

Book Proposal

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Title: **Controlling the Mercenaries: Reshaping the debate over privatizing national security**

To many, the use of private military companies by the United States suddenly surfaced when four Blackwater contractors were ambushed and mutilated in Fallujah, Iraq, in April 2004. Since then, movies, books, and media reports claim their use is a threat to the nation-state and its monopoly on the use of force. Opponents of privatization argue the very nature of the modern mercenary prevents any effective oversight and control. On the other hand, proponents claim advantages in the corporate outsourcing of military capabilities ranging from food services to offensive operations.

The outsourcing of a major element of American foreign policy is not an insignificant matter, but it is one usually discussed with incomplete facts and misguided arguments. This book, Controlling the Mercenaries, fills in the blanks, addressing both sides of the privatization debate. This book reshapes the debate over private military forces by the United States by revisiting their use in history, including by the US, the uniquely American relationship with its military, and present day realities that dispel many of the popular myths, allegations, and touted advantages.

The author uses a multidisciplinary approach considers privatization in light of the changing realities of modern irregular warfare, the role of information and perceptions in leveling the asymmetrical battlefield, and the American societal and political relationship with its military and foreign policy. Updating the studies by Peter W. Singer, Deborah Avant, and others, Controlling the Mercenaries focuses on the American experience and the impact of privatization on American national security.

There are several goals of Controlling the Mercenaries. The first is a pragmatic contribution to the literature that increases awareness of the real issues surrounding the use of private military companies in American foreign policy. Media, public opinion, and even Congressional and Administration statements often mislead, intentionally or accidentally, and misrepresent both threats and advantages of privatization. This book corrects those statements through an updated presentation and analysis of facts from history and through to the present day.

The second goal is to provide a cross-disciplinary study of privatization through the author's previous work in counterinsurgency and unrestricted warfare, public diplomacy and the primacy of information and perceptions in modern conflict, the special American civil-military relationship, and years of studying private military companies. This unique, holistic analysis is helped by the author's existing relationships with writers, academics, and practitioners in the fields listed.

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The third goal is to make this information accessible to a broad audience that includes academics, policy makers, and lay-persons. Conversations with experts, from those in counterinsurgency who dismiss private forces as something to deal with later, to public diplomacy experts and policy makers who discount or ignore the impact of contractors in Iraq, show a continued failure to incorporate these agents of American foreign policy into our foreign policy. General David Petraeus was unique in acknowledging the contribution of private security contractors in Baghdad prior to the “surge” of 2007. However, even this acknowledgement assumes a working principal-agent relationship. Too often, as Controlling the Mercenaries shows, this is a dysfunctional relationship that needs to be understood before it can be properly fixed.

To be sure, this will not be the first book on the topic. Popular recent books include Peter W. Singer’s Corporate Warriors, Deborah Avant’s The Market for Force, Robert Young Pelton’s Licensed to Kill, and Jeremy Scahill’s Blackwater. Controlling the Mercenaries fits in between all of these, with the exception of the last. With regards to Scahill, Controlling the Mercenaries serves as a reality check.

Singer’s book, Corporate Warriors, the first modern book on the subject, was published in 2003. In it, he examines the then-burgeoning industry as a global phenomenon. His emphasis on their essence, hence the use of the word “firm” instead of “company”, speaks to his analysis of the industry at large. While still a required read in the field, it is dated in its recommendations in the aftermath of the explosive rise in privatization immediately following its publication, including little in the way of a deep discussion on the American use and issues.

The Market for Force was an important update to the literature, taking advantage of the two years that passed after Singer published his book. Avant’s book is academic, looking at privatization as a threat to the control of force. Analyzed through the lens of political science and civil-military relations theory, it is a good read thick with analysis, but it becomes a little esoteric at times. It has little on the realities of American political implications of their use as well as little discussion of their use in the context of modern information age, public diplomacy, and irregular warfare from the perspective of the United States.

Pelton, a journalist who would rather jump into a car with a guerrilla leader to get to the action than sit at camp to write his report when the leader returns, gives front line details on the “hired guns in the war on terror”, the subtitle for Licensed to Kill. Enlightening in the specifics of their use, as both perceived deniable and disposable assets, it fills in some of the details, and purposes, missing in the books previously mentioned. This is in part because of its later authorship, but also because of its focus on use and not theory.

The very recent Blackwater, by Jeremy Scahill, is included here not because of its positive contribution to the debate but for its distraction. Blackwater is provocative and emotional and understandably became a popular source on the subject. To be sure, Scahill raises valid issues, but

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too often these are wrapped in distorted facts that ignore actual use, the actual reasons of their use, as well as the more important question of understanding the real impact of their use.

