More than Mercenaries?

Mercenaries, Sierra Leone, and the rise of Private Military Companies

by

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ABSTRACT

The rise of Private Military Companies (PMCs) in the mid 1990s suggests a significant threat to the states' traditional control of force. The impact of these companies on Africa has yet to be fully investigated, and their roots in Africa's mercenary past are often ignored or misunderstood. Sierra Leone's experience with three companies, Gurkha Security Guards (GSG), Executive Outcomes (EO), and Sandline International provides an ideal setting in which to both explore and pinpoint the transformation of freelance mercenaries into modern PMCs. At the center of this debate is Peter Singer's suggestion that modern PMCs are something more than mercenaries. Globalization, private authority, and legitimacy theories provide both guides to such a study and explanatory tools helpful in understanding this radical development. While most observers rightly conclude that such companies are not a direct threat to the state's central role in international relations, or to its control of force, they nonetheless suggest a significant realignment of international relations. EO's success in both Angola and Sierra Leone came amid the company's all-out bid for legitimacy as a private provider of security on the African continent and on the international scene as well. In the final analysis, PMCs did gain significant acceptance, authority, and legitimacy in Sierra Leone, but whether this will transfer to a future for mercenaries in Africa is not decided yet. Most indicators suggest that large-scale PMCs will return as security providers in Africa. Because of this, these companies are indeed more than mercenaries.
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To my family; Barbara, Desiree, and Tyrel:
For all they have given up
Chapter I
Introduction: From Mercenaries to Private Military Companies

For much of the twentieth-century mercenaries existed as shadowy, illicit, and somewhat reprehensible entities. This was especially the case on the African continent. Mercenary employment was a singular, individualized activity populated by people whose motivations ranged from an ideological abhorrence of communism to a thirst for adventure. Yet, today the employment of private force is commonplace throughout the world. Companies offering paramilitary services exist openly, often as publicly traded corporations, and are hired by actors that run the gamut from failed or failing states to the current world hegemon; from rebel groups and international drug cartels to humanitarian aid organizations. What predicated such a change? Are these companies simply mercenaries reworked, or are they indeed more than mercenaries as Peter Singer claims? Has private force gained the authority, legitimacy, and acceptance to constitute a threat to the state and its supposed monopoly on the legitimate use of force? By exploring the transitional case of Sierra Leone it can be demonstrated that, in their new form as Private Military Companies (PMCs), mercenaries are alive and well and indeed thriving. Sierra Leone illustrates the transition from the free-lance mercenaries of the 1960s-1980s to modern PMCs, a transition accompanied by significant gains in authority, legitimacy, and acceptance.

History and Mercenaries:

Anthony Mockler asserted that to write “a history of mercenaries would be very little less than a history of warfare throughout the ages,” which suggests both the prevalence of

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mercenaries in history, and the futility of such an effort. Nevertheless, certain aspects of that history are useful in understanding modern security companies. Historically, mercenaries come into vogue when quality of troops matters more than quantity. They are especially prevalent at the end of mass mobilizations, because the end of a large war often leaves many young men without employment, but with strong military skill sets. Pertinent examples include the end of the Second World War and the end of the Cold War; the former producing the manpower for the mercenary boom which began in the 1960s, and the latter supplying modern companies, most notably Executive Outcomes (EO). Private military actors also thrive in areas of weak governments that are threatened either externally by other states or internally by dissenters. Examples include Angola and Sierra Leone in the 1990s. Finally, there are, historically, frequently links between business ventures, especially foreign ones, and the employment of private arms. Examples of such collusions abound especially in Africa, and include Angola and Sierra Leone as well.

Under the above generalities, mercenaries have been part of organized warfare for at least three thousand years. Throughout, the fortunes and acceptability of mercenaries has waxed and waned. Mercenaries were often hired for their unique skills or fighting methods, and in the process both made and destroyed states. Their loyalty, albeit bought and paid for, was often valued by rulers over the fickle loyalties of immediate subjects. Throughout history mercenaries were more readily available than the untrained and often unwilling peasant levies that were less useful and more dangerous if armed and prepared to fight. Machiavelli warned of the pitfalls of hiring mercenaries, and, though often quoted, placed the blame on mercenaries rather than on

3 Singer, Corporate Warriors, 38-39.
5 "If one has his state based on the arms of mercenaries, he will never be solid or secure, because they are disunited, ambitious, undisciplined, unfaithful, stalwart among friends, cowardly among enemies, with no fear of god, no fidelity toward men; and one only delays his ruin as long as he delays their assault; and during the peace one is despoiled by them, during the war by the enemies. The reason for this is that they have no other friendship, nor any
inept rulers where it really belonged. Following the peace of Westphalia and the French Revolution, mercenary popularity suffered a significant decline in favor of the ideal of citizen armies fighting for home and hearth. In this sense Machiavelli’s warning was finally, though indirectly, heeded.

Despite the trend away from the use of mercenaries, the use of hired soldiers continued, though usually under some pretext such as leased national troops, charter companies, or privateers. However, this too had faded by the end of the nineteenth century, more as a by-product of the rise and revision of sovereignty than a specific attempt to eliminate mercenarism.

Janice Thomson summarized her evaluation of this change as follows:

The institution of sovereignty was transformed by nineteenth-century state practices. This transformation was evidenced by the elimination of non-state violence. The elimination of non-state violence was predicated on its prior delegitimating, which was sparked by European expansion and the rise of republican government.

Thomson’s research demonstrates two important points. First, the delegitimating of mercenary activity was an important precedent for its elimination. Thus, a legitimization of mercenaries may suggest a corresponding rehabilitation of the hired soldier. Secondly, the idea that understandings of sovereignty change over time with direct implications for non-state violence is crucial as well. Again, this suggests that if definitions and understandings of sovereignty are subject to change, this might also signal the return of mercenary soldiering in some form.

While Thomson did not recognize it, this low ebb in mercenary history ended in the early 1960s with the advent of decolonization, the rise of independent states in Africa, and the return

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6 Lynch and Walsh, “The Good Mercenary?” 146. “The real problem is not that we have bad mercenaries so much as that we have stupid rulers.”


9 Thomson, Mercenaries Pirates, and Sovereigns, 148.
of freelance soldiers of fortune to the African Continent on a fairly large scale. The Congo crisis, which began in 1960 and coincided with the heyday of the decolonization movement, provides one example of this trend. The mercenaries active there are the real founding fathers of modern security companies, as well as of the popular understandings and negative connotations which have plagued the private use of force since. The men who volunteered for service in Katanga’s effort at secession from the newly independent Congo in 1960 were mainly former soldiers cast off or downsized by their home militaries. These were largely European, although there were “floating indigenous mercenaries”10 throughout Africa who fought alongside their white counterparts, and often shared their backgrounds and experiences. Many had combat experience stemming from World War II and its aftermath. Most found little use for their combat skills in modern society, missed the camaraderie and excitement of combat, and exhibited the anti-communism common throughout western militaries at the time. Pay was certainly a strong motivator, especially in the Congo as it could often be tripled on the black market, and because their skills had little pecuniary value in the civilian market. Contracts in the Congo, usually six months in duration, provided a steady paycheck, life insurance, danger allowance, and even a vacation after a period of service. Mercenary service offered the chance of rapid promotion based on merit, especially attractive when compared to peace-time soldering in a national army. Additionally, the very qualities—a strong conception of self and individualism—which made them successful combat soldiers, also disqualified them in many ways for the spit and polish of the standing national army.

This training and experience could only be put to use—or realized—in combat, and for many the pure pleasure of training and leading men was motivation enough. They enjoyed working in dangerous environments with other people of a similar outlook, and with whom they

shared an idealistic commitment to fighting the spread of communism. For Mike Hoare, these were the

real adventurers (a dying breed)...the real mercenary soldiers, to whom this was a way of life that could go on for ever as far as they were concerned. They came again and again, just using the period between contracts as a time to go on an almighty thrash until their money was spent.\(^{11}\)

For such men war was a lifestyle choice. It was their specialty and they saw themselves as individuals fighting for an ideological cause their home nations either ignored or restricted them from fully engaging as national soldiers. On more general grounds, they represented traits common to mercenaries throughout the ages; they were primarily loyal to their paymasters, divorced from the political struggles, and politically expendable.

**Defining Mercenaries:**

Modern definitions of mercenaries tend to center on the post-1960 period. Everybody knows instinctively what a mercenary is, but a clear and concise definition is difficult or perhaps impossible to pin down. Deborah Avant, a leading scholar in the field of private security, avoids the term altogether for this reason. "The fact that what "mercenary" refers to has changed over time is interesting for what it tells analysts about the shifts in what are considered legitimate uses of force, but makes the word less useful as an analytical term."\(^{12}\) This approach, however, ignores both the term's common usage and its pejorative implications. For example, in Western culture a mercenary is an independent, extra-legal, almost vagabond, figure; one which is at the same time romanticized and idealized in popular literature and film. The UN definition,\(^{13}\) compiled in 1977, is based on motivations, primarily pecuniary reward, and has been routinely circumvented and criticized on this point. However, because the term carried negative

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\(^{13}\) Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, Article 47, Mercenaries.
connotations, and still does to a great extent, security companies strenuously avoid its use, and resist all attempts to label such businesses as mercenary collectives.\textsuperscript{14} However, the press and academic observers generally assume that employees of security companies are mercenaries—Abdel-Fatau Musah goes so far as to call such entities Private Mercenary Companies rather than Private Military Companies.\textsuperscript{15} Either way, the term mercenary is beginning to lose the negative stigma attached to it through much of the twentieth century in large part due to the efforts of modern companies such as Executive Outcomes.

The modern understanding of what a mercenary is and what that means stems from the 1960s as well. This understanding is conditioned by the image of mercenaries presented in, and to, the world press, the UN’s ongoing campaign, and popular fiction. Despite this popular image—or perhaps because of it—medieval historian Philippe Contamine’s definition of the medieval mercenary may well be the best example of avoiding depending on motivations as the deciding factor, while maintaining value neutrality. According to Contamine “in short, the mercenary is defined by three qualities: being a specialist, stateless and paid.”\textsuperscript{16} Thus a mercenary is an individual possessing special capabilities, usually of a military nature, who fights in other people’s wars for pay. In addition to Contamine’s succinct definition, Xenophon noted that even in ancient Greece such men were marked by their devotion to war.\textsuperscript{17} Accepting this definition, and ignoring for the moment its critics and ambiguities, allows a base-line for comparing modern contractors and their much maligned predecessors.

\textsuperscript{14} Tim Spicer, \textit{An Unorthodox Soldier: Peace and War and the Sandline Affair}, Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1999, 29-40. Spicer, who founded Sandline and is often credited with consolidating the positive image of companies offering combat services, is a good example because he clearly resents being called a mercenary, but only in the pejorative sense. He seems to want to rework the term to reflect a time when being a mercenary soldier did not have the negative connotations that it developed in the second half of the twentieth century.

\textsuperscript{15} Musah, “Privatization of Security,” 913.


\textsuperscript{17} Xenophon, \textit{The Persian Expedition}, Rex Warner trans., (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967), 89-90. Both Carleton L. Brownson and Finley translate the phrase ‘devoted to war’ as “fond of war.” Xenophon, \textit{Anabasis}, Carleton L. Brownson trans., (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard, 1998), 205. Finley, \textit{The Portable Greek Historians}, 413. This is a key distinction as Clearchus was indeed fond of war, but being devoted to it indicates a much stronger and different attachment. Many mercenaries in the Congo were fond of war, but the mercenary leaders there were clearly devoted to war as both an occupation and a lifestyle.
The importance of the emergence of organized corporate bodies offering military services on the international market cannot be overstated. According to one observer "the emergence of PMCs in the 1990s as the primary means of selling mercenary services on the international market represents the biggest change in the profession since the Thracians began selling their services in the ancient world."\(^{18}\) Although Hoare is among the best known of the 1960s-era freebooters, he clearly saw a role for a well disciplined and organized mercenary force to help stabilize African states in the aftermath of decolonization.\(^{19}\) Though he singularly failed to develop such an organization, his ideas and premonitions bore fruit in the last decade of the twentieth century. Avant captures the connections between the Hoare-style freebooter and the modern security company, and the implications of this new trend quite nicely, stating:

The one place where soldiers of fortune never went away, even at the height of the modern system, was in portions of the developing world where states had not reached maturation. My point is not to suggest that this is new, but that the growth of the market for force has enhanced the prospects for these dynamics by legitimizing the private delivery of security services. This legitimation has folded the 1960s-style soldiers of fortune into the new corporate private security architecture and opened the way for new ideas about the private responsibilities for security, both of which enhance the amount of private security and thus the chances for these effects to be felt in a range of different weak states.\(^{20}\)

Sierra Leone’s experience with mercenaries in the 1990s is the critical nexus of the process which Avant describes—the birth of the modern military company or PMC.

Not surprisingly, current contractors exhibit many of the same traits as their predecessors. They are ultimately loyal to their paymaster, in this case a company, government contractor, or security firm. As employees of such companies they are largely divorced from political struggles, at least at the level of individuals, and much of their utility both to their immediate


employer and finally to whatever entity hired that employer, is their political expendability.21 Interestingly, their motivations mirror those of the mercenaries in the Congo as well. They share an idealistic outlook regarding terrorism, or at least the conception of an 'other'—the defeat of which is a worthwhile cause.22 Their skills, while valuable to modern militaries are certainly not remunerated there at the same rates found in the private market. Civilian life often pales by comparison to the excitement and uniqueness of private military employment. Especially for US soldiers, but for those from other developed countries as well, the 1980s-1990s were an exceptionally dry spell as far as opportunities for actual combat were concerned. Employment with a security company offers an escape from the restricted atmosphere of the modern national army. Additionally, the opportunity for real-world experience, promotion, and excitement in the company of like-minded individuals makes such employment attractive. Finally, the pay—far above that offered by national militaries—is a strong incentive. Thus, on a motivational basis there is little to distinguish the modern contractor as an individual from the mercenary of the 1960s; there is certainly a tendency for them to lead a similar contract to contract lifestyle.

Types of Companies:

Although clearly mercenary in nature, modern companies offer a much wider range of services necessitating a further definition of, and a distinction between, the various types. Most researchers develop a categorization of companies offering security services based on the types of services offered. The companies under investigation do not include those offering private security domestically for such routine concerns as gated communities, construction sites, or warehouses, but those providing para-military or military services, including combat, training, and intelligence, and replacing state authority in areas traditionally seen as the preserve of the

21 Singer, Corporate Warriors, 40-43.
national military.\textsuperscript{23} The major dividing line between such companies is whether or not they offer combat services. Thus, Private Security Companies (PSCs) offer site security, training, and advice, but are, ostensibly, unwilling to engage directly in offensive combat operations. Private Military Companies (PMCs), on the other hand, offer all that PSCs do, but are also willing to involve their personal in offensive combat operations either as advisers to indigenous troops, force multipliers, or the main effort. According to Tim Spicer, PMCs are not passive and “their operations extend beyond the guarding roll. PMCs offer practical military help in an acceptable form to legitimate governments.”\textsuperscript{24} Within this general outline there exist a multitude of variations and further subdivisions and categorizations. However, the majority of observers agree on the critical distinction between those companies offering combat and those that do not.\textsuperscript{25}

While the distinction between PSCs and PMCs is useful, and for the purpose of this argument, will be maintained, it is also a bit of a misnomer. Avant conflates the two terms under PSC because for her purposes it covers more ground and makes studying the general phenomenon easier.\textsuperscript{26} Yet another reason to maintain the unity of the terms is that most PSCs are but one contract away from becoming PMCs. In all particularities, these entities are essentially the same except for their respective stances on involvement in combat. With similar personal and capabilities it is basically a matter of contract language and individual company


\textsuperscript{24} Spicer, \textit{An Unorthodox Soldier}, 41.


\textsuperscript{26} Avant, “The Implications of Marketized Security for IR Theory,” 508.
policy which separates the two. Thus, the potential for crossover exists at all times, which blurs the analytical usefulness of such a division. However, though blurred, the difference is still useful as will be seen in Chapter Three when Gurkha Security Guards (GSG) refused to cross the line and engage in combat operations and left Sierra Leone only to be replaced by Executive Outcomes (EO) which harbored no qualms about offering combat services. Thus, this argument uses Avant’s all encompassing definition, while accepting the subtle difference between PSCs and PMCs. The employees of each type of company are clearly mercenaries regardless.

Summary of Argument:

This argument will be developed along the following lines. Chapter Two will lay the theoretical groundwork for understanding why the development of modern PMCs was possible both from a global perspective as well as from a time and place perspective. The chapter also explores the relationship between globalization, private authority, and legitimacy as concepts central to explaining how and why the modern PMC was born and flourished in Sierra Leone. Chapter Three provides a case study of Sierra Leone and its interactions with three security companies including GSG, EO, and Sandline International. Chapter Four looks in-depth at the relationship between the theories provided in chapter two and the case study in chapter three, especially the development of legitimacy by PMCs in Sierra Leone. Chapter Five explores several of the issues most discussed regarding PMCs, such as the potential negative impacts of their activities and the early development of analytical tools for gauging their success or failure. Finally, Chapter Five looks at what the future of the industry might be.

The case of Sierra Leone offers a unique opportunity to explore the development of the idea of PMCs from its roots in the freelance mercenaries of the post-1960 era in direct contrast to the efforts of a PSC in that country. EO clearly intended to develop acceptability and legitimacy for its efforts to offer direct combat to countries in vital need of military aid such as Sierra
Leone. In doing so it intended not to function as an aid organization, but as a for-profit commercial military endeavor unique in the modern world. Its attempt largely succeeded, with far-ranging import for the study of globalization and the development of private authority, specifically regarding the use or control of force. While no company since EO has demonstrated either its aptitude or success, it did lay the groundwork for a radical revitalization of the mercenary trade in the years and decades to come. In doing so, EO, and its successor Sandline, developed significantly the authority, legitimacy, and acceptance of modern Private Military Companies.
Chapter II
Concepts and Connections

Traditional International Relations theory places military force firmly within the domain of the state. This is primarily because of its state-centric approach which locates the state as the paramount actor on the international scene, and assumes state agency even when it appears otherwise. In this sense mercenaries are seen simply as existing at the pleasure of the state. As Michael Desch put it, "The point boils down to this: when non-state violence is useful to the state, state leaders will use it; when it is not they will not." However, three relatively new concepts within political science challenge the idea that states have a monopoly of force: globalization, private authority, and legitimacy. Globalization creates the political spaces within which mercenaries operate. The concept of private authority, once mercenaries are understood in their global context, provides tools for understanding and explaining the development of international acceptance in relation to the progressive change from freelance mercenaries to their corporate counterparts. As these companies gain authority and acceptance as military providers on the world stage, investigators increasingly question whether or not this equates to a growing legitimacy. Thus, legitimacy as a concept provides key insights when questioning the state-based interpretation. With an increase in globalization and privatization, the state's control of violence is at least partially falling into private hands; this is especially the case in those areas of the world such as Africa where the state is generally a weak entity.

