: in primo luogo, che su un argomento con relativamente meno letteratura e

documenti, doveva essere necessario scegliere un conflitto meno recente in cui i dati e le statistiche sono stati ben documentati. In secondo luogo, poiché il mondo delle imprese private militari è piuttosto vasto, da quelle con sede occidentale a quelle con sede orientale, sarebbe stato eccessivamente impegnativo e francamente meno preciso non concentrarsi soltanto sulle imprese occidentali. Pertanto, le guerre in Iraq e in Afghanistan sono diventate le migliori scommesse per un compromesso tra affidabilità e peculiarità. Entrambi i conflitti hanno visto la partecipazione degli Stati Uniti d'America, inoltre entrambe le guerre sono state oggetto d'intervento da parte di militari privati. Altrimenti, le guerre più recenti sarebbero risultate in una minore disponibilità e affidabilità dei dati. Anche a fronte della consistente presenza di queste aziende in Iraq e in Afghanistan, non si pensa spesso a tirarle in ballo nel peggiore dei casi, o a menzionarle appena nel migliore dei casi. Da qui, la nascita di questa tesi ad esplorare il reale significato della partecipazione di queste aziende in contesti chirurgici e non generalizzati. Lo scopo non è solo quello di vedere come le compagnie militari private abbiano assunto ruoli nelle guerre Statocentriche, ma anche di ragionare sul loro potenziale impatto su scala più ampia. È piuttosto fondamentale capire perché il settore militare privato stia assumendo una maggiore capacità di influenzare la guerra moderna. Per di più, ciò presuppone non solo una potenziale revisione del modus operandi della guerra contemporanea, ma anche valutazioni legali, politiche ed economiche sull'interazione tra Stati e privati. Inoltre, questo ragionamento sarebbe garantito da un'analisi approfondita grazie a: documenti ufficiali autorevoli, fonti accademiche, da riviste a ricerche e in fine libri inerenti. Ove possibile, saranno utilizzate fonti primarie. Tuttavia, considerando la natura privata delle aziende e per motivi di privacy, è piuttosto difficile svelare la verità con un'analisi completa. Per giunta, l'ipotesi è stata formulata sulla base di una domanda di ricerca, che a sua volta si è basata sui casi di studio, insieme alle variabili dipendenti e indipendenti, che verranno presentate nei prossimi capitoli. Infine, per quanto riguarda l'introduzione di questa tesi, è importante notare che tutte le considerazioni e le idee dell'autore possono essere confermate o respinte sulla base dei risultati. In sostanza, sono di vitale importanza le analisi imparziali che, al meglio delle loro capacità, descrivono e comprendono la realtà dell'avvento delle Compagnie Militari Private.

Estratto Capitolo 1

Sebbene l'acronimo PMC stia per Private Military Company, e quindi sottolinei un modus operandi di natura offensiva e militare, non è comunque necessario differenziarsi dalle Private Security Companies poiché le missioni di sicurezza, da esse svolte, sono sovrapponibili. La loro presenza stessa può provocare una forza destabilizzante abbastanza potente da schiacciare i loro concorrenti. Quindi, i loro risultati possono essere utilizzati per scopi di sicurezza o per processi di destabilizzazione. Di seguito, il lettore può osservare le entrate di un gigante del settore, DynCorp international.

Ricavi DynCorp International	
Year	Turnover
2006	\$1.96B
2007	\$2.08B
2008	\$2.13B
2009	\$3.10B
2010	\$3.60B
2011	\$3.70B

I numeri relativi all'intervento della Blackwater e della DynCorp parlano da soli, soprattutto l'assenza di morti tra i clienti.

