The Rise and Fall of Private Military Firms

A neoclassical realist approach to Military Provider Firms and their influence on state power

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by

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# Index

1. **Introduction**
   - Contemporary world: 3
   - Aim and theoretical approach: 5
   - Content and methodology: 7

2. **Neoclassical Realism and State Power**
   - The theory’s emergence: 11
   - Realism’s foundations: 12
   - Neoclassical realism: 15
   - Approaches to power: 18
   - State power in classical and structural realism: 18
   - Shortcomings in relation to PMFs: 21
   - Neoclassical realism and state power: 22
   - Relevance to PMFs: 25
   - Military effectiveness: 26
   - Application in regards to PMFs: 28
   - Neoclassical realism and the privatization of force: 30

3. **Historical Insights**
   - The earliest mercenaries: 34
   - The first companies: 36
   - The decline of privatized forces: 38
   - Re-emergence of PMFs: 39
   - Evaluation: 42

4. **Classification**
   - Typologies: 45
   - Tip of the Spear: 47
   - Other categorizations: 51
   - Case selection: 52
   - Concluding remarks: 54

5. **Case I: Executive Outcomes in Sierra Leone**
   - Executive Outcomes: 56
   - Services and materiel: capabilities: 58
   - Sierra Leone’s conflict: a context: 61
   - Enter EO: strategic interests and desired outcomes: 64
   - Impact on state strength: 69
   - National power: military effectiveness: 72
   - Impact on national power: 80
   - Evaluation: 80

6. **Case I: Blackwater and the United States of America**
   - Blackwater: 86
   - Services and materiel: capabilities: 88
   - United States intervention in Iraq: a context: 89
   - Blackwater’s impact on strategic interests and desired outcomes: 94
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact on state strength</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National power: military effectiveness</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact on national power</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Conclusion</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical framework</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military provider firms’ impact on state power</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding remarks</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avenues for further research</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Appendix</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Bibliography</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
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<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
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<td>AWS</td>
<td>Aviation Worldwide Services</td>
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<td>BRS</td>
<td>Brown and Root Services</td>
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<td>BTS</td>
<td>Beni Tal Security</td>
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<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
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<td>CRG</td>
<td>Control Risk Group</td>
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<td>DCI</td>
<td>Défence Conseil International</td>
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<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
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<td>ECOMOG</td>
<td>Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group</td>
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<td>EO</td>
<td>Executive Outcomes</td>
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<td>GAO</td>
<td>Government Accountability Office</td>
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<td>GRI</td>
<td>Globe Risk International</td>
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<td>GSG</td>
<td>Gurkha Security Group</td>
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<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
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<td>MPLA</td>
<td>People Movement for the Liberation of Angola</td>
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<td>MPRI</td>
<td>Military Professional Resources Inc.</td>
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<td>NPRC</td>
<td>National Provisional Ruling Council</td>
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<td>OAU</td>
<td>Organisation of African Unity</td>
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<td>OIF</td>
<td>Operation Iraqi Freedom</td>
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<td>PMC</td>
<td>Private Military Company</td>
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<td>PMF</td>
<td>Private Military Firm</td>
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<td>PMSC</td>
<td>Private Military and Security Company</td>
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<td>PSC</td>
<td>Private Security Company</td>
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<td>RSLMF</td>
<td>Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces</td>
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<td>RUF</td>
<td>Revolutionary United Front</td>
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<td>SADF</td>
<td>South African Defence Forces</td>
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<td>SRC</td>
<td>Strategic Resource Corporation</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNITA</td>
<td>National Union for the Total Independence of Angola</td>
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1. Introduction

When the Cold War winded down near the end of the 1980’s and the standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union came to a halt when the Berlin Wall fell, an international order collapsed along with it. Areas which were formerly of strategic importance to the superpowers, especially across Africa, Asia and the Balkans, were no longer considered pivotal to national security or the strategic, economic or ideological interests. This led to a situation where conflicts long manipulated or suppressed began to re-appear.¹ New and more varied global threats began to emerge as well, many of which were ethnic, historic or internal by nature, providing a challenge to the security of states. The international security environment was thereby increasingly challenged—and often by non-state threats such as climate change, refugee flows, drugs and weapons trade, water and food shortages, or by non-state actors including terrorist groups, guerilla fighters, armies of child soldiers, drug cartels, pirates, transnational criminal networks, economic insurgents, and local warlords.²

At the same time, many professional armies were downsized or restructured. Defense budgets were diminished and military apparatuses were reformed in a desire for cost savings. What developed was a security gap where the demand for troops was greater than what the market for security could supply.³ This led to a situation where the ability of states to respond to threats declined. Devoid of superpower support, and thus of aid and assistance, some countries underwent a breakdown in governance, particularly those in developing regions.⁴ The results were failing states, regime changes, and the rise of new areas of instability. Low-intensity, internal conflicts began to dominate the geopolitical scene. While conventional responses to these areas of instability used to be outside intervention, generally by one of the superpowers, the end of the Cold War led to a reluctance to intervene abroad and restore stability as there were no longer traditional power politics at play.⁵ Consequently, governments turned to a new security actor for support.

This culminated to the emergence of what today is known as the modern private military industry, as governments and leaders came to rely on private troops to supplement or replace their own militaries in order to balance against threats, preserve their interests, ensure their national security, and guarantee their sovereign autonomy. In some countries, for instance the United States and the United Kingdom, downsizing militaries occurred to such an extent that outsourcing both core and non-core military tasks to the privatized industry was deemed not only acceptable, but even necessary.\textsuperscript{6}

Initially, these companies fulfilled non-core military services, including tasks as supply transport, base construction, military logistics, weapon system maintenance and upkeep, cleaning, cooking and many others.\textsuperscript{7} Over the years, however, the notion of private companies evolved into what is now commonly known as private military firms (PMFs) or private military and security companies (PMSCs). These PMFs provide services not only in non-core military areas, but also in high-risk areas of operation as they began to fulfill more core-like military functions, including tactical military advisory training, counterinsurgency, anti-terrorism, intelligence gathering, peacekeeping services, command and armed battlefield operations, and operating as a paramilitary force in conflict areas.\textsuperscript{8} PMFs thereby offer a wide spectrum of military and security services, usually reserved for official state militaries.\textsuperscript{9}

Many PMFs contract over thousands of people, and operate in multiple countries. Aegis Defence Services Ltd, for example, employs over 3,500 people in more than sixty countries, while ArmorGroup International (presently known as G4S) has more than 618,000 employees in over 120 countries, with a turnover of more than 1.7 billion pounds.\textsuperscript{10} Operations have been carried out from New Guinea to Sierra Leone to Columbia, and from Croatia to Iraq to Angola to South Africa.\textsuperscript{11} Work has been conducted on every continent except Antarctica. The breath of PMFs operating across the world is therefore wide and certainly not limited to any geographical area or type of state.

Three trends thus led to the emergence of the private military industry. These are: the end of the Cold War, which removed the controls over certain conflict areas and also resulted

\textsuperscript{7} Singer, P.W. (2008), p. 46  
\textsuperscript{8} Idem, p. 104.  
\textsuperscript{10}http://www.aegisworld.com/who-we-are/ (last accessed 14 December 2013) and http://www.g4s.com/en/Who%20we%20are/Where%20we%20operate/ (last accessed 16 December 2014)  
in a vacuum in the market for security as states downsized their national militaries; the transformation in the nature of warfare, releasing new tensions, threats and conflict groups; and the rise in privatization, caused by the civilization of warfare as many high-technology equipment started being produced in the corporate realm.\textsuperscript{12} As such, the industry seems intrinsically linked to the changed international security environment that came into existence in the 1990’s—and is likely here to stay.

- **Contemporary world**

The role of PMFs in the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan seem to indicate that the use of private companies in foreign conflicts have become increasingly acceptable. Over the last decennium, contractors in these countries accounted for over more than fifty percent of the total military troops. In May 2013 a total number of 114,404 contractor personnel was operating in Afghanistan. This represented 62% of the overall present force.\textsuperscript{13} For the U.S. it seems, waging war is no longer possible without the private military industry. As a result, outsourcing government services such as military operations are not only increasingly seen as efficient and effective, but as necessary.

Yet there also exists a more infamous side to such firms. Soldiers for hire are often labelled as ‘dogs of war’ who are irresponsible and negligent, and create nothing but chaos on the battlefield.\textsuperscript{14} Such concerns stem from the inherent violence of their profession combined with a lack of control over their actions.\textsuperscript{15} Moreover, governments fear the misuse of PMF exportation. PMFs potentially allow exporting states to use them as political pawns or proxies in an attempt to affect the (internal) affairs of another country or region, while preserving their official neutrality in a conflict. Lastly, in terms of motivation and allegiance, there is a concern that PMFs only act in pecuniary interests and thus change loyalty and employers often, and easily.\textsuperscript{16} This leads to a situation where the debates on PMFs are often conducted as though PMFs are by their very definition bad, and national armies good.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} Idem, p. 77-78.
In practice, however, national armies are in many cases guilty of exactly those abuses with which PMFs are charged—especially in African countries such as Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and others. Some commentators, such as David Shearer, Steven Brayton, Oldrich Bures and Christopher Spearin, have therefore considered—even suggested—the usage of PMFs in UN humanitarian and/or peacekeeping operations as a substitution to regular state troops.\(^{18}\) However, as the implications of hiring a PMF are not a priori positive or negative to the contracting side, a deeper analysis is required.

What is clear is that in our post-Cold War era, national governments have increasingly hired PMFs to fill a certain security gap left by their professional armies being downsized or restructured. This is done to balance against threats, to promote vital interests, or to provide sufficient national security. Contracting PMFs therefore may have far-reaching consequences for a state and its power; its safety and security, its military capabilities and effectiveness, its conduct of foreign policy, and consequently its position within the international security system.

Despite this growth in the usage of PMFs, however, the phenomenon of the private military industry and its impact on state power has been poorly covered by academic literature. Peter Singer already mentions in 2001 that “the activity and significance of the privatized military industry have grown tremendously, yet its full scope and impact remain underrealized.”\(^{19}\) Almost a decade later this situation has not changed. As David Perry describes in 2012: “the role of PMSCs, and non-state actors in general, has largely been overlooked in the strategic studies literature.”\(^{20}\) What has been debated broadly are PMFs’ accountability and status under international law or the laws of war, the manner and form in which they should be regulated, the normative or ethic concerns associated with hiring a military firm, as well as the historical role of mercenaries in warfare.\(^{21}\) Less attention has been paid to the motivations or

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goals behind a state’s decision to hire a PMF—but even more important to this research, to the actual effect of such a company on the concept of state power. This is curious because within international politics, the accumulation of power is still one of the most important—if not the most important—goals of the state. Without, interests cannot be achieved, security cannot be obtained, and survival cannot be assured. This research attempts to fill this gap.

- **Aim and theoretical approach**
  This research explores the role of PMFs—specifically, military provider firms—in fulfilling a state’s strategic designs, interests and desired outcomes, and the consequent influence it has on a state its power. It does so by undertaking a qualitative research approach to two specific case studies whereby a military firm was contracted to operate in a conflict situation.

  Power, however, is an essentially contested subject. Therefore, to analyze the influence of PMFs on state power, the concept itself first needs to be examined. This research chooses to do so through a realist—or more precisely: a neoclassical realist—lens, as realists are the theorists of power politics.\(^2\) Power has always been, and will continue to be, central to any theory of realism. An assessment of the impact of PMFs on state power is therefore best undertaken by building on the insights found within the realist tradition. Neoclassical realism appears exceptionally suited towards this task as it assumes that politics is a “perpetual struggle among different states for material power and security in a world of scarce sources and pervasive uncertainty.”\(^23\) Moreover, the theory places “power at the center of political life” and sees “the drive for power as the primary goal of state behaviors and grand strategies.”\(^24\)

  As such, the main purpose of this research is to analyze the influence of a particular type of PMF—namely, military provider firms—on state power through a neoclassical realist lens. This is done by providing an analytical assessment of the extent to which the military provider firm in question fulfilled its client states’ strategic interests and desired outcomes, and whether it has a beneficial or detrimental effect on its client’s military effectiveness in combat operations. This study thereby aspires to account for the importance of privatized forces in

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\(^23\) Lobell, S. E., Ripsman, N. M., Taliaferro, J. W. (2009), Neoclassical Realism, the State and Foreign Policy, 1st edition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 4-5

\(^24\) Idem, p. 44, 54, 238.
modern military issues. It examines their functions, role and nature with the aim of determining the consequences and impact the industry has on the contemporary security environment.

Selecting military provider firms as the object of analysis is a deliberate choice. The private military industry forms a wide and very divergent sector. A range of services is offered, and the various firms operating in the industry neither look alike, nor do they serve the same markets or fulfill the same functions. They differ in history, number of personnel, market capitalization, employee experience and characteristics, the geographical location of their home base, and their zones of operation. Some provide direct combat services, others provide military training or weapon procurement, and again others offer consulting and strategic analysis, or logistical support. According to Singer, due to the wide ray of services provided, classifying the firms participating in the military industry is a troubled undertaking as “no clear consensus has been reached on how to define mercenaries.” Their single uniting aspect is that “they all involve the export of private military expertise in some fashion.”

Military provider firms, however, fulfil a rather specialized role. These companies operate closest to the battlefront, are engaged in actual fighting, and provide the most immediate and direct capacity for violence. They offer more offensive and tactical military services than other firms, are more combat orientated, and therefore have a more direct and imminent impact on the outcome of conflict situations—and thus, likely, on state power. A more detailed discussion of the assorted PMFs and their roles is provided in the section discussing the classification of the various firms.

Conducting this research in such a manner is challenging because an added complication to researching the impact of modern-day military companies on state power is the limited existence of available cases. This is due to the reason that PMFs in their current form are a relatively new trend. More importantly, the inherent secretive nature of the business and the work they do severely limits the availability of relevant information and data. Data and reports relating to private military activity abroad is hard to acquire and often unreliable, which makes an accurate analysis of the influence and impact of the industry a difficult undertaking—especially in regard to military provider firms. As Alan Axelrod mentions, few studies of the modern private military industry “make any attempt at a comprehensive survey of operational

26 Ibidem.
companies” (i.e. military provider firms). The reason for this, Axelrod continues, is because many are “low profile, even obscure, and they present very little in the way of a public face. Many present themselves as security consultants, even if they actually perform operational services.”\textsuperscript{30} In most cases, reliable information relating to such firms is consequently unavailable.\textsuperscript{31} Nevertheless, this research hopes to contribute to unravelling some of the secrecy that surrounds the private military industry and thereby help policy makers decide how—or even if—they should make use of such companies in support of national interests in an ever increasing hostile system. Neoclassical realism should serve as a valuable lens through which to conduct this research as the theory balances between theory and policy-relevance, and actually veers in the direction towards policy-relevance.\textsuperscript{32}

- **Content and methodology**

The main objective of this research is thus to examine the impact of a particular type of a military provider firm on the components of state power. This is done by undertaking an in-depth, qualitative research of two case studies. These cases are Executive Outcomes (EO) in Sierra Leone and Blackwater (converted to XE Services in 2009 and renamed Academi in 2011, but named Blackwater throughout this research for the sake of clarity) in Iraq.

To do so, this research is composed of five sections. The first section examines the concept of state power through a neoclassical realist lens. It does so by looking at the foundations of the neoclassical realist theory, which are classical and structural realism, as neoclassical realism is most often presented as building upon insights found in these two main theories of realism preceding it. The importance of power in international politics is discussed as well, whereby the linkage between realism and power is established so as to affirm that realism is indeed the theory of power politics. Consequently, the manner and form in which classical and structural realism approach the concept of state power is discussed so that, finally, the neoclassical realist concept of state power—and why it is relevant to this particular research and the subject of PMFs—can be provided.

Through an analysis of the neoclassical realist theory and its conceptualization of state power, the theoretical framework that serves as the groundwork for this research is constructed. More specifically in regards to the neoclassical realist theory, this research builds upon Fareed

\textsuperscript{30} Axelrod, A. (2014), p. 239.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibidem.
Zakaria’s approach to state power. Zakaria considers state power a combination of state strength and national power. State strength considers power as a means to realize an outcome, while national power is seen as the possession of certain capabilities. Power as a means to realize an outcome relates to the question whether the initial goals or strategic interests that the state had when it contracted the military provider firm have been fulfilled by hiring the firm. Thus, it refers to the extent that the state’s desired outcomes have been fulfilled. Power as capabilities will be developed into an assessment that equates it to a firm’s war-fighting ability, which is its military effectiveness in combat. This part examines four properties of a military force that are crucial to its military effectiveness: integration, responsiveness, skill, and quality. Why this particular approach is taken—and why it is so applicable to PMFs and their impact on state power—will become clear in this particular section.

The second section examines PMFs from a historical and political perspective to highlight similarities and paradoxes connected to the outsourcing of security. To understand the emerging forms of private military firms within the international security environment, and consequently place them in a proper context in relation to their heritage, an examination into the evolution of mercenaries and the companies they operated in is required. This section thus describes the concept of mercenaries and the first military companies. It also explores how interrelated processes led to the reappearance of the industry at the end of the Cold War. This historical context is required in order to place private military firms in the proper context in our contemporary, ever changing, and global world.