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Globalization and the Rise of PMCs in Africa:

The key point globalization theory allows us to understand is that PMCs are international businesses. Globalization, in its most generic form, is a process of social change involving the transnational compression of time and space. As technology and trade expand the reach of private entities, the state loses some of its traditional role as the principal authority in international affairs. Related to the control of force more specifically, globalization is central to understanding and exploring "the evolving social relations underlying the regulation of the justified use of force."² Despite its relative marginality in mainstream political science, globalization as phenomenon is not novel—the era of imperialism and the charter companies provide one example among many. Thus, in a historical sense, the idea of the Westphalia state system, with states enjoying complete sovereignty and control of force never existed in any ideal form.³ Private Military Companies (PMCs) are not only global in nature, but since the end of the Cold War they have, according to Peter Singer, "been active on every continent except Antarctica."⁴ They are employed by a wide range of entities from international criminal organizations to the most powerful nation states to perform a wide array of military functions. Despite this, they remain marginalized by mainstream study.⁵

Within political science there are two primary reasons for marginalizing the role of Multinational Corporations (MNCs) generally and the growth of Private Military Companies (PMCs) specifically. On one hand political economists stress the efficiency and lowered cost of privatization but miss the political impact of this concept, especially with regard to PMCs. Others looking at questions of power ignore the impact of economics, and economic motivators,

⁵ Singer, Corporate Warriors, 8-12.
especially in the South, and downplay PMCs as security actors. Additionally, they are often not seen as private actors in the first place because of their close ties to, and preference for basing themselves in, strong states; the employment of personnel drawn from national armies, primarily those of their home-state; and their tendency to avoid contravening home-state policy. In either case, PMCs are often ignored.

Core to any PMC debate is the morphing of state sovereignty as a concept because of the centrality of the control of force to the issue. The key questions are whether the state is complicit in altering aspects of its authority and what new forms that authority might take. In a globalization sense states can chose between efficiency, often privatization of state functions, and sovereignty strictly defined. Further, there is a question of whether, considering a loss of substantial portions of key sovereignty issues such as the privatization of force, the state can or will take that authority back if there is a downturn in the market or a clear and persistent threat to core sovereignty issues. 6 Few serious observers see modern PMCs as threatening the demise of the state as an international organizing entity, but most do point to a changing role for the state. 7 Critically, this may involve new or different forms and conceptions of sovereignty. Key aspects of that change include the legitimacy of state violence and a call for a reinterpretation of the state’s monopoly of violent force.

Thomson argues that for three-hundred years prior to the nineteenth-century, “non-state violence was a legitimate practice in the European state system.” 8 The institution of sovereignty led to the state monopoly of violence. Decision-making authority and the ownership of the means of violence shifted from non-state to state control, and state authority replaced market allocation of violence. At no point did states fear private power; they only sought to exploit it.

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7 Singer clearly sees the rise of PMCs as a threat to the current state-based international system; a threat that is only just emerging and that will, by all appearances, grow in the future. Singer, Corporate Warriors,” 188-190.
8 Thomson, Mercenaries Pirates, and Sovereigns,” 143.
During this process of state accumulation of control over violent force, there was no concerted effort to eliminate non-state violence, only its consequences and effects. As Thompson indicates “the state’s monopoly on external violence is an unintended consequence of a series of ad-hoc actions taken against the various forms of non-state violence.”

However, despite Thomson’s clear understanding of the evolution of state sovereignty and control, she missed the mark by claiming that a return to non-state armed force was “unthinkable.” As Ann Leander points out, the globalization phenomenon clearly indicates a weakening of the exclusiveness of the state control of force. Conversely, Christopher Spearin argues that while non-state violence exists, its “actions are seen as illegitimate, as on a smaller scale than state activity, and as not posing a direct threat to the state’s monopoly.” Deborah Avant counters that Weber’s state monopoly of force “was exaggerated from the start” and that PMCs have always existed in some form, although they have been changing significantly in the last two decades. Currently an international market for force exists alongside state employees, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), and MNCs. She agrees with Thomson that state control of violence was really only an idea, “an ought to be,” rather than a historical fact. Thomson sees these developments—at least early in the 1990s—as somewhat anticlimactic. She argues that developing states are not states in the same sense as those in the West because they hire mercenaries. While this clearly is a nonsensical argument, what is

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9 Ibid., 145.
10 Thomson further questions the probability of a resurgence of non-state violence when she asks “and despite violent attacks on corporate property and personnel, is it conceivable that a company could be authorized to hire its own army as the mercantile companies were?” Whether or not it was authorized, and the key question then would be by whom, it certainly happened in Sierra Leone, and continues to happen daily in Iraq. Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns*, 146.
15 Ibid., 2-3.
clear is that a change is occurring. With an increase in globalization and privatization, the state’s control of violence is at least partially falling into private hands, especially in those areas of the world, such as Africa, where the state is generally weak. For some observers this constitutes a shift of sovereignty from the state to private entities. While non-state violence of a criminal or small-scale variety does not often threaten the state, and is not considered legitimate at any level, the development of PMCs is altogether different, and necessitates a closer look.

Traditionally, mercenaries, and more recently PMCs, are seen as foreign policy by proxy at best. At worst they are denounced as simply mercenaries operating in the South, where they become tools of weak states concerned with questions of power and politics, not economics. However, this argument misses the business aspect of PMCs as corporations existing and operating within an evolving market for force. Ann Leander agrees with Singer that in this sense they are more than mercenaries, and she further argues that this division of labor within political science obscures the full picture of both the market for force and the activities of PMCs as security actors on the world stage.

Globalization provides a lens through which to understand the development of a market for force and thus explains the rise of the companies that evolved in the early 1990s to meet the demand created by that market. The end of the Cold War ushered in an era of military downsizing in the developed world as the bi-polar tensions dissipated with the demise of the Soviet Union. Large conventional militaries were increasingly seen as unnecessary as the new warfare of the 1990s was of a different nature, primarily consisting of intra-state warfare, civil

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19 Singer, Corporate Warriors, 44.
wars, insurrections, and insurgencies. These, especially in Africa, resulted from the loss of Cold War patronage and the subsequent exposure of internally-divided weak states to the vagaries of the international market. Such weak states were unable and often unwilling, due in part to the corruption, avarice, and insatiability of their ruling bodies, to provide basic governmental functions and were therefore incapable of fielding effective standing armies. Without a unified population, lacking an effective military to enforce order, awash with weapons both left over from the Cold War and sold for cash in its aftermath, these states suffered a severe lack of security. Additionally, with the lessening flow of Cold War era money, training, and material support, these states were increasingly forced into a rapidly globalizing world economy increasingly dominated by MNCs competing for extractable resources.

The globalization debate surrounding mercenaries centers on whether or not it is a neo-colonial effort fostered by MNCs to extract wealth from resource-rich weak states, or the unintended consequences of the rise of globalization. For Abdel-Fatau Musah it is clearly the case that the developed world is rolling back the state in favor of private enterprises, often assumed to be more effective and efficient, largely through the well intentioned structural adjustment programs of the IMF and the World Bank. One aspect of this is the state in Africa privatizing even its social responsibilities in favor of INGOs. Thus, the private market for force encourages PMCs to use their training and technological advantage to exploit a market opening, especially in Africa.²¹

Deregulation of international markets, a product of globalization and privatization generally regarded as positive, produced ideal conditions for the creation and development of PMCs especially when considered in connection to MNCs and international business. In part, this is because deregulation decreases transparency. Further, the idea that markets and efficiency

are the criteria by which to judge the success of privatization, and the general assumption that
PMCs are cheaper and more efficient than national militaries, encouraged such a development.22

All these elements, combined, created "a self-help environment for those individuals, states,
corporations and other entities that must live and operate in these borderlands of the developed
world."23

This created a market for force as security itself increasingly became a commodity for
sale. Not only did the end of the Cold War release a plethora of cheap weapons onto the open
market, it also stranded many former First World soldiers in home economies that could not
adequately accommodate them, and for which their military backgrounds and training did not
prepare them. Within Africa the increase in insecurity coupled with the lack of First World
patronage made PMCs an attractive alternative for struggling states. They were ostensibly non-
political, and could be hired as needed thus reducing the great expense of maintaining national
armies. Additionally, as outsiders they did not pose the risks that exist around training locals
who may have alternative goals or loyalties threatening to the state. Even relief and
humanitarian organizations began hiring PMCs in response to the inability of host governments
to provide security for their efforts and activities.24

The marketization of security creates its own reinforcing dynamics. As states hire
corporate military advisors, the advice they get is specifically military in nature. Because of
their background, most military actors see problems in the light of military solutions. Thus a
feed-back loop is created. As more and more issues faced by weak states are solved or discussed
in the context of military solutions, more issues become securitized or perceived as a military
threat. The case of Sierra Leone, discussed later, clearly demonstrates this assertion. This in

22 Anna Leander, "Global Ungoverance: Mercenaries, States and the Control over Violence," COPRI Working
turn leads to increased insecurity and the hiring of more military advisors. Further, these actors have a lasting impact on those who hire them and, through training and example, leave a legacy of securitizing issues which furthers the cycle, creating more demand for security and the securitization of yet more problem areas. While PMCs see themselves as contributing to the state-building process by strengthening the state in its ability to control violent force, they are in fact creating both more insecurity and dependence on non-state elements, which fundamentally undermines the state’s control of force and therefore, according to standard logic, weakening the state.25

Some observers argue that even if the market were to disappear, the impact of PMCs cannot be undone. Abdel-Fatau Musah suggests that the industry, at least for the more militarized companies, peaked in Africa in the mid 1990s. However, the progressive securitization and inward turn of the West post 9-11 furthered a global sense of what should and should not be securitized. While this makes western PMCs more accountable to their home-states and to the International Criminal Court (ICC) overall, it provides no solution to the problem, specifically in Africa. Although Musah argues that African governments were and are exploited by PMCs, he locates the primary problem in Africa with African governments, which continue to encourage violent solutions to security issues.26

Others, such as Anthony Clayton, take the argument further. For Clayton, African warfare in the 1990s was about land, the control of local resources, and the will to live more so than ideological, tribal, or religious reasons, or in any real way connected to the Western notion of a nation state. He sees Africans in places like Sierra Leone and Angola as frontiersmen fighting to secure the necessary resources to prolong survival. As Clayton concisely put it, “In such conditions, considerations of whether war is a cultural, political or ideological phenomena,

whether or not human nature is essentially aggressive, or whether any distinction could be made between legitimate and unacceptable uses of force, had by the 1990s become in the African context irrelevant."27 For Clayton, then, African warfare is more about survival. Clayton’s arguments, coupled with the previously mentioned indicators, demonstrate a significant loss of state exclusivity in Africa.

Africa is a prime example generally of the impact of globalization, and specifically of the commercialization of security. The state exists in a poor security environment in post-colonial, post-Cold War, Africa. Internally, many states are plagued by a lack of popular legitimacy, widespread corruption, chronic economic failure—in large part due to the impact of structural adjustment programs—and competition over scarce resources. The end of the Cold War left many African soldiers demobilized, similar to the phenomenon in the West. Additionally, Africa became something of an easy market for excess military hardware, which provided the means of waging war cheap, and, more importantly, were easily available to non-state entities ranging from PMCs to rebel groups. The West in general, and the United States, Britain, and France more specifically, discontinued or dramatically cut operational support for United Nations (UN) interventions in Africa.28 Debacles in Rwanda and Somalia also cost the UN and the West much credibility in Africa. Regionally, Nigeria has been pulling back from being a regional policeman, and South Africa has long since taken an inward turn as well.29

Access to resources is made more difficult by the rise of organized international criminal activity. Weak African states cannot curb illegal resource extraction which further weakens their precarious financial position internationally and at home. Such weakness further opens the bureaucracies and militaries to corruption which feeds on the paternalistic and charitable

provision of social benefits by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and others in the absence of the state’s provision of the same. This demonstrates the progressive privatization of key state functions, such as the provision of social welfare, and is another aspect of globalization, which further weakens the state as an entity both ideationally, among its populace, and in terms of real power which goes hand in hand with the loss of the control of force.

Thus, globalization theory provides an important adjustment to traditional International Relations theory. It sheds light on the rise of MNCs in general and the rise of PMCs more specifically, providing insight into the creation of a demand for private security services, the creation of a supply of such services, and the permissive conditions that allow PMCs to flourish in Africa. Importantly, “the return of private armies to Africa is a symptom rather than a cause of the continent’s milieu and its wider environment.” Thus, globalization provides a lens through which to understand and evaluate the creation of a private market for force in Africa.

Private Authority and the Rise of PMCs in Africa:

Private authority is the legitimate exercise of authority over areas traditionally considered within the state’s purview due to a loss or renunciation of state control over these areas. Hallmarks of private authority include authority, cooperation, expert status, institutionalization, decision making authority, allocation, and ownership. Private authority is not necessarily associated with government institutions, although it can be gained as an “explicit or implicit grant of power by states.” Additionally, such authority can be gained through “perceived

expertise” and historical practice which lends acceptance and appropriateness to the private exercise of authority. All these indicators point to a growing private authority for PMCs.

Thomson finds three distinct dimensions to the state’s control of force, and thus to state-based authority: decision making authority, allocation, and ownership. For PMCs to gain authority within this structure they must in some measure replace the state within it. Within decision-making authority over the deployment of violence, Thomson carefully divides authority as either state or non-state in nature. In this framework, states can deploy non-state actors and leave coercion decisions to them, or can deploy state coercion for state (ideological) or market (financial) reasons. Non-state actors may do the same and allocate coercion authority under the same rubric. Similarly, control over the means of violence, labor and property, take two forms. These are the standing army, a condition in which the state owns both, and privateering, whereby the state controls the resources used by non-state actors. For Thomson, “by 1900, states monopolized decision making authority and ownership of the means of violence, and allocated violence authoritatively rather than through the market.”

Authority is a social relationship between author and subject within a definable domain of action. It is visible through behavioral consent, routines, norms, and public recognition. Key to locating authority is the identification of cooperation, the surrendering of personal judgment—in a cooperation scenario—based not on the particular issue at hand, but on the rightness of the authority itself—midway between negotiation and coercion. This cooperation requires an adjustment of behavior by all actors involved in order to reach mutual goals.

37 Ibid., 5.
34 Avant, on the other hand, divides control of private armies between political and functional control. Political control includes who decides about deployment and who ultimately calls the shots, while functional control involves types of capabilities and whether forces are capable of meeting current challenges within international values. Avant, *The Market for Force,* 5-6.
35 Thomson, *Mercenaries Pirates, and Sovereigns,* 9. “This new state form, which I [Thomson] will call the national state, reflected a redrawing of authority claims such that authority over the use of violence was moved from the non-state, economic, and international domains and placed in the state, political, and domestic realms of authority.” Ibid., 9 8-11.
Authority can stand by itself; it is not necessarily held by one actor, but often held cumulatively by a group of actors. Within such a model, participants exhibit a degree of obligation and restriction of conduct both for the present and future. This sense of obligation secures future cooperation and defines authority. Conformity to rules and norms is on an essentially voluntarily, but fairly universal, basis, as opposed to enforced conformity and cooperation.\textsuperscript{38}

Thus, in the international sphere, where the market is thought to dominate and where there is no overarching government to create the rules, independent actors work together to govern the market—or elements of the market—themselves.\textsuperscript{39}

Claire Cutler argues that while cooperation is necessary, it can only be recognized as authority once it is institutionalized. Institutionalization is necessary to develop the habits, norms, rules, and shared expectations which participants must regard as obligatory whether enforced or not. While she concedes that it is difficult to establish a threshold by which to irrefutably identify institutionalization as sufficient to constitute a private international regime, institutionalization remains critical to the development of private authority.\textsuperscript{40}

Rodney Hall and Thomas Biersteker subdivide private authority between moral and illicit authority. Moral authority encompasses a wide range of actors including NGOs and religious entities. These function as agenda setters or as experts, in the academic sense, who control specific information and understanding. Such figures gain their authority from the “emancipatory or normatively progressive social agendas, or their ostensible objectivity or neutrality as non-state actors.”\textsuperscript{41} Obviously moral authority itself can be seen as both normatively positive, as is the normal interpretation, and as having negative normative connotations such as with violent transnational religious movements. Illicit authority includes

\textsuperscript{38} Hall and Biersteker, “The Emergence of Private Authority in the International System,” 4-5.
\textsuperscript{39} Cutler, Häußler, and Porter, “Private Authority and International Affairs,” 6-13.
\textsuperscript{41} Hall and Biersteker, “The Emergence of Private Authority in the International System,” 14.
both international criminal organizations and PMCs. These are considered illicit because they implement a form of organized violence that violates domestic and international norms.42 With this understanding, PMCs are especially concerning because they exhibit the capacity to back private authority with physical force and, especially in Africa, represent a key threat to the state.43 However, Hall and Biersteker recognize that such authority can be seen as socially legitimate because it provides a public good which weak states are incapable of producing; they specifically identify it as illegitimate in favor of a normative good which is not easily defined and may not be applicable in a globalized world. This suggests that PMCs cannot be the 'good guys' because they are not states and yet they exercise private authority backed by force as opposed to an aid agency such as Medecins Sans Frontieres.

It is difficult to accept the argument that PMCs represent illicit authority specifically because they threaten the state—an argument not of concern to most observers—and for the reason that the public good they provide is often accepted locally. Under Hall and Biersteker’s conception, if PMCs were in fact exhibiting private authority on the international scene in an accepted and legitimate manner, they would rank with NGOs such as Medecins Sans Frontieres; in other words, entities with normatively progressive social agenda.

Under this conceptualization, when investigating PMCs it is difficult to avoid the notion of private authority. They clearly develop at least a socially accepted localized authority in the immediate areas where they operate, and, as will be seen in Sierra Leone, authority at the state and international level as well. Because MNCs and states routinely influence and interact with each other the discipline cannot exclude one or the other. What is clear from their efforts is that corporations, writ large, increasingly do rule the world.44

43 Hall and Biersteker, “The Emergence of Private Authority in the International System,” 14-17.
However, it is essential to note that Claire Cutler, Virginia Haufler, and Tony Porter do not address the issue of private military force when writing in 1999, while a short five years later Hall and Biersteker could not ignore it when discussing private authority. While the latter place it in the illicit category, it is clearly a growing form of private authority and should not be pushed aside because of its nominal negative normative standing and its perceived threat to core sovereignty concerns; indeed that is exactly why it is so central to any discussion of private authority. As with the other forms of private authority which the authors admirably demonstrate as cooperating with each other and with states, PMCs are increasingly interacting with states as well. For this reason they are a key issue as their activities intersect critically with the state’s control of force.