Table 1.1 Casualties inflicted by Blackwater and DynCorp, 2003–2009

	<i>Blackwater</i>	<i>DynCorp</i>
Violent incidents	428	78
Incidents in which firms used violence	353	60
Incidents in which firms fired weapons	342	59
Non-insurgent deaths	38	3
Insurgent deaths	33	8
Total deaths	71	11
Serious non-insurgent injuries	64	1
Serious insurgent injuries	58	4
Total serious injuries	122	5

Note

Table 1.2 Casualties suffered by Blackwater and DynCorp, 2003–2009

	<i>Blackwater</i>	<i>DynCorp</i>
Encounters with insurgents	131	26
Attacks by insurgents	118	22
Security personnel deaths	20	14
Security personnel deaths per insurgent attack	0.17	0.64
Client deaths	0	0

Estratto Capitolo 2

Per il Caso Studio in Iraq, l'arco temporale delle operazioni militari private va dal 2003 al 2009. Il governo degli Stati Uniti ha stipulato contratti con le PMC, noti come "il primo e il secondo Worldwide Personnel Protective Services Contracts (WPPS-1 e -2) del Dipartimento di Stato". Le società note all'epoca come Blackwater e DynCorp sono state incaricate di proteggere gli agenti statunitensi insieme a un'altra società privata nota come Triple Canopy. Gli accordi specificavano le rispettive aree di interesse, anche se ciò non impediva necessariamente di fornire operazioni che si sovrapponevano all'area di interesse di un'altra PMC. L'area di operazioni della DynCorp era probabilmente la più semplice, in quanto era centralizzata intorno alle città del nord dell'Iraq, in gran parte relativamente sicure, come Erbil e Kirkuk, mentre la Triple Canopy operava nelle città del

sud dell'Iraq, come Bassora e Tallil, e, infine, la Blackwater agiva nelle "aree più instabili dell'Iraq, come Baghdad, Ramadi, Najaf, Karbala e Al Hillah"; inoltre quest'ultima forniva "supporto aereo ravvicinato per le operazioni di sicurezza del Dipartimento di Stato". È da notare che la presenza militare privata è a dir poco stupefacente; il numero di operatori privati, ha raggiunto il rapporto di "uno su dieci", con il primo presente ogni dieci persone americane. Questo numero è davvero sorprendente. Nel 2007, il 23 maggio, si sarebbe dovuto tenere un incontro diplomatico nel municipio di Amanat, il centro di Baghdad, quando si è manifestato qualcosa di particolarmente oscuro. Il personale del Dipartimento di Stato degli Stati Uniti è stato gravemente minacciato da colpi di armi leggere, colpi sparati da numerosi insorti nascosti in edifici che si trovavano nelle vicinanze dell'edificio. La PMC Blackwater, incaricata di salvaguardare il personale statunitense, ha risposto al fuoco. L'apertura del fuoco è stata effettuata con centinaia di proiettili per creare un fuoco di soppressione che ha permesso di guadagnare tempo sufficiente per scortare i clienti statunitensi in sicurezza. In queste circostanze, questa sarebbe stata una reazione sana di mente. Ma se si considera quello che è successo dopo, ciò che sarebbe potuto accadere è agghiacciante. La squadra di supporto tattico "Raven 23" è stata incaricata di garantire immediatamente la sicurezza del diplomatico statunitense, scortandolo in una zona sicura chiamata Green Zone. Possedevano 4 veicoli da convoglio, armati di torrette per essere utilizzati dagli artiglieri. Inoltre, erano autorizzati a fornire supporto di fuoco di riserva¹⁴⁴ per le altre squadre di sicurezza Blackwater. Questo poteva essere fatto attraverso il loro considerevole equipaggiamento di cui erano dotati: "mitragliatrici, lanciagranate, fucili e pistole". Raven 23 era composto da 5 uomini, tutti accusati e condannati per omicidio colposo, uso volontario di granate e fuoco automatico in uno spazio pubblico civile. La violenza insensata è sfociata nel massacro a sangue freddo di 17 civili iracheni in piazza Nisour: è passata alla storia come la domenica di sangue di Baghdad.