The third section discusses the classification of PMFs—and thereby touches on the research’s methodology as well. An examination of military firms’ impact on state power must include a definition of the object under analysis: the people, activities and firms that provide military and security services. Various typologies dealing with private military firms are discussed. Classifying the firms, which is done by differentiating between the level of force a firm is able to provide, makes this research more manageable and specific by providing relevant research groups. Moreover, it allows the establishment of linkages between the types of firms and the military functions they perform. Such linkages reveal what level of force a firm is able to project and provide. This section thereby outlines part of the research’s methodology: it delineates the specific kind of private military firm under consideration—and why this type is chosen. It enables this research to further explore the impact of PMFs—more precisely that of military provider firms—on the concept of state power, and consequentially whether such

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impact is beneficial or detrimental. Through such an analysis, it will become clear why so few companies can be classified as military provider firms, and why this research consequently focusses exclusively on the firms Executive Outcomes and Blackwater.

Section four and five function as the core of this research: they analyze the impact of the military provider firms on the concept of state power in two different case studies. The first case concerns Executive Outcomes, which was hired by Sierra Leone in 1995 to provide military support to the Sierra Leone government in its civil war against the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The second case concerns Blackwater, which was hired in 2003 by the U.S. government to provide support during its intervention and reconstruction mission in Iraq. Both case studies follow an identical path of analysis in order to examine the firms’ impact on state power and its two conceptual components: state strength and national power. Before such an analysis takes place, however, each section first discusses the relevant firm, as well as the context of the conflict the firm was contracted to operate in.

The first component of state power being examined is state strength. This is done by analyzing the goalsategic interests/desired outcomes of the hiring state. What did the state attempt to achieve by hiring the military provider firm; what were its strategic interests and its desired outcomes? Consequently, an examination takes place to determine to what extent, by hiring the firm, these outcomes were fulfilled. Afterwards, the second component of state power is analyzed: national power. It discusses the particular firm’s conduct during combat operations, and the influence it has on its client’s military effectiveness. An examination takes place to determine the degree to which the particular firm exhibited, and influenced, the four attributes crucial to a state’s military effectiveness: integration, responsiveness, skill, and quality. Conducting this research in such a manner allows for a diverse but specific analysis of a firm’s impact on the components of state power. Determinacy is thereby traded for greater accuracy.

This particular research methodology aims to assist policy makers in determining whether to hire military provider firms in order to increase their state’s power, to assure survival and secure interests, or to defend their nation’s national security. It thereby contributes to unravelling some of the secrecy that surrounds the private military industry and help policy makers decide if they should make use of such companies in support of national interests in an ever increasing hostile system—and if so: how.

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34 Consequently, by analyzing the impact of PMFs on the power of two differing states: the U.S., a highly advanced, industrialized nation, and a superpower—if not global hegemon—to boot, and; Sierra Leone, a developing, third-world nation torn by civil unrest and regional instability, a careful estimation concerning PMFs impact on diverse states can be made as well.
2. Neoclassical Realism and State Power

To determine the influence of military provider firms on state power, first the concept of power needs to be examined. Realism is an exceptionally useful tool to do so, as realists are the theorists of power politics. They argue that in international relations, power is central.\(^{35}\) Considering that modern private military firms are a relatively recent phenomenon that emerged in a new global order, tackling the impact of such a firm on state power should be analyzed through a version of realism able to account for the changed global order. This is where neoclassical realism comes in: it is a new school of thought within the broader realist tradition.\(^{36}\)

The purpose of this section is multifold. It examines the neoclassical realist theory, its conceptualization of state power, and whether this concept is applicable to PMFs. This requires a deeper look into both classical realism and structural realism, which is necessary as neoclassical realism builds upon insights found in the writings of Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Edward H. Carr, and Hans J. Morgenthau (classical realists), as well as Kenneth N. Waltz, Stephen Walt, Robert Gilpin, and John Mearsheimer (structural realists).\(^{37}\) By analyzing how the different strands of realism conceptualize power, it allows for a more thorough examination of the neoclassical realist concept of it, and thereby helps to determine why power is so pivotal to the survival, security and interests of the state.

This section begins by briefly outlining the emergence of the neoclassical realist theory so as to explain why a more recently developed, contemporary version of realism is used. Consequently, because neoclassical realism is most often presented as building upon insights found in classical and structural realism, the preceding theories will be outlined first. Here, the importance of power in international politics is discussed, and the linkage between realism and power is established so as to affirm that realism is indeed the theory of power politics. By doing so, the neoclassical realist theory can be presented and explained. Afterwards, an examination of the concept of state power is possible. The manner and form in which classical and structural realism approach the concept is once again discussed first. Finally, the neoclassical realist concept of state power—and why it is relevant to this particular research—is provided. This section thereby builds the theoretical framework that serves as the groundwork for this research.

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• The theory’s emergence

During the Cold War, realism—or rather neorealism as developed by Kenneth Waltz in his 1979 book *Theory of International Politics*—dominated much of the International Relations (IR) theory together with neoliberalism.38 When the Cold War ended, it not only led to a collapse of the then existing international order, to the emergence of new security issues and to the rise of modern-style private military firms, it also led to a reconfiguration of debates within the discourse of international relations theory.39 The end of the Cold War undermined the explanatory power of neorealists and liberals, neither of whom could elucidate the new global order that was coming into existence. It thereby opened up space for different approaches to understanding and theoretical development.40

A new international system thus developed, affected by state and non-state actors and threats. It seemed this system, including the interaction between the units operating within it and the (policy) strategies undertaken by these units, could no longer be explained by a purely systemic theory of international outcomes, such as neorealist balance of power theory, nor a domestic politics theory, like neoliberal democratic peace theory. Instead, a combination of one and the other are necessary to analyze post-Cold War concepts of state power, national interests, and contemporary foreign and security policies undertaken by countries.41

Neoclassical realism combines systemic and domestic factors and develops it into a theory of foreign policy to determine state interests. These interests are guided by the amount of power a state can muster. Power thus functions as a means to achieve an interest or outcome. In turn, the ability to fulfill interests and outcomes determines to an extent the amount of power a state has.

Neoclassical realism takes the state as its central unit of analysis, providing a conception of it by “specifying how systemic imperatives will likely translate, through the medium of state power, into actual foreign and security policies.”42 An important note must be made here, however. Even though neoclassical realism sees the state as the most important actor within international politics and international relations, it does not necessarily see the state as a unitary actor.43 As Steven David mentions: “the state is often simply the representative of a group that

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holds power in the capital.”

Lobell et al concur with this statement. They see the national security executive (or foreign policy executive) as the representative of the state. This executive is a “unified central decision-maker” consisting principally of “the head of government and key ministers and officials charged with the conduct of foreign policy,” and is primarily committed to “advancing the security or power of the entire nation.” The national security executive has confidential access to information concerning threats, opportunities and capabilities. For this reason, it is “best positioned to respond to international exigencies.”

In short, neoclassical realism is a theory of power and foreign policy. It explains the foreign and security policies undertaken by great powers, but is also able to, as Lobell et al assert, “account for the distinctive characteristics of regional and small powers, developing countries, or divided, warring or failed states.” To give a coherent description of neoclassical realism, and consequently its conceptualization of state power, it is necessary to differentiate it from the theories preceding it. The following segment will therefore discuss classical and structural realism, so as to provide an analysis of the neoclassical realist theory. The theory’s linkage to power, and why power is so pivotal in international politics, is discussed as well. Afterwards, the discussion will turn to state power itself, and realism’s conceptualization of it.

- Realism’s foundations

The classical realist lineage begins with Thucydides portrayal of power politics as a law of human behavior. This human behavior is defined by the drive to accumulate power and to dominate others. The behavior of states is consequently understood to be a reflection of the characteristics of the people that constitute the state. To classical realist, international politics is therefore necessarily power politics because of human nature. Classical realism is thereby mainly concerned with the sources and uses of (national) power in international politics, and the problems that leaders and policymakers meet when they create foreign policy.

As Hobbes, a founding father of classical realism, writes in his Leviathan: the search for power is never-ending. Hobbes starts from the premise that people live in a constant state of nature, which causes them to live in a “condition called war; and such a war, as if of every man,

48 Idem, p. 43.
against every man.”

This results in an existence dominated by a “restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death. And the cause of this is not always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight than he has already attained to, or that he cannot be content with a moderate power, but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more.” According to Hobbes, because of this search for power, units—individuals and men aggregated into states—are in “continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of gladiators […] which is a posture of war.”

Later realists, such as Morgenthau, apply this personal, individual state of nature to the sphere of international politics and the international system. Focus is thereby placed on the distribution of power between states, as states are continuously engaged in a struggle to increase capabilities. This leads to a fixation on the accumulation of power in pursuit of the national interests, which is primarily defined in national security and the survival of the state. The international system in which these states operate in has no overarching authority, can thus be considered anarchic, and therefore the security—the survival—of the nation-state and its population hinges on the accumulation of power. This is the main determinant of foreign policy.

The condition of human nature as the driving force behind international politics is represented in Morgenthalau’s 1948 book Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace. By declaring that “international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power” and that “whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim,” Morgenthau established the close connection between classical realism and power. The supremacy of power in politics meant that the main pattern of behavior was one of a “perpetual and permanent struggle for power in which the goal of every state was to maximize its own relative power.” Consequently, Morgenthau viewed the actions undertaken by states within the international system and within international politics as a “continuing effort to maintain and to increase the power of one’s own nation and to keep in check or reduce the power of other

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52 Idem, p. 61
53 Idem, p. 79.
56 Idem, p. 124.
This behavior of states stemmed from the biological drives of human beings, which was power-seeking. Morgenthau thus took Hobbes’ state of nature in which humankind lived, and considered the pervasiveness of power as rooted in human nature. According to Morgenthau, “international politics is of necessity power politics,” because there exists a “struggle for power in all social relations on all levels of social organization.”

Structural realists agree with classical realists that within international politics there is a continuous struggle for power, but they do not agree that this is due to human nature. To structural realists, the struggle for power is caused by systemic pressures and the search for security in an anarchic international system. This condition of anarchy, which means that there is no higher authority to keep sovereign states in check and ensure peace, is frequently perceived as being synonymous to a state of war. What guides the relations between states in the international system is the distribution of capabilities: powerful units have the means and capabilities to influence weaker ones, which means that weaker units have a greater chance of being exploited. This strict identification of state interest with (material) national power fit well with the nature of the Cold War, as did the assumption that the structure of the international system determined the behavior of states.

According to Waltz, it is the structure of the system that forces states to seek power, because “states in an anarchic order must provide for their own security, and threats or seeming threats to their security abound.” Among structural realists, however, there exists a disagreement concerning the question whether states seek power because they are security-maximizers (defensive realists) or power-maximizers (offensive realists). Waltz can be said to be a defensive realist, as he declares that in crucial situations “the ultimate concern of states is not for power but for security.” He argues that states only pursue enough power to ensure security, and consequently assure survival. According to this position, the mechanism of the balance of power means that states seek power to “minimize international power gaps” rather than “maximize such gaps to their advantage,” as offensive realists suggest.

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60 Idem, p. 31.
65 Idem, p. 616.
Offensive realists, like Mearsheimer, argue that states attempt to gather a maximum amount of power, instead of looking for an appropriate amount of power. Their ultimate goal is the attainment of a hegemonic position. Offensive realists’ account of international politics is thus mainly focused on great power behavior. To Mearsheimer, power lies at the heart of how states think about the world around them. This is because the international system and the anarchic nature of it compels states to maximize their relative power position at the expense of rivals—which is required to ensure security. Consequently, power-maximization is important for states in order to survive in a self-help system.

Structural realism thus mainly focusses on states’ ability to survive in the international system—it has little to say about achieving other goals or interests, such as influence, (material) gains, or prestige. The theory is focused on the systemic level of analysis and is therefore limited by its refusal to consider how factors located at the unit or individual level of analysis affect the struggle for power, security, and survival.

In all, classical and structural realism place the search for power at the heart of international relations and international politics: it drives the actions of individuals and states. It can therefore be concluded that realists are indeed the theorists of power politics. But how does neoclassical realism build upon the insights found in classical and structural realism?

- **Neoclassical realism**

What unites all realists is a bleak view of the human condition and the chance for change in human behavior; a pessimistic attitude towards the possibility for a peaceful international order; and the understanding that ethics and morality are products of power concerns and interests.

Within the realist tradition, neoclassical realism shares the view with its predecessors that international politics is a continuous struggle for power. Power shapes interests and a state’s foreign policy. Neoclassical realism focuses on both structural and domestic variables, including power and interests, to explain state behavior and a state’s foreign policy by building “upon the complex relationship between the state and society found in classical realism without sacrificing the central insight of neorealism about the constraints of the international system.”

It thereby attempts to integrate systemic and unit-level variables (such as state-society

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relationships, and state and strategic interests—which differ per unit, per state) in a derivable and consistent approach.\textsuperscript{70}

The term neoclassical realism was first coined in 1998 in an article by Gideon Rose in the following quote. Coincidentally, this same quote demonstrates that power lies at the heart of the neoclassical theory.\textsuperscript{71}

\begin{quote}
“Neoclassical realism argues that the scope and ambition of a country’s foreign policy is driven first and foremost by the country’s relative material power. Yet it contends that the impact of power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex, because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening unit-level variables such as decision-makers’ perceptions and state structure.” (Rose, 1998)
\end{quote}

According to neoclassical realism, states are the most important actors within international politics.\textsuperscript{72} However, the state itself is embodied by the national security executive, more specifically the head of government and officials charged with conducting foreign security policy.\textsuperscript{73} This is because “a nation pursues foreign policies as a legal organization called a state, whose agents act as the representatives of the nation in international affairs.”\textsuperscript{74} Therefore, neoclassical realists focus on the role of the national security executive. This executive operates at the crossroads between the state and the international system, has access to information deriving from the political-military apparatus, and is therefore best suited to analyze threats, systemic constraints and opportunities to determine the national interests.\textsuperscript{75} To Lobell et al, this means that neoclassical realism sees the state as a unit where the leaders “define the national interests and conduct foreign policy based upon their assessment of relative power and other states’ intentions, but always subject to domestic constraints.”\textsuperscript{76}

Unlike structural realism, neoclassical realism thus argues that anarchy is a permissive condition—a dependent variable—rather than an independent factor.\textsuperscript{77} Anarchy and the distribution of power alone do not explain the power-seeking behavior of a state. It does put limits to what a state may be able to achieve, but it will not absolutely determine or dictate what

\textsuperscript{73} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{74} Morgenthau, H.J. (1954), p. 108.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibidem.
states will actually do. Neoclassical realism therefore makes no attempts at explaining broad patterns of systemic or recurring outcomes. It might explain the likely diplomatic, economic and military responses of a state to certain systemic impulses, threats or constraints, but it cannot explain the systemic consequences of these responses. States can choose different goals and interests, and prefer certain outcomes over others—whether these are, or include, prestige, gains, influence or certain other interests. However, at its most basic, a state is primarily concerned with “advancing the security or power of the entire nation.” Power is the chief determinant of state behavior. It defines the amount of influence a state can utilize, thereby shapes interests and intentions, and thus guides foreign policy.

Hence, in order to gain greater accuracy and specificity, domestic- as well as systemic-level variables need to be taken in consideration if a state’s power and its consequent foreign policy is explained. This is because international imperatives, threats, opportunities and interests affect how top officials assess these elements, consequently identify viable strategies in response, and ultimately extract and mobilize resources necessary to implement and sustain strategies. Neoclassical realism thus draws upon the fundamental assumption from structural realists that the international system influences the policy choices of states, without sacrificing the insights about foreign policy and the complexity of statecraft found in classical realism. The result is that neoclassical realism can give a more accurate account and definition of state behavior, state power, and the differing influences on it.

Unlike classical realism, which stresses human nature as the driving factor behind state actions, or structural realism, which stresses systemic pressures, neoclassical realism thus emphasizes the interests of states that drives foreign policy. These interests are primarily fulfilled through the accumulation of state power, so that a state’s desired outcomes may be achieved. Power, therefore, determines a state’s interests and its goals, and its consequent conduct of foreign policy. But what exactly constitutes state power, and how is it measured? What is neoclassical realisms conceptualization of state power?

Now that the primacy of power within the realist and neoclassical realists schools of thought have been affirmed, and the groundwork for the conceptualization of state power has

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82 Idem, p. 1.
84 Ibidem.
been examined, the next segments of this section will discuss the conceptualization of state power within classical and structural realism. This is done so that, finally, the neoclassical realist approach to the concept of state power and how it can most appropriately be applied to this research can be determined.

- **Approaches to power**

Power, like numerous other important concepts in IR, is an essentially contested concept. It means different things to different people subscribing to different theoretical traditions. According to David Baldwin, there are two dominant traditions of power analysis in IR. These are the national power approach, “which depicts power as resources,” and the relational power approach, “which depicts power as an actual or potential relationship.”

National power is equated with the possession of certain resources. Indicators of these include the size of territory and population, the level of military expenditure, gross national product, and the size of the armed forces. Aside from these tangible resources, some scholars also include intangible elements, such as national moral, diplomacy, and the quality of political leadership.

What is important is that those supporting the national power approach believe that power can be “measured and combined to provide an indicator of the aggregate power of a state.”

The relational power approach, on the other hand, depicts power as a “process of interaction whereby a state is able to exercise influence over the actions of another state.” The relational approach does not consider power a tangible concept. Instead, it disaggregates power into component parts so as to determine how it is applied in specific issue areas. An important note here is that the relational approach equates power with influence. It means that an actor must demonstrable be able to cause another to do something they would otherwise not do.