The privatization of security grew out of the general post-Cold War trend toward globalization and privatization. Although increasingly visible in its most extreme form in the South, it is a visible trend in the US as well. Globally the result is the privatization of security, especially within defense industries, as a corporate model. As Singer argues, governments—even in the West—are increasingly less involved in the protection business and in turn less able to exert control of it. The result is that private entities turn to private sources for protection. Because outsourcing proved a successful business strategy for private business, militaries the world over turned to private sources as well. This moved from what were initially only non-military functions, such as data-processing or health services, into military areas including security, police, prisoners, and site security. As indicated, this process is self-perpetuating, as the more militaries are privatized the less they can provide in-house and the more they tend to outsource. Singer found that, while this is certainly prominent in the West, significantly in the US, it has quickly gained legitimacy worldwide and spread accordingly.45

45 Singer, Corporate Warriors, 66-70. Avant’s main concern with the growth of PMCs in the loss of key military capabilities which she argues may hamstring Western militaries, especially the United State, in the near future. Avant, The Market for Force, passim. For Singer this is best exemplified by MPRI, a US company extensively
The private authority of PMCs grew in the political space vacated by the state. As more of that space was available, PMCs developed cooperation both among themselves and with other MNCs, particularly extraction industries, which, coupled with the PMCs’ expert status, further developed their private authority. This development follows quite clearly the lines laid out by Cutler, Haufler, and Porter in the conclusion of their work on private authority. In particular their development of a set of rules and norms coupled with inter-corporation cooperation and institutionalization which leads to successful PMCs. Herbert Howe concisely indicates why PMCs are successful where state militaries fall short.

Private forces can start up and deploy faster than multinational (and perhaps national) forces, and may carry less political baggage, especially concerning casualties, than government militaries. Additionally, they have a clearer chain of command, more readily compatible military equipment and training, and greater experience of working together than do ad hoc multinational forces. They may be financially less expensive than other foreign forces. Finally, they can handpick from a pool of proven combat veterans.

While private authority does not inevitably develop simply by responding to a need, a successful and accepted—though not necessarily acceptable—response significantly furthers the development of private authority for and among PMCs.

These developments secure a growing private authority to PMCs in general. They are largely accepted as experts from the level of the most powerful nation states to weak states, from humanitarian INGOs to local NGOs, and from the UN through regional organizations. Certainly these actors accept the existence of a measure of authority with PMCs, however, this does not necessarily equate to legitimacy as few of the above mentioned entities would publicly announce or avow such status of a PMC.

involved in US missions abroad, with ROTC programs within the US, and which claims more Generals per square foot than the Pentagon. Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 119-135.


Legitimacy and the Rise of PMCs in Africa:

Legitimacy is often seen as state based, meaning that states constitute the final arbitrators. The key question is legitimacy for whom? In traditional theory that ‘who’ is states, thus clearly making states the only legitimate coercion actors. Because of this, Thomson and others argue that while a state’s actions may be illegitimate, the state is always legitimate despite its actions.48 Scholars continue to neglect the legitimacy of actions in favor of actors, arriving, in the same vein as Thomson, at the idea that states can act illegitimately without losing legitimacy as an actor. However, this approach is increasingly opening to include actors—specifically states—as illegitimate as well.

Legitimacy can be described as a social status by which an actor or action is judged as acceptable. Conversely, illegitimacy describes an actor or action that is socially offensive, or that offends a particular set of communal rules. Internationally the key difficulty continues to be answering the question who or what are the subject, judge, and rules of legitimacy.49 Katharina Coleman identifies three groupings by which to evaluate legitimacy: all states in the international system; transnational and domestic civil societies; and the world media. While Coleman focuses on legitimacy in the eyes of the state, for the PMC case a larger rubric is necessary.50 Coleman also expands legitimacy to include the legitimacy of actions as well as actors. Thus, a state actor committing an illegitimate act does, contrary to Thomson, risk losing its legitimate status, if only in the long term.51 If this reasoning is accepted several results follow. First, this allows for the existence of illegitimate states which lowers the authority of all states when making legitimacy judgments. This is because when states were considered de-facto legitimate as with Thomson’s understanding, they necessarily held the last word concerning the legitimacy of each other and other actors and actions. Yet, if states can in fact be considered

50 Ibid., 36.
51 Ibid., 32-33.
illegitimate, all states must, in some measure, lose their right to make such judgments. Second, it invites other actors into the legitimacy judging game, which Coleman admits with the introduction of civil societies and the media. Finally, it opens the possibility that the reverse is true as well. This means that if legitimate states can lose that status through illegitimate acts, so too then can illegitimate states gain legitimacy through legitimate acts; at least this should be theoretically possible. If this is the case, there is nothing standing in the way of formerly illegitimate non-state actors such as PMCs from gaining, or regaining,\textsuperscript{52} legitimacy, or at least some measure thereof, through legitimate acts as well. In fact, without having to concern themselves with all the elements that go into statehood as a status, such actors may have a much easier time moving from illegitimate to legitimate than do states.

Taking Coleman’s macro rubric and applying it to PMCs in general leads to some surprising results. In the first case, states seem to be accepting PMCs as security actors, although they may do so through actions rather than overt statements.\textsuperscript{53} Since 1990 the use of PMC contractors has increased dramatically, especially among the most powerful states such as the United States and Britain. For example David Isenberg points out that in the first Gulf War there was one contractor for every fifty military personnel while in the latest conflict the ratio was one in ten.\textsuperscript{54} PMCs are gaining tacit acceptance as security actors, and increased access to and involvement in governmental decision-making; and, they are also involved in writing US governmental regulation of the industry. Isenberg even claims that PMCs in Iraq have acquitted themselves quite well, and often outperform the US military in social relations with Iraqis.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{52} A reading of Thomson clearly indicates that the predecessors of the modern PMCs, such as the charter companies, were considered legitimate.
\textsuperscript{53} Ken Silverstein interviewed high level players in the US government who admitted the usefulness of PMCs, but stressed their corporate, thus private, nature and declined to comment further. Ken Silverstein, \textit{Private Warriors}, London: Verso, 2000, 143-145.
\textsuperscript{55} Isenberg, “A Fistful of Contractors,” 68. This general assessment is taken from a general reading of Isenberg’s work. While he is cautious about attributing outright legitimacy, his balanced and well researched and informed evaluation points to that conclusion.
Even firm detractors such as Arnold admit that while they may not be overtly accepted at the UN, Britain's encouragement of Sandline in Sierra Leone made it clear that PMCs “were gaining credibility where it mattered—in Washington, London and Paris.”\textsuperscript{56} While Arnold considers the failure of European powers to curtail or prevent their citizens acting as mercenaries a “slap in the face”\textsuperscript{57} for the UN, Avant notes that “every multi-lateral peace operation conducted by the UN since 1990 included the presence of PSCs.”\textsuperscript{58}

While the UN continues to denounce mercenaries in general, some of its sub-agencies have hired, or considered hiring, PMCs for protection in various trouble spots around the world.\textsuperscript{59} Both the UN and the US debated and considered employing Executive Outcomes (EO) during the Rwandan refugee crisis of 1996, although the idea was shelved due to disagreements as to who would pay the company's fee. During the 1994 Rwandan genocide, EO itself presented a plan to the UN, but was turned down.\textsuperscript{60} Doug Brooks, president of the International Peace Operations Association (IPOA)\textsuperscript{61} decries the lack of consideration of PMCs in the UN's \textit{A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility}\textsuperscript{62} stating that “the UN already relies heavily on the private sector for logistics, transportation, and demining support, and it regularly uses private

\section*{Notes}


\textsuperscript{57} Arnold, \textit{Mercenaries}, 159.

\textsuperscript{58} Avant, \textit{The Market for Force}, 7. PSC or Private Security Company for Avant is the equivalent of PMC as used here. Thus, it is a fairly wide interpretation including companies providing logistics, support, combat, or a combination thereof.

\textsuperscript{59} Avant, \textit{The Market for Force}, 201-203. One example is CARE, which suggested hiring PMCs after the Rwanda debacle. This kicked off a debate concerning the role of humanitarian workers especially their status as neutral parties. This means the PMCs Avant refers to may not have been conventional combatants. Also, Avant does not cite this statement and it is difficult to find direct evidence of PMC involvement with official UN humanitarian missions or INGOs, however, Singer, Avant, Spearin and others continue to cautiously put forward the idea of using PMCs in peacekeeping missions. That the idea continues to be seriously discussed points to a growing legitimacy for PMCs internationally.

\textsuperscript{60} Singer, \textit{Corporate Warriors}, 185-187.

\textsuperscript{61} The IPOA is an international lobby organization working for a consortium of major PMCs seeking humanitarian work and general legitimacy for these companies. \url{http://www.ipoaonline.org/home/}.


security to protect their field headquarters, their warehouses, their convoys and their personnel.”

Additionally, he points out that regional efforts such as ECOWAS in Liberia and the African Union (AU) in Darfur also relied heavily on private entities, including for training the troops. However, the UN’s official stance remains clear; “that, notwithstanding the...form they take to acquire some semblance of legitimacy, mercenaries or mercenary-related activities are a threat to peace, security and the self-determination of peoples.”

For the UN this includes “recruitment, training, hiring or financing of mercenaries by private companies offering international military consultancy and security services.” This indicates at the very least that the UN is concerned about the rising legitimacy of PMCs, an implicit recognition of their growing legitimacy.

PMCs may in fact siphon off some of the states’ inherent legitimacy, especially the case with companies operating in the context of weak states in Africa. In this scenario the debate about mercenaries acts as a mask for the exploitation of African countries. As David Francis suggests, “the argument here is that this corporate mercenarism—in search of strategic minerals—represents the ‘new face’ of neocolonialism, operating under the guise of neoliberal market policies.”

Arnold agrees and goes further. According to him mercenaries operate outside government control, work with MNCs to extract wealth from poor countries, train armies with poor humanitarian and behavior records, and are prepared to work for international criminal organizations as well. The only answer is for major powers working through the UN to curb

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64 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 Brayton, “Outsourcing War,” 328. Or it may be the case that the state looses some social or local legitimacy which is gained by the applicable PMC for supplying public goods, key in this case is security, that the state is unable or unwilling to supply.
68 Francis, “Mercenary Intervention in Sierra Leone,” 319.
what he considers an evolving threat to humanity. Steven Brayton is concerned that as MNCs and their partner PMCs establish control of the state and its resources they place the legitimacy of the state itself at risk. Further, as a PMC establishes itself as the guarantor of security it creates a cycle of further dependence. “The wages of this process are the further erosion of states, the decentralization of international order and commercialization of national security.”

On the flip side, others see the privatization of security as a logical product of globalization, or an outright positive development. William Reno argues that the security provided within weak states by PMCs benefits the global market by allowing a diversification of firms able to access resources. Within the affected states, state functions are indeed privatized, but this only removes them from the corrupt patronage system exhibited in many African states and limits the access of local strongmen and warlords to key state resources. This not only breaks the cycle of successive and exploitative strongmen, but creates the stability essential for foreign investment, foreign loans, and participation in the international economy so necessary for state survival in the post-Cold War world. It further allows democratically elected leaders freedom of action by limiting the influence of local strongmen and allowing them to perform their statesmen duties without interference. INGOs and aid groups are then allowed to provide, in a more secure environment, the social services so lacking in weak states. The privatization of violence removes military power from dangerous and politically unreliable portions of the community and avoids implosions such as those experienced by Somalia and Liberia. As Reno indicates, “strong state interest in stability, credit-worthiness and avoiding pressures to act to support these arrangements belies notions that strong states cooperate with one another to

69 Arnold, Mercenaries, 127-131. Reviewers of Arnold’s work note that he is not interested in an evenhanded assessment. Cecil B. Currey, “Arnold, Guy. Mercenaries: The Scourge of the Third World,” Journal of Third World Studies, (Spring 2002), 261-262. However, his work does represent a set of reactionary arguments against the privatization of force and points out many potential consequences. That said, his work is not well researched and depends primarily on newspaper and magazine accounts for its source material.


eliminate the trans-national exercise of violence by non-state actors."72 While this "imperialism by invitation"73 is not without its drawbacks, as Reno openly admits, it may be the only way forward for poor African states in a globalized world.

Accompanying this debate among observers of PMCs' status as security actors at the international level is an increase in their employment and a revaluation of their status by both transnational and domestic civil societies. Though Christopher Spearin has concerns about PMCs partnering with humanitarian organizations, he suggests that they do provide stability in chaotic situations allowing humanitarians to do their work. However, that his concerns exist at all indicates PMC engagement of civil society elements is a growing, if concerning, trend.74 Further, as security becomes a commercial product, Leander argues, it also necessarily gains legitimacy within the context of a neo-liberal, globalized, market-orientated world. In this sense legitimacy itself can be bought and paid for by states by hiring PMCs to enforce and establish traditional markers of statehood such as the control of force and territory. Additionally, in the context of globalization, the control of resources is also a key indicator of statehood.75 Singer suggests the possible employment of PMCs to protect civil society space in failed states is a viable option where the state can no longer provide such protection.76

Not only have mercenary corporations taken advantage of an existing market opportunity, but they also have made progress in losing the image of the swashbuckling marginal heroes, such as the Denards and Hoares of the 1960-1980s. They have clearly adopted a corporate model, presented themselves as a friend of business, and as money-making enterprises. As Nick Van Den Bergh, EO chief executive claimed "we are a commercial venture. We are not an aid

72 Ibid., 184.
74 Spearin, "The Emperor's Leased Clothes," passim. Spearin's argument lends general support to this assertion, and he claims specifically that the United States is a leading norm changer in this regard.
75 Leander, "Global Ungovernance. Mercenaries, States and the Control over Violence," 10-12
agency. Company representatives further stress the approval of their home nations as well as the nations within which the companies operate. Crucially, Leander criticizes other observers for missing the agency of PMCs themselves. For her, the privatization of security affected a change, not only in how states viewed security, but also in how PMCs saw and presented their own roles. In part this resulted in active campaigns for acceptance and legitimacy, efforts to increase transparency, and claims of self-regulation and market controls in the absence of any real state regulation. Indeed, as Van Den Bergh’s above comment demonstrates, PMCs are increasingly shaping the debate and defining their own goals and results, and the criteria by which these should be measured. Initial inroads have expanded into a key portion of the security debate being prosecuted by PMCs themselves. This takes the form of battlefield decisions, training, education functions and the use of the media in shaping the debate itself.

As previously mentioned, Arnold and others note an improving press on PMCs in the world media. Such a suggestion, however, must be treated with care because, while it is certainly possible to find positive press, the world media expresses strong reservations and concerns as well. While it is outside the parameters of this chapter to evaluate it in any scientific way, that the press, both positive and negative, exists at all is critical. Arnold’s book is instructive as it is based on press reports and clearly demonstrates the polarization found in the world media. In fact, PMCs are well aware of the power of the media and go to great lengths to present themselves in a positive light, and efforts such as Brook’s IPOA attempt to improve

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77 As quoted in Arnold, Mercenaries, 118. Interestingly, mercenaries in the 1960s pointed to the positive aspects or results of their employment when justifying their role. While EO did this as well, it is instructive that such a comment carries positive weight in the context of globalization. In a real sense Van Den Bergh claimed legitimacy as a corporate actor which significantly defined and limited his company’s role and responsibilities. His claim to legitimacy is as a corporate, not a humanitarian, entity.
81 Arnold, Mercenaries,” 125.
82 Doug Brooks, President, http://www.ipoaonline.org/home/. IPOA stands for International Peace Operators Association. It is an international lobby organization working for a consortium of major PMCs seeking humanitarian work and general legitimacy for these companies.
PMC standing in general. That they are being considered seriously lends credence to the argument they are gaining legitimacy.

Conclusion

The state centrism of traditional international relations theory has created difficulty in dealing with MNCs and PMCs for political science. The development of such concepts as globalization, private authority, and legitimacy opens the debate for a reinterpretation of power understandings, sovereignty, and the role of the state on the international scene, thereby allowing for the growth of PMCs. Globalization provides a lens through which to recognize the development of a market for force, the conditions necessary for the supply of that force, and permissive conditions for the rise of PMCs, especially in Africa.

Private authority shows how PMCs have developed into security actors in their own right within the space created by globalization. They developed cooperation, rules, norms, and institutionalization. This is made evident by the development of agency in shaping the debate and security issues, and in changing international norms. The development of agency is critical, exemplified by progressive PMC inroads into intelligence gathering, training, consulting, and advising roles not just in Africa but in the West as well. With these developments, PMCs began shaping the debate and shaping security issues. As a result they increasingly came to be regarded as security experts.

Legitimacy theory has evolved to explain the development of that authority and of PMCs as legitimate international security actors. The ideas that both actors and actions can exhibit legitimacy, and that states have lost de-facto legitimate status provides space which PMCs are increasingly exploiting to expand their legitimacy. While they are certainly not fully accepted as legitimate actors, these three concepts point to the conclusion that PMCs are moving in that direction. This is evidenced by their tacit acceptance by states, if not by the UN, their
engagement of both transnational and national civil societies, and the fact that there is a debate concerning them in the world media. Within the context of globalization, PMCs are gaining private authority and legitimacy as security actors on the international scene. The experience of Sierra Leone encapsulates the ignition point of this progression while demonstrating the experience of an African state in a globalized world.
Sierra Leone’s experience with Private Military Companies (PMCs) represents the key point of change between the traditional freelance mercenaries and their modern corporate counterparts. As a poor country beset by civil war, yet extremely rich in extractable resources, Sierra Leone provided an ideal setting for the development of the modern PMC. Sierra Leone also incorporated a number of other characteristics which promoted PMC involvement, including a repressive and corrupt regime, a weak but politically active military, several sectarian subgroups, and a populace yearning for peace. Freetown first attempted to secure private help for its internal struggles by hiring Gurkha Security Guards (GSG), a company that proved ready to provide training to the army, but was not, as it turned out, willing to fight as Sierra Leone’s leaders had expected. The subsequent hiring of Executive Outcomes (EO) provided the requisite war fighting skills and training, but at some cost. Finally, the experience with Sandline demonstrated both the limits of what a PMC could be expected to accomplish and the resistance of many members of the international community to private military involvement in sovereign countries. Thus, Sierra Leone encapsulates the evolution of the modern PMC from its roots both in the freelance mercenaries and the more tentative Private Security Companies (PSCs) to modern Private Military Companies (PMCs).

Sierra Leone, a historical overview:

Sierra Leone is located in West Africa between Guinea to its North and East, Liberia to the South, and the Atlantic Ocean to the West. Its 27,925 square miles, much of which is inhospitable jungle, sit just 500 miles north of the Equator. In 1995, the year Sierra Leone hired EO, the country contained 4.7 million people, seventy-five percent of which practiced subsistence agriculture. Although the country encompasses one of the richest diamond deposits
in the world as well as gold, bauxite, and rutile mining sites, the majority of the population remained poor. When EO was hired, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) had cut Sierra Leone’s export earnings by two-thirds, and ninety-percent of diamonds harvested were sold illegally.¹

Sierra Leone’s population is generally divided into two ethnic groupings, the Mende in the South and the Temne in the north. Traditionally, each ethnic group produced a sub-group known as Hunters—among the Mende these were called Kamajoisia (Kamajors). The Kamajors did not function within the government, but intervened militarily to protect local areas from government exploitation. Due to the British practice of indirect rule, the colonial military—Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF)—was made up of soldiers drawn from remote regions. These were trained, indoctrinated, and loyal to the status quo. As such, the RSLMF commanders tended to be resistant to changes within government which disrupted the flow of benefits to them through the patronage system.