Research will be done through first person interviews with authors and experts in a variety of fields. Beyond the first person interviews, research includes books, journals, research reports, and government reports to create a compelling narrative of the issues.

Controlling the Mercenaries is divided into three parts. The first two are split chronologically, while the third is contemporary analysis and recommendations. Part I begins with an introduction that provides the overview of the book, as well as lays out key terms and concepts used in the book. The second chapter is a history of mercenaries and non-state forces from the very distant past up to the 17th Century. The third chapter looks at the subsequent three centuries, 1600's through the end of the 1800's, and the influence of globalization, nationalism, and industrialization on mercenaries and privateers.

The second section of the book focuses on the American relationship with its military, the politicization of foreign policy, and the privatization of foreign policy. The politicization of foreign policy, including an evolving civil-military relationship, through the end of the Cold War is the subject of the first of two chapters in this section. The second chapter focuses on the privatization of foreign policy in the short time between the end of the Cold War and 9/11.

The three chapters in the last section build upon both of the previous sections. The first chapter compares reality with rhetoric in the modern discourse of privatizing force. The next chapter considers privatization within modern conflict, discussing counterinsurgency, public diplomacy, and the implications for foreign policy options now available to decision makers. The final chapter summarizes the findings in the book and suggests practices to best utilize these resources to minimize problems and maximize value.

This book will be about 60,000 words plus footnotes and bibliography. About one-third of the book has been written. It will take about eight months to finish.

Annotated Table of Contents

Part I: Introduction and history of use

Chapter 1: Introduction

Establishes the purpose and theme of the book, including defining key terms

Chapter 2: A History Dominated by Mercenaries

This chapter is an historical look at mercenaries through the history of warfare up the 17th Century, starting mainly from the Peloponnesian War, where Athens used mercenaries and Sparta did not. The purpose of this chapter is to show the shortage of political and economic capital has always been a reason to outsource. This chapter also discounts Machiavelli's

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famous warning that mercenaries are “useless and dangerous...and without discipline” as naïve when placed in context of contemporary fact.

Chapter 3: Industrialization, Nationalism, and Mercenaries

From the beginning of the 17th to the end of the 19th Centuries, changes in international relations, commerce, globalization, nationalism, and military affairs and technology were the pressures that pushed mercenaries out of favor of states. In the United States, the Founding Fathers’ distrust of military force included Constitutional responsibilities that established a unique civil-military relationship that would not be fully realized until after World War II. In addition to their concerns, political and economic limitations would lead to suggestions of outsourcing military protection of commerce as well as the effective use and oversight of privateers with effective oversight and accountability.

Part II: American Evolution

Chapter 4: Politicizing National Security

This chapter spans the period from the end of World War II until 9/11. The military began to act more independently in the aftermath of World War II and draw Congress into its disputes with the Administration. Increased media coverage domestically and in war, as well as outrage against acts by the President, reduces Presidential autonomy in foreign policy. Increased media coverage, the end of the Cold War, and the “end of history” contribute to the belief that American military lives are not worth foreign engagements. The “CNN Effect” becomes a perceived factor in decision making.

Chapter 5: Privatizing Foreign Policy

The “peace dividend” was more than a reduction in defense spending, it forced the military industrial complex to seek out clients and opportunities in security consulting and services pioneered in the modern era two decades prior by WatchGuard International. The changed political landscape found Presidents looking for alternative means of supporting foreign policy, including using private corporations to satisfy UN peacekeeping obligations. This chapter looks at the revolution in military affairs in the post-Cold War era, its similarity to the RMA around Napoleon’s time, and the changing perception of military force by the President, public, and media. This chapter continued through 9/11 to the present day.

Part III: The Results Are In

Chapter 6: Examining the Rhetoric

This chapter discusses the arguments for and against using private military companies, including the four fundamentals found in any pro-contractor mantra: cost savings, surge capacity, accountability, and skill set availability. Also looks at their use by international governmental organizations, such as the UN. The Blackwater incident in April 2004 is examined as a “perfect storm”, highlighting issues of extra-military operations, the power of information that led the civilian leadership to overrule ground commanders, to unnecessary obfuscation in subcontracting, accountability of contractors to their firm, as well as the firm to the client, and more.

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Chapter 7: Counterinsurgency and public diplomacy

This chapter looks at the importance of perceptions in modern conflict and the impact of US-contracted military firms around the world, including in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Philippines, and Colombia. With varying degrees of control, accountability, integration, collaboration, and support, contractors are often not perceived as agents of the US by US policy makers, but are seen as embodiments of American foreign policy by the locals. The unconsidered effect of their use: what is communicated when the state does not send its own forces?

Chapter 8: Looking forward

This summary chapter suggests when and how to use private forces, including selection criteria and control mechanisms.

About the Author

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