The following segments will discuss the classical and structural realist approaches to state power, so that neoclassical realisms’ conceptualization of it may better be understood.

- **State power in classical and structural realism**

Classical realists perceive politics as an eternal struggle for power. Among the classical realists, Carr equated international politics with power politics, and argued that power could be divided into three categories: military power, economic power, and power over opinion. Carr, however,
never provided a detailed definition of power, but did claim that military power was the most important form of power. This was due to the reason that “the supreme importance of the military instrument lies in the fact that the ultimate ratio of power in international relations is war.”

Morgenthau gave a more detailed account of power. Morgenthau considered international politics as a continuing effort of states to increase their own power, and to keep in check or reduce the power of other countries. States have different interests—and calculating those interests is important in assessing power. Morgenthau equated power with the control over identifiable and measurable resources, and thereby seemed to support the national power approach. He differentiated between two types of elements that supported the power of a nation: those that are stable and those that are subject to change. The stable elements were mostly of a quantitative nature and included geography, natural resources, population, military preparedness, and industrial capacity. The elements subject to change were the quality of government, the quality of a nation’s diplomacy, the national character of a state, and the national morale. This led Morgenthau to conclude that “the conduct of a nation’s foreign affairs by its diplomats is for national power in peace what military strategy and tactics by its military leaders are for national power in war.”

This leads to the implication that Morgenthau’s discussion of the elements of national power indicates that war-winning capability is the standard by which (elements of) power should be judged. As state power has historically been linked with military capacity, this is not a strange consideration. Military capacity, however, is not composed of one element. Morgenthau realizes this as well and calls the erroneous attempt to define state power in terms of one element “the fallacy of a single factor.” Even though Morgenthau thus acknowledged the importance of military might, he also warned against the tendency to focus on a single component of power.

For classical realists, the concept of power is thus primarily understood in term of the national power approach: it mainly includes material capabilities and resources, and focusses on military might.

92 Idem, p. 25.
94 Idem, p. 6.
Structural realists such as Waltz endorse the national power approach. Waltz, equates power to a state’s possession of a wide range of material capabilities and resources, such as “size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic stability, military strength, political stability and competence.” Conceived this way, state capabilities are nothing more than the sum of a number of identifiable national attributes. Although capabilities are a unit level attribute, Waltz argues that it also is a structural, a systemic, attribute in that he is mostly interested in how attributes are distributed across the international system.

Even though Waltz does identify a few items that determine the rank of a state, he does not provide a detailed analysis of these capabilities, how they should be measured, or how they can be combined into an accumulated score. Waltz admits this himself by mentioning that capabilities are “difficult to measure and compare, the more so since the weight to be assigned to different items changes with time.” This leads him to declare that “the economic, military and other capabilities of nations cannot be sectored and separately weighed. States are not placed in the top rank because they excel in one way or another. Their rank depends on how they score on all of the […] items.” Waltz thus remarks that ranking states needs only be done through a measurement of their capabilities—through an accumulated score of the above-mentioned items. However, this implies there is a definition of capabilities provided—which Waltz never does. As Baldwin mentions, “The use of the term “score” is revealing. It implies a measuring rod, or standard, in terms of which the various elements of national power can be evaluated; but there is no indication of what this standard is.”

Among other structural realists, Gilpin somewhat endorses Waltz’s definition of power. He agrees that power is simply the military, economic, and technological capabilities of the state. According to Gilpin, all states seek control over territory, the behavior of other states, and the world economy.

Mearsheimer views power largely in military terms as well. Mearsheimer endorses the national power approach and defines power as nothing more than specific assets or material resources available to a certain state. Contrary to Waltz, however, Mearsheimer devotes more attention to discussing which elements make up state power, and how these should be measured.

102 Ibidem.
104 Ibidem.
Mearsheimer distinguishes between military power and latent power. The essence of state power is its military power, based primarily on the size and strength of its army compared to that of other states. To Mearsheimer, however, there is a clear hierarchy in military power. Land power matters, even more so than naval or air forces, due to land powers’ ability to conquer and control land—which, according to Mearsheimer, is the supreme political objective for states in a territorial world. The ability of the state to build a powerful army subsequently depends on its latent power, by which Mearsheimer means assets of population and wealth. The concept of power within offensive realism is therefore based on material resources used for conquering and controlling land, which, to Mearsheimer, is the supreme political objective of the state.

Neither Gilpin, Mearsheimer, nor Waltz thus provide a comprehensive discussion of state capabilities, nor do they indicate exactly how these capabilities should be measured or how an actor/capability specifically affects state power. Moreover, because Waltz associates resources with capabilities, but never addresses the question how these capabilities lead to the exertion of control of one state over another, he thereby bypasses the concept of the relational power approach. Consequently, Baldwin mentions that a “careful reading of Waltz generates a strong suspicion that war-winning ability is the unstated standard by which states are being ranked.” Thomas Juneau and Brian C. Schmidt agree that national power and the ability to fight wars are “deeply embedded in the structural realist model.”

- **Shortcomings in relation to PMFs**
Recalling Carr, Waltz, Mearsheimer and, to a certain degree, Morgenthau, it seems military force serves as the final and definite standard by which state power is conceptualized and assessed. State power within international politics and the international system, it seems, is equivalent to military power. It decides the foreign policy choices made by states and is a crucial variable in explaining international outcomes such as wars, alliances, and the creation of a balance of power between actors.

However, this conception of power and its equation to the possession of tangible resources overlooks the extent to which power is a matter of perception. More importantly, applying this concept of state power to the usage of military provider firms and its impact on

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110 Ibidem.
111 Idem, p. 282.
112 Ibidem.
state power, leads to an oversimplified analysis. State power is then equated to numbers. More men, more military material and more expertise indicates more power, and thus an increase in influence and security. As PMFs are technically not part of the state, hiring such companies is an immediate net increase of resources and capabilities. Any in-depth analysis thus leads to the predetermined answer that PMFs do indeed have a beneficial effect on state power: they add military capabilities and material resources (including, but not limited to, weapons, expertise, technological assets, manpower, etc.). Furthermore, to quote Waltz, these material capabilities are “difficult to measure and compare, the more so since the weight to be assigned to different items changes with time.”

For this particular research, a different analytical approach to state power is thus required. Neoclassical realism helps fill this analytical gap.

- **Neoclassical realism and state power**

Now that the theory’s foundations and assumptions have been discussed, and (neoclassical) realism’s linkage to the concept of power has been affirmed, it is possible to examine and conceptualize the neoclassical version of state power.

Neoclassical realism shares the view with its predecessors that international politics and the interactions between units within the international system can be described as a continuous struggle for power. They agree with structural realism that international anarchy is an influential factor that contributes to the search for power and security because there exists a prevalent uncertainty and a continuous presence of potential threats. This situation of anarchy results in an environment of self-help, where states can rely only on themselves to survive within the system. To accomplish this, leaders try to anticipate other states’ probable reactions to systemic incentives and power trends. One of the primary interests of neoclassical realists is thus explaining the foreign policy behavior and decisions of specific states. The theory should thereby be quite apt at explaining states’ policy decisions to hire and employ PMFs. However, that is not the prime goal of this research. What is, is whether PMFs have a positive or detrimental influence on state power—and this requires a sufficiently clear neoclassical conceptualization of the concept itself.

In terms of the material and relational power approach as described above, neoclassical realism initially seems to endorse the material conception of power. However, neoclassical

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117 Idem, p. 43.
realists assert that it is not just relative material capabilities that determine the actual power a state possesses. As Lobell et all assert: “power cannot be calculated solely on the basis of material factors.”  

Other elements of power are leadership, quality of forces, training, organization, and others. Neoclassical realists thus argue for flexibility in the definition, measurement and operationalization of the concept of power. Moreover, they conceptualize power as a means to an outcome, as a means to secure the interests of the state. This implies that an analysis of any actor’s or unit’s influence on power should include an assessment of the extent to which a (desired) outcome is reached. Consequently, to neoclassical realists, “the dominant pattern that arises from the exercise of power – that is, the foreign policy outcome [...] – is ‘influence maximization’.” This has some similarities to the relational power approach. However, whereas the relational power approach refers to the shaping of the behavior of others, influence maximization relates to the shaping of outcomes.

Neoclassical realism thus agrees with classical realism that interests are defined in terms of power—which are often conceptualized as the national power, or power-as-capabilities, approach, with the added factors of quality, training, organizational capabilities, etc. However, it adds that power also needs to be assessed as a means to an outcome.

There have been several attempts by neoclassical realists to conceptualize, and consequently measure, state power. Randall L. Schweller, for example, argues that there are three distinct measures of national power. These are military (forces in-being); industrial (war potential); and demographic (staying power and war-augmenting capability). According to Schweller, these three distinct measures should provide a reasonable accurate estimate of the power held by actors with respect to their fighting capabilities. Moreover, Schweller argues that in order to describe the character of (the struggle for) power, state interests and motivations need to be taken into account as well. Schweller thereby echoes classical realists, who argue that states hold differing interests, and diverges from structural realists, who maintain that states are motivated by the same interests.

Although Schweller provides more detail in the measurement of capabilities, his approach falls short when applied to the assessment of PMFs’ impact on state power. It leads

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120 Ibidem.
123 Ibidem.
125 Ibidem.
126 Idem, p. 545.
neoclassical analysts to a conclusion that exhibits the same logical fallacy as that reached by structural realists. The addition of extra military forces would mean an ipso facto increase of material capabilities and resources for the hiring state, and thereby an automatic increase in power overall.

Fareed Zakaria also made an attempt to conceptualize power. When measuring power, Zakaria argues, a distinction needs to be made between national power and state strength. The former is equated with traditional material resources as identified by classical and structural realists, while the latter is identified as the ability of a state’s government to “extract national power for its ends”, as well as the “capacity and cohesion to carry out its wishes.”127 The result of the combination of national power and state strength is state power, which can be defined as “that portion of national power the government can extract for its purposes and reflects the ease with which central decision-makers can achieve their ends.”128 According to Zakaria, this approach avoids the “pitfalls of the vague concept of power.”129

To neoclassical realists, states are unable to control or shape the environment they occupy without (an adequate amount of) state power. It is one of the few tools a state can harness to ensure security and assure survival. Most neoclassical realists, such as Zakaria, consequently describe states as influence-maximizers, rather than as security- or power-maximizers.130 This allows for greater flexibility in explaining how (or why) a state seeks to increase its power, as neoclassical realists argue that the pursuit of power is not caused by human nature nor by the anarchical structure of the international system.131

Consequently, neoclassical realists conceptualize power in terms of “the possession of specific assets or capabilities (or the perception of those capabilities), and as a means to realize specific outcomes.”132 This results in unit behavior that is influence-maximization, which relates to the shaping of outcomes.133 As Zakaria argues, “the best solution to the perennial problem of the uncertainty of international life is for a state to increase its control over that environment through the persistent expansion of its political interests abroad.”134 Neoclassical realists thereby put more focus on strategic or security interests and the means by which power is able to secure a specific outcome.

128 Ibidem.
131 Ibidem.
133 Ibidem.
• **Relevance to PMFs**

Realists, in sum, are the theorists of power politics. An assessment of a unit’s or actor’s impact on state power should therefore be done through a realist lens. With regard to the conceptualization of power, it can be concluded that an overwhelming majority of classical, structural, and even neoclassical realists endorse the national power approach, whereby power is defined in terms of the possession of material resources or capabilities. In addition to defining power in such terms, realists tend to associate power with military might, and war-fighting as the essence of state power. As Schmidt mentions, “power is largely defined in military terms by realists because they believe that force is the *ultima ratio* of international politics.”

Using this conceptualization, it is possible to analyze PMFs’ impact on state power—especially military provider firms, which have the most direct and immediate influence on a state’s war-fighting capabilities.

Conceptualizing state power in this manner—by equating state power with war-fighting—allows for an assessment of PMFs’ impact on state power in several ways. One is by analyzing whether PMFs—in this research Executive Outcomes and Blackwater—were successful in the conflict situations they participated in. However, research is then limited to whether a PMF was victorious in combat, which leads to a parsimonious conclusion, lacking explanatory depth. One element alone cannot determine state power. Neither is such analysis in spirit with the neoclassical realist theory, which stresses “explanatory accuracy in accounting for the world as it is, not as it should ideally be for the sake of theoretical convenience.”

Another method to conceptualize, define, or measure state power is by equating war-winning ability with military effectiveness. Winning wars is about winning battles. Winning battles depends on an army’s effectiveness at winning said individual battles. An army’s effectiveness is thereby determined by its military effectiveness. This conceptualization of state power does allow for a more thorough research consisting of more explanatory depth, as it accounts for attributes such as a military’s expertise, its training, quality, technology, organizational capabilities, etc. It thereby builds upon Zakaria’s concept of state power—specifically the national power component—while still staying true to the neoclassical realist dictum, which favors greater accuracy in exchange for determinacy.

If military effectiveness is considered a component of state power, how is it defined?

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Military effectiveness

There exists a substantial amount of literature on military effectiveness. The term is often used by analysts, defense specialists and military professionals, but at the same time holds a wide variety of meanings. It may refer to the readiness of forces to be deployed to the conflict’s location. It may also refer to the accomplishment of a mission in a combat zone. It could also refer to the attributes of a specific military organization: the quality of its leadership, its organizational capabilities, its training, its systems, etc. According to Risa Brooks and Elizabeth A. Stanley, the diverse use of the term military effectiveness poses “a challenge to developing a systematic and broadly shared understanding of what an effective military looks like and how to evaluate a military’s effectiveness.”

Molly Dunigan describes military effectiveness, with regard to PMFs, as: the structural integration of contractors into the military forces with which they are deployed; the cohesiveness of the collective identities of private and national military forces employed together; and the extent to which private companies operate in an ethical manner. Although this approach might be applicable to PMFs, it also highlights the extent to which firms operate in an ethical manner and in compliance with the laws of war—subjects this research eschews.

Dan Reiter and Allan C. Stam developed another method to assess military effectiveness by dividing it into two basic components: individual soldiering and organizational efficacy. Individual soldiering refers to the behavior of individuals on the battlefield: the willingness to lead others, execute orders, put lives on the line, resist the temptation of fleeing while under fire, and seize the initiative when it presents itself. Organizational efficacy refers to the ability of a military organization to execute those tasks that will “maximize troops’ chances of victory on the battlefield.” Organizational efficacy thus means carrying out tasks such as general planning, gathering intelligence, providing logistical support, preparing works such as entrenchments, tactical analysis, training, etc. Reiter and Stam’s focus on military effectiveness relates to an “army’s effectiveness at winning battles, that is, its battlefield military effectiveness.”

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139 Ibidem.
141 Ibidem.
143 Ibidem.
144 Ibidem.
145 Ibidem.
Both methods of assessing military effectiveness fall short when compared to Brooks and Stanley’s comprehensive method in analyzing military effectiveness, however. Brooks and Stanley build upon the (neoclassical realist) concept of national power and consider military effectiveness a primary attribute of military power, which in turn is a main component of state power. They define military effectiveness as “the capacity to create military power from a state’s basic resources in wealth, technology, population size, and human capital” and as such build upon the national power approach. Brooks and Stanley further develop, and measure, military effectiveness according to the degree to which a military force exhibits four “crucial attributes: the integration of military activity within and across different levels; responsiveness to internal constraints and the external environment; high skill, measured in the motivation and basic competencies of personnel; and high quality, as indicated by the caliber of a state’s weapons and equipment.” In sum, a force’s effectiveness is measured according to its integration, responsiveness, skill, and quality, which means that an effective military is one that “exhibits high levels of these four attributes.”

Integration is defined as “the degree to which different military activities are internally consistent and mutually reinforcing.” The relationship among strategic, operational, and tactical activity is considered essential, as well as the consistency in force deployment that furthers such activity, such as training and education, and communication and coordination practices. Strategic-level activity involves conceptions of how the military is to be organized in support of the fulfilment of desired objectives. Operational-activity refers to the method through which military force is employed within a conflict. Tactical-activity concerns to the engagement of units on the battlefield. The consistency in which strategic, operational, and tactical goals are achieved, consequently determines the integration of a military force.

Responsiveness is defined “the ability to tailor military activity to a state’s own capabilities, its adversaries’ capabilities, and external constraints.” It refers to a military’s capacity to respond to new information about itself, its opponents, its environment, and external constraints (including geographic, material, technological, social-cultural, or political limitations). Responsiveness ensures that a military is trained, equipped, organized and

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147 Idem, p. 9.
149 Idem, p. 10
150 Ibidem.
151 Ibidem.
152 Idem, p. 11.
structured according to its strategic environment. A responsive military knows its strengths and weaknesses, and modifies military activity accordingly.

Skill measures “military personnel and their units against some objective standard or benchmark in assessing their ability to achieve particular tasks and to carry out orders.”153 Indicators are the fluid assimilation of technology, the motivations of units and soldiers, and their proficiency at executing doctrine such as orders and maneuvers. In sum, it reflects the degree to which military personnel are capable and willing to undertake complex tasks in preparation for combat operations, as well as their proficiency at firing and maintaining (modern) weaponry.154 Skill thus closely matches Reiter and Stam’s notion of individual soldiering. In modern warfare, where the assimilation and use of new technologies and weapon systems are increasingly important, skill is an essential attribute. A military that has sophisticated technologies, but lacks the skill in using it, makes suboptimal use of its resources.