Sierra Leone’s primary and capital city Freetown was founded in 1787 as a settlement for freed slaves and ex-servicemen who had fought for the British Empire. The capital and its immediate environs became a formal British colony in 1808 and the hinterland a protectorate in 1896. Thereafter, the whole area continued to function primarily as a repository for slaves returned to Africa. Since 1930 the national economy of Sierra Leone depended heavily on extraction industries which, until 1968, generated seventy-percent of foreign exchange revenues. This was halved by 1987 due to illegal diamond exports. Primarily because of the richness of the diamond fields, Private Security Companies (PSCs) have been involved with mining companies in Sierra Leone since the mid 1950s, although not extensively until the rise of the RUF in 1991.²

At independence on April 27, 1961, Sierra Leone was a fragile democracy under Premier Siaka Stevens, held together by a patronage system reflecting the legacy of British colonialism. Stevens was deposed by coup in 1967 but returned to power in a counter coup in 1968—a position he maintained until his voluntary retirement in 1985. The 1967 and 1968 coups were the RSLMF’s first direct interventions into the political life of the state, events which presaged its constant struggle for political survival and power thereafter. Stevens established one party rule in 1978, which furthered the lack of political competition and led to the neglect of the RSLMF. Stevens quickly downsized the RSLMF while becoming increasingly dependant on the State Security Department—as a personal army—for political support and personal protection. This trend continued after Stevens’ retirement and resulted in the RSLMF being reduced from approximately 13,000, its traditional strength, to only 3,000 by 1991. In addition to the ensuing difficulties with the army, Stevens also proved incapable of dealing with the 1970s and 1980s downturn in the price of minerals world wide. When coupled with competition from neighboring countries and illegal mining and export, this produced an economic slump that disturbed Sierra Leone’s delicate political-economic balance. The disruption had social implications such as the youth moving to urban centers in a quest for quick diamond wealth, and the corresponding crumbling of traditional society. This led to the development of a disaffected population of petty criminals and wage laborers which was easily recruited and radicalized by various factions even prior to the eruption of civil war in 1991. By Stevens’ retirement, the loss of state revenues and social services were in and of themselves fostering political unrest.

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3 The post colonial state in Africa often centered on a large state bureaucracy which was generally ineffective and really the locus of social contact among tribal chiefs. The real authority rested locally with the chiefs not the state itself. This resulted from the colonial practice of using tribal chiefs to maintain peace and security. The perpetuation of this system moribund many states in Africa, and certainly limited what any leader in Sierra Leone could accomplish nationally. Deborah D. Avant, *The Market for Force: The Consequences of Privatizing Security*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 82-83.

General Joseph Momoh took over the reins of government with Stevens’ retirement in 1985, but was unable to stop the economic decline. He increased the size of the army, albeit without the financial resources to support it, in an attempt to quiet rising rebellions and unrest; meanwhile, his kleptocracy quietly bled the country dry and diverted much foreign aid as well. However, Momoh’s greatest challenge lay with the RUF, a growing rebel movement.

The RUF was founded and led by Foday Sankoh. Sankoh was trained by the British as a radio operator in the 1950s. In 1971 Sankoh, then a corporal in the RSLMF, was arrested in a coup attempt. Following his confinement, he worked as a photojournalist in the vast forests and jungles of Sierra Leone. He surfaced in 1987 in a Libyan training camp along with elements from neighboring Liberia which launched his career as a rebel leader. The RUF’s tactics were atypical of rebel groups at the time as they were extremely violent toward civilians, ostensibly because of Liberian backing and access to illegal diamond—traded in Liberia and Ghana for weapons—which lessened dependence on civilian support. Additionally, the RUF had no clear ethnic connections, although northerners were prominent within it. It did develop an effective propaganda machine, and used traditional rivalries including local grievances and tribal strife to encourage recruitment. This, coupled with the use of video violence to whip up fighting furor and support among adherents, made for an exceptionally violent insurgency campaign.

The RUF invaded Sierra Leone from Liberia with Charles Taylor’s support, in March, 1991, intending to topple the Momoh government. Between 1991 and 1993 the fighting swayed back and forth between elements of RSLMF and the RUF with each side engaged in asset striping. During this period the RSLMF expanded to around 14,000 and received some Israeli training. However, this expansion mainly consisted of poorly trained disaffected youth, some as

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young as 11 years old, who were often impressed into service—a practice common on both
sides. The army also lacked adequate arms and received little if any pay. This forced most army
units to live off the land similar to the RUF units; a practice which gave raise to the term
Sobels—soldiers by day, rebels by night. Throughout this period the RUF concentrated its
efforts on diamond acquisition, hostage taking, and a campaign of terror. As a result, it lost
much popular support among local populations and prompted resistance from local Kamajors.
That lost support, however, did not necessarily transition directly to the national government.

Momoh was overthrown in April 1992 in a popularly supported coup engineered by Captain
Valentine Strasser. Strasser set up government as the head of the National Provisional Ruling
Council (NPRC). He inherited Momoh’s difficulty with the RUF. Additionally, the severely
weakened army was scattered throughout the country under leaders waiting to see who managed
to consolidate power and unwilling to commit to any one cause until then. Only a small portion
of the RSLMF remained loyal to the government, and there were persistent rumors of
cooperation with the RUF among the rest.7 According to Anthony Clayton, the major cause of
Sierra Leone’s difficulties was “the structural imbalance between coastal Creole elite and the
hinterland peoples, in particular the northern Temne and the southern Mende” which the RUF
exploited and which belied a unified defense against rebel units and penetrations.8 Additionally,
the overspill of refugees—already over 100,000 in 1990—from the Liberian Civil War
overburdened the country’s weak infrastructure. Liberian rebels sought to shutdown Freetown
and force the withdrawal of Sierra Leone’s forces from ECOMOG—Sierra Leone responded
with incursions into Liberia, ostensibly chasing retreating rebel units.9

7 MacKenzie, “Death of a Warrior,” 38, 85. Strasser’s coup was really a non-event in the sense that Momoh split the
8 Clayton, Frontiersmen, 195.
9 Ibid., 195-196.
In late 1994, the RUF, fortified with mercenary recruits and RSLMF defectors, intensified its operations, and by early 1995 it threatened Freetown directly.\textsuperscript{10} The RUF during this period was made up of a total of 3,000-4,000 fighters grouped around a hard core of 500-600 devotees. These were organized roughly into six battalions. They operated from jungle camps using guerrilla tactics, maintained a radio network, had expanded their external support network to include Liberia, Guinea, and Libya, and captured much of their equipment—including uniforms—from disaffected RSLMF units.\textsuperscript{11}

By 1995, Sierra Leone was fourth from last on the UNDP Human Development index,\textsuperscript{12} and its population’s average life expectancy dipped to thirty-seven years, the lowest in the world. Central authority had collapsed, warlords and fiefdoms ruled the hinterland, and bandits ran rampant. The damage to mines and equipment, the unstable political situation, and the inability of the government to protect mining operations meant that there was little willingness among foreign investors to risk investing money in mining, infrastructure, and, by connection, the country.\textsuperscript{13} Desperate, Strasser turned to Gurkha Security Guards (GSG) for help.

\textbf{Gurkha Security Guards:}

GSG was formed in 1990 as a British company headquartered in St. Hélier, Jersey, the Channel Islands. The three founders were all former British Army soldiers who had also served as mercenaries in Rhodesia and Oman. The company provided security services, and specialized in ordnance disposal. Its recruits were drawn mainly from Gurkha retirees in their early forties left jobless by British army downsizing. The company’s first big contract was in Mozambique for Lonroh, a large British conglomerate, guarding installations and training local protection.

\textsuperscript{12} United Nations Development Program.
\textsuperscript{13} MacKenzie, “Death of a Warrior,” 38, 85.
units. Early on GSG established medical facilities and evacuations plans which proved able to move injured men from Mozambique to England in 36 hours. In addition to providing healthcare to its employees, the company also offered vacations and provided aid and donations to Nepal in support of, and to maintain the good will of, its main source of recruits.\textsuperscript{14} The company had contracts in Kuwait during the Gulf War, and provided embassy protection and UN deployment aid as well. GSG maintained about 250 people on the payroll and accessed a large database of prospective Gurkha employees as contracts needed them.\textsuperscript{15} Most GSG recruitment was personal or based on word of mouth, despite claims of an extensive vetting process.\textsuperscript{16} The key aspect of the company was its claim to offer only non-combat services; specifically, it strove to avoid being labeled as a mercenary organization.

GSG was hired by the NPRC through the British Weapons Manufacturer J&S Franklin to secure the possessions of Sierra Rutile, a US/Australian mining company, and to train Special Forces and an officer cadre for the RSLMF. GSG sent 58 Gurkhas led by two Europeans and commanded by an American Colonel Robert Mackenzie.\textsuperscript{17} Mackenzie was an interesting choice for GSG. He was clearly a mercenary and had a history of aggressive action on the battlefield. Mackenzie joined the US Army in 1966, was wounded in Vietnam in 1967, and discharged after one year in the hospital at seventy-percent disability. He then joined the Rhodesia Special Air Service (SAS) and, from 1970-1980, rose through the ranks to Captain and SAS squadron commander, earning a bronze and silver cross in the process. During his time in Rhodesia he was involved in the famous cross-border raid at Chimoio, a critical moment in the development

\textsuperscript{14} GSG’s plan was to access former Gurkhas as a source of labor with real world experience and British training at a fraction of the cost of hiring the British equivalent. While on the surface this seems like GSG exploited the Gurkha soldiers, hiring them did provide employment and income to a poor and remote country, and upheld Nepal’s long tradition of what was essentially mercenary soldiering for the British.


\textsuperscript{17} Musah, “A Country Under Siege,” 87-88.
of counterinsurgency warfare and mercenary involvement in intrastate conflicts. Following Rhodesia, he fought in the South African Defense Force (SADF) as a Special Forces Major, the Transkei Defense Force as second in command, and saw further action in Central America, Croatia, and Bosnia. He also visited many other conflict zones as a *Soldier of Fortune* magazine contributing editor. He seems to have been hired by RSLMF Major Abu Tarawali, with the agreement of Strasser, to lead the GSG team. This demonstrates a critical difference between GSG’s understanding of its mission and Freetown’s expectations. In the first place, Mackenzie worked for both the company and the Sierra Leone government. Secondly, he was a well known mercenary commander who did not fit the ‘training only’ profile GSG claimed as a central operating principle.

GSG experienced early success in Sierra Leone. In setting up a training base some distance from Freetown, the company repelled several RUF ambushes and achieved a mythical status both among the locals and with the government because of its ability to defeat the RUF’s effective ambush tactics. This resulted in calls by Freetown for aggressive action, yet GSG maintained that it was not contracted to fight, only to provide security and training. However, Mackenzie, on February 24, probably against company policy, and almost certainly against his better judgment—but under heavy pressure from Freetown to produce noticeable results—agreed to lead an attack on a RUF base in the Malal Hills. The attack was supposed to be supported by Sierra Leonean bombers, but they apparently bombed the wrong hill. It was a disaster and resulted in the routing of the new RSLMF trainees as well as the wounding of Tarawali. Six

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18 The raid at Chimoio cemented a bloody, but successful, program of cross-border raids by Rhodesia into Mozambique to strike at bases of resistance contending with Rhodesia’s insistence on a White run government. It is important not only because Rhodesia got a way with it, and other raids as well, but because it furthered the development and acceptance of cross-border pursuit of resistance fighters as a staple of African warfare. Additionally, Rhodesia employed many foreign adventurers, many of them served in the SAS and similar units.


Gurkhas were brought along as non-combatant medics and one of these was wounded as well. In the ensuing confusion Mackenzie was killed and the Gurkhas pulled back to the base.\textsuperscript{21} As a result GSG canceled its contract and pulled out of Sierra Leone altogether. Deborah Avant has argued convincingly that this was because of concerns about the mercenary connotations and its potentially negative effect of these on future contract prospects.\textsuperscript{22}

Following GSG's withdrawal, several other companies including Special Projects Services and UK-based Defense Systems were contacted by Sierra Rutile, but as they carried prohibitive price tags none were hired.\textsuperscript{23} This may have been intentional on the part of the companies as GSG withered away as a competitor in the security industry following the debacle in Sierra Leone.\textsuperscript{24} The death of Mackenzie and GSG's experience in Sierra Leone seemed to spell the death knell for PSCs wishing to involve themselves in African conflicts largely due to the perception that such activities would carry the stigma associated with the term mercenary and would certainly involve combat and casualties. However, an increasingly anxious Freetown soon found a company willing to offer not only training and mining-site security, but offensive combat operations as well.

**Executive Outcome's history and development prior to Sierra Leone:**

In order to understand EO's role in Sierra Leone it is imperative to look at its early history, its development into a PMC, and its first foray into combat operations in Soyo, Angola. Executive Outcomes (EO) was founded by Eeban Barlow and Lafras Luitingh in 1989. Both of these men had a background in the counterinsurgency warfare developed during the final years

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 37-41, 82-84.
\textsuperscript{22} Avant, *The Market for Force*, 84-86.
\textsuperscript{24} Vines, “Chapter 7: Gurkhas and the Private Security Business in Africa,” 130-134. Alex Vines claims that Mackenzie was only scouting a live-fire training area at the time of his death. However, considering the pressure he was under from Freetown to achieve direct success against the RUF, the involvement of Sierra Leonean bombers, and his own aggressive nature, this is doubtful. The key point is that GSG did not support his combat operations as evidenced by their quick pull-out following his actions and death.
of South Africa’s apartheid regime. More specifically, both were members of the South African Defense Forces’ (SADF) Civil Cooperation Bureau (CCB). This organization was tasked with ‘sanctions busting’ which it accomplished largely through setting up layers of front companies.25 While there is some dispute about EO’s origins, it is clear that both men applied skills learned at the CCB to the creation of the company. Additionally, their past gave the new company connections in high places within the South African government and access to the tight-knit community of SADF veterans with similar backgrounds and experiences. Key also is the difficulty that researchers have had in trying to trace the corporate family tree, of which EO was only the visible tip. This tree, while unclear in specifics, in general reached all the way to Plaza 107—a cluster of defense contractors in London specializing in international, high-risk, paramilitary security offerings to MNCs and governments—and involved 30-50 related companies.26

Tony Buckingham, a British oil entrepreneur with ties to the large conglomerate Branch-Heritage Group, and a former Special Air Service (SAS) officer, could often be found at or near the center of this web. While it is unclear whether Buckingham was directly involved in the founding of EO, he certainly was instrumental in securing its first formal contract involving combat operations within Angola, and in the company’s subsequent expansion.27

25 David Shearer, Private Armies and Military Intervention, Adelphi Paper 316, London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, Oxford University Press, 1998, 41. Shearer also notes that the CCB carried out assassinations. Khareen Pech indicates that EO actually originated as a CCB front company. This seems doubtful as both men were certainly capable of setting up new companies, and there would be no reason, considering EO’s efforts to distance itself from its founder’s pasts, that they would use a company with direct connections to the CCB. Additionally, Pech cites private interviews with EO veterans for this information so it is difficult to corroborate. Conversely, Peter Singer argues that EO was founded under the purview of Strategic Resources Corporation (SRC), a company closely related to Branch-Heritage Group. He indicates it was one of several security companies founded to provide local security for international clients. Specifically, EO was to focus on counterinsurgency consulting working for major corporations and the SADF, and by 1991 was working outside South Africa for South American Governments presumably—including Columbia—conducting counter drug raids. What is key is that each of these men had the training and capability to create and operate companies with confusing, if not deliberately misleading, ownership and corporate connections. Khareen Pech, “Chapter 5: Executive Outcomes—A Corporate Conquest: An old Emperor in a New Suit,” in Peace, Profit or Plunder? The Privatization of Security in War-torn African Societies, Jakkie Cilliers and Peggy Mason eds., South Africa: Institute of Security Studies, 1999, 84-85. Peter W. Singer, Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003, 104-105.


27 Al J. Venter, War Dog: Fighting Other People’s Wars, Philadelphia: Casemate, 2006, 352-355. According to Guy Arnold, the connection between Buckingham, Simon Mann, and EO can be traced to “the various companies
Whatever EO’s corporate and governmental links, it was its connections to the apartheid-era SADF Special Operations which eventually proved most telling and indeed publicly damaging to its prospects for contracts. These units included the Recon Commandos, the Parachute Brigade (Parabats), Koevoet, and 32 battalion or Crowbar. Such units had secretly spearheaded South African destabilization efforts in Angola and Mozambique.\(^{28}\) With the advent of the post-apartheid era in South Africa they were disbanded as politically embarrassing and outdated. Within these units three-quarters of the men were black and all the officers white. Once demobilized, some 2,000 of these men formed a ready-made recruiting pool for EO.

Additionally, because of their common experience, background, training, and indeed closeness, they functioned as an ideal on-call force for a company founded and run by the elite of their previous officer corps.\(^{29}\) This similarity in background also maintained consistency within EO’s pool of prospective employees, in recruit training, hierarchy, and combat experience, which rendered welding these men into an effective fighting force on short notice possible.\(^{30}\) In fact, Barlow claimed to only hire former SADF and South African Police (SAP) personnel because of their consistency in training.\(^{31}\)

Not only were EO’s employees drawn from similar backgrounds, but they were in a similar situation. With the loss of their covert operations occupations they were unemployed and stigmatized by their former affiliation with the apartheid regime. The new South African Government did not want to recognize or laud their former service. Additionally, EO offered

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28 Shearer, *Private Armies and Military Intervention*, 41.
30 Shearer, *Private Armies and Military Intervention*, 41.
pay ranging from five to ten times that to be had with African militaries including the SADF, paid them in US dollars, and offered contracts which included life insurance and full medical coverage. Thus, EO did not need to maintain a standing army, but had access to one on a contract by contract basis.\textsuperscript{32}

Because of this combination of tradition and background EO was willing act in ways that other entities such as the UN could not or would not, including taking sides, deploying overwhelming force, and firing preemptively. Despite this, EO claimed to distance itself from mercenaries in that it only worked in support of sovereign states with favorable human rights records.\textsuperscript{33} According to EO co-founder Barlow, “The Cold War left a huge vacuum, and I identified a niche in the market—we are selling the business of surviving.”\textsuperscript{34} However, it all started in a less than inspiring manner in Soyo, Angola.