Invece per quanto riguarda il secondo Caso Studio, la presenza delle PMC in Afghanistan è ancora una volta in gran parte dovuta alle politiche di Washington. Dal 2002, "i servizi contrattuali" offerti a più di 17 società hanno raggiunto un picco di 107,9 miliardi di dollari. Solo i membri del personale di supporto - privato - sono arrivati a 6000. Il Dipartimento della Difesa degli Stati Uniti sembra essere ben consapevole dei vantaggi derivanti dall'integrazione tra l'esercito privato e l'esercito degli Stati Uniti, che ha portato a una così grande quantità di mezzi finanziari spesi per questi contratti. I 6000 dipendenti, più precisamente 6147, sono una fetta del totale dei contractor (compresi quindi quelli operativi di combattimento) che ammontano a un totale di 16832. contro 2500 truppe statunitensi (questi numeri si riferiscono al 2021). Dal 2001, l'affidamento degli Stati Uniti alle aziende private non ha fatto che aumentare: dai ruoli di supporto alle operazioni militari e di sicurezza hanno accompagnato l'esercito di Washington. Questo legittimo sentimento di destabilizzazione da parte del popolo afgano è dovuto soprattutto a una "scarsa presenza di informazioni" sulla loro natura e sul loro scopo. Inoltre, la natura privata porta la popolazione afgana a ritenere che questi appaltatori possano operare al di sopra della legge

afghana¹⁴⁵. Un afghano, Abdul Wali, era interrogato da David Passaro quando l'interrogatorio ha portato alla morte di Wali; inoltre, poiché lavorava per la CIA, è stato solo accusato di aggressione brutale - 8 anni di carcere - e non di omicidio (2003, Asadabad). Un caso simile è stato quello di un appaltatore privato che ha sparato al suo interprete locale dopo una lite verbale. Inutile dire che le PMC continueranno a operare nella regione anche dopo il 2021 in operazioni di stabilizzazione o destabilizzazione, solo il tempo potrà dirlo. La principale giustificazione della Casa Bianca per la presenza della PMC è quella dell'antiterrorismo.

Estratto Capitolo 3

Come promemoria dell'ipotesi originale formulata dall'autore, essa afferma che: *Le PMC dispiegate dall'Occidente hanno avuto un impatto considerevole sui conflitti mediorientali attraverso le missioni di sicurezza e di controllo nelle guerre in Iraq e in Afghanistan.* Considerando il fatto che questa ipotesi è stata pensata, formulata e scritta prima di una ricerca approfondita dei fatti e delle analisi offerte da questa tesi, è abbastanza accurata. Anzi, si potrebbe dire che può essere accettata per la maggior parte. Ancora una volta, i termini missioni di tipo "security" ed "enforcement" si riferiscono alla grande maggioranza delle operazioni condotte dalle compagnie private, in quanto comprendono sia la scorta e la protezione di obiettivi HV (high value), sia l'imposizione della stabilizzazione in una determinata area di interesse. La variabile indipendente, che sarebbe la "PMC occidentale", sta effettivamente plasmando in qualche modo le variabili dipendenti, entrambe attraverso varie metodologie, tra cui le missioni di sicurezza e di controllo. I conflitti mediorientali in Iraq e Afghanistan, quindi le variabili dipendenti, sono stati effettivamente influenzati dalle PMC. Per quanto riguarda questo aspetto, l'ipotesi è accettata e non smentita. Tuttavia, ciò che è ulteriormente aperto alla discussione è la misura in cui queste aziende sono state in grado di rovesciare un conflitto. Per certi versi, entrambe le letture sono corrette. Pertanto, la misura in cui le aziende furono influenti si trova nella posizione intermedia tra i due punti di vista. Quindi, dato che a lungo termine le guerre in Iraq e in Afghanistan sono state complessivamente negative per Washington, le aziende hanno agito da moltiplicatore di forze. Più precisamente, la loro presenza è stata solo un beneficio per gli Stati Uniti e sicuramente ha evitato ulteriori perdite; inoltre, gli interventi complessivi di queste aziende sono stati influenti in una certa misura. Per dirla senza mezzi termini, hanno tolto un peso dalle spalle già stanche e tese delle forze statunitensi. L'autore è giunto alla conclusione che la parola "considerevole" è il problema principale dell'ipotesi. Un'ipotesi più completa potrebbe quindi essere scritta come: *Le PMC dispiegate dall'Occidente hanno avuto un certo impatto sui conflitti mediorientali in Iraq e Afghanistan, attraverso missioni di sicurezza e di controllo, ma non sono state in grado di ribaltare gli esiti.* Ora, questa ipotesi olistica considera entrambi i lati dell'argomento, in cui l'impatto delle PMC è preso in considerazione ma non è sopravvalutato.