Finally, quality refers to a military’s ability to “provide itself with highly capable weapons and equipment.”155 Quality measures the ability of a military force to supply itself in preparation for, or during, a conflict with superior materiel. Organizational planning and procurement are essential elements of quality, as is the manner and form in which said materiel is used. All else constant, a state and its military force that are able to equip themselves with superior weaponry is often able to generate more power.

According to Brooks and Stanley, all four properties are vital to military effectiveness. A state that has shortcomings in one attribute will likely be disadvantaged, even crippled, in generating power should a conflict break out. Brooks and Stanley’s categorization of military properties is a remarkably comprehensive method for the assessment of the effectiveness of a particular military unit’s actions. It is also one of the most recent scholarly conceptions of military effectiveness to date.156 This research therefore uses Brooks and Stanley’s conceptualization of military effectiveness as an assessment of the state power component that is national power.

- **Application in regards to PMFs**

This conceptualization of state power, by equating it to military effectiveness, does allow for a more thorough research consisting of more explanatory depth. However, using military

154 Ibidem.
effectiveness alone as an indicator of state power in part bypasses the neoclassical conceptualization of state power, particularly the component state strength. It does not take a state’s interests or strategic intentions in consideration, nor does it examine what kind of outcomes PMFs were hired for to achieve—and to what extent said outcomes were achieved.

This is where this research builds upon Fareed Zakaria’s conceptualization of state power. Neoclassical realism in general, and Zakaria in particular, considers state power in terms of two mutually constitutive elements: power as capabilities/resources and power as a means to realize an outcome. This research will take this conception of state power as the groundwork for which PMFs’ impact on state power is analyzed. It means that, regardless of the parsimony and rigor this entails, an assessment of PMFs influence on a state’s material power, or rather a state’s war-fighting ability, is required. This is done by analyzing the impact of a particular military provider firm on its client state’s military effectiveness, instead of conducting a material power analysis or a simple determination concerning whether or not the firm was victorious in a certain conflict situation. Furthermore, and more importantly, the goals behind a state’s decision for hiring a PMF are determined in order to analyze to what extent the relevant firm was able to reach said goals and achieve the state’s strategic interests and desired outcomes.

This means that the analysis of Executive Outcome’s and Blackwater’s influence on respectively Sierra Leone’s and the United States’ state power has two separate components: national power and state strength. For the sake of structure and clarity, however, this research will first discuss the component state strength afore national power. Thus, first, a military provider firm’s influence on the hiring state’s strategic interests and desired outcomes is analyzed. This means that the initial goals or interests that the hiring state had when it contracted the PMF are discussed, and consequently an examination takes place to determine to what extent these goals were met and the desired outcome were fulfilled. Second, the influence of the PMFs on the power-as-capabilities approach is examined. Here, power-as-capabilities is equated to a firm’s war-fighting ability, meaning its military effectiveness in combat, which relates to the degree to which the military provider firm exhibited four crucial attributes: integration, responsiveness, skill, and quality.

Conducting this research in such a manner allows for a diverse, but specific, analysis of a military provider firm’s impact on the concept of state power. This, according to Gideon Rose, as well as Juneau and Schmidt, is “consistent with the eclecticism and flexibility that is at the
core of the neoclassical realist research program.”¹⁵⁷ Determinacy is thereby traded for greater accuracy in describing the impact a military provider firm on state power. This provides a more specific understanding and allows this research to account for the world as it is, not as it should ideally be for the sake of theoretical convenience. Rigor and parsimony are thereby sacrificed in favor of richness and detail, which is done in accordance to the spirit of neoclassical realism.

- **Neoclassical realism and the privatization of force**

An important, additional note to this section must be made. The hiring of foreign soldiers, mercenaries, or private military armies has been considered contradictory to the founding and existence of the modern nation state.¹⁵⁸ During the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century, non-state violence was attempted to be brought under control of the state. It seems, then, that the privatization of force is a conflicting and inconsistent movement in regards to that development. Does this mean that the start of the twenty-first century is dealing with the breakdown of the state’s monopoly of violence?

Taking this under deliberation, it seems even more contradictory that a theory such as neoclassical realism is used to help analyze a military provider firm’s impact on the concept of state power. After all, the privatization of force seems to tackle the core of state power. Moreover, realists are not only the theorists of power politics; they are also the theorists of the monopolization of power. The very act of outsourcing seems to run counter to the realist assertion that states seek to maximize power through self-sufficiency and thereby minimize their reliance on others.¹⁵⁹ Using neoclassical realism as a theoretical lens therefore seems counterintuitive, as the rise of PMFs may represent state retreat.

On the other hand, this development may also be considered state extension, as the following will point out.

Military firms can act both in support of and against a state’s interests. As Kevin O’brian notes, “By privatizing security and the use of violence, removing it from the domain of the state and giving it to private interests, the state in these instances is both being strengthened and disassembled.”¹⁶⁰ In historical times, the state itself has drawn extensively from private military sources to strengthen and centralize its power, as will become clear in the following section.¹⁶¹

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Looking at that historical trajectory of the employment of private force, over the last few centuries the state monopoly over violence has been the exception rather than the rule. During historical and medieval times, mercenary forces, whether lone units or organized companies, were not only present during warfare; they often dominated the battlefront. The privatization of warfare was an ordinary aspect of international politics and international relations long before the twentieth century. It was only after the French Revolution (1789) and the subsequent Napoleonic Wars (1789-1815) that the use of privatized forces saw a steep decline.

In regard to contemporary times, there has been another important development that has linked the privatization of force to the state itself. Military firms are tied to the state in various ways (despite the fact that such firms are often not accountable in the same way as national armies are, and their activities and decisions not subject to the same political process). First, PMFs are accountable to the state as they are legal, registered companies that are generally bound to their employer by recognized contracts and subject to national regulations. In most countries, the state’s government must license each military firm’s contract, which imposes regulations and accountability for the terms of employment. Such regulations, consequently, reduce the chances for conflict between the state and the military firm, thereby bringing the firm tighter under state control. Second, as firms’ revenue originates from their contracting government, who are often long-term clients, military firms want to comply with the interests and policies of their hiring states for their own benefit. Third, because of the importance of their own legitimacy and future contracts—since they are long-term market players—military firms try to act in the interest of their contracting state. They want to be seen as a reliable asset, and are thereby transformed into a sort of quasi state agent.

Additionally, many companies, such as Blackwater, are actually tied to their contracting state through personal and professional ties. They are dependent on their home country for the supply of professional retired ex-soldiers and officers. As such, they truly become a type of state agent. PMFs thereby act on behalf of their employer, despite the fact that a military firm may have more than one employer, and that the firm is a private structure apart from the state.

For these reasons, PMFs, when they are contracted, can to a certain extent be regarded as part of their hiring state. They face an economic pressure to stay loyal to their employer, as a fee will not be delivered unless the contract is fulfilled. Furthermore, employers provide the

164 Idem, p. 124, 148-150.
166 Idem, p. 91.
possibility of long-term benefits through renewals of contracts, the signing of new deals, etc. In short, corporate and economic, as well as security interests, provide military firms with a stake in the peace and stability of their contracting state. By supplying national power and state strength to their hiring country, they thereby promote their own interests simultaneously. Once under contract, therefore, military firms can be considered state agents. As Michelle Small mentions, by providing state-like functions, military firms “attain state-like agency in the sense they perform a core state sovereign function.”\(^{167}\) A military firm thereby functions as a tool that provides more, and more efficient, security and military services.\(^{168}\)

In sum, military provider firms such as Executive Outcomes or Blackwater have a powerful military capability. When military firms consequently act in an international manner, such as EO in Sierra Leone or Blackwater in Iraq, it is, as Anthony Vinci argues, “an extension of the state […] since it is the government that decides their strategic actions (while the PMCs tend to maintain control over their tactical decisions).”\(^{169}\) Consequently, a military firm can be regarded as an enabler of the state and its interests, by contributing to its state power. As such, they actually reinforce the state system.

The privatization of force can therefore be analyzed adequately enough through a neoclassical realist lens—particularly since military firms support the state and the national security executive in its survival, national interests, and foreign policy. As a result, as Perry describes: “Supplementing state militaries with contracted private forces enables states to generate additional military capabilities,” which in turn expands “the range of foreign policy options available to state leaders.”\(^{170}\) As such, PMFs can be regarded as a form of resource extraction as well, which allows states to create military forces and use them in pursuit of the national interest.\(^{171}\)

Neoclassical realism thus serves as a useful theoretical framework through which to analyze the impact of PMFs on the state as the theory provides a “unique synthesis of international and unit level variables.”\(^{172}\) A PMF can be conceptualized as a resource that creates and subsequently provides military forces. The military firm thereby acts as a state agent, as a vital partner of the state that employs it. In this form, the state agent makes it easier for a state’s national security executive to create military resources to deploy in service of

\(^{171}\) Idem, p. 15.
\(^{172}\) Idem, p. 10.
national strategic interests. This is because military and security services are delivered “cheaply and flexibly in ways that will enhance state security.”

In conclusion, neoclassical realism serves as a useful and applicable theoretical framework through which to analyze the impact of military provider firms on the state, and on the concept of state power. The neoclassical realist theory thereby offers an understanding of the privatization of force and the influence such privatization has on the clients that hire them.

Now that the neoclassical realist concept of state power, as well as its application to the privatization of force is discussed and properly explained, the private military industry will be discussed, starting with their historical context, leading up to the rise of the industry after the Cold War ended.

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3. Historical Insights

To understand the emerging forms of private military firms within the international security environment, and place them in a proper context in relation to their heritage, it is necessary to examine the evolution of the mercenaries and the companies they operated in.

Outsourcing war practices have deep roots in the world’s historical course and are certainly not a unique phenomenon of contemporary times. The purpose of this current section is somewhat different from the two cases researched in the latter sections—as those are relatively recent occurrences of modern private military firms acting as a direct military force for a particular state. This section aims to illuminate the protracted historical trajectory preceding the private military industry in armed conflicts and thereby show that it has long been an aspect of international relations and international politics—although not precisely in its current form.

This section therefore examines their activities from ancient times up until the arrival of the nation state, when the influence and presence of military companies diminished in light of the Peace of Westphalia and the French Revolution, and an increased skepticism towards the presence of such companies developed. It aims to discuss their activities as well as their impact and significance on the various states and civilizations they hired their services out to. Consequently, it explores how interrelated processes led to the reappearance of the industry at the end of the Cold War. This historical context of the development and rise of modern mercenary companies will provide an understanding of a state’s reasoning behind its decision to hire a private military firm. The aim of this section is thereby to provide the groundwork for comprehending the present military firms operating around the globe.

- The earliest mercenaries

Privateers, soldiers for hire, contract killers, corporate warriors, dogs of war: contracted soldiers go by many names. Historically, they are known as mercenaries. For as long as humanity has waged war, so have they existed. In some eras these private participants into conflicts were individual outsiders, brought in to fight for whatever state or side offered the most money. In other periods, they came in the form of organized and specialized entities.

In general, mercenaries have appeared in areas where there has been a breakdown of internal order; where conflict thrived. States or civilizations caught in such a war or civil

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unrest often resorted to the hiring of private contractors, whereby mercenaries functioned as a continuous and immediate source of military force and expertise.\textsuperscript{177} Moreover, countries hiring or supplying large amounts of mercenaries have been able to affect the internal balance of other areas and states around the world, while at the same time claiming neutrality.\textsuperscript{178}

In 1479 B.C., Egypt was one of the first recorded civilizations to utilize mercenaries instead of citizen armies.\textsuperscript{179} Fighting against the rival Mitanni Kingdom, Egypt had experienced a decline in influence in Syria and Palestine, and sought to restore its power through a series of military campaigns.\textsuperscript{180} Over the next centuries, Egypt actively recruited mercenary warriors and made them an integral part of the army, in the process expanding its kingdom, wealth and power.\textsuperscript{181} Over time, however, military might began to erode as mercenaries fought for riches instead of loyalty to the governing elite, which eventually led to the kingdom falling to the Persians in 525 B.C., and then to Alexander the Great and the Greeks in 332 B.C.

Aside from the Egyptians, the Greeks were one of the earliest populations whose name became synonymous with the word mercenary. The Greeks formed small city-states, all independent and often at war with each other over territories, resources and slaves. Each city maintained an army and navy, and utilized proficient and experienced soldiers willing to assume the mercenary lifestyle to wage war.\textsuperscript{182} The Greeks proved to be a gifted people, absorbing knowledge and military innovations from civilizations they met, and consequently incorporating them into military operations, improving their effectiveness.\textsuperscript{183} By the mid-sixth century B.C. and onwards, the Greek city-states were providing mercenaries throughout the Mediterranean and other overseas colonies, prospering off their violent profession.\textsuperscript{184}

From the eight till fourth century B.C. another kingdom had risen in North Africa: Carthage. Carthage had become prosperous through trade and resources, but it had one primary weakness in that its population was too small—which limited its expansionist capabilities. Instead it hired soldiers from Gaul, Spain, Italy and many other regions to provide security and secure interests. Over the next centuries, Carthage fought wars against Greek city-states and Rome, accomplishing various degrees of success, until they were defeated in the First Punic War (264-241 B.C.) by a Roman citizen army.\textsuperscript{185} However, although the Roman army was

\textsuperscript{177} Zarate, J.C. (1998), p. 82.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{179} Lanning, M.L. (2005), p. 3.
\textsuperscript{181} Lanning, M.L. (2005), p. 4.
\textsuperscript{182} Zarate, J.C. (1998), p. 82-83.
superior on land, it was highly inferior on sea. It was not until the Romans hired mercenary naval-officers from among the Greek city-states that Carthage’s naval power was defeated. Notably, the Roman victory was also aided by a revolt among Carthage’s mercenary forces, which was caused by a lack of pay. The revolt become known as the Mercenary War, which aided the Romans in their subsequent defeat of Carthage. The revolt thereby brought to light major disadvantages inherent to an almost entirely mercenary army: limited loyalty, allegiance dependent on pecuniary interest, and the reluctance to fight for a cause not their own.

Forced to pay restitution, Carthage was economically crippled. It began to rebuild its navy to regain its control over shipping lanes and commerce. Once the Kingdom’s coffers were replenished, Carthage crossed into Spain to gain control of silver mines and mercenaries, and to establish a base for military operations. Under the rule of Hannibal, Carthage set out from Spain with an army of mostly hired, expert soldiers, and initiated the Second Punic War (218-202 B.C.) in an attempt to conquer Rome. The war ended when Carthage was driven out of Spain. The loss of that region caused Carthage to lose a skillful source of mercenaries, along with silver mines that were needed to finance the use of hired soldiers from other areas. Bereft of these incomes, Carthage’s military power dwindled. Ultimately, without mercenaries to defend their territory and provide security, the Carthaginian city-state was sacked and destroyed by Rome in 146 B.C.

- **The first companies**

Hired soldiers continued to fill armies for many years. During the Middle Ages, when war was common but standing armies difficult to raise, mercenaries were used all across Europe. Kings and lords were forced to hire soldiers when they wished to launch offensive military expeditions. The proliferation of these private forces often coincided with rising situations of instability, such as severe changes in political systems, breakdowns of internal orders, territorial expansionist projects, or (continental) wars. This became especially clear at the end of the Hundred Years War period (1337-1453). This long war and its intermittent periods

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189 Lanning, M.L. (2005), p. 25-30. Also, even though Rome was famous for its citizen army, it too became very much reliant on mercenaries; hiring soldiers for specialized roles as archers, cavalry and naval roles. As the empire grew over time and it became increasingly harder to recruit native Romans, the army eventually ended up being more Germanic, and thereby mercenary in nature, than Roman.
of peace and inactivity had produced large amounts of soldiers—often experienced, unemployed and unwelcome in the countries they had fought for. Reluctant to give up fighting and go home, many of such soldiers formed free companies, designed to help expedite employment as a group or provide some measure of security for the individual mercenary.

These first companies evolved into permanent military organizations that were regularly under employment of one or more rulers or districts. In time, the agreements the companies signed with their contractors become more detailed, specifying the length of service, number of men hired, amount of pay accorded, etc. These agreements or contracts, known as condotte, stipulated the military-service terms between the soldiers and states that hired them.

Although the strength and usefulness of the free companies was not often contested, their loyalty was fickle and their willingness to fight was at times underestimated. For instance, in 1311 the Grand Catalan Company betrayed its employer, the Duke of Athens, and established a duchy in the city—where the company and its reign survived for sixty-three years. Also, in 1392, King John II of France attempted to destroy the free companies operating within his country. The companies, however, united into one army and defeated the king’s feudal force at the battle of Brignais. The accomplishment sent panic throughout the country, but the companies, having no actual political agenda, dissolved without a unity of purpose.

At the end of the fourteenth century many free companies had crossed into Italy, looking for a more fixed term of employment. They became known as condottieri, after the name of the contract. For most of the period between the thirteenth and fifteenth century, Italian city-states and sovereigns did not have the means to raise armies from among their own citizenry; the city-states were too small and predominantly merchant-like in nature. Due to manufacturing, trade and commerce they did amass great wealth, however, allowing them to actively recruit mercenaries in the form of condottieri companies—which were safer to hire than potential rivals from their own respective regions. Moreover, hiring outside professionals did not disrupt the profitable economy by forcing normal citizens into military service.