The Soyo operation launched EO’s career, and convinced Barlow that the corporate model, complete with press releases, careful culling of prospective employees, and medical evacuation facilities would work in Africa. In March 1992, UNITA rebels captured the coastal town of Soyo and refused to release Branch-Heritage Oil’s expensive, and importantly rented, equipment. The Angolan army (FFA) did not have the wherewithal to recapture the town and equipment, much less to do so without damaging either—a key concern for the oil companies involved. In its stead, EO was hired, ostensibly by the Angolan government, but most certainly at the behest of Buckingham, to recapture the town and secure the equipment.\textsuperscript{35}

While EO had existed since 1989 as a security company, this was its first significant foreign venture, and the first to involve actual contracted combat. Initially, it looked and acted like any other mercenary operation in post-1960 Africa. There was a clear lack of structure, planning, and forethought, and little to no time allowed for training. Prospective employees were gleaned

\textsuperscript{32} Singer, \textit{Corporate Warriors},” 102-103.
\textsuperscript{34} Silverstein, \textit{Private Warriors},” 164.
from the bars and hangouts of former soldiers in South Africa. Many of these men were so desperate that they did not ask, and specifically were not told the destination, duration, or political aspects of the job. This is key as most of the former Special Forces personnel had spent years advising, training, and leading UNITA operations as part of South Africa’s destabilization efforts in Angola. Thus, their sympathies could be expected to lie with UNITA rather than their former enemy the Angolan government. The plan was to take the main industrial complex at Soyo with EO personnel through helicopter assault, and bring in the FFA to hold and protect the gains made. However, rather than the few lightly armed rebels that were expected, UNITA had the elite of its South African trained resistance fighters based at the facility. The initial assault gained little more than a foothold, and the FFA was delayed by its own incompetence and upon arrival proved of little combat value. Fully half of the EO’s initial intake of personnel quit within several days and were flown out, no questions asked, further reducing the chances of success for those left behind. Jim Hooper, a war reporter who spent much time with EO in Angola also noted that heavy weapons were not allowed due to concerns of damage to the infrastructure.

Barlow was determined to retake the facility and recruited more and better troops in South Africa. This was complicated by the bad press the operation was getting, and by UNITA’s hiring of South African mercenaries. Despite this, EO secured Soyo and pushed UNITA out of the area with the intake of fresh higher quality mercenaries and the raw determination of those already there. When EO left at the completion of its contract UNITA quickly recaptured the facility, presumably after the sensitive equipment was evacuated. The Angolan government viewed the operation as an outstanding success. Further, it demonstrated that EO had the skills, could take casualties, and would stay against all odds to complete the contract.36

Angola quickly signed EO to a series of yearly contracts to combat UNITA. This involved over 500 EO personnel in training some 5,000 FAA troops and 30 pilots, and direct combat roles including everything from conventional ground operations, Special Forces style commando assaults, air support from fighter bombers and helicopter-gunships, and large scale airborne assaults. EO’s success in Angola is credited with leading to the 1994 Lusaka Peace Accord, one provision of which required EO to withdraw from the country. Significantly, EO stayed another 13 months beyond the treaty signing at the request of the Angolan government, and only withdrew in December 1995 under pressure by the US Clinton administration, presumably in favor of the contract going to the US based company MPRI. Even after EO’s withdrawal, many former employees remained legally and worked for the national government both as private individuals and contracting security companies. The government continued to encourage the use of private security companies within the country.\(^{37}\) Venter, writing in 1996, noted that as long as the mercenaries and EO’s legacy companies remained, civil war in Angola was delayed by UNITA’s lack of access to illicit mining proceeds.\(^{38}\) Thus, after a difficult start at Soyo EO did polish its image and prove itself in Angola. However, it was in Sierra Leone that EO made its most telling bid for legitimacy as a private military company.

**Executive Outcomes in Sierra Leone**

By EO’s arrival in April, 1995, Sierra Leone was in a severe state of decline. The four-year war had left one-third of the population refugees, and some 15,000 of them dead. Road traffic was closed down along with diamond and bauxite mining, resulting in a fifteen percent...
reduction in the GNP, and inflation increased by thirty-five percent. The RUF had captured or severely limited all significant legal mining and was threatening Freetown directly, having advanced to within striking distance of the city. The RSLMF, bulging with Stressor’s conscripts, reached some 14,000. However, these were poorly paid, poorly trained, and only encouraged with daily rations of marijuana and rum. This resulted in an army as abusive toward the civilian population as the RUF, and completely ineffective as a fighting force.

It appears that Strasser learned of EO through *Newsweek* and *Soldier of Fortune* articles, but it is likely that Buckingham, whose firm also had operations in the country, recommended the company. The initial contract called for 160 EO personnel to be deployed along with aircraft, government supplied weapons, vehicles, and uniforms. EO’s mandate was to retrain and restructure the RSLMF to stand alone without outside help, evict the RUF from the vicinity of Freetown, stabilize diamond mining areas, and to locate and destroy RUF headquarters. With the arguable exception of the first, these goals were accomplished quite quickly.

During its time in Sierra Leone, EO divided its efforts between training the RSLMF and combating the RUF directly. The company used standard counterinsurgency tactics to great effect; ‘find them, pin them, and destroy them.’ The key was its complete air superiority. Using relatively few helicopters EO located RUF concentrations and pinned them with firepower while ground forces were helicopter or vehicle transported to the location, set up blocking positions, and through superior firepower destroyed and dispersed RUF contingents. One critical element involved was the use of intelligence gathering and the spreading of misinformation. While Kamajors provided valuable local information on the location of RUF units, aerial reconnaissance coupled with a systematic methodology of putting the information together and using it easily surpassed anything the RSLMF was capable of at the time, and had a devastating

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41 Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 112.
effect on the RUF. EO’s operatives used Afrikaans to secure their radio communications from RUF intercepts. To confuse their opponent, they often cut and pasted rebel commander’s voices into pseudo-rebel broadcasts to spread doubt and misinformation via the RUF’s own radio net. Another key tactic was following through when ambushed and pursuing the attackers. The RUF had not experienced aggressive and skilled opponents as both the RSLMF and the RUF usually ran within the first few shots.

Training the RSLMF began from the ground up as the over-inflated military had lost much of its core combat skills, and many of its soldiers had never learned them in the first place. Even such rudimentary skills as weapons handling and standard drill had to be instilled. The intelligence service, organized supply and transport, and communications had to be created, as none existed in the army. Finally, EO reversed the tradition of issuing alcohol and drugs with rations packs.

The main role EO played during this time was instruction, protection and organization which, coupled with its willingness to lead the newly trained troops in combat, built the beginnings of an effective fighting force. Senior RSLMF officers seemed happy to let EO run both the war and the retraining schedule while they enjoyed their wealth—derived from the corruption endemic within the upper ranks of the military—and only showed up at briefings or for photo opportunities. Additionally, EO’s contract called for a joint headquarters giving the company great leeway in the conduct of the war and the retraining program.

In addition to retraining the RSLMF, leading it in combat, and conducting its own operations usually supported by retrained RSLMF units, EO instituted what can be aptly called a hearts and

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42 Venter, War Dog, 513-524.
44 Venter, “Not RUF Enough,” 33-37, 74-77.
minds campaign. The RUF—despite its own notoriously violent and alienating methods—had legitimate complaints about the abusive and corrupt RSLMF, and EO’s training and reorganization began the process of addressing those issues.

Other EO efforts in this area included training Kamajors militias to provide local defense. This lent a localized popular legitimacy to EO which the exploitative national government and the RUF were unable to achieve. This was reminiscent of South Africa’s effort to enroll Africans in its fighting ranks, especially in counterinsurgency units. Drawing on South Africa’s experience, EO trained Kamajors because of the difficulty of maintaining effective RSLMF units without constant supervision. The interaction between the traditional warriors and EO began early in EO’s deployment as the company depended on their jungle fighting skills, local terrain and political knowledge, and their ability to provide detailed intelligence. Avant argues that this was simply a continuation of British style colonial practice where local chiefs were supported by the colonial power and then depended on to extend foreign power to the local level. However, it was more likely a marriage of convenience as each group had some goals in common, specifically the elimination of the RUF. In return for the Kamajors’ allegiance, EO provided training in modern counterinsurgency techniques and weapons. As a result, the Kamajors became a force in their own right, expanding their membership, and progressively eclipsing the RSLMF not only as EO’s main partner in the country but in the general political landscape as well. This subsequently drove a wedge between the RSLMF, the Kamajors, and the RUF, further dividing an already divided country.

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47 Gerry Cleaver stated the RUF were “no better than murders gangsters who used mutilation as a deliberate weapon against defenseless civilians...no liberation movement.” Cleaver, “Subcontracting Military Power,” 141.
48 Venter, “Not RUF Enough,” 74-77.
EO also maneuvered within the Sierra Leonean government for support. Julius Maada Bio, Stressor's defense minister, was EO's main contact within the Strasser government and a hard-line war-fighter. EO preferred such men over the corrupt majority, especially because Bio wanted to rein in the local strongmen.\(^{53}\) One way this was accomplished was through a subsidiary company, Lifeguard, which held contracts to protect mining installations. Lifeguard went to great lengths to hire and train locals to defend these locations, which secured governmental revenues to flow toward foreign debt and multinational creditors, which in turn led to increased foreign investment and helped with debt reduction. EO's role and presence in Sierra Leone also allowed the privatization of state owned functions, which removed them from local strongmen and curtailed their influence on the government.\(^{54}\)

Militarily, things went well and pressure on Freetown was relieved within nine days of EO's arrival. The mining areas around Kono were quickly recovered, and by December 1995 the key Sierra Rutile Mine was secured. In January 1996 the RUF stronghold in the Kangari Hills fell, resulting in the RUF's initial efforts at negotiation.\(^ {55}\) In January 1996 Bio overthrew Strasser in a coup which EO pointedly was not involved in, significantly did nothing about, and avoided supporting or denouncing outright. Avant argues that the company may even have encouraged it. EO had threatened to leave in November, 1995, due to non-payment, and the RUF would only agree to negotiate with Bio, which lends credence to Avant's suspicions.\(^ {56}\) However, Bio's interests lay with the RSLMF and its loss of political power. Further, he was supported by the

\(^{53}\) Musah sees EO's relationship with Bio as more incestuous. He claims that Bio's brother was part owner of Soruss Air, the EO connected company that provided EO's air service between Sierra Leone and South Africa and really represented EO's life line for supplies, men, and medical evacuation during operations both in Angola and Sierra Leone. Regardless, Bio clearly had his own political and personal reasons for supporting EO. Musah, "A Country Under Siege," 88-89.


\(^{56}\) Avant, The Market for Force, 89.
RUF only insofar as no elections were held. Under international pressure, Bio held elections in February, 1996, and Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was elected to power.

The elections were contested both by the RSLMF and by the RUF, the former due to concern over its loss of political power, and the latter due to its exclusion. Kabbah continued to depend on EO and negotiated smaller monthly payments in order to extend its contract. The company and its Kamajors stood between his government and an increasingly politically ambitious RSLMF. EO’s continued efforts—assisted in no small measure by increased Kamajors activity—drove the RUF to a cease fire in April 1996 which was however widely ignored. The final push by EO came in October 1996. It destroyed the remaining RUF headquarters, and drove the rebel organization to the bargaining table.

During the ensuing negotiations, which ran from April 1996 through November 1996, EO’s presence was often a contentious issue. Meanwhile, EO’s enforcement of security brought about a revival in the diamond mining sector. Additionally, the negotiations were hampered by mistrust, partisan games, and OAU, UN, and Commonwealth bickering. A harassed and harried Sankoh signed the peace accord on November 30, 1996, for the militarily destroyed RUF. The agreement required the expulsion of EO and ECOMOG within five weeks, and especially targeted the Nigerians for their aerial support of EO operations, and made room for a RUF political party. EO accordingly left in January 1997, predicting an imminent overthrow of Kabbah in its absence. The UN remained uninvolved, as it would not deploy forces without the RUF’s consent, and certainly would not work with EO. Despite the Nigerian led ECOMOG,

58 This was a significant development as the monthly payment of $1.2 million originally agreed to in December 1995 was reduced to $700,000 by May, 1996. Douglas, “Chapter 9: Fighting for Diamonds—Private Military Companies in Sierra Leone,” 186.  
59 Musah, “A Country Under Siege,” 89-90. As Arnold points out, no international entity expressed concern about the employment of mercenaries at this point. The World Bank approved Sierra Leone budgeting to pay EO, the OAU said nothing about mercenaries despite a history of condemning them, and the commonwealth, while condemning Sandline in PNG, said nothing about their use in Sierra Leone. Arnold, Mercenaries,” 135.
deployed in place of the UN, EO’s departure created a military vacuum. The fragile situation worsened steadily through February. Meanwhile RSLMF and RUF contingents continued foraging as they had previous to EO’s involvement, while the Kamajors fought to protect the countryside. In March, Nigeria and Sierra Leone signed a defense pact. Kabbah, who had seriously considered calling EO back with the intention of turning all Sierra Leonean military operations over to the company, turned instead to Nigerians to train and reequip the Kamajors as a private army, and began cutting the RSLMF out of the picture entirely.

Under pressure, the RSLMF responded with a coup led by Major-General Johnny Paul Koroma which forced Kabbah into exile on May 25, 1997. Koroma set up a military junta, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Counsel (AFRC) to rule the country. While the coup almost certainly was aided by the RUF, this relationship was cemented when Sankoh, then in jail in Nigeria, but still speaking for the RUF, allied the rebel organization with the junta. The coup was exceedingly violent, and although the junta ended up controlling Freetown it controlled little else. The Nigerians, nominally still under ECOWAS, controlled the Lungi Airport, and the Kamajors struggled to control the interior. Finally, Lifeguard, and other smaller PSCs, continued to protect mining installations. This situation continued through January 1998, with the international community growing ever more concerned, but significantly doing little to ease the situation. The UN and OAU condemned the coup and Nigerian troops attempted to enforce the resulting embargos on weapons and aid to all parties, but to little avail. The fighting continued with the Kamajors facing the RUF in the hinterland and Nigerian troops battling AFRC mainly

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60 Shearer, Private Armies and Military Intervention,” 68.
63 Musah, “A Country Under Siege,” 96. Ian Douglas points out that Koroma, who was in jail for a coup attempt in September, 1996, was set free after an exceedingly violent and bloody coup led by Corporal John Gborie, and took leadership then. Douglas, “Chapter 9: Fighting for Diamonds—Private Military Companies in Sierra Leone,” 188.
within Freetown. By mid July, 1997, a stalemate of sorts had been achieved. Kabbah, in exile in Guinea, protested loudly, but few paid attention.\textsuperscript{64}

EO operations were successful in Angola and Sierra Leone for a number of reasons. The company was proficient in counterinsurgency warfare and exploited the weakness of a numerically stronger opponent. EO used surprise, recognized the lack of a front line, and exploited both with long-range aerial attacks deep into enemy rear areas. The employment of suppressive mortar fire and following up ambushes aggressively demonstrated the ability to adapt tactical options in a non-traditional manner, admittedly “options perhaps less possible in a public military.”\textsuperscript{65} EO demonstrated a discipline of force and cohesive identity founded on the past experience of its personnel in the SADF as well as a common language, Afrikaans. The company used its weapons in a novel manner including night fighting gear, napalm, cluster bombs, aerial reconnaissance, radio intercepts, and the use of Kamajors as scouts. Further, EO drew on its corporate connections both those outside the country, and its brother companies within it. Finally, EO employed an effective hearts and minds campaign within the country, and a less effective media campaign internationally.\textsuperscript{66}

Despite its success on the battlefield—and EO was active in more than twelve African countries providing services ranging from combat, training, mine clearing, and site security to repair of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, harbors, and pipelines—EO officially ended its corporate existence on January 1, 1999.\textsuperscript{67} Peter Singer argues that despite efforts at a positive media spin, the company was unable to disassociate itself with its apartheid past. Additionally, there was the uncertainty of such a public and well known entity as EO in the face of South


\textsuperscript{65} Singer, \textit{Corporate Warriors},” 116.

\textsuperscript{66} Singer, \textit{Corporate Warriors},” 115-117. Singer suggests that they had no weapons advantage over their opponents. This seems an obvious contradiction since in neither Angola nor Sierra Leone did the rebels have combat air assets. Further, the RUF certainly had no access to napalm or cluster bombs, much less the delivery platforms for these weapons. Finally, in most evaluations the RUF were very poorly armed and almost certainly had to conserve ammunition as the majority of their munitions were man-packed from Liberia.

\textsuperscript{67} Arnold, \textit{Mercenaries},” 119.
Africa's Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Bill,\textsuperscript{68} which, coupled with South Africa's concerns over the loss of tax monies as EO operated overseas, made South Africa an untenable environment in which to base a PMC. Venter also suggests there were concerns over war crimes accusations considering the nature of the conflict in Sierra Leone and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{69} The company was also loosing market share to less stigmatized companies. However, there is a strong possibility that only the name and mode of doing business changed and that EO simply diversified, or broke into parts. Companies such as Sandline, Lifeguard, Alpha 5, NFD Ltd., and others all had personnel in common with EO. As Singer aptly put it "the end result is that although Executive Outcomes technically closed, in another sense it simply globalized."\textsuperscript{70} One outgrowth of this move was Sandline International, which attempted to carry on EO's efforts in Sierra Leone and to develop fully the idea of a completely legitimized marked for PMCs.

\textbf{Sandline International in Sierra Leone}

Timothy Spicer formed Sandline in 1996. Although the company was officially registered in the Bahamas, it retained links to Plaza 107 Ltd., and was headquartered in London as well. Spicer is a retired British Army Colonel, formerly of the Scots Guards, who saw service in the Falklands, in North Ireland, and as UNPROFOR spokesman in Bosnia.\textsuperscript{71} Spicer claims to have developed an idea, closely associated with many mercenaries, that soldiers often know better how to solve security issues than higher echelon military commanders or government officials.

Spicer drew these lessons from his experience, especially in North Ireland, and also concluded that some situations do not have a military solution.\textsuperscript{72} According to Spicer "there is absolutely nothing wrong with providing military services to people who don't have them... we

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\textsuperscript{68} Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Bill, Republic of South Africa, [B 54D—97].
\textsuperscript{69} Venter, \textit{War Dog}, 567-568.
\textsuperscript{70} Singer, \textit{Corporate Warriors}," 118, 117-118.
\textsuperscript{71} Singer, \textit{Corporate Warriors}," 105. UN Protection Force for the Former Yugoslavia.
are not a sort of moral crusading white legion that goes about the world knocking off the bad
guys.”

He founded the company on five basic operating principals: “we only work for
legitimate governments; we will do nothing illegal, even for those governments; we will do
nothing against key Western nations’ foreign polices; we apply first world standards to all our
military work, including respect for human rights; and we ensure client confidentiality.”

Despite these high sounding words, Sandline’s first contract in Papua New Guinea (PNG)
brought the company negative press coverage internationally, and Spicer’s captivity by elements
of the PNG government did not bode well for the future of either the company or the idea of
PMCs. The employment of EO personnel in PNG coupled with Spicer’s close dealings with
Buckingham belies any argument that Sandline and EO were not connected. 

Whatever those
connections, Sandline clearly intended to pickup where EO left off in Sierra Leone.