Tuttavia, per quanto riguarda l'influenza di queste compagnie, esse avrebbero potuto essere di maggiore influenza se fossero state impiegate proprio per questo motivo: avere un impatto maggiore. In effetti, se fossero state pagate per concentrarsi maggiormente sull'acquisizione, l'inseguimento e l'eliminazione di tutti gli avversari delle forze di Washington, l'impatto sarebbe stato ancora più significativo.

Per ricordare al lettore qual è la domanda di ricerca, essa verrà qui riproposta: *In che modo gli attori militari privati guidati dall'Occidente hanno influenzato i conflitti mediorientali?*

L'ampia influenza delle PMC nei conflitti mediorientali è una questione di identificazione del grado di importanza di certe azioni rispetto ad altre. Inoltre, questa domanda di ricerca presuppone un dettaglio importante: la parola "come" afferma implicitamente che, effettivamente, c'è stato un impatto pragmatico causato dalle PMC. In accordo con la domanda di ricerca, questa tesi dimostra ampiamente che ci sono stati interventi che hanno avuto un impatto sulla guerra in Iraq e Afghanistan da parte di queste aziende. Pertanto, ora che la premessa implicita è stata esposta, è possibile analizzare e rispondere alla domanda. Le PMC (di origine occidentale) hanno avuto un impatto sui conflitti in due macrosettori: il supporto passivo e l'impegno attivo. Il primo descrive il supporto logistico di fondo che va dall'equipaggiamento, all'addestramento, all'intelligence. Mentre il secondo riguarda il dispiegamento attivo degli operatori nei vari POI (punti d'interesse). Naturalmente, gli ingaggi attivi comportano anche le sparatorie su civili innocenti delle rispettive due guerre proposte. Il loro intervento è per lo più positivo se si considera la mancanza di morte dei loro clienti, per non parlare per le cifre spese da quest'ultimi. Morti innocenti a parte, il loro compito è stato portato a termine e con particolare efficienza. Una minore attenzione alle circostanze è ciò che permette a queste compagnie di essere libere da catene e particolarmente attraenti per gli Stati, che a loro volta hanno più vincoli, almeno in teoria. Inoltre, il diritto internazionale dovrebbe essere generalmente rispettato, ma probabilmente le PMC o addirittura gli Stati stessi tendono a disattendere la legge internazionale abbastanza spesso. Questo è particolarmente vero quando si considerano altri conflitti, anche più recenti. Inoltre, la portata dell'impatto è un punto interessante di analisi. È chiaro che ci sono stati interventi passivi e attivi, ma la portata di queste operazioni è ciò che in ultima analisi potrebbe rispondere alla domanda. In sostanza, se la portata delle PMC era quella di presidiare aree concentrate senza una macro-strategia militare ed economica, allora l'impatto del "come" è minore. Se invece i vari contratti e le varie PMC sono stati affidati in diverse aree operative con una strategia in mente, l'impatto è maggiore. Questa tesi vorrebbe ricordare al lettore che Blackwater e DynCorp erano sì le aziende principali, ma non erano le uniche ad avere un contratto e ognuna aveva i suoi settori operativi (spesso sovrapposti). Quindi, se questi pezzi del puzzle devono essere concatenati, sarebbe logico concludere che la seconda affermazione, quella di una grande strategia che include le PMC, è quella più adatta. Se ciò fosse vero, significherebbe che le compagnie private erano parte integrante del conflitto e improvvisamente il "come" assumerebbe una rilevanza ancora maggiore. È inutile dire che l'accesso ai documenti e ai contratti ufficiali degli Stati Uniti risolverebbe ulteriormente la questione della ricerca, ma al

momento non sono disponibili. Pertanto, questa tesi dimostra che non solo le PMC hanno avuto un'influenza e un impatto attraverso i mezzi già spiegati, ma anche che le PMC hanno avuto un impatto sul conflitto.