193 Mockler, A. (1970), p. 44.
197 Ibidem.
The condottieri themselves offered specialized skills, detailed organization, tactics and command structure, superior leadership, and often more advanced weaponry. When serving individually instead of in companies, mercenary soldiers acted as force multipliers, increasing the combat potential and effectiveness of the military units they operated in.\textsuperscript{200} The companies were often successful in battle and thereby had an immense influence on the Italian powers at the time. They forcefully brought smaller city-states under control of larger powers, creating an environment that eventually proved to be beneficial to the emergence of the Italian renaissance and thereby to the overall wealth and influence of the Italian rulers contracting the mercenary forces.\textsuperscript{201}

- **The decline of privatized forces**

The use of mercenary forces, or free companies, saw a gradual decline in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Sovereigns, states and cities came to regard the private units as a threat to their own security, or feared they were losing their independence to outside forces.\textsuperscript{202} Sometimes the condottieri proved to be detrimental to military effectiveness, as their profit-motivated nature meant they were susceptible to bribery. One of the earliest realists in history, the Italian military theorist and writer Niccolo Machiavelli, wrote a lasting conviction of the Italian condottieri:

> “The mercenaries and auxiliaries are useless and dangerous, and if anyone supports his state by the arms of mercenaries, he will never stand firm or sure, as they are disunited, ambitious, without discipline, faithless, bold amongst friends, cowardly amongst enemies, they have no fear of God, and keep no faith with men. Ruin is only deferred as long as assault is postponed; in peace you are despoiled by them, and in war by the enemy. The cause of this is that they have no love or other motive to keep them in the field beyond a trifling wage, which is not enough to make them ready to die for you. They are quite willing to be your soldiers as long as you do not make war.”

(Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 1532)

In response, rulers began to build up their own professional forces and attempted to subsume the condottieri into state armies. It was an occurrence that became more common from the seventeenth century onwards, particularly after the Peace of Westphalia (1648), which strengthened the emergence of the state and the importance of its sovereignty over affairs within its own borders.\textsuperscript{203} This build-up of state-like armies also coincided with the evolution of

\textsuperscript{200} Dunigan, M. (2011), p. 130-131
\textsuperscript{201} Lanning, M.L. (2005), p 48-51.
warfare in Europe. War became a massive and expensive undertaking, with the costs of artillery, ammunition and materiel (which were increasingly used in battles) rising above the costs of condottieri companies.\textsuperscript{204} Despite these developments, however, states used hired units well into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Swiss were a major supplier of troops and officers, especially to France.\textsuperscript{205} The German Landsknechts served throughout Europe, and the latter Hessians on the American continent.\textsuperscript{206} Other examples of mercenary forces include the Irish Wild Geese and the Nepalese Gurkhas. Increasingly, though, state authorities controlled the usage of such forces, and their numbers as well as activity diminished.\textsuperscript{207}

The French Revolution (1789) and the subsequent Napoleonic Wars (1789-1815) signaled the end of hired soldiers fulfilling an important role in warfare for the next two centuries.\textsuperscript{208} The consolidation of authority, and the notion of nation-state sovereignty in most European states, turned out to be decisive factors in the diminishing use of mercenary forces. States began to pass neutrality laws, which in most cases prohibited their citizens from enlisting in foreign armies.\textsuperscript{209} Large numbers of soldiers were thus available through the conscription of citizens instead of through outside hiring. Armed forces thereby became citizen-armies, which were regarded as the representation of the nation-state.\textsuperscript{210} Numerical advantages on the battlefield also became more important than some of the specialized skills offered by the free companies.\textsuperscript{211} It made mercenary armies almost obsolete as only the state, with its considerable resources of production and manpower, had the capability and capacity to undertake large-scale conflict—and thereby protect its territory, secure its interests and ensure security and survival.

The state began to develop a monopoly over the business of war and came to dominate military power in the international system.\textsuperscript{212} The golden age of mercenary armies, it seemed, had come to an end.

- Re-emergence of PMFs

For nearly two centuries onwards the accepted international norm continued to be that only nation-states fought wars. This changed rather rapidly with the end of the Cold War, as

\textsuperscript{206} Mockler, A. (1970), p. 5.
\textsuperscript{211} Ibidem.
discussed above.\textsuperscript{213} With the Cold War at an end, states on both sides of the conflict undertook a military downsizing, which resulted in a surplus of unemployed ex-military personnel in the West, the Soviet sphere, and South Africa. Furthermore, the consequent financial problems in ex-Soviet states led to a large scale removal of Soviet-era military weaponry and equipment that was sold to private actors.\textsuperscript{214} As a result “post-Cold War force reductions produced a ready supply of both men and materiel that private industry snapped up.”\textsuperscript{215} New conflicts arose, which, as Deborah Avant writes, “unleashed disorder and demands for intervention.”\textsuperscript{216} Consequently, when the west did not respond, “PMSCs provided a stop-gap tool for meeting greater demands with smaller forces.”\textsuperscript{217}

One of the first major companies that undertook active military operations for a hiring state, and which had a significant impact on world events, was the privately owned company called Executive Outcomes. This military firm will be discussed in greater detail in the next sections. Suffice to say for now that EO was a company founded in 1989 by Eeben Barlow, a former assistant commander of the 32\textsuperscript{nd} battalion of the South African Defence Forces (SADF). It operated in various conflicts throughout the African continent during the 1990’s, most markedly Angola, Sierra Leone, Congo, and later Burundi.\textsuperscript{218} Barlow had founded Executive Outcomes because, according to him, “the Cold War left a huge vacuum and I identified a niche in the market.”\textsuperscript{219} Singer mentions that the company was considered one of the most effective military provider firms because of its “ability to organize and deploy an elite fighting force in a matter of days.”\textsuperscript{220}

Executive Outcomes undertook its first important operation in 1993 in Angola (although it must be mentioned that mercenaries have played a part in the Angolan conflict on several occasions before and after). Here, a civil war was raging between the democratically elected government led by the MPLA and the rebel National Union for the Total Independence of

\textsuperscript{215} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{217} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{219} Idem, p. 101.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibidem.
Angola (UNITA) forces. Within days after signing the contract, the military provider firm had launched an eighty-man commando unit, which was backed by two Angolan battalions, to assault and retake the fields. After brief but heavy combat they managed to seize the oil installations. With the income regained from the fields, the Angolan government was able to recover the costs incurred for Executive Outcome’s military assistance.

Additional profits from the fields went to further contracts made with the private firm. These contracts included the provision of security for natural resources, as well as military advisory training. Angola was thereby able to raise an army of five-thousand infantrymen, including counter guerilla professionals and pilot officers, and markedly improved their military effectiveness. Executive Outcomes supplied infrared capabilities, fuel air bombs, advanced communications, reconnaissance, and increased air power in the form of helicopter gunships and various MiG fighter aircrafts. EO forces, combined with Angolan army units they had trained, continued their success against UNITA, retaking major cities, towns, and oil facilities with great speed. This resulted into the establishment of a ceasefire and a peace accord (the Lusaka Peace Agreement) signed between the government and the rebels, thereby improving the country’s security situation and creating a peace—albeit a temporary one. One of UNITA’s demands, however, was a provision that demanded the exit of the military firm from the country upon signing of the accord. With the departure of EO, UNITA rebels resumed their attempt to seize the country and its natural resources. Within a year, the rebels had once again captured the oil fields and severely deteriorated the security situation within the region.

The Soyo operations, however, did demonstrate the worth of hiring a modern, privately owned military firm in deterring military threats posed by rebel forces or local insurgencies. Despite the small numbers involved—Executive Outcomes never had more than 500 men in Angola compared to the Angolan armed forces of more than 100.000 men—it is regarded as having played a critical part in securing victory for the government forces. The conflict was also of significance in that it was the first real demonstration of Executive Outcome’s combat

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221 These rebel forces had steadily begun to take over the country after the Soviet Union had withdrawn its support from Angola after the Cold War, attempting to take control of the natural resources (such as oil fields and diamond mines) located within the country’s borders.
223 Ibidem.
capabilities and thereby paved the way for the signing of future contracts. For a minimum cost, the Angolan government had managed to acquire a relatively effective army without the necessity of help from the United Nations or neighboring countries. To Western countries too it showed the value of a private military firm. PMFs could serve as a useful tool to project military power abroad without the enormous costs to the treasury accompanied by sending an entire army overseas.

Executive Outcomes had thus proven that a PMF could have a beneficial impact on a state’s security situation, by fulfilling a state’s interests and in enhancing its military effectiveness. This is probably what motivated the Sierra Leone government to hire the company in 1995.

- **Evaluation**

  Looking back at the history of private actors in warfare, certain patterns can be distinguished. First, the demand for troops has been linked to the nature of warfare. When quality was more important than quantity, mercenaries thrived. Due to their superior organization, experience, tactics and weaponry, skilled professionals were more valuable than ill-trained citizen soldiers. Conversely, when quantity became a dominant force in warfare, especially after the Peace of Westphalia and the French Revolution, hired troops became less relied upon. This changed once again after the Cold War, when technological advanced and expertly led, trained and maintained forces became more important in conflicts.

  Second, private military forces thrived in areas of weak governance—usually where a large number of states were in close proximity to each other, but unable carve out a dominant position within the region or the system as a whole. The Greek and Italian city-states, the many principalities and monarchs during the Middle Ages, and more recently the failing or unstable states in Africa are all examples of this.

  Third, private military firms have most often bloomed in periods of systemic transition, when certain governments were weakened and powerful capabilities or large-scale militaries were available on the open market, as occurred after the Cold War when military apparatuses were reformed and diminished, and large quantities of military expertise became available on the market.

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A valuable realization of this recounting is the consistency in the activity these military firms have shown in warfare and conflicts throughout the ages. There is a general assumption in war that it is mostly engaged in by states and their national militaries. Both history and contemporary events, however, show us differently. Rulers or states did not have the monopoly on violence and war. Instead, they were often highly reliant on the supply of private forces to accumulate power, to serve their interests, or to assure survival in a hostile environment. The rise of private military companies in a post-Cold War world is therefore not a unique phenomenon. Instead, it is a prime example of history repeating itself. Executive Outcomes and other new military companies are thus modern manifestations of an old phenomenon. These are the new condottieri, functioning as state assets.

The next section will discuss the various sorts of PMFs operating in today’s international security environment. It will establish linkages between the types of firms that exist and the military functions they perform. Such linkages will reveal, to an extent, what level of force a firm is able to project and provide. This enables this research to further explore the impact of PMFs on state power—and consequentially whether such impact is beneficial or detrimental.

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4. Classification

Today’s privatized military entities in the form of PMFs share both similarities with, and departures from, the historical forms of contract soldiers such as the free companies and the condottieri. One aspect in which they differ is that current private military firms have developed a method of operation compatible with the needs and constrains present in the post-Cold War world, centered around the state-based international system. They present a distinct corporate image in that they are structured as firms and operate as businesses, exhibiting a hierarchical organization with boards of directors and share-holders to survive in the global market.

Any examination of PMFs’ impact on state power must include a definition of the object: the people, activities and firms that provide military and security services. In practice, terms including ‘mercenary’, ‘private military firm’, and ‘security company’ cover a wide range of different people, corporations and activities. Discussing the various sorts of PMFs operating in today’s military industry is therefore necessary for several reasons. The primary reason is methodological: to compare cases of modern-day PMF deployment to determine the kind of impact PMFs have on state power, it is necessary to have a clear conception of what constitutes a PMF and what kind of military firm this research focusses on. Classifying the firms makes such research more manageable and specific by providing relevant groups of the various firms spanning the globe. Moreover, it allows us to establish linkages between the types of firms and the military functions they perform. Such linkages reveal what level of force a firm is able to provide. This enables the research to further explore the impact of PMFs on state power—and consequentially whether such impact is beneficial or detrimental.

This section discusses the various typologies dealing with private military firms. It makes a distinction between the firms operating around the world, by differentiating between the level of force a firm is able to provide. Examples of companies falling under each denominator will be included throughout. Through such an analysis it will become clear why so few companies can be classified as military provider firms—which are the main objects of analysis—and why this research consequently focusses on two particular cases only: namely Executive Outcomes and Blackwater. Such an examination will demonstrate why, in contrast to other firms operating within the privatized military industry, the above-mentioned companies have a direct and immediate impact on state power. This section thus provides the groundwork for an analysis into the type of companies that EO and Blackwater are, and the sort of influence they exert on state power in the neoclassical sense of the word.

• **Typologies**

A basic definition, provided by the Oxford English Dictionary, describes a mercenary as a “professional soldier serving a foreign power.” This is a wide definition. It includes many different people engaged in the private military industry, but also those operating within national states’ militaries. For example, the Swiss Guard in the Vatican would be classified as a mercenary, as well as the French Foreign Legion or troops in the British Army recruited from Commonwealth countries.\(^{235}\)

Another definition is provided by the United Nations. Although it is the most widely used, it is not a universally accepted definition of mercenaries. Article 47, Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions defines a mercenary based on six criteria, all of which must be met:

2. A mercenary is any person who:

   (a) is specially recruited locally or abroad in order to fight in an armed conflict;
   (b) does, in fact, take a direct part in the hostilities;
   (c) is motivated to take part in the hostilities essentially by the desire for private gain and, in fact, is promised, by or on behalf of a Party to the conflict, material compensation substantially in excess of that promised or paid to combatants of similar ranks and functions in the armed forces of that Party;
   (d) is neither a national of a Party to the conflict nor a resident of territory controlled by a Party to the conflict;
   (e) is not a member of the armed forces of a Party to the conflict; and
   (f) has not been sent by a State which is not a Party to the conflict on official duty as a member of its armed forces.

(Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions, 1997)

This definition, however, is unusable not only for the purpose of this research, but also in practice. Contracts with people or companies accused of mercenary activities can be drafted so that those employed under them fall outside the definition provided by the convention. For example, in 1997 Sandline International signed a contract with Papua New Guinea whereby its employees were designated as Special Constables. Under that denominator, they would not be classified as mercenaries because they would not fall under section 2(e) of the article; they would have been members of the armed forces of a party to the conflict.\(^{236}\)

In practice, a broad spectrum of companies and people may be involved in the supply of military services in foreign lands. These include: mercenaries in the traditions sense; volunteers; servicemen enlisted in foreign armies; defense industrial companies; and private


\(^{236}\) Idem, p. 7.
military and security firms.\textsuperscript{237} This research focusses on private military companies, but requires the development of a more analytical definition in order to differentiate between the actors—particularly the military firms—functioning within the industry as they provide a wide range of services.

The most common analytic division made within the industry is that between private security companies (PSCs) and private military companies (PMCs).\textsuperscript{238} In many respects, this division reflects the separation of state security services between the police and the military forces. The first type, PSCs, specialize in the provision of protection services for people and/or assets.\textsuperscript{239} They provide defensive security services, including equipment and training for professional armies, multinational corporations, individuals, humanitarian agencies, and others.\textsuperscript{240} Their provision of security often resembles that of police and other security enforcement institutions. These capabilities indicate the capacity for playing a role in the preparation for, or the commission of, armed operations without PSC employees actually engaging in fire or combative operations.

PMCs on the other hand provide a more immediate, or as Dave Whyte calls it, “proximate capacity” for violence.\textsuperscript{241} They offer additional offensive and tactical military services, and are more combat orientated. Furthermore, they are mostly contracted by governments to increase military capabilities and specializations. Whyte argues that the services offered by PMCs “enhance the ability of state military and paramilitary forces to wage war and engage in lethal force.”\textsuperscript{242} It should be noted, however, that in our contemporary world PMCs have increasingly been contracted by states and international organizations to perform tasks such as intelligence analyzing; training, modernizing and restructuring of armed forces; operating technologically advanced military systems; providing transportation; clearing minefields; protecting strategic interests; interrogating prisoners, and many others. Some of these tasks border on those performed by PSCs, which leads several analysts to propose a further analytical subdivision of them based on the extent of their involvement in military operations.

\textsuperscript{242} Ibidem.
- **Tip of the Spear**

One of the most common classifications, called the ‘tip of the spear’ typology, is developed and popularized by Singer, who is considered the “most comprehensive and thoughtful student of modern PMCs.”

This typology categorizes firms into military provider firms, military consulting firms, and military support firms. They are distinguished by the range of services they provide, the amount of force they supply, and their proximity to the frontline of the battlefield. The figure below displays a graphical representation of Singer’s typology.

Military Provider Firms engage in “actual fighting, either as line units or specialists and/or direct command and control of field units.” These firms operate closest to the military action and thereby represent the tip of the spear. They are the only firms able to function as “all-purpose combat-capable military formations capable of insurgent suppression, peacekeeping, and country-building missions.” Provider firms have the capability of bearing the entire combat load. They are private armies, able to stand-in for state armies, and in this their origins date back to the mercenary companies of the Middle Ages and Renaissance period. Compared to other private military or security firms, they are distinguished by their capability to conduct active defense and complete offensive operations, they have an immediate

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245 Idem, p. 92.  
247 Ibidem.
capacity for violence, and secure objects or goals in a lethal manner. They project lethal force, of the type projected by state militaries, in high-risk security operations in volatile areas of the world, and thereby act as, or represent, national militaries.