Kabbah, still in exile, officially hired Sandline in July 1997 to train and equip some
40,000 Kamajors, to develop and implement a plan to retake the capital, and to coordinate this
with some 20,000 primarily Nigerian ECOMOG troops at Lungi. Additionally, Sandline also
contracted to provide air support and intelligence. Although hired directly by Kabbah,
Sandline’s actual paymaster was Rakesh Saxena’s Jupiter mining company, which was
developing business interests in Sierra Leone in conjunction with Kabbah’s government. Saxena
was then based in Vancouver Canada and fighting extradition to Thailand. In the fall of 1997,
Sandline acquired Lifeguard Security, then securing the Sierra Rutile and Kono mines in Sierra
Leone. In late 1997 or early 1998 Sandline received $1.5 million of a promised $10 million from
Saxena and began operations. However, Saxena was arrested in Canada on passport charges and
Sandline put up $3.5 million for arms and equipment meant for the Kamajors out of the

73 Al J. Venter, “Resurgent Dogs of War: The Market for Military Skills, As Merc Work Goes Corporate,” Soldier of
Fortune, Vol. 28, No. 5, (May, 2003), 70.

74 Spicer, An Unorthodox Soldier, 21.

75 Venter doubts Sandline’s claim of no connection as early as 1998, however Spicer admits to a close connection to
company's own funds. Sandline then shipped some 35 tons of weapons to Sierra Leone, which were impounded by ECOMOG in Freetown's harbor.

Throughout 1997 and into early 1998, Spicer claims that Sandline's and Lifeguard's helicopters flew in support of ECOMOG. These were flown and crewed by Juba Joubert, Neil Ellis, and Fred Marafono among others, all of whom had previously worked for or closely with EO in Sierra Leone and Angola. Sandline planned to use these helicopters, advisory teams, and the shipped arms to aid ECOMOG and the Kamajors in retaking Freetown. However, due to Saxena's jailing, which resulted in Kabbah canceling all contracts with him, coupled with the lack of payment, Spicer claims the Sandline was not involved in the final assault on February 18, 1998. Instead Spicer, having lost his own money and concerned his company would not be paid, gave the helicopters to Ellis and Joubert in lieu of wages. The two men continued to fly them for ECOMOG, and Spicer essentially attempted to wash his hands of the whole deal.

However, David Francis suggests that while ECOMOG can be credited with the retaking of Freetown, Sandline played a vital role in the assault and the restoration of civil government. Musah concurs, claiming that some 200 Sandline mercenaries were involved in the fight for Freetown. Singer also suggests that Sandline was instrumental in aiding the return of Kabbah to power. Regardless of the extent of Sandline's involvement, Kabbah returned on March 10, 1998, quickly supplanted much of the RSLMF with Kamajors, and the RUF returned to the

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77 Spicer, An Unorthodox Soldier, 192-202. Fred Rosen suggests, probably quite wisely, that Spicer's account should be accepted only carefully. He states that "like any good mercenary, "Spicer's history" is open to interpretation." Fred Rosen, Contract Warriors: How Mercenaries Changed History and the War on Terrorism, New York: Alpha, 2005, 7.
78 Francis, "Mercenary Intervention in Sierra Leone," 328.
80 Singer, Corporate Warriors," 115.
hinterland, retaking many of the mining areas and drawing support from Liberia. The situation, it seems, returned to some semblance of the status quo.

Internationally, however, the idea of PMCs necessarily became a focus—if only temporarily. When the story regarding Sandline’s involvement in Sierra Leone, especially the shipment of arms in support of the Kamajors, appeared in the press the British government found itself in a tough position. The rub came over whether or not Sandline had violated UN resolution 1132 disallowing arms shipments to Sierra Leone. It soon became painfully obvious that the British government knew of, and thus tacitly supported, Sandline’s efforts. Britain behaved this way because it wanted to showcase its new ethical policy, and thus was unable to deal with the Nigerian dictatorship directly. Further, it had publicly supported Kabbah, and therefore his efforts to return to Sierra Leone. Sandline made much of the British governmental involvement public to shore up its corporate image, already hit hard by the PNG affair. Thus, “Britain now found itself in the position of having taken a morally sound action illegally and so being unable to defend it publicly.” According to Spicer, in a case of the government wanting it both ways, meaning plausible deniability, London turned on Sandline despite the UN finding that the company had not violated Resolution 1132. While Sandline, despite its high goals, achieved little militarily on the ground compared to its predecessor, its success internationally brought the issue of PMCs briefly to the forefront. The UN acknowledged that the company had not broken any laws, despite Britain’s accusations. Sandline demonstrated the ability to use and control the

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81 Avant, The Market for Force, 94. Avant states that while there remains disagreement over the extent of Sandline’s actual contribution to the retaking of Freetown, EO’s former contribution is much clearer regarding Sierra Leone.
82 United Nations, S/RES/1132 (1997), Security Council, October 8, 1997, http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/5880898.html. Paragraph 6 was the issue disputed stating “that all States shall prevent the sale or supply to Sierra Leone, by their nationals or from their territories, or using their flag vessels or aircraft, of ... weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment, paramilitary equipment and spare parts for the aforesaid.”
84 Arnold, Mercenaries,” 138.
85 Spicer, An Unorthodox Soldier, 203-223. For Spicer the UN finding was correct as it is inane to think that the ban included the democratically elected government in exile. Douglas supports Spicer’s assertion. Douglas, “Chapter 9: Fighting for Diamonds—Private Military Companies in Sierra Leone,” 193-194.
press better than the British government. Finally, Sandline survived the debacle intact, demonstrating that the modern corporate military provider had truly come of age.

Conclusion:

Sierra Leone provides the ideal case study when attempting to understand the evolution of the modern corporate military provider from its roots in both the freelance mercenaries of the latter half of the twentieth-century and the early development of PSCs. Initially, companies such as GSG avoided providing direct involvement in combat to clients due to fear of a market backlash, an unwillingness to take casualties, and a lack of proactive corporate image building. EO redirected these factors and developed corporate military offerings as both plausible and largely accepted. Despite its humble beginnings at Soyo, Angola, EO learned its lessons—especially that of creating its own image in the international press, and, except for the past of its founders and many of its personnel's history in the apartheid era of South Africa, it would almost certainly be in business yet. EO also proved its capability in combat and its willingness to absorb casualties, establishing both as hallmarks of a successful private military provider. EO’s success spawned a number of companies; most notably the British based Sandline International which pursued a somewhat less successful contract in Sierra Leone. Although stung by repeated setbacks, Sandline survived the firestorm and emerged hailed as a founder of modern military providers. Whether or not EO’s and Sandline’s efforts amount to increased international legitimacy for PMCs will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter IV
The Application of Theory: The gain of legitimacy in the Sierra Leone case

Within the rapidly changing international scene in the final decade of the twentieth century, PMCs developed as one key expression. The PMC Executive Outcomes (EO) formed the premier example, while GSG indicates a starting point and Sandline International an end point of sorts all within the context of Sierra Leone. Globalization, a complete reordering of international society along neoliberal lines, laid the groundwork for a resurgence of mercenaries. PMCs developed within that framework and as such mirrored many of its values especially private authority, the central axis around which the larger changes revolved. These two then form the basis for the claim that PMCs gained significant international legitimacy and that this gain can be traced directly to events in Sierra Leone, especially the development and employment of EO. While this is not an argument that PMCs are now completely legitimate security actors on the world stage, it is an argument that Sierra Leone’s experience represents the transformative point from freelance mercenaries to modern security actors with a significantly higher legitimacy standing.

Globalization, PMCs, and Sierra Leone:

The permissive conditions for the rise of PMCs in Sierra Leone were created by Western ambivalence toward both mercenaries and Africa. The UN had worked to create a strong anti-mercenary norm since 1960. However, UN member states showed little enthusiasm for the effort. For example the UN’s International Convention Against The Recruitment, Use, Financing, and Training of Mercenaries was only adopted by the General Assembly in 1989, and only received the minimum of votes needed for ratification in 2001. The difficulty stems
from the unwillingness of major powers to sign primarily because such security providers are convenient tools of both foreign policy and, at times, internal control.\(^1\) Lesser powers such as Angola, Congo, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are signatories and have domestic laws against mercenaries, but also hire them. Moreover, the UN’s efforts were stymied by the development of a more corporate style mercenary activity, and by the lack of effective mechanisms and political support to administer or enforce such a ban.\(^2\) Finally, the urgency of the issues on the ground confound the slow moving UN and drove struggling countries such as Sierra Leone into the waiting arms of private companies.\(^3\)

Regional conditions were also permissive for the rise of mercenary activity in Sierra Leone. South Africa’s reaction, or lack thereof, to EO’s development and deployments in Angola and Sierra Leone is one example. South Africa was not, and indeed could not have been, ignorant of EO or its activities. All of EO’s manpower came from South Africa. EO employees went there while on vacation, they were taken there when wounded or sick for treatment, and they were buried there when killed. EO’s Boeing 727 flew countless supply, medical evacuation, and general transport missions between South African airports and Angola and Sierra Leone. There was nothing clandestine about EO’s activities and it in fact sought attention in the international press. Thus, South Africa either approved, or at the least did not disapprove of EO’s activities. Al Venter rightly suggests that South Africa allowed EO such freedom in order to repay an old debt and to protect itself. The African National Congress (ANC) was allied with the MPLA throughout its fight against apartheid—and apartheid South Africa supported UNITA’s efforts in opposition to the MPLA run Angolan government. By allowing EO to aid the MPLA, the new South African government functionally paid the MPLA back for past

support. Secondly, allowing EO to employ so many former apartheid era Special Forces—
deactivated either willingly or unwillingly—kept these former soldiers busy and out of the
country during the fragile early years of the post-apartheid regime. Thus, they were less likely to
be recruited into an opposition faction in South Africa where they would have constituted a
potent military and political threat to the newly reordered state.  

Sierra Leone was also a microcosm of the effect of these permissive conditions—the rich
and powerful individuals benefited at the cost of the suffering poor. Neoliberalism and its
accompanying privatization trend have limited the options of states, especially in the South, to
control, limit, direct, and otherwise engage in their own social and economic development.
Elites in such states have capitalized on this development to expand and centralize their own
wealth and power. This resulted in a drift toward anarchy and civil war as disaffected
populations sought to improve their existence in the face of corrupt governments and a lack of
access to resources. The state continues to exist, but the majority of its authority is in private
hands. Correspondingly, the use of force also devolves to private entities in the absence of a
strong and representative state authority. Violence, then, for these internal private entities
becomes a means to wealth, not a necessary evil to protect the citizenry. Thus, security
developed into a market good available only to those who can afford it. The privatization of
security in Africa is the “most extreme manifestation of a global trend turning toward sources of
private authority.”  

All this leads to a delegitimization of the state.  

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authority and legitimacy to look PMCs for help. With the West and the UN apathetic about conditions in Sierra Leone, such elements had little option if the state in any form was to be saved.

Demand for mercenaries arises precisely because of these permissive conditions. Already in 1968 Sierra Leone was experiencing increasing problems with illegal diamond mining. The slump in mineral prices worldwide in the 1970s drove the state to near bankruptcy with disastrous political and economic results including the loss of traditional lifestyles and values and the urbanization and radicalization of the youth. The latter proved divisive in a society further divided and radicalized by refugees from the Liberian civil war and internal disorder. Sankoh was influenced by radicals in both Liberia and Libya, responding to the residual effects of decolonization, deregulation, globalization, and the end of the Cold War. The RUF capitalized on the disintegrating state and its inability to provide security by ‘cornering the market’ in illegal mining. This further radicalized elements of the RSLMF leading to the Sobels phenomena and Stevens’ reduction of the army as a political threat. Amplified insecurity brought about a precipitous drop in mining revenues as the state was increasingly unable to secure the mining sites, and the RUF made concerted efforts to drive the companies out. The loss of revenue furthered the collapse of state authority and legitimacy at the local level—internationally, no one seemed to notice. Thus, within Sierra Leone warfare came to concern survival, not ideologies, cultural considerations, or political affiliation.

In Sierra Leone there was also a clear demand for security at the state level by those who wish to benefit from the exploitation of the state’s natural resources. Additionally, there existed those in Sierra Leone concerned at least as much, if not more, with the survival of the state as with lining their own pockets. Maada Bio, who did allow democratic elections even though he came to power through a coup, and Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, the democratically elected president, provide arguable examples. Bio saw the military usefulness of EO and sought to privatize many
state functions to remove them from the control of appointed state officials, and thus limit or break the cycle of the patronage system. Kabbah, although he was limited by the rising influence of the Kamajors and the RSLMF’s efforts to retain control of the state, used EO as a shield against the influence of such entities in his effort to establish a government free of the vestiges of the patronage system. Arguably, such leaders are often corrupted by the opportunities offered by neoliberal economic policies in a globalized world, but without a state in place it is difficult for such individuals to realize either illicit profits or personal survival.

While the hiring of mercenaries can be viewed as inhibiting or infringing on the state’s rightful monopoly of force, in the case of Sierra Leone the state could not have survived to the benefit of either the elite or the common people without outside help. Further, the international investment necessary to make mining profitable, and to fill state coffers, would not be made in an insecure environment. The catch then is that portions of state power—specifically the monopoly on the use of force—must be abandoned in order to maintain even a shadow of the state itself. Without such a move Sierra Leone would have disappeared. In hiring PMCs the state essentially forced international mining companies to pay for their own security, and in EO’s case, this provided the opportunity to strengthen the government and allow it to step outside the patronage system. The cost of such a decision, both in state legitimacy and in mining concessions was high; however, the consequences of inaction would have been devastating as well. Thus, there was a clear demand for security by Sierra Leone’s government and its populace. Further, this demand included international mining companies seeking access to extractable resources. This demand could not be met domestically either by the national army, nor the traditional defenders found in the Kamajors. The RUF, unlike many other rebel

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organizations, was also not offering security, rather the opposite, in its search for loot, the withdrawal of foreign mining firms, and the disruption of the entire country.

Globalization, the end of the Cold War, and the privatization trend—the same forces that created the permissive conditions and the demand for security—also created the supply of mercenary soldiers. GSG, EO, and Sandline all depended on the availability of deactivated Cold War professional soldiers desperate for meaningful, and lucrative, employment. These soldiers came from Western militaries, the British deactivation of the Gurkhas, and post-apartheid South Africa. In each case people were let go and left to fend for themselves. Many of these former soldiers, especially in South Africa, threatened security at home unless suitable employment could be found for them. The means of warfare were, and largely continue to be, available on an international market flooded with post-Cold War (mostly Eastern Bloc) weapons. These range from assault rifles through tanks, infantry fighting vehicles such as Soviet BMPs, helicopters, jet fighters and bombers, to include heavy lift aircraft—all of which were employed by EO in Sierra Leone. EO rarely purchased its own weapons as most could be easily and cheaply provided by the host country which only lacked the experienced operators and the tactics to employ them effectively. In Sierra Leone this supply was coupled with mineral wealth which promised not only the availability of the tools of war, but also the high probability of a paycheck in the end.

Anna Leander goes so far as to suggest that once jumpstarted by the permissive conditions, the existence of demand, and a supply of soldiers the PMCs will create a perpetual market for their services. She criticizes EO and Sandline for the clever selling of their own particular brand of security services to countries that may or may not need them. Such an argument may play out in the long run, but in the transitional case of Sierra Leone the demand condition neatly coincided with the supply side amid the overall permissive conditions to allow a foothold for companies ready and willing to profit in a dangerous security environment

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Private Authority, PMCs, and Sierra Leone:

EO moved mercenaries from scattered individuals who claimed authority based on their crusade against communism in Africa during the Cold War, to corporations with significant private authority based on neoliberal market ideals. The company claimed to provide a military service for profit, not on humanitarian grounds. In Sierra Leone, EO took up the authority voluntarily abandoned by the state and ran the war to an extent not seen even in its experience in Angola. In doing so the company exercised that authority directly at the request of the state—indeed even in the state's pay. Further, EO stayed, ostensibly, out of politics and served the state in whatever form it took. This was tempered somewhat by EO’s training of the Kamajors to the exclusion of state forces, an effort which Kabbah approved of, but which Bio decidedly did not. In doing so EO demonstrated the exercise of authority outside of the state’s purview and, arguably, not in its best interest. EO pioneered much in the way a PMC shouldered such authority and how such companies implement it. EO clearly controlled and molded the market within Sierra Leone, which had effects outside the company itself and indeed outside the country. EO’s method became the model which Sandline built on.

Within the context of Sierra Leone, EO also developed cooperation both with the government and with other companies working in Sierra Leone. In doing so EO really pioneered a new way of providing security services which was outside the norm of the industry at the time. GSG recognized the non-combat norm when it pulled out of Sierra Leone after Mackenzie’s death and due to the expectation of the government that the company would not only train the RSLMF, but spearhead it in combat as well. EO worked closely with Lifeguard as the company guarded the mining facilities EO had ‘liberated.’ While the precise connections between EO and many of the companies in Sierra Leone are not clear—meaning whether or not they represented branches of the same tree or completely separate entities—cooperation was demonstrated
nonetheless. Additionally, EO forged links with the international mining companies active in Sierra Leone, although some argue that these links existed prior to EO's debut at Soyo. Later, Sandline more clearly demonstrated links with mining concerns prior to its employment by Kabbah. However, in all three cases the companies worked closely with others in their industry, the mining industry, and the state. In doing so they built a measure of private authority founded in the cooperation with other companies and the united front these private entities presented to state authorities. Sierra Leone did not negotiate with, nor benefit from, any one company outside of its context within the larger group. EO's provision of security was of little use to Sierra Leone if it did not allow and encourage outside investment. It did so because EO knew and cooperated with other companies also interested in doing business with Sierra Leone.

Another hallmark of private authority is institutionalization. It is difficult to measure how much EO's authority was institutionalized in Sierra Leone especially because EO was breaking new ground in the provision of combat services. However, there was necessarily some institutionalization as evidenced by the consensus among EO's critics that the company created a permanent environment of securitization which continued even after its departure. Sandline's explicit attempt to institute a model of combat provision based on EO's example failed largely due to its own bungling and the loss of British support, yet Sandline's emulation of EO speaks to institutionalization. EO acted with authority on behalf of the Sierra Leonean government, developed cooperation and expert status within that context, and some level of institutionalization of private authority took place in the process.

Several observers divide private authority into moral and illicit categories. Throughout EO's time in Sierra Leone it remained committed to the state as an entity despite internal changes within the state; yet, EO gained considerable moral authority with the populace as evidenced by its clear social acceptance in areas the company operated in. This argument is tempered by EO's training of the Kamajors, which was clearly not in the interest of the
government or its sub-mission of training the RSLMF, but was critical to its success in defeating the RUF. Additionally, EO clearly did not demonstrate neutrality as it operated at the behest of the state and in a manner which served its own interests, especially the development of international acceptance and legitimacy for modern PMCs. Despite these exceptions, EO did gain and display moral authority even according to the arguments of observers who argue PMCs are examples of illicit authority.

One reason to place PMCs in the illicit category is for violating international and domestic norms against non-state organized violence. However, these norms were initially challenged internally by the RUF, and externally by international complacency and apathy, even more so by Britain's encouragement of Sandline's efforts and the UN's clearing them of violating UN sanctions. Additionally, while GSG followed non-combat norms within the industry, EO was clearly pushing a new set of norms allowing combat based on its formative experience at Soyo, the following operations in Angola, and its efforts in Sierra Leone. While EO did exercise private authority through violence, it clearly did so at the behest of the state. This is not an argument that PMCs are moral, as opposed to illicit, authority per se, only that they cannot be simply or generally categorized as the latter. Whatever the category, it is clear that EO developed private authority in Sierra Leone.