Conclusione

Dal momento che l'obiettivo principale di questa tesi era quello di approfondire "come" le PMC potessero avere un ruolo nei conflitti mediorientali, in cui gli Stati Uniti, loro principale cliente, sono intervenuti, questa sezione servirà al lettore come cappello conclusivo ai risultati. In primo luogo, deve essere chiaro che questa tesi ha effettivamente confermato, attraverso i suoi risultati, il fatto che le PMC hanno giocato un ruolo nei conflitti e non è possibile negarlo. In secondo luogo, il grado di partecipazione delle compagnie private è stato sostanziale in proporzione alla presenza statunitense, tuttavia il grado di influenza che queste compagnie hanno esercitato è lasciato volutamente aperto all'interpretazione di chi legge. Una cosa come l'influenza non può essere facilmente quantificata. In effetti, il concetto d'influenza meriterebbe una dissertazione a sé stante. Si può sostenere che l'influenza può essere intesa in termini di impatto sul campo, come ad esempio, ma non solo, il successo della missione, il numero di morti, le uccisioni e l'entità del dispiegamento della missione. In realtà, lo scopo di questa dissertazione era quello di confermare come le PMC intervenissero, e cioè attraverso atti di supporto come l'addestramento e la logistica, oltre all'applicazione della sicurezza. Ricordando l'analisi del Capitolo 3, i tassi di efficienza, cioè la mancanza di morte del cliente, sono stati quasi immacolati. In questo senso, quindi, l'influenza è stata eccezionale. In contrapposizione, considerando la grande scala di queste guerre, alla fine sia l'Iraq che l'Afghanistan non sono stati un successo completo per Washington. Anzi, si potrebbe arrivare a definirli fallimenti. Tuttavia, non vi è certamente alcuna attribuzione o causalità tra i fallimenti dell'intervento americano e le PMC. In termini pratici, le PMC devono essere percepite come un ruolo di supporto la cui portata deriva dai contratti. Se fossero state incaricate di missioni più offensive, forse il "come" e l'influenza sarebbero stati modificati.

La base di queste considerazioni deriva dai conflitti precedentemente esposti. Pertanto, un seguito a questa tesi sarebbe quello di considerare altri contesti in cui le PMC sono state utilizzate e di analizzarne l'impatto, insieme ai loro metodi, cioè il come. Questa tesi è consapevole della presenza di altri clienti, come la Repubblica Popolare Cinese (RPC) e la Federazione Russa (FR), che fanno anch'essi uso di PMC. Questo è sicuramente osservabile nel recente conflitto ucraino, attraverso l'uso della PMC noto come Gruppo Wagner. La Federazione Russa ha fatto ampio affidamento su di essa e sarà sicuramente interessante il suo ulteriore impatto sull'esito della guerra. Inoltre, un'altra analisi convincente potrebbe essere scritta, come estensione di questa tesi, sugli usi contemporanei da parte degli Stati occidentali e confrontarli con i conflitti meno recenti riportati da questa tesi. Un ostacolo costante a tutte le tesi che si concentrano sull'elemento PMC è la mancanza di documentazione ufficiale da parte di queste società private. Considerando che non sono pubbliche, non tutto viene divulgato.

Inoltre, nemmeno i clienti sarebbero interessati a rivelare troppi dettagli su questo argomento. Inutile dire che un'analisi ancora più completa richiede informazioni riservate. Ciononostante, un'analisi ottimale può essere conclusa con ulteriori dati provenienti da contesti diversi. La raccolta di dati sul modo in cui queste aziende operano e sull'influenza che hanno in altri conflitti porterebbe all'individuazione di tendenze, somiglianze e forse culture identificabili dei loro metodi che sono più affidabili. Il rilascio di ulteriore documentazione, di comunicati stampa e di dichiarazioni ufficiali sia da parte dei clienti che delle aziende avrebbe sicuramente migliorato questa tesi. In conclusione, l'autore si augura di poter disporre di ulteriore letteratura e dati su questo fenomeno in crescita: le Compagnie militari private.