Major cases of these type of privatized military suppliers are Executive Outcomes (which is considered the first post-Cold War era military provider firm), Sandline, and more recently Blackwater. These firms have run operations in Angola, Sierra Leone, Papa New Guinea, Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. Less known military provider firms, due to the unavailability of comprehensive information relating to these companies, are Défence Conseil International (DCI) and Geolink in France; Beni Tal Security (BTS) and Silver Shadow in Israel; and Gurkha Security Services Ltd. and Saracen International Ltd. in the United Kingdom.  

Another example is a Russian-based company called Sukhoi Design Bureau, which made a deal with Ethiopia to deliver Su-27s fighter aircrafts for its war against Eritrea. As part of the sales agreement, Sukhoi reportedly incorporated former Russian military pilots, ground personnel and mechanics. It thereby supplied a small, but complete airforce to Ethiopia—a country previously lacking trained aviators. According to Singer, typical clients of military provider firms tend to be those with a “comparatively low military capability, faced with immediate, high threat situations.” In sum, those countries facing an urgent threat to the security and survival of their nation.

An important note must be made here. Although the firms in this sector potentially have the most influence on states and their military effectiveness on account of their ability to project direct force, these companies also tend to attract considerable negative public attention. This causes them to be at greater risk of regulations being implemented to manage their business, resulting in possible damaging consequences to their operations. Consequently, firms within the sector often deny any claims connected to their provision of military combat services, instead asserting they merely provide advice or training. Ergo, “identifying the specific firms within this sector is often a daunting task.”

Military Consulting Firms provide training and advice, and offer “strategic, operational, and/or organizational analysis.” Singer explains that the crucial difference between military provider firms and these type of firms is that the latter do not operate on the battlefield itself.

251 Ibidem.
252 Ibidem.
Their employees may not engage in direct combat activities. Although these firms influence the strategic and military environment of the hiring country, “it is the client who bears the final risks on the battlefield.”\textsuperscript{253} Such firms thereby have less direct impact on military operations. Typical clients of these firms are usually undergoing military restructuring or are aiming to increase their capabilities in the long run. Singer states: “Their needs are often not as immediate as those who hire firms in the provider sector.”\textsuperscript{254} Examples include companies as L-3 Military Professional Resources Inc. (MPRI), Spearhead Limited, WatchGuard International Ltd., Globe Risk International (GRI), G4S, Saladin Security, Aegis Defence Services Ltd, McKinsey and several others.

Among these, MPRI is one of the most well-known firms in the military consulting sector, chiefly because of its operations in the Yugoslav Wars. During this war, in 1994, MPRI signed a contract to help transform the Croatian army into a professional force. In a matter of months, MPRI managed to have a “beneficial effect on the tactical abilities of the Croatian military.”\textsuperscript{255} The training supplied by MPRI brought about a “dramatic organizational and attitudinal transformation in the Croatian forces … which likely helped Croatian military morale and discipline.”\textsuperscript{256} MPRI was thereby “pivotal in the resurgence of the Croatian military and the recapture of critical Croatian territory.”\textsuperscript{257} As the biggest U.S. firm in consultancy and training, MPRI officials have boasted that the company can even muster more generals than the Pentagon.\textsuperscript{258} The company has taken on training roles and has given military assistance to foreign governments on behalf of the U.S. Defense Department.\textsuperscript{259} The company is able to provide the same services as the U.S. military, but at a cheaper price and with minimal political risk for the government itself, compared to a situation where it would have to deploy its own U.S. advisors or troops.\textsuperscript{260} MPRI is thereby frequently accused of being a government proxy.\textsuperscript{261} As the firm does not take contracts which do not have U.S. government approval, this assertion is a valid one.\textsuperscript{262} In the case of MPRI and its exceptionally close ties to the U.S. government, the company certainly seems to have functioned as an instrument of U.S. policy in the Balkans.

\textsuperscript{254} Idem, p. 96.
\textsuperscript{257} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{260} Ibidem.
The overall difference between a military provider firm as EO, and a military consulting firm like MPRI is described succinctly by Shearer in the following quote, which shows that the impact of military provider firms are more direct, immediate and forceful.263

“EO has been directly involved in combat; MPRI claims to work only in a training capacity. A senior MPRI employee compared the two companies thus in July 1997: “when a fire is raging a government may call in EO. But when the fire has been put out, we … install the necessary precautions to ensure it won’t start again.”” (Shearer, 1998)

Military consulting firms, in sum, have not been involved in combat operations. MPRI, for instance, does not allow its employees to be armed and has turned down offers for operations requiring armed personnel.264

Finally, Military Support Firms offer nonlethal support functions, filling needs such as logistics, transportation, technical support, supply, and intelligence. These firms consequently “specialize in secondary tasks not part of the overall core mission of the client.”265 This sector is the largest in scope and income. Examples include Brown and Root Services (BRS), Halliburn, AirScan, Bristow Group, DynCorp International, Vinnell Corporation, Skylink Aviation, and many more. BRS, for example, started as an oil well cementing company in 1919. The company later got involved in operations in the Persian Gulf War, the crisis in Yugoslavia, and during operations in Iraq. Finding military deployment towards support and logistics a lucrative venture in which to invest its resources, BRS grew into a multi-billion dollar company. Outsourcing its program to the military logistical support business provided the company with a valuable growth factor and steady source of income.266

Analytically, it can be concluded that military provider firms occupy one end of a spectrum of PMCs based on their lethality and closeness to the frontlines. The other end includes companies specialized in tasks such as the distribution of various sorts of non-combat orientated activities (i.e. training and logistical support). This research focusses on companies resembling Singer’s military provider firms: those closest to the battlefront, engaged in actual fighting, with an immediate capacity for violence.

**Other categorizations**

Singer mentions that his typology is “a conceptual framework rather than a fixed definition of each and every firm.” Other classifications have been developed by Avant and Christopher Singer. Avant, for example, makes a contribution to the classification by focusing on the use of contracts as the unit of analysis, instead of firms. Avant distinguishes between internal (or domestic) and external (or foreign) security support, and subdivides each into three categories of services. Internal security support includes armed and unarmed site security, crime prevention, and intelligence—and thereby represents the police side of state security services. External security support involves operational support, military advice and training, and logistical support—and thereby represents the military side of state security services. These categories can be organized according to their closeness to the frontline and the amount of force they can supply. Firms providing armed operational support can be equated with military provider firms and are thus of particular interest to this research. Molly Dunigan points to the strength of this typology, stating that it “allows the analyst to look at a certain firm based on its activities in a certain situation, rather than generalizing about the firm based on outdated notions of the services it provides.”

Kinsey developed a typology based on the object to be secured and the means employed to secure the object. The object to be secured can be placed along a range between private and public interests within the international environment, while the means of securing the object take place between non-lethal and lethal measures. An actor securing an object in a relatively non-lethal manner would thus represent a conventional police force or an unarmed guard, while an actor securing an object with lethal force can be compared to an army fighting a war. Kinsey consequently differentiates between private and public objects to be secured. Private objects to be secured can be “purchased by anyone able to afford it” or include instances where a local population is forced to secure their own private objects in an environment where state responsibility has broken down—as may happen in Somalia, Sudan, Syria or Iraq. Public objects, on the other hand, are objects of which the security is the responsibility of the state.

Of interests to this research are companies securing objects in a lethal manner. Such companies can consequently be divided into those securing private or public objects.

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272 Ibidem.
273 Idem, p. 11-12.
Companies providing lethal support to private goods usually operate in an environment where states are unable to provide security. In such circumstances they often protect assets owned by oil or mining companies, or other large multinational companies. This sector is also home to the classic mercenary, as described by the Geneva Conventions.\textsuperscript{274} Companies securing public objects in a lethal manner, on the other hand, fall under the control of the state and operate at the strategic level of state responsibility, functioning as a state agent. According to Kinsey, they “project lethal force … in support of the public good.”\textsuperscript{275}

Both Avant’s and Kinsey’s typologies thus classify military provider firms almost identical to Singer. However, whereas Singer concentrates on the services provided, Avant looks at a firm’s activities in a certain situation, and looks at the manner and form in which a company secures an object.

- **Case selection**

Neither Singer’s, Avant’s or Kinsey’s classification systems work in all circumstances, nor are they meant to. All models serve their purpose and provide a conceptual framework of analysis, overlapping on many areas with their classification and categorization of activities. As the core of each typology’s conceptualization and identification of a military provider firm remains basically identical, this research focusses on Singer’s military provider firms. Such firms provide activities centered on armed operational support, they secure objects in a lethal manner, and operate at the strategic level of state security. By defining the object of analysis so specific, the cases under research are limited to only a few companies.

This selection is narrowed down further because of the limited amount of information available due the inherent secretive nature of the business. Information about private military activity abroad is hard to acquire and often unreliable, which makes an accurate analysis of the extent and impact of the industry a difficult undertaking.\textsuperscript{276} For instance, a company such as AirScan has signed security and support contracts stipulating the protection of oil installations, fisheries, U.S. military space launch sites, and classified U.S. government assets.\textsuperscript{277} However, and more importantly, the company has also alleged been involved in the Angolan-Congolose intervention in Brazzaville in 1997 to remove the democratically elected president Pascal

\textsuperscript{275} Ibidem.
Lissouba, whereby it participated in combat operations.\textsuperscript{278} No official reports exist, however, which makes the verification of AirScan operating as a military provider firm near impossible, and an analysis into its influence of state power even more so.\textsuperscript{279}

There are other firms that are suspected of having provided direct military force in combat situations. Some commentators (such as Larry Isaac and Daniel Harrison) maintain that DynCorp is a military provider firm, quoting Singer in that the company engages in “actual fighting, either as line units or specialists.”\textsuperscript{280} To what extent this is true remains a point of contestation. According to DynCorp’s site, the company is mainly focused on aviation maintenance, intelligence training, security services, and logistical support.\textsuperscript{281} The firm is all that and more. DynCorp has been involved in anti-drug and rebel operations in Columbia. Its personnel fought in “counterinsurgency operations against the Columbian rebel groups” and had acquired a reputation for being “far too willing to get ‘wet’, going out on frequent combat missions and engaging in firefights.”\textsuperscript{282} Again, though, detailed accounts of the operations available to the general public are severely lacking, which makes a proper assessment difficult.

The specific defining of this research’s object of analysis, as well as the limited availability of analyzable cases, limits the research to three companies: Executive Outcomes, Sandline International and Blackwater. These firms have acted as an operational military provider, as field units capable of co-deployment with national forces, as well as units capable of being deployed in place of them, including in conflicts where no credible national forces existed.\textsuperscript{283} Of these, Sandline is considered the sister company to EO.\textsuperscript{284} The company began to operate as EO’s successor after termination of the firm’s operations in January 1999. Its management and personnel are largely the same, as well as its employee base from which it draws its soldiers.\textsuperscript{285} According to Axelrod, historians have commented that “EO and Sandline may actually have operated simultaneously for a time in Sierra Leone, and they claim it was often impossible to tell which operations were EO’s and which Sandline’s.”\textsuperscript{286} The fact that

\textsuperscript{278}Musah, A.-F., Kayode Fayemi, J. (2000), p. 188.
\textsuperscript{279}Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{283}Idem, p. 299.
\textsuperscript{285}Idem, p. 60-61.
\textsuperscript{286}Axelrod, A. (2014), p
both companies were subsidiaries of a larger South African venture-capital firm called the Strategic Resource Corporation (SRC) group did not help in battling this view.  

There are other firms that at one point or another could have been categorized as a military provider firm, such as Sukhoi Design Bureau, SCI and NFD, but none provided the same level of force, nor operated at the same scope of lethality, as EO, Sandline and Blackwater.

- **Concluding remarks**

It may seem to some analysts that due to the diversity and volatility of the industry—including the many corporation closures, acquisitions and mergers, as well as the various types of contracts that are being signed—the idea of classifying the industry is an aimless or unattainable undertaking. However, different types of PMFs pose different types of normative and policy questions, which makes an analytical division necessary. Moreover, on a more theoretical level, the above classifications provide a sort of toolkit, a common language, which is essential for the formulation of hypotheses and research aimed at discerning the influence of the private military industry on issues as peace, security, state interests, survival, and power.

The remainder of this research therefore draws on the above typologies and classifications to understand the influence of the private military industry on state power. The cases under research are rare occurrences of military provider firms acting as a national military force within the international system and international politics. They project lethal force, of the type projected by state militaries, in high-risk security operations in volatile areas of the world.

The following sections will analyze the influence of Executive Outcomes and Blackwater on state power. It will also discuss to what extent EO and Blackwater meet the criteria of Singer, Avant’s and Kinsey’s overlapping typology, and consequently determine why Executive Outcomes and Blackwater can be labelled as military provider firms. Analyzing the impact of military firms on two different types of states—namely a developing state such as Sierra Leone, and a developed state such as the U.S.—allows for a diverse, but specific, research that favors richness and detail.
5. Case I: Executive Outcomes in Sierra Leone

The end of the Cold War saw a proliferation of intra-state conflicts in Africa, often with crippling consequences on lives, on national security, and on the state itself. Such conditions have created a market opportunity for private military firms to provide military and security services to beleaguered African governments. “Write a check and end a war” is how Doug Brooks consequently encapsulates his view on the role of PMFs in Africa and some of its war-torn countries. The question is, do PMFs have such a direct and forceful impact on conflicts and the states that hire them? Do they influence state power to such a degree that hiring a firm ends a nation’s troubles?

This section discusses the impact of the military provider firm Executive Outcomes on Sierra Leone’s state power. The previous sections have expounded the theory of neoclassical realism and the concept of state power, the historical trajectory of the development of military companies, and the assorted private military and security firms operating around the globe. It determined that neoclassical realist theory in general, and Fareed Zakaria specifically, considers state power a combination of state strength and national power.

Conducting research in such a manner allows for a diverse, but specific analysis of a military provider firm’s impact on state power, which is “consistent with the eclecticism and flexibility that is at the core of the neoclassical realist research program.” It leads to greater accuracy and understanding in analyzing a PMFs influence on a nation’s crucial attribute necessary for its survival, its security, and the promotion of its interests within the international system and international politics: its state power.

The various PMFs operating in the post-Cold War and contemporary world have been discussed as well. Among the multitude of firms that provide military and security services to states, military provider firms have been purposely selected as the object of analysis because they operate closest to the military battlefront, are (unlike other, or competing, private companies) engaged in actual fighting, have an immediate capacity for violence, and secure objects or goals in a lethal manner. They project lethal force, of the type projected by state militaries, in high-risk security operations in volatile areas of the world, and thereby act as, or represent, national militaries. Thus, they function as a type of state agent. Their impact on the state, and on state power, should thereby be of more direct and immediate nature in comparison

to, for example, military support or consulting firms. Consequently, conducting this research in such a manner allows for a specific look into the impact of a military provider firm on the concept of state power.

This and the following section undertake an in-depth, qualitative analysis of two specific case studies whereby the influence of a military provider firm on state power is examined. The case studies are Executive Outcomes, hired by Sierra Leone to operate in Sierra Leone itself, and Blackwater, hired by the United States to operate in Iraq. The next section discusses Blackwater. This section analyzes EO’s influence on Sierra Leone’s state power.

To do so, first the company under consideration is discussed, as well as the conflict in which the firm operated in. This will provide a proper context and will describe the circumstances under which the state decided to contract the military provider firm—and whether these correspond to the neoclassical realist theory. Moreover, it will firmly establish why the particular company can be considered a military provider firm. Consequently, the impact of the firm on state power is analyzed. The concept is disseminated into two component parts: state strength and national power. An analysis of the firm’s impact on state strength is done by discussing the extent to which the firm has been able to fulfill the contracting state’s strategic interests and desired outcomes. An analysis of the firm’s impact on national power occurs by equating it to a firm’s war-fighting ability—which this research further developed into an assessment of its military effectiveness in combat. Thereupon, an assessment concerning the firm’s impact on the concept of state power can be made.