Even if Janet Thomson's three dimensions of control—decision making authority, allocation, and ownership—are considered EO did not undercut or eliminate Sierra Leone's authority. While EO clearly exercised authority in controlling the war effort, its contract with the state specified joint command of RSLMF forces. EO further chose to employ, train, and equip Kamajors as being in the best interest of defeating the RUF, a decision accepted largely due to EO's expert status. EO also reorganized the RSLMF to include intelligence gathering capability, supply and transport corps, communications, and reversed its drug and alcohol policy. Granted, while doing so EO pursued its own hearts and minds campaign aimed at its own
legitimacy, and ran a media campaign independent of Sierra Leone and with the same goal in mind. In those pursuits EO exercised its own authority as a private non-state entity. Within that context, and within the context of globalization, such actions carry no negative connotations, and EO's main effort remained to benefit its employer. Further, EO left when asked which lends credence to its claim to be a contract based enterprise. While EO largely directed the war, it is difficult to see this as an intrusion on state authority because it was contractually authorized to do so. Finally, EO owned little in the way of military hardware, it had no standing army or equipment roster, thus ownership of the means of warfare remained with the state.

Thus, EO's private authority was derived from filling a market niche—expertise in military matters especially at the tactical level—which aimed to make the country safe for state building and capital investment to allow the state to provide public goods such as security. As Van den Berg, an EO executive clarified EO's position by bluntly stating: "We are a commercial venture. We are not an aid agency." EO provided combat and combat support to a state in need. Had Sierra Leone not needed its services there would have been no reason to hire EO. Thus, for EO, its contractual activity in Sierra Leone was not an ideological fight—besides the idea, which Sandline later made much use of, that it only fought for legitimate governments.

Thus, the evidence strongly suggests that EO developed significant private authority while operating in Angola and especially Sierra Leone. The company exercised this authority initially at the behest of the state, but expanded its own agenda—and ultimately that of Sierra Leone—through developing cooperation, expert status, institutionalization, and control of the war. Although EO exercised this authority, it did not threaten either the state's authority over, or ownership of, the physical means of violence. Further, the fact that EO left Sierra Leone when asked even prior to the completion of the contract speaks to the point that the PMC was not a

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9 Arnold, "Mercenaries," 118.
threat to the state itself. In this sense EO exercised legitimate, even moral, authority while under contract in Sierra Leone.

**Legitimacy, PMCs, and Sierra Leone:**

In Sierra Leone EO and Sandline demonstrated a significant rise in the legitimacy of PMCs internationally in the final decades of the twentieth century. Key to this claim is the acceptance of PMCs as security actors by the major players on the international scene including the UN, the West, and specific Southern states including Sierra Leone. Even transnational and domestic civil societies grudgingly accept these actors, on practical if not moral grounds. Within the international media, the debate concerning PMCs continues, a key indicator that PMCs occupy an accepted—if debated—slot as security actors. This is not an argument that PMCs are completely legitimate actors on par with states; rather it is an argument that PMCs have gained significant legitimacy within the context of a neoliberal globalized world as depicted by Sierra Leone’s experience.

In Sierra Leone, the state did not lose power as much as share it with an international market actor for a period of time. One key concern is that the state will be lost in the face of the rise of private security actors. However, most observers agree that the state’s legitimacy as an international actor—though often identified as resting on its control of force—is not threatened by the rise of PMCs. As Deborah D. Avant correctly observes, the result is not the loss of the state, but a morphing or changing of the state into a competitor within the international market.¹⁰

In this context, Sierra Leone clearly accepted EO as a legitimate actor. Sierra Leone’s government hired EO, depended on it and accepted its advice, gave it joint control of the armed forces and great leeway in implementing strategies and fighting the war, and finally paid

financial debt owed the company. The international community also accepted EO as an actor. This is most glaringly demonstrated by the IMF’s insistence that Sierra Leone pay EO even after the company had left the country.\textsuperscript{11}

While the West does not overtly recognize mercenary companies, its continued use of them, more, and more openly, lent some legitimacy to the company’s efforts. The West initially ignored the employment of EO in Sierra Leone which at the least represents tacit approval, at the worst apathy. The UN acted in a similar manner; although it was not invited into Sierra Leone due in part to EO’s presence, it nonetheless did nothing while EO was there, again suggesting tacit approval.\textsuperscript{12} Formerly, states intentionally ignored mercenary activity, or supported it only covertly. EO left Angola in part due to US pressure on the Angolan government to shed itself of the company. However, that pressure was intended not to end a mercenary scourge, rather to make way for the employment of MPRI, an American company. Competition rather than condemnation is a more effective strategy in a globalized world driven by neoliberal economic strategies. This also suggests a stronger than tacit acceptance of PMCs as legitimate actors, at least by the US.

The international community and the UN were aware of EO’s activities in Sierra Leone representing a significant shift from the earlier policy of seeking plausible deniability. EO made no secret of its actions and neither did Sandline. While tacit approval of PMCs certainly does not equate to outright legitimacy, it does indicate something more that illegitimacy, or at least a move in that direction.

The Sandline case furthers the argument that states had come to at least tacitly accept PMCs. Spicer clearly and overtly intended to take up where EO left off both in Sierra Leone and

\textsuperscript{12} Guy Arnold argues that nothing has really changed in this regard since the 1960s except that states and international business now hire mercenaries more openly. That is, however, a major change. Arnold, \textit{"Mercenaries,"} 147-149.
in EO's efforts to legitimize PMCs. For him, this represented a 'full run' at legitimacy, a concept he never doubted personally, but one which he thought the world needed to be convinced of.\textsuperscript{13} For Arnold "the intervention of Sandline demonstrated, once more, the gaining influence and determination of the new 1990s mercenary organizations, and their capacity to intertwine their activities with governments in their efforts to obtain legitimate standing."\textsuperscript{14} While Sandline failed to achieve complete legitimacy in any sense of the word, its victory over the British government suggests a measure of success. As Ian Douglas points out, it proved easier for Kabbah to divest his country of the services of both EO and Sandline than of the dubious services of the Nigerian State. In the case of Sierra Leone, PMCs proved the less costly and less burdensome allies than states.

Considering transnational and domestic civil societies, the commodification of security as a phenomenon itself lends PMCs legitimacy, even in the eyes of INGOs such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). For the ICRC, Sierra Leone proved a key testing ground of its refusal to deal with mercenaries no matter the situation. EO helped aid agencies through helicopter transport and security. This is significant because the ICRC had stated to Venter in late 1995, that it was "opposed to their [EO mercenaries] presence in Sierra Leone." Further, while refusing to accept EO proffered transport of food and medical supplies to starving villagers, the representative stated that "mercenaries are unacceptable for any reason."\textsuperscript{15} Even

\textsuperscript{13} Spicer, \textit{An Unorthodox Soldier}, passim.
\textsuperscript{14} Arnold, "\textit{Mercenaries}," 145.
\textsuperscript{15} Al J. Venter, "Not RUF Enough: Mere Army Routs Rebel Anarchists in Sierra Leone," \textit{Soldier of Fortune}, Vol. 20, No. 12, (December, 1995), 33-34. At the time Venter was searching for Mackenzie's body because his wife was having trouble with the life insurance company as they had no proof of death. During their meeting the ICRC official not only refused to help locate Mackenzie's body, but passed on a message directly from Sankoh that "anyone even making inquires about these mercenaries will be hunted down and killed." Key is that as EO secured more of the country and pushed the RUF further into the hinterland, the ICRC apparently dropped some of its reservations about the company and began accepting the offered transport of supplies. Their earlier reluctance may have stemmed from direct RUF threats of retaliation.
though aid agencies were increasingly availing themselves of EO transportation and protection, the international community “expressed its disgust about the activities of the mercenaries.”

Initially, the ICRC refused all cooperation with EO, even when it meant an inability to move aid to remote parts of the country due either to a lack of transport capability, dangerous conditions on the ground, or both. However, despite its continued negative rhetoric about EO, the ICRC increasingly accepted aid from the company both in helicopter transport, and in grudgingly admitting that EO’s presence made dispensing aid to civilians caught between the government and the RUF possible. This was aided by EO’s development of local social legitimacy which resulted from both its military victories over the RUF, and the PMC’s effective and directed hearts and minds campaign. In a globalized world governed by neoliberal economic strategies, security services bought and paid for become a bitterly acceptable commodity, even for international aid organizations.

For the local civil society in Sierra Leone the choice was less ideological and more connected with immediate survival. This is evidenced by EO’s Rolf van Heerden’s status as a hero among Sierra Leoneans for simply driving out the exploitive RUF. Heerden, who commanded one of EO’s battle groups, after securing the Koidu diamond mining area, became a local celebrity and de-facto mayor. He played the role of “arbiter, military commander, lawyer, administrator, mediator, facilitator and judge.” He concentrated his efforts on rebuilding the area and the infrastructure as soon as his men secured it from rebel occupation. Heerden claimed that EO did not engage in illegal diamond smuggling “EO... was there to protect people [and]... has an image to protect. If he or his officers were to sully that commitment, ‘then you

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16 Ian Douglas, “Chapter 9: Fighting for Diamonds—Private Military Companies in Sierra Leone,” in Peace, Profit or Plunder? The Privatization of Security in War-torn African Societies, Jackkie Cilliers and Peggy Mason eds., South Africa: Institute of Security Studies, 1999, 186. In response to Venter’s direct question as to whether or not EO employed mercenaries, Luitingh stated “call them what you like—mercenaries, profiteers, soldiers of fortune, or simply soldiers—Executive Outcomes is a very professional organization.” At the time, 1995, EO was still maintaining that their role in Sierra Leone was primarily training, although Luitingh stated that they were capable of defending themselves. Venter, “Not RUF Enough,” 76.

17 Venter, “Not RUF Enough,” 33-34.

start to think like a rebel, especially when people around us believe in what we are trying to do here." Heerden stressed that illegal diamond mining went on and that it certainly was a quick way to line one's pockets, but that was not why EO was there. He stated that "we can’t have the men getting interested in that kind of business. There would be trouble for sure in the end and we would lose the trust of these folks. They respect us and I want to keep it that way." This example demonstrates EO’s commitment to building local social legitimacy.

Other evidence includes the local support afforded to the Kamajors—and to EO because of its close working relationship with them and its success against the RUF—which indicates a key acceptance of the company among the local population. Overall this implies an increasing acceptance among civil society, both locally and internationally, of the actions of successful PMCs.

The ongoing debate within the international media also points to an acceptance of PMCs as security actors. EO recognized this debate early and sought to exploit the world press to bolster its legitimacy. During the Soyo operation, Barlow did something quite atypical of past mercenaries, he called a press conference. Jim Hooper argues this was only to counter the bad press. However, Venter, another war correspondent who spent time with EO, claimed that Barlow invited the media to Cabinda, EO’s operations base for the Soyo operation, for a show and tell, even flying select reporters into Soyo, which was a step beyond simply publishing press releases. Usually mercenaries avoided the press completely. Barlow was clearly working to craft EO’s image in the international press.

In one example EO invited the press to view successful operations, and even delayed military operations to await the arrival of preferred correspondents such as Venter. Heerden, in

19 Ibid., 530.
20 Ibid., 531.
1995, held up a planned attack waiting for Venter—one of two international journalists that EO trusted enough to grant access to its inner-sanctum and combat units—to arrive.\(^{22}\) He did this on orders of EO’s local commander Andy Brown who was responding to the orders of Luitingh—thus the order came from the top and represented official EO policy. Luitingh held the opinion that EO needed “more media mileage,”\(^{23}\) at a time when EO’s international image increasingly mattered. This stems in part from an increasing presence of foreigners among the rebels as evidenced by clean and well organized camps near captured villages and faculties which seemed to contradict the evidence of destruction, slaughter, animist practices found in many liberated villages.\(^{24}\) Additionally, it also stems from an ongoing media campaign in which EO strove to present itself as a legitimate actor within African international relations.

Even the rightwing press, represented by *Soldier of Fortune* magazine, and including Venter himself, initially reacted negatively to EO’s activities. Venter claimed in a 1993 article that early reports suggested Barlow and his staff stranded employees and avoided the press. Further, reports of poor communications, support, medical evacuation, and intelligence belied later EO press releases and really suggested a rough start.\(^{25}\) Robert K. Brown interviewed a Soyo participant and reported that the operation was shoddy from the start. Most of the initial intake of recruits had little or no military training, and were given to understand they were to be non-combatants hired simply to clear a landing zone and advise FFA troopers. He concludes that

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\(^{22}\) Venter and Hooper were the only international journalists allowed behind the publicity screen set up by EO after Soyo. Some might argue that this was because of favorable reporting, however it had more to do with both men’s previous combat experience which increased the likelihood that they would both survive on the battlefield, and would understand the methodologies and practices of EO units in the field. Venter also worked with South African units in Angola supporting UNITA prior to 1994, so he was known to many of the men who led EO combat units. Importantly, Venter’s early reporting on EO was negative and forthright as exemplified by the *Soldier of Fortune* articles.

\(^{23}\) Venter, *War Dog*, 540.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 513-549, 550.

if EO did not lie to prospective employees, they certainly did not tell them the whole truth.\textsuperscript{26} He states that EO made a lot of money while paying the real fighters a mere pittance. Early on these reports contradicted EO’s efforts “to set the record straight about mercenaries fighting at Soyo.”\textsuperscript{27} What is telling is that initially right wing publications like \textit{Soldier of Fortune} clearly saw EO’s corporate approach as a hoodwinking of loyal South African anti-communist patriots into fighting for an ostensibly leftwing Marxist government in Angola, and “being duped into acting against their best political interests,”\textsuperscript{28} so that EO executives could make money.\textsuperscript{29}

However, over time and investigation that view evolved into a more positive one. Later, Venter’s account in \textit{Soldier of Fortune}, 1996, and his later work \textit{War Dog}, 2006, and Hooper’s \textit{Bloodsong!}, 2002, are supportive of EO as a good company with dedicated employees doing excellent work in Angola and Sierra Leone. Spicer and Sandline clearly recognized the critical importance of good press, and beat the British government both to and in the press regarding their involvement in Sierra Leone. Spicer, responding to humor at the expense of the British government in the Daily Telegraph stated that “When your company becomes part of a good joke, you know you are part of the established order.”\textsuperscript{30} While not outright legitimacy, it does indicate a growing acceptance of PMCs as security actors on the world stage.

Conclusion:

Overall, EO and Sandline in Sierra Leone are a transformative case in the legitimization of PMCs. The UN proved unable to outlaw mercenaries due to a lack of real state support and a general lack of Western interest in Africa. The privatization trend within globalization, coupled

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 79-80.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 62-65, 79-80.
\textsuperscript{30} Spicer, \textit{An Unorthodox Soldier}, 224-225. Spicer is referring to a spoof script for the British Army’s answering machine indicating British Army incompetence and suggesting that “if you are in real trouble, please press 3 and your problem will be rerouted to Sandline International.”
with poor states in which a wealthy few seek to capitalize on the lack of international interest, and where the majority see conflict as mainly about survival, produced the necessary permissive conditions and space for the development of a private security solution. The UN's own inability to generate results on the ground coupled with neoliberal economic patterns drove failing states such as Sierra Leone to look outside the traditional international process for help. That help was available primarily due to the end of the Cold War, Western military downsizing, and South Africa’s turn away from apartheid. Thus, globalization both created and sustained the key permissive conditions, supply, and demand which encouraged the growth of a market for modern PMCs.

With EO especially, but with Sandline as well, the growth of private authority can be demonstrated within the industry. The authority that EO exercised within Sierra Leone was accepted in that it came as a direct grant from the state. EO made great efforts—though not always successfully—to remain distant from the often confused and violent political situation in Sierra Leone. EO also engaged in norm development in the sense of pursuing combat as part of its corporate offering, and in doing so became pioneers of a sort. Within that context the private authority EO developed is surprisingly typical of corporations the world over. It developed cooperation with others in the industry, with the Sierra Leonean state, with elements of the international aid community, and within the company substructure as well. Much of the resulting authority was based on EO’s status as experts in the provision of competitive security services.

While the key indicator of institutionalization may be difficult to identify, the authority EO developed was arguably not illicit because EO provided a normative good—security—in the absence of the state’s ability to do so based on its expert status. EO borrowed the Sierra Leonean state’s inherent authority, but did not eclipse it; as is evidenced by EO’s exercising decision making authority and allocation, but not retaining ownership of the means of warfare. That
remained with the state. In this context the state became a competitor on the international market where the maintenance of access to its own resources is a key indicator of state stability. The development and exercise of private authority points to increased legitimacy for EO in the context of Sierra Leone and for PMCs in general in the wider context of the international market.

Looking at legitimacy directly, it is clear that Sierra Leone, as a state, accepted GSG, EO, and Sandline as a legitimate providers of security services. While the international community as a whole, exemplified primarily by the UN, did not overtly accept the company, they arguably tacitly did. Western states have long tacitly accepted mercenaries, and they increased the policy significantly regarding PMCs in Sierra Leone. Even transnational INGOs such as the ICRC came to tolerate, if not publicly accept, EO as a security provider if only for practical reasons. The local civil society within Sierra Leone also accepted EO and its provision of security. EO’s development of localized social legitimacy is further exemplified by the Kamajors who both helped, and were helped by, EO in the company’s efforts to defeat the RUF. EO also sought to create a legitimate image in the world press, and while its efforts fell short of universal acclamation, EO helped foster a debate. This debate is a key indicator of a growing legitimacy, especially considering that even the rightwing press, traditionally the friend of mercenaries, was initially quite skeptical. Sandline demonstrated the industry’s ongoing mastery of media imaging by winning a favorable ruling while in competition with the British state. Thus, legitimacy theory also supports the argument that PMC gained significant legitimacy both during EO’s time in Sierra Leone as well as in its aftermath.

Thus, although not fully legitimate or universally accepted EO and Sandline made great strides in legitimating themselves and by extension PMCs as security actors on the world stage. In doing so they transformed mercenary work from the freelance individuals fighting singular campaigns against communism for cash to an industry carefully filling a niche market in a globalized world.
Chapter V
The Aftermath of the Sierra Leone case: Continuing Debate

In the aftermath of Sierra Leone and the demise of Executive Outcomes (EO), a debate has evolved considering several aspects surrounding the implementation of private force in sovereign countries. This debate has centered on three central concepts. First, many observers have discounted EO and Sandline as simply the military arm of a neo-colonial movement bent on gaining access to the extractable resources of weak states. Second, a discussion of whether or not EO was successful in Angola and Sierra Leone. Finally, observers disagree regarding the wider effects and the future of PMCs in general, and the implications of private force in a globalized world in particular. EO's claim to legitimacy fundamentally suggests an African future in which private force will play a significant role; including the employment of PMCs willing to provide combat services to legitimate governments. In the final analysis mercenaries, through the development of PMCs in Sierra Leone, have indeed become something more than mercenaries.