- **Executive Outcomes**

One of the first companies to take advantage of the changing political and security environment that occurred when the Cold War winded down in the 1990’s, was Executive Outcomes. The firm had active operations in South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Angola, Liberia, Senegal, Namibia, Mozambique, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and a number of other states. As mentioned, Executive Outcomes was founded in 1989 by Eeben Barlow, a former assistant commander of the 32nd Battalion of the South African Defence Forces. Its officership was predominantly white, most of its soldiers were black. The 32nd Battalion was one of South Africa’s most elite fighting forces during its bush wars with its neighboring countries in the 1970s and 1980s, and thereby became South Africa’s most highly decorated

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unit since the Second World War. \(^{294}\) These forces were often used by the Apartheid regime to counter internal opposition and to covertly destabilize neighboring states.\(^{295}\)

Barlow called the company Executive Outcomes to avoid references to violent means, and instead put accent on desired ends. According to Axelrod, the promise of EO was that “the efficient application of decisive corporate military competence would produce whatever outcomes a client desired.”\(^{296}\)

In its initial years, Executive Outcomes functioned as an agent of the South African Apartheid regime and the privatized part of its war force.\(^{297}\) It operated as an intelligence training unit for SADF Special Forces. A large part of EO’s personnel also originated from these Special Forces units.\(^{298}\) They were experienced in counterinsurgency operations, as they had fought in conflicts in Namibia, Mozambique and Angola. In addition to these regular army forces drawn from the SADF (more specifically the Parachute Brigade, the Reconnaissance Commandos, and 32\(^{nd}\) Battalion itself), other personnel were ex-Koevoet operatives.\(^{299}\) These operatives were members of a counterinsurgency police unit and were highly capable in areas such as infiltration, interrogation (including torture), and undercover assignments. The one specialty that Barlow was unable to recruit from the SADF were fighter pilots. These were recruited from Nigeria, and from remnants of the old Soviet air force and other former Soviet countries, most particularly Ukraine.\(^{300}\) Salaries were attractive, ranging from $2,000 to $13,000 per month. This was determined by employees’ experience and expertise, and only helped Barlow gather additional professional forces.\(^{301}\)

Barlow thus created a professional military firm by recruiting professionals and actually rewarding them as such. These ex-SADF forces were recruited on a contract-by-contract basis. EO thus controlled its costs by maintaining no standing army, except for a small headquarters in Pretoria. Despite this, the firm claimed it was able to assemble a force of two-thousand men strong on exceptionally short notice.\(^{302}\)

Using ex-SADF forces offered Executive Outcomes several advantages. It ensured the troops were well trained, accustomed to following orders, and able to effectively operate as a

\(^{297}\) Cilliers, J. and Mason, P. (1999), p. 84.
\(^{299}\) Axelrod, A. (2014), p. 202. The Koevoet were a major paramilitary organization in South-African governed South-West Africa, now Namibia. It was a police counter-insurgency unit consisting of effective combat forces.
group. They had a clear pre-existing hierarchy and command structure, and had extensive combat experience.\textsuperscript{303} EO had close ties to mineral exploitation companies. One of these was the Branch-Heritage Group, a London-based company that held various mining and oil operations in Africa and elsewhere around the world.\textsuperscript{304} In reality, there existed a “strategic accommodation between two broad umbrella companies.”\textsuperscript{305} These two umbrella companies, of which Executive Outcomes functioned as the venture’s military strategic side and the Branch-Heritage Group (and several other mining operations) as the mineral exploitation side, were subsidiaries of a larger South African venture-capital firm called the Strategic Resource Corporation group.\textsuperscript{306} EO’s leadership, however, sat on the SRC board of directors, which indicated the military firm’s greater influence in the broader operation. Other companies on SRC’s security side included the private military firms Lifeguard, Teleservices, and Saracen (a security provider in Angola and Uganda).\textsuperscript{307} Some were owned by EO.

The various linkages between the companies, groups and ventures were intricate and complex, which was only a further indication of the shadiness that covered Executive Outcomes specifically, and most of the military firms operating around the globe generally. Nonetheless, the ability of EO to link up with mining operations was a potent combination. It allowed the firm to offer its military services to underdeveloped governments that would otherwise be unable to hire it. Consequently, both Angola and Sierra Leone were able to afford Executive Outcomes in the 1990’s.

- **Services and materiel: capabilities**

What sort of services did EO provide, exactly? What did the company offer that classified it as a military provider firm? To begin with, the company provided expert services in connection with combat and combat support. It promoted itself by claiming that it could offer “more than five thousand years of collective combat experience.”\textsuperscript{308} Its core business services included

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{303} Singer, P.W. (2008), p. 103.
  \item \textsuperscript{304} Axelrod, A. (2014), p. 203.
  \item \textsuperscript{308} Axelrod, A. (2014), p. 204.
\end{itemize}
military training, advice and support services; para-military services; peacekeeping services; and specialist security services. The firm stated it was its mission to provide.\footnote{309}{Adams, T. (1999), p. 107-108.; Axelrod, A. (2014), p. 204. See also: mirror page of EO’s official webpage in 1998, from archive.org: http://web.archive.org/web/19981205202613/http://www.eo.com/miserv/miserv2.html.}

1. A highly professional and confidential (strategic and tactical) military advisory service to legitimate governments
2. Advice to armed forces on weapon and weapon platform selection and acquisition, as well as assistance in such acquisition
3. The most professional military training packages available to armed forces, covering aspects related to warfare on land as well as at sea and in the air
4. Peacekeeping services—sometimes marketed as ‘persuasion’ services, such as the pacification of hostile populations
5. Paramilitary services, including basic and advanced security

Training services offered by the firm ranged from basic infantry training to highly specialized training required for elite forces operating in counterinsurgency operations, airborne operations, and working with advanced weapons systems.\footnote{310}{Axelrod, A. (2014), p. 204.} Furthermore, the firm supplied comprehensive military air forces. EO was able to do so through its association with Ibis Air.\footnote{311}{Musah, A-F. (2002): ‘Privatization of Security, Arms Proliferation and the Process of State Collapse in Africa.’ In: Development and Change, Vol. 33, No. 5, p. 927-928.} According to Singer, Ibis Air was a “separate holding in the umbrella group” (of SRC), but it was so closely associated to EO that to outsiders it was “almost indistinguishable.”\footnote{312}{Singer, P.W. (2008), p. 105.} This connection allowed the firm to deploy troops anywhere in the world in a short period of time, thereby making good on its promise that it was able to assemble a force of two-thousand men strong on short notice.

Among the airforce assets were military transport aircrafts, at least two Boeing 727 passenger jets, several armed Mi-17 Russian transport helicopters, Mi-24 Hind attack helicopters (armed with titanium, equipped with four-barreled Gatling guns, and a 40mm grenade launcher), and MiG-23 jet fighter-bombers.\footnote{313}{Cilliers, J. and Mason, P. (1999), p. 88.; Smith, E. B. (2002): ‘The new Condottieri and US Policy: the Privatization of Conflict and its Implications.’ In: Parameters: US Army War College Quarterly, Vol. 32, No. 4, p. 108.; Lanning, M.L. (2005), p. 180.; Singer, P.W. (2008), p. 106.} Moreover, Ibis Air had access to air crews and finances which allowed it to lease and operate practically any combat aircraft available on the open market.\footnote{314}{Axelrod, A. (2014), p. 204} Executive Outcomes thus mostly used ex-Soviet weaponry. Due to Cold War overproduction, these weapons were cheap and easy to acquire. Armored vehicles used in ground attacks included ex-Soviet material as well, such as BMP-2 infantry.
fighting vehicles and BTR-60 armored personnel carriers. The MiG jets and Hind attack helicopters especially were considered EO’s most effective and intimidating capabilities.\(^{315}\)

Executive Outcomes is therefore a prime example of a company that stepped in the vacuum within the market for security that had developed when the Cold War ended. The firm recruited its forces from a state that had downsized its military (South Africa); it bought its equipment from (ex-Soviet) nations who had sold their superfluous equipment and material on the open market; and found clients in areas where new threats had emerged due to the withdrawal of superpower interests, influence, and military and political presence.

Over the years, Executive Outcomes grew in size and operational capabilities. Its military force expanded and its inventory of military hardware increased.\(^{316}\) The firm marketed itself as an instrument able to create regional stability in unstable areas. Its services included direct infantry and light armor participation, combat air patrols, battle planning and advisory operations, and numerous training assistances.\(^{317}\) Barlow described his company first and foremost as a “counterintelligence consultancy firm.”\(^{318}\) However, regardless of how it was described, EO’s core business has always been clear cut: it was a company for hire, providing military (support) services in a dangerous world, particularly Africa. As such, Executive Outcomes embodied to a large extent what any definition of a military provider firm is about.

Reportedly, EO received its first offers from Algerian religious factions and Sudanese rebels. The company turned both offers down, explaining it would only accept offers from legitimate, UN-recognized governments.\(^{319}\) The firm did not want to threaten its claim of legitimacy as a military company for hire by working for what it considered to be illegitimate causes.\(^{320}\) Executive Outcome’s first large contract came in 1992 from the Angolan government, where the company played a vital role in securing victory in operations with government forces, serving primarily as a force multiplier—as “a small group whose specialized skills enhanced the effectiveness of a much larger force.”\(^{321}\) The firm was subsequently established as an effective military company.\(^{322}\) EO’s combat capabilities had thus been demonstrated during its “successful campaigns in Angola against the materially superior

Consequently, its professionalism spread throughout the global, interconnected world of institutions, nations and corporations. It is likely what influenced Sierra Leone to hire the company in April 1995.

- **Sierra Leone’s conflict: a context**

The next large-scale employment opportunity for EO came in the western African state Sierra Leone. The country had regained its independency from colonial Britain in 1961. Over the next decades, rebellions, coups and countercoups brought various leaders to head the country, but unrest remained prevalent. The country remained exceedingly poor during this time, despite an abundance of diamond deposits and other natural resources, such as bauxite and rutile.324

On 23 March 1991, a group of guerrilla fighters and rebels invaded eastern Sierra Leone from Liberia and initiated a civil war against the then ruling government of President Momoh. The group, known as the Revolutionary United Front, was led by Foday Sankoh, a former corporal in the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF). Sankoh was supported by Charles Taylor because of the latter’s desire to access the Sierra Leone’s diamond rich areas so he could fund his own war in Liberia.325 The RUF advanced quickly, which was in large part caused by the limited resistance offered by the RSLMF. The RSLMF was plagued by logistical, support and training inefficiencies, and its troops were newly recruited, young, inexperienced, and prone to flee upon enemy contact.326 In January 1992, the diamond rich mining areas of the country were targeted.327 The eventual loss of the mines, combined with the weak position of the government itself, as well as the ineffective actions conducted by RSLMF troops, resulted in a coup against President Momoh. The coup was initiated on April 1992 by several RSLMF officers, led by Valentine Strasser. The new military government called itself the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC)328—and from then on could be regarded as the national security executive; as the unified central decision-maker best positioned to respond to national and international exigencies.

Strasser’s military junta government promised to return Sierra Leone to civilian rule in 1993, but in that year changed the date for transformation to 1996, and was himself eventually...

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ousted by a coup in that latter year.\textsuperscript{329} The new military government launched offensives against the RUF in 1992, assuring it would quickly push the insurgent forces back. To do so, the NPRC increased its army’s strength to 14,000, mostly by conscripting (criminalized) urban youth and children.\textsuperscript{330} However, the army, without proper training, equipment or pay, failed to alter the course of war. Consequently, both rebels and official soldiers, often awash with alcohol and drugs, raided and pillaged villages and mines.\textsuperscript{331} The RSLMF troops were thus a highly ineffective force, who more often than not fought against each other and the local population, instead of against rebel forces.\textsuperscript{332}

It can be concluded that in 1995 Sierra Leone displayed the symptoms of a failed state. The country had disintegrated into regions controlled by warlords, rebel armies, and bandits. Central authority, including security, had disappeared, and survival became the national security executive’s main concern.\textsuperscript{333} It was clear that the incapable and unruly RSLMF troops, which exhibited a reflection of the political (dis)order in Sierra Leone, were in no position to protect civilians or to counter RUF forces. It thereby demonstrated that the government was ineffective at providing safety and security for its citizens.

The RUF advanced on the country’s capital Freetown in January 1995. By then, the rebel group controlled the strategic diamond mines and were able to purchase weapons and equipment on the free market by use of the mines’ incomes. The national security executive consequently turned to the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and requested an outside intervention. Although the ECOMOG sent several battalions—specifically from Nigeria, Guinea and Ghana—these troops were unable to halt the RUF’s progress.\textsuperscript{334} From this point on, the situation Sierra Leone deteriorated: unpaid government troops were as often as RUF forces pillaging the country, and the ECOMOG soldiers were dug in at the Freetown airport, protecting themselves.

Under these circumstances, whereby the government of Sierra Leone was struggling for survival against an outside force, the national security executive decided to hire a private firm for military and security aid. They turned to the Gurkha Security Group (GSG).\textsuperscript{335} The Gurkha mercenaries, supposedly first-rate troops, were quickly put into action, but were almost

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{330} Shearer, D. (1997), p. 204.
\item \textsuperscript{331} Musah, A-F., Kayode Fayemi, J. (2000), p. 86.
\item \textsuperscript{335} Fitzsimmons, S. (2013), p. 250-251.
\end{itemize}
immediately upon arrival ambushed by a superior number of RUF rebels. The GSG lost twenty operatives, as well as its commander. Consequently, the GSG decided the risks outweighed the rewards and evacuated the survivors. The group cancelled the contract with the Sierra Leone government and fled the conflict. Following the fate of the GSG, almost all companies exploring the private military market avoided direct combat contracts for a while. It thereby left Sierra Leone without an effective military option to provide safety and security until it was able to hire Executive Outcomes.

Facing defeat at the hands of the RUF, who by now numbered about four thousand strong, Strasser turned to Executive Outcomes to defeat the rebels and militia on behalf of his struggling government. The initial contract between EO and the NPRC was signed in April 1995, and the company arrived within a month. By this time, the country had descended into chaos. The RUF had advanced to twenty kilometers from Freetown, and threatened the country’s military government. The NPRC had also lost control of Sierra Leone’s bauxite and diamond mines that produced over half of the country’s export earnings. Executive Outcome’s contract with the national security executive was complex, due in part to NPRC’s lack of resources, but stipulated that over the period of April 1995 to January 1997, the company was contracted to provide “military advisory and support services […] to the NPRC of Sierra Leone.” Training, combat assistance, intelligence gathering, and night-time raids with radars were facilitated. As payment in exchange for its services, mining concessions were granted to EO and several other mineral exploitation companies within the umbrella venture-capital firm that was the Strategic Resource Corporation.

Strasser, as the head of the NPCR—which served as the ruling party within Sierra Leone and thereby as the state’s national security executive—thus turned to Executive Outcomes to provide security and ensure the survival of the state. Sierra Leone’s strategic and economic interests were threatened by rebel forces who had occupied the country’s mining areas and were advancing on the capital Freetown. The national interests, which at this point translated into the security—the survival—of the nation-state and its population, became the main concern of the

345 Francis, D. J. (1999), p. 325.
national security executive and the main determinant of foreign policy. Determining that the RUF threat was too great, and the nation’s own capabilities too limited, Strasser therefore responded to the international exigency by grasping one of the few opportunities left at Sierra Leone’s disposal: the government hired an outside force to “advance the security or power of the entire nation.”346 The Sierra Leone government acted because of both systemic and domestic pressures in the form of respectively an anarchic environment and outside intervention, and a corrupt national military as well as a criminalized, desponded youth.

As Waltz comments, “states in an anarchic order must provide for their own security, and threats or seeming threats to their security abound.”347 It was established that in order to guarantee survival, the most important measure a state can take is to accumulate an adequate amount of power. Sierra Leone consequently did so by hiring the military provider firm Executive Outcomes in an attempt to secure its strategic interests and ensure its national survival. It is therefore clear that the ruling government within Sierra Leone turned to Executive Outcomes because of issues correlating to the neoclassical realist theory. As such, neoclassical realism serves as a useful guide in deducing how Sierra Leone’s state behavior, and its consequent foreign policy decision to hire Executive Outcomes, came into existence. After all, the reasoning behind Sierra Leone’s decision to hire EO correlates to the neoclassical realist theory and overlaps with its conceptions.

Having established the type of services Executive Outcomes provided, the context of the conflict, and the reasoning behind Sierra Leone’s decision to hire the military provider firm, this research will now turn to its main objective: an in-depth analysis into the impact of Executive Outcomes on Sierra Leone’s state power.

- **Enter EO: strategic interests and desired outcomes**

To determine Executive Outcome’s influence on Sierra Leone’s state power, the concept is disseminated into two component parts: state strength and national power. This means that, first, an analysis of the firm’s impact on state strength is undertaken by discussing the extent to which the firm has been able to fulfill its client state’s desired outcomes. This segment therefore analyzes the desired goals or outcomes the Sierra Leone government wished to see fulfilled by hiring the military provider firm. It will also examine the actions taken by EO in its attempt to accomplish said outcomes and, consequently, to what extent EO’s actions have been successful. Afterwards, an analysis of the firm’s impact on national power occurs. This will allow for a

complete, detailed, and accurate assessment concerning the firm’s impact on the overall concept of state power.

What, exactly, did the Sierra Leone national security executive wish to achieve by hiring Executive Outcomes? What were its interests, and what were the desired goals and outcomes it wished to see fulfilled by hiring the military provider firm? There were four primary goals—four national and strategic interests—the Sierra Leone government wanted to see accomplished. Consequently, the company was set four objectives, which can be considered the desired outcomes that the Sierra Leone government wished to see fulfilled.\(^{348}\) These objectives were:

1. To secure Freetown
2. To regain control of the country’s rutile mines and diamond fields, thereby allowing the government to generate revenue, which in turn would guarantee EO payment
3. To eliminate RUF headquarters
4. To clear the remaining areas of RUF occupation

As Joanna Spear remarks, this was an indication that EO was to be “military engaged itself, not just functioning in support of the Sierra Leone Army.”\(^{349}\) Consequently, during May 1995, a lead contingent of fifty soldiers from EO arrived in Sierra Leone. Six months later, as the company’s operations in Angola drew to a close, another 130 followed. The firm entered a conflict that had since 1992 killed at least 15,000, had created more than 1.5 million refugees out of a population of four million, and had devastated the country’s economy.\(^{350}\) EO was under immense time pressure to save the Sierra Leone state from further collapse, as the RUF was fighting close to the capital’s suburbs. The military provider firm had to start its operations from the ground up, as there were “no intelligence services” and “the elementary problems of supply, communications and transport had to be solved.”\(^{351}\) Subsequently, Executive Outcomes introduced nighttime operations, assumed operational, command and communications control, established intelligence and information gathering, and provided logistical and fire support.\(^{352}\)

EO’s military operations relied heavily on mobile assaults from helicopters, ground attacks, and assault barrages from mortars.\(^{353}\) At the outset of operations, most anti-RUF


\(^{349}\) Spear, J. (2006), p. 27.


operations were planned to be undertaken with support from trained RSLMF units.\(^{354}\) However, it quickly became apparent that these forces were “poorly trained, poorly disciplined, and—since they were often unpaid—progressively criminal, representing a part of the problem instead of a part of the solution.”\(^{355}\) Consequently, EO established a Kamajor militia: traditional hunters found in the Sierra Leonean society functioning as local, rural, self-defense units against the excesses of rebel and government soldiers alike.\(^{356}\) These Kamajor militia were loyal to the central government, had intimate knowledge of the Sierra Leone terrain, were sworn enemies of the RUF, and for these reasons were often used as infantry in further operations.\(^{357}\) EO thereby overcame an external constraint—limited intelligence capabilities and unreliable government forces—present within the Sierra Leone strategic environment.

EO set out a “three-phase operational strategy” for accomplishing the national security executive’s desired goals and outcomes.\(^{358}\) First, RUF rebels were to be cleared from the Freetown area. Then, EO and government forces were to advance on the diamond-rich mining area of Koidu, located about 160 kilometers from the capital. Once there, a new operation would be launched with the goal of locating and capturing RUF headquarters.\(^{359}\) Such an operation, EO knew, would only be possible through competent cooperation (and thus integration) between its own troops, the government’s remaining reliable RSLMF troops, and the new Kamajor forces.\(^{360}\) The map below offers a visual representation of EO’s planned and conducted combat operations within Sierra Leone throughout its stay.\(^{361}\)

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\(^{359}\) Idem p. 182.

\(^{360}\) Francis, D. J. (1999), p. 327.

The first EO-supported attack was launched in late May 1995. Its goal: to lift the siege of Freetown from rebel forces.\textsuperscript{362} A RSLMF battalion, combined with various combat teams of Kamajors, as well as two EO BMP-2s with troops, advanced from Freetown.\textsuperscript{363} Operations were conducted towards south-west areas, whereby several key RUF positions located near the Sierra Leone capital were captured. Subsequently, Mi-17 transport helicopters were used to deploy forces behind the RUF in order to cut off escape routes. Once these operations were conducted, a three-day long aerial campaign commenced, targeting RUF positions. The rebels, having suffered severe losses, including local command and communications systems, fled into EO and Kamajor planned ambushes. The siege of the city had been lifted in ten days. The RUF had withdrawn a hundred kilometers into the interior.\textsuperscript{364}

Many subsequent missions followed a similar procedure. First, enemy positions were reconnoitered and analyzed. Then, a bombardment by fighter jets followed. This allowed small, mobile combat groups of EO and government forces, which were supported by mortar fire, armored vehicles and helicopter gunships, to attack an already heavily demoralized, though still numerically superior, enemy.\textsuperscript{365} It is estimated that the RUF outnumbered EO’s soldiers in every engagement, sometimes by a factor of twenty-to-one.\textsuperscript{366} Driven from their positions, rebel RUF forces often fled straight into planned ambushes of Kamajor forces that had previously been deployed by Mi-17s. EO was thereby highly effective in using (at the time) sophisticated technology, and executing tasks such as coordinated tactical movement and maneuverability.

In June 1995, EO initiated the second phase of the offensive. Supported by the Mi-24 Hind attack helicopters, the BMP-2s and Kamajor combat forces, the firm’s troops advanced eastwards towards the Koidu city and its mines, located in the Kono-Region. Within two days, the city of Koidu and its surrounding mining areas were retaken from rebel forces, releasing it from RUF control.\textsuperscript{367} Losses were minimal during these operations. EO incurred two wounded specialists, while the Kamajor combat teams lost two soldiers and suffered another five wounded.\textsuperscript{368} The RUF, in contrast, suffered hundreds of casualties and several times more deserters. More importantly, by reclaiming the diamond rich mines, the rebel forces had lost

\textsuperscript{366} Idem, p. 250.
\textsuperscript{368} Ibidem.
their main source of income. By the end of August 1995, Executive Outcomes had thus accomplished Sierra Leone’s first two objectives.\textsuperscript{369} In several weeks, the firm had achieved better results than the RSLMF and ECOMOG in years of fighting. The firm had worked “swiftly, precisely and with minimal losses.”\textsuperscript{370}

Next, the third phase of the operational strategy was put into action: to locate and destroy RUF headquarters. Aerial reconnaissance located the existence of a large enemy base in south-east Sierra Leone. On 5 December, 1995, the base was attacked. RUF losses were heavy, especially among essential officers from senior cadres. According to Jakkie Cilliers and Peggy Mason, “follow-up intelligence indicated that this was formerly the main springboard for operations against Freetown.”\textsuperscript{371} The following weeks, EO-led troops advanced into jungle areas and drove rebel forces back into Liberia. At the height of its operations, EO had at least 300 troops deployed, backed by Mi-17 and Mi-24 helicopters, several fighter jets, and a purchased Cessna 337 Super Skymaster spotter plane to assist with reconnaissance and intelligence gathering. The firm had trained a few hundred government troops and about ten thousand Kamajors.\textsuperscript{372}

By early 1996, battered and diminished RUF forces called for a cease-fire. Executive Outcomes had thus achieved two essential results. First, the government was put into a stronger strategic position of power—economically, military, as well as politically—which made elections possible and allowed more than a million displaced people to return home. Second, a clear correlation could be established between EO fulfilling Sierra Leone’s desired outcomes through its military operations, and the consequent willingness of the RUF to negotiate.\textsuperscript{373} EO’s military pressure had thus compelled the rebels to stop fighting.

The coercive stability offered by Executive Outcomes allowed Strasser to hold elections, but he seemed unwilling to do so, which led to a coup that ousted him from office on January 16, 1996. Brigadier General Julius Maada Bio, Strasser’s former deputy, replaced him.\textsuperscript{374} Maada Bio had functioned as the liaison between Executive Outcomes and Sierra Leone’s national security executive, the NPRC, and as the commander of the EO-trained Special Forces within the RSLMF. A few months later, the country went forward with elections.

\textsuperscript{369} Shearer, D. (1997), p. 204.
\textsuperscript{370} http://www.soldiers-of-misfortune.com/history/eco-sierra-leone.htm (accessed on December 27, 2014)
\textsuperscript{373} Shearer, D. (1997), p. 204.
so as to return to civilian rule, and parliamentary and presidential elections were held.\[^{375}\]

From then on, Sierra Leone was led by the democratically elected government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, and the Kamajor militia were transformed into a recognized military arm of the government.\[^{376}\] Among Sierra Leone’s population, EO gained a reputation for being “efficient, reliable, and humane” in contrast to RUF and RSLMF forces.\[^{377}\] The firm was consequently admired for “bringing security to most of the country.”\[^{378}\] Anna Leander mentions, “EO played a pivotal role in breaking long and protracted conflicts, stabilizing the governments and setting the stage for civilian politics.”\[^{379}\]

The new president negotiated a cease-fire agreement and established peace talks with the RUF. The RUF leadership, recognizing that Executive Outcomes was largely responsible for its defeat, demanded that the military provider firm be discharged from operations and expelled from the country before negotiations would continue.\[^{380}\] In December 1996, the parties to the Sierra Leone conflict signed the Abidjan Accord, and EO’s activities were ended. Once the firm departed, however, the democracy of Sierra Leone fell to a military coup, and the country was once again plunged back into a state of chaos and lawlessness.\[^{381}\]

It can be concluded that EO thus played a crucial role in Sierra Leone’s attempt to fight for its survival, battle rebels for security, and control valuable and critical strategic interests and resources.\[^{382}\] The involvement of EO brought command and control of Sierra Leone’s territory back under the national security executive’s rule, and restored the state’s sovereignty.

- **Impact on state strength**

Sierra Leone’s desired outcomes, as well as the actions taken by Executive Outcomes to fulfil said outcomes, are thus established. What remains is an analysis that determines to what extent EO has been successful in accomplishing its objectives. Although this has in part been established above, this segment will encapsulate and outline the findings.

There were four desired outcomes. The first item was to deter the immediate threat to Freetown by lifting the RUF siege on the capital. This was accomplished by EO and trained government forces in ten days, with minimal losses. The firm was able to do so because it

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deployed its forces in a shorter timeframe than most state-centric or international armies would be able to. Moreover, in comparison to Sierra Leone, its military had a clearer chain of command, greater experience in combined and covert operations, more readily compatible military training and equipment, and was able to handpick its soldiers from a large pool of proven combat veterans. Thus, in matter of days, EO had accomplished more than government troops or outside forces, such as the ECOMOG and the GSG, had in several months and years.

Shortly after the battle for Freetown had begun, the military provider firm brought in infantry fighting vehicles, helicopter attack gunships, and additional troops for the second phase of the operational strategy. The second objective was to stabilize the diamond mines around Koidu by removing rebel forces from the area. Starting the operation in June 1995—approaching the area less than a month after the firm first arrived in Sierra Leone—EO drove rebel forces from the area, without much resistance. Koidu had been recaptured. The Kono-Region had been cleared of remaining RUF forces. The retaking of the mining regions established that a military provider firm with cohesive, well-trained troops, assisted by proper intelligence and firepower, was able to positively affect a conflict in which it was severely outnumbered.383

The third item on the list—which was also the third phase within EO’s operational strategy—was to destroy RUF headquarters within Sierra Leone. After comprehensive reconnaissance missions, RUF headquarters had been located and eliminated by superior firepower and the application of strategic, tactical and maneuver warfare.

By late 1995, Executive Outcomes had thus achieved three of the main goals set by the Sierra Leone government. The siege of Freetown had been lifted; mining areas had been released of occupation and were open for operations back in government hands; and RUF headquarters east of Freetown had been eliminated. Executive Outcomes thereby had a crucial strategic impact on the collapsed state of Sierra Leone and provided the most basic of security needs for the country’s citizens.

The following weeks and months, EO conducted operations deep into jungle areas whereby RUF camps and troops were being cleared, or driven back into Liberia. The exact extend of the firm’s success in fulfilling this latter objective is difficult to determine considering the environment in which the company operated: jungle territory, where there are no clear front lines, and where reconnaissance is problematic. It is likely that “EO’s military efforts did not destroy the RUF” entirely within Sierra Leone.384 The military firm had destroyed the majority

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384 Idem, p. 184.
of the RUF’s planning and logistical capabilities, but the pursuit and removal of small, disconnected RUF groups was more difficult to accomplish—and was generally better achieved by the Kamajor militia themselves. On top of that, as Abdel-Fatau Musah asserts, it is often the case that in guerilla conflicts, “guerilla’s very seldom get defeated in civil wars.” To what extent this assertion is applicable to the civil war in Sierra Leone remains a point of contestation. Taking into account EO’s excellent intelligence gathering, as well as the RUF’s request for a cease-fire and peace talks, would indicate EO was successful in eliminating most of the remaining RUF bases throughout Sierra Leone territory. The firm thereby restored Sierra Leone’s control and sovereignty over its own territory and resources.

The involvement of EO in Sierra Leone therefore seems to be successful when it concerns Sierra Leone’s strategic interests and desired outcomes. Evidence of Executive Outcome’s success in this matter is RUF leader Foday Sankoh’s proclamation made after the signing of the 1996 peace accord, that he would have taken Freetown and won the war against Sierra Leone if not for EO’s intervention.

On the battleground, EO’s intelligence capacity and air power, combined with the increased efficiency of the trained RSLMF army units, as well as the exceptional terrain knowledge of the Kamajors, had tilted the balance in the civil war from the RUF to the Sierra Leone NPRC government. EO thereby operated as a direct force multiplier. Within nine months of arrival, the firm had led the anti-RUF campaign to victory. A defensive military perimeter around Freetown had been constructed, which impeded the RUF guerillas’ advance. The guerillas and rebels were consequently forced back into the forests to regroup; their wartime capabilities severely weakened. In time, all diamond fields and rutile mines were recaptured, which ensured renewed incomes for the NPRC—and deprived the RUF of incomes. The operational and strategic aims of Sierra Leone had been realized, which was mostly—if not wholly—attributable to EO.

Military firms such as Executive Outcomes have, as Shearer mentions, a “strategic impact on the political and security environment of the countries in which they operate.” It allowed the firm to stabilize a crisis, ensure the survival of a state, its government and population, and coerce a negotiated settlement. It can therefore be concluded, as William Reno

(generally a critic of EO), notes: in Sierra Leone a firm like “Executive Outcomes prevents chaos.” In the case of EO, the firm’s employment resulted in a decisive victory. By hiring an outside military provider firm, Sierra Leone was able to preserve its regime against both internal and external threats, and thereby ensure its survival. It regained control over strategic and economic interests such as the mining areas and the capital Freetown, and established security in its territory by eliminating RUF headquarters and clearing areas of rebel occupation. It can therefore be concluded that EO was effective at fulfilling its client’s desired outcomes, and thereby had a beneficial effect on Sierra Leone’s state strength.

In sum, a close analysis of Executive Outcomes’ operations in Sierra Leone reveals that the company made a very real impact on Sierra Leone’s state power by fulfilling all of the country’s desired outcomes. The firm affected the course of the war and forced its opposition into the eventual signing of the peace accords. Therefore, even though EO took over what are considered conventional state tasks and responsibilities, the company functioned as a crucial beneficial (f)actor on Sierra Leone’s state strength, operating during its employment as a state actor, as both a replacement and supplement to the national military. It fulfilled Sierra Leone’s interests and desired outcomes, and had an undeniable positive effect on its state strength.

To what extent Executive Outcomes was subsequently beneficial to Sierra Leone’s national power—i.e. its military effectiveness—will be discussed in the following segment. This will allow for comprehensive assessment of the military provider firm’s impact on Sierra Leone’s state power.

- **National power: military effectiveness**

To reiterate, in its most basic form national power is regarded as the possession of (traditional) material resources or capabilities. Indicators include the size of the territory and population, the level of military expenditure, gross national product, and size of the armed forces. Some observers have added intangible factors such as national moral, diplomacy, the quality of leadership, quality of forces, training, organization, and others. To realists, national power and all its indicators are thus generally associated with, and defined by, military might because they believe that “force is the ultima ratio of international politics.”

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Neoclassical realism in general, and Zakaria in particular, also regard national power as an important component in an analysis of state power, but sees it as one of two components—the other being state strength, defined as the fulfillment of interests or desired outcomes—instead of the primary component. This research consequently builds upon neoclassical realism’s and Zakaria’s concept of state power, by developing national power, which is usually equated to a state’s war-winning ability, with military effectiveness. Winning wars is about winning battles, winning battles depends on an army’s effectiveness, and an army’s effectiveness is determined by its military effectiveness. To do so, Sierra Leone’s military effectiveness, by hiring Executive Outcomes, is analyzed according to the extent to which the state exhibited four crucial attributes: “the integration of military activity within and across different levels; responsiveness to internal constraints and the external environment; high skill, measured in the motivation and basic competencies of personnel; and high quality, as indicated by the caliber of a state’s weapons and equipment.”

Integration
In short, integration is defined as “the degree to which different military activities are internally consistent and mutually reinforcing.” There are three essential aspects to a military integration. First there is the consistency in which strategic, operational, and tactical goals are achieved; second, the training and education troops receive in support of said goals; and third, the communication and coordination practices between military forces.

Executive Outcomes brought with them a military apparatus that ensured its troops were well trained, accustomed to following orders, and able to effectively operate as a group. The firm had a clear preexisting hierarchy and its troops had extensive combat experience. Because the firm had an already clear preexisting chain of command, there was no impairment within its own integration. Its soldiers were “cohesive”, “disciplined”, and never “shirked from combat.”

EO’s operations were characterized by their effective tactical and operational coordination of helicopter usage, support fire, and involvement of specially trained Kamajor units. In air operations, they sought “to find, fix and destroy.” They found the RUF through

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398 Ibidem.
use of intelligence and reconnaissance capabilities, using then-contemporary available electronic warfare. Consequently, “long-range helicopter assault operations against targets deep within enemy territory, supported by the ground attack aircraft [and the] use of pinpoint suppressive fire with mortars and follow-up pursuit of ambushes” fixed oppositional forces into position.\textsuperscript{402} Finally, helicopter-carried assault troops were deployed to destroy enemy forces. Using these tactics, EO troops combined with government RSLMF forces and Kamajor militias were able to effectively take out large numbers of RUF soldiers. Subsequent missions followed a similar procedure, which meant there was a clear consistency in force deployment. By hiring EO, Sierra Leone was thus able to markedly improve its tactical and operational activity in support of its strategic activity—and thereby establish a well-coordinated military acting in its interests.

Moreover, the effectiveness of government troops multiplied due to EO’s influence. The firm supplied tough, combat-oriented training programs, augmented with knowledgeable leadership—leadership capable of operating close to the battlefront and in a difficult environment.\textsuperscript{403} During operations, usually a combination of EO and RSLMF forces accomplished/fulfilled the first three desired outcomes, while regional protection and further clearing of RUF forces throughout the remainder of the country was often conducted by trained Kamajor militias.

EO thereby had a positive effect on the integration of its own troops with government forces and local militia, influencing the coordination and communication practices between troops in a beneficial manner. When there were issues of inefficient integration between EO and RSLMF forces, these were quickly resolved by training motivated Kamajor forces