PMCs, a Neo-Colonial Project?

Many observers characterize PMCs as simply one facilitator of a new colonization project. This arises because of the link these companies have with Western commercial interests, their apparent lack of long-term victories, and the commercialization of security. Resource extraction companies such as Branch-Energy appear to gain advantageous mineral concessions, and promote pro-PMC—pro-EO in the case of Sierra Leone—policies in the countries where they operate which leads to the permanent retention of foreign security personal. The cost, these
observers argue, is too high, including the militarization of Africa, the corrupting or co-opting of African leaders, and the mortgaging of state assets far into the future.¹

PMCs are, ostensibly, a cheaper, one-off, provider of security and an attractive alternative for weak states because hiring PMCs forces international entities like Branch Energy to pay for their own security, and lowers both the cost and political risk of maintaining national armies. However, the international companies, including PMCs, in collusion with the powerful elites within the state, exploit the natural resources of the country at the expense of the populace who only benefit from the security created by PMCs if in proximity to key locations.² Further, as a PMC establishes itself as the guarantor of security it detracts loyalty from the state and potentially creates a cycle by which it creates the very insecurity it is there to reduce and further necessitates its services. The trade-off is accepting a weakening of state institutions in exchange for survival. Whether or not PMCs weaken the state depends on who is asked. Critics argue that the elites within the state, who benefit from both the increased security and income, favor the presence of PMCs while others within the populace are not so sure.³

However, as was demonstrated earlier, it was the general populace within Sierra Leone that hailed EO as heroes and saviors, while the elites simply saw the company as a temporary, if expensive, tool in either their personal pursuit of power, or in securing the state from internal enemies and attracting foreign investment. While EO certainly did gather loyalty to itself in the sense of creating localized social legitimacy, loyalty to a failed state such as Sierra Leone is tenuous at best among its population, and is based more on security and survival than any abstract ideal such as nationalism. Additionally, globalization and increasing private authority

already produced a decentralization of the international order and the commercialization of national security in situations like Sierra Leone.

However, PMCs do not build states, but only fight wars and provide security on a contractual basis. The companies freely admit that hiring PMCs is only a temporary fix, but that the security provided allows the opportunity for the country to attract foreign investment, develop its own security operations, and ultimately provides the foundation for a competitive, secure, and prosperous state. In Sierra Leone’s case, Branch Energy’s investment allowed for expanded commerce which provided the opportunity for Sierra Leone to flourish. Further, even while EO protected the country in 1995-1996 Sierra Leone resisted Branch Energy’s attempts to acquire oil and maritime surveillance contracts due to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) insistence on a transparent bidding process. This suggests that Sierra Leone was not fully under the influence or control of multi-national companies.

Thus, the loss, ideally on a temporary basis, of a portion of the control of force is a necessary evil to ensure state survival and competitiveness internationally. Without EO Sierra Leone would have collapsed completely, and, critically, the company did leave when asked, which suggests a less than cynical evaluation of its motives and belies arguments that PMCs are a part of a larger neo-colonial plot.

EO’s presence in Sierra Leone allowed Kabbah to bypass the traditional patronage system and establish an independent government. It limited the RSLMF’s interference in politics, which had plagued Sierra Leone’s government at least since the coups of the 1960s. This positive result was not without costs such as arming the Kamajors, and thus the creation of yet another armed group within Sierra Leone. However, the defeat of the RUF, the resulting peace accord, and the increase in international investment and commerce suggest that William Reno’s cost

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benefit analysis\textsuperscript{6} may be correct and that EO was removed prematurely. As he suggests, aid groups were able to function effectively under EO's protection, and indeed even with the company's help. Finally, under the conditions imposed by a globalized economy based on neoliberal values and conditions, this may be the only way for countries like Sierra Leone to survive, much less flourish.

\textbf{EO's Success: What is a reasonable expectation of PMCs?}

This discussion centers on differing understandings of what can, and indeed should, be expected of PMCs. Ultimately, a PMC's success or failure can only be evaluated on whether or not it fulfilled the terms of its contract, and not on the more abstract evaluations of the net impact of the phenomena. The latter question is certainly valid and of great importance, but it is not useful in understanding EO's success or failure in Sierra Leone.

Many observers accept that EO was successful on the battlefield in both Angola and Sierra Leone, yet they temper this observation by suggesting that while the company did drive the RUF to the bargaining table, it only did so with the aid of the Kamajors which it trained, supplied and supported. The main concerns center on EO's not addressing the underlying "fundamental political and socioeconomic issues that prompted the conflict"\textsuperscript{7} in the first place.\textsuperscript{8} However, it is not clear at all that EO promised more than a military solution to the RUF problem, the training of Sierra Leone's military, and the provision of security for foreign investment—all of which EO delivered. EO officers as gave the Kamajors their full due stating that "they would never have been able to do it without us—their planning and support. On the

\textsuperscript{8} Brayton "Outsourcing War," 324.
other hand, we couldn't have done it without them."^{9} EO intentionally looked to the Kamajors for their knowledge of the jungle, their position outside the political system, and their effectiveness as fighters especially when compared to the RSLMF.

Others suggest that EO did not broker the peace because it had no tools to do so, or mechanisms to sustain it after it was accomplished.\(^{10}\) However, EO did not claim to offer such solutions and made every attempt to remain outside the political aspects of the situation. EO was mandated to force the RUF to the table, not broker a peace agreement—that was supposed to be the job of Ivory Coast, the British Commonwealth, and the UN.\(^{11}\)

Yet others question whether EO-provided security was worth the cost considering its transient nature and the potential impact of mineral concessions and outside investment on Sierra Leone’s financial future.\(^{12}\) Therefore, EO was really engaged in providing a secure environment for mining companies. The company effectively manipulated Sierra Leone’s government—even threatening to withdraw if not paid on time—to its own ends of perpetuating the conflict and gaining concessions for its affiliated companies.\(^{13}\) While EO was certainly connected with companies like Branch Energy which benefited from the security that EO created within Sierra Leone, EO’s real concern was the successful completion of its contract. There is no evidence that EO received direct payments for the concessions gained by the mining industry,\(^{14}\) yet the concessions did directly benefit EO. Sierra Leone, without the influx of cash provided by companies such as Branch Energy and gained from the revitalization of legal mining activities, would have been unable to pay its bill to EO. Thus, if EO failed in completing the terms of its contract it would make no money and, as its founders clearly stated, that was the reason the

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10 Francis, “Mercenary Intervention in Sierra Leone,” 330.
13 Francis, “Mercenary Intervention in Sierra Leone,” 331-333.
14 Shearer, Private Armies and Military Intervention,” 52.
company was there in the first place. EO’s threat to withdraw is ample evidence of where its interests lay; they lay in making money providing security, not in mineral concessions. Further, the IMF supported Sierra Leone’s payments to EO because it recognized the need for security to attract investment.\footnote{Shearer, Private Armies and Military Intervention, 53.}

EO’s efforts in Sierra Leone clearly saved the country from the RUF as a military threat and are linked directly to the RUF’s willingness to negotiate a peace agreement. The company further bolstered the strategic position of the country’s military forces regarding future uprisings. Critically, EO’s presence made democratic elections possible in a country fraught with divisions and strife. On the humanitarian side, the company facilitated the return of more than one million people to their homes. As mentioned in the previous chapter, much of EO’s success depended on efficient military and training operations bolstered by the effective employment of advanced technology and organizational skills.\footnote{Shearer, Private Armies and Military Intervention, 51-54.} This is what Sierra Leone hired the company to do, and this, by all accounts, the company did well.

When the above discussion is coupled with the evidence already presented in previous chapters, a picture develops of a successful company applying time tested business models to creating a positive image for itself as a security provider in Africa. Few observers disagree that EO was a military success on the ground, or that the company did not benefit Sierra Leone at least in the short-term. The divergence appears when looking at the larger picture, and the long-term effects of Sierra Leone’s employment of PMCs. While such a discussion is important, it is misleading when applied to evaluations of EO’s success. The attempt to attribute failure based on EO’s inability to achieve lasting results or implement more than a temporary turn-around in Sierra Leone’s fortunes misses the point. EO did not present itself as a private UN, nor did it promise more than it delivered; although, it often delivered more than it promised. Within the
context of Sierra Leone and EO's contract with the country, the company performed its role admirably.

After EO: Wider Effects, PMCs, and the Future:

Executive Outcomes officially ceased to exist on January 1, 1999, citing, in part, a changing political culture in Africa in which African nations are solving African problems, and an accompanying increase in law and order which made EO's services obsolete. However, as Peter Singer notes, this explanation rings a little hollow. The overall political situation in Africa is as chaotic as ever, and the market for, and supply of, private force still exists. Based on the latter two observations, PMCs will also continue to exist. However, no prominent company has yet stepped up and taken EO's position as an overtly public provider of military services, especially of combat services. One reason may be, to quote Singer, "that although Executive Outcomes technically closed, in another sense it simply globalized."  

While some observers credit EO's demise to South Africa's Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Bill, others indicate that the bill only hindered the company's operations, and in reality limited it very little. The bill threatened EO's independence, limited its response time, and potentially curtailed some operations, but it also gave EO significant legitimacy, with the South African government taking partial credit for EO's successes. Others argue that the bill simply drove mercenaries back underground. While the very public employment of South African mercenaries in Iraq belies this notion, the fact remains that after EO and Sandline, there has been no attempt to create a full-blown company offering direct and offensive combat

18 Singer, Corporate Warriors, 118.  
19 Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Bill, Republic of South Africa, [B 54D—97].  
20 Shearer, Private Armies and Military Intervention," 55.  
services, at least with any degree of publicity. In reality, many former EO employees continue to work in the military security industry in Africa and abroad, but they are much quieter about it.

A series of articles in Soldier of Fortune magazine chronicle the continued quiet activities of EO veterans beginning even before the company's demise in 1999. As early as 1998, mercenary involvement seemed invasive in Angola, much of it through EO 'sleepers'—or former EO employees left in-country and operating clandestinely. Even UNITA began hiring mercenaries as the country escalated toward war. Despite the South African bill, many former soldiers continued to ignore or dispute the alleged illegality of working as mercenaries abroad.22

In 2001, reports noted examples of former EO employees working for Southern Cross Security patrolling Sierra Leonean waters interdicting pirates and illegal fishing. Additionally the company had contracts guarding hydroelectric and mining facilities as well as with the ICRC, World Vision, CARE international, and several UN agencies and embassies. Further, Angola had several hundred PSCs, each of which, due to governmental corruption, were tied to a powerful someone within the government.23 In 2002, former EO mercenaries were picking up work all over Africa including in Liberia, in Libya, and in the Sudan protecting oilfields and providing training in counterinsurgency warfare. In response to suggestions that these were EO spin-offs, Nick Van den Bergh, a former EO officer, stated that there was no connection and that these companies were simply using EO's good name to acquire work—this seems doubtful.24 In 2003, former EO operators were involved with government forces in Ivory Coast. Although the French Troops there rejected the idea, the presence of English speakers and the death of

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mercenaries on both sides of the conflict belied the French denial. Additionally, EO veterans were fighting on both sides of the conflicts in Ivory Coast and Liberia.\textsuperscript{25}

In a sense this can be viewed as Singer’s globalization. As the market and political atmosphere, no matter the legitimacy gained by EO, seemed unwilling to support a large, extremely public, company, the companies by default devolve into smaller more agile and covert entities. Some claim that EO and Sandline were only temporary developments and that mercenaries will quickly return to their individualistic, independent, and clandestine roots. By fighting for both sides in a civil conflict, independent mercenaries further the conflict through weapons proliferation, a culture of violence, and by simply propping-up each side.\textsuperscript{26} All this leads to more mercenary work, and this certainly could be one way a globalized market place might evolve. There are a plethora of small security companies competing for work in places like Sierra Leone, and there are increasing concerns about a mercenary-led wars over access to natural resources in poor African countries.\textsuperscript{27} While this may be the case, clandestine mercenary activity certainly took place during EO’s tenure as well as before and after. The simple development of companies such as EO is no bulwark against the 1960s style freebooter, although it may siphon off some of the potential soldiers because of a stronger claim on legitimacy and because of the benefits offered such as medical treatment and evacuation, more structure, and work security. Nonetheless, EO’s veterans are certainly implementing the company’s lessons in their freelance activities as evidenced in the Wonga Coup, 2004.

Many, if not most, of the fighters involved in the March, 2004, bungled attempt to overthrow the tyrannical regime of Equatorial Guinea were former EO employees. Most were


\textsuperscript{26} Musah, “Privatization of Security, Arms Proliferation and the Process of State Collapse in Africa,” 928-929.

unnamed African soldiers from South Africa, but individuals such as Harry Carlse, Simon Man, and Nick du Toit were former EO leaders and well known figures as well. They applied the lessons learned with EO to the coup attempt in Equatorial Guinea. The planners of the Wonga coup were concerned with the public image of a successful coup and designed it accordingly. They intended to brief “diplomats, businessmen, aid workers and journalists” immediately upon taking over the country. Greg Wells, former EO employee and accountant as well as one of the coup organizers, thought it critical that “the new rulers should seem legitimate...projecting a good image to the world is necessary to discourage an invasion or counter coup.” This effort included the planned announcing of “social, political, medical, and economic” reforms. He expended great effort in laying the groundwork for a successful media and public campaign in the event the coup came off as expected.

Adam Roberts, who did extensive research on the coup attempt, was surprised at the extensive, though confusing, paper trail left by the plotters. He attributes this to either an intentional attempt to mislead investigators or simply the result of overconfidence. However, the architects may have viewed themselves as carrying on EO’s legacy to a certain extent, and thus operated in a fairly open business-like manner—albeit quite clumsily. In this sense there was no reason to cover their tracks anymore than any international business might, because they believed that what they were doing would be accepted by the larger powers, served the greater good, and could draw on EO’s legacy in Africa. Of course, it was also an affront to international law, directly threatened the state as an institution, and was patently doomed to failure as demonstrated by the many such coup attempts of their freelance forbearers in the 1960s and 1970s. What the coup plotters attempted took EO’s experience in a dramatically different direction from that EO Sandline’s founders envisioned. Ultimately, the reasoning behind the

29 Ibid., 80.
30 Ibid., 86-87.
coup is probably best summed up in the words of one of the foot-soldiers who claimed “you can see why this is tempting. Its fun, it could work, you trust the leaders. Some guys did it for the kicks, because life is boring.”

The Wonga Coup represents a backward—or sidewise—step from the movement for legitimacy led by EO and Sandline. Clearly this bungled operation lacked EO’s attention to planning and execution as evidenced in Angola and Sierra Leone. Also, EO did not undertake such patiently illegal and greedy measures. The coup does suggest the dangers posed by independent mercenaries and provides supportive arguments for EO’s approach, making the company stand out for its attention to image and successful attempts to gain widespread legitimacy. This is furthered by Soldier of Fortune’s response to the coup condemning it as an inept and foolish venture. This is a crucial reversal in the magazine’s coverage, initially suspicious of corporate EO in favor of freelance operators, especially when the latter were fighting the ‘good’ fight against African leaders and regimes portrayed negatively in the world press. Yet, by themselves neither the Wonga coup nor the smaller quieter companies operating throughout Africa satisfactorily explain the lack of an EO or Sandline successor company.

The war in Iraq and the increasing dependence of the US and other coalition partners on privat military providers created a demand for companies outside of Africa. While Iraq is certainly a dangerous environment to operate in, the prospect of a reliable and steady paycheck has attracted many former EO and Sandline employees. Not only is the pay for companies more reliable than that in failing African states, but the pay is higher as well—so much so that many

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31 Ibid., 132.


Dr. Martin Brass, “Brit Mercenaries’ Monstrous Muck-Up: All That is Necessary For the Triumph of Evil is For the Good Guys to Get Ratted Out,” Soldier of Fortune, Vol. 30, No. 3, (March, 2005), 16-18, 34.


observers are increasingly concerned that the lucrative private military business is draining the best and the brightest out of national militaries.\textsuperscript{33} Tim Spicer is there with Aegis, a new evolution of the old Sandline model, along with other such adventurers. Many South African citizens are working for the US in Iraq which contravenes the South African bill ostensibly condemning mercenary activity. Despite this, South Africa is either unable or unwilling to prosecute them.\textsuperscript{34} Ultimately, the Iraq war provides a stronger draw than does forming a company in Africa's unstable political and financial environment. Should lucrative work run out in Iraq, the reappearance of a company founded along the lines of EO in Africa would be no big surprise.

There still exists both a supply of soldiers and a market for PMC services in Africa\textsuperscript{35} where EO represented "the expanded model of the military contractor"\textsuperscript{36} of the future. New companies, including new versions of EO and Sandline, offering combat services will reappear in Africa. These will build on EO and Sandline's foundation, and will take a clearer corporate form. Integral will be the intention to create companies with a long lifespan, companies capable of creating and imposing their own rules and regulations as they outgrow the embryonic regulatory framework which evolved post-EO. These companies will avoid debacles such as the Wonga coup in Equatorial Guinea by insisting on only working for legitimate governments.\textsuperscript{37} However, no EO type 'tip of the spear' company can achieve legitimacy without public transparency and public accountability.\textsuperscript{38} Increasing calls for more public oversight and international regulation of the industry suggest that the groundwork work is done and\textsuperscript{39} suggests

\textsuperscript{34} Avant, "The Implications of Marketized Security for IR Theory," 515.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 567.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 574-575.
increasing legitimacy for the idea of PMCs even in the absence of any really public examples. In this sense, the legitimacy gained by EO still exists and its efforts may well bear fruit in the near future.

Conclusion:

In the end, PMCs are more than mercenaries as Singer suggested, but only marginally so. While their corporate foundations, organization, and publicity campaigns are clearly different from the freelance operators represented by individuals like ‘Mad’ Mike Hoare, they remain specialists, stateless, and paid. However, because of the development of a globalized world driven by neoliberal economic policies and values, the increasing acceptance and influence of private authority, and the legitimacy established by EO and Sandline in Sierra Leone, being a mercenary in the twenty first century has changed significantly. That is not to say that the freebooters are gone for good, only that they are no more acceptable—perhaps less so—than they ever were. Despite the evil of the regime in Equatorial Guinea, there is little sympathy for the fate of the coup-plotters. Had they instead formed a public company, sought overt state support for their activities, and gained international sanction, the result might have been different. That said, overthrowing a sovereign state, no matter how notorious that state, by either public or private entities is not tolerated in any case. This suggests that the role of the state internationally is not threatened by the development of a market for private force.

The transitional case of Sierra Leone clearly demonstrates the critical moment which led to the development of modern PMCs. Because of this, mercenaries not only continue to exist, but are flourishing in today’s globalized economy. In the process of transformation, EO and Sandline gained significant authority, acceptance, and legitimacy which laid the groundwork for future PMCs. As more lucrative work in Iraq and elsewhere comes to an end, there will be another EO-type company develop to serve the existing market for private force in Africa.
While these companies will certainly employ mercenaries, the profession is something more than it was. In this sense, PMCs are more than the sum of their parts; they are more than mercenaries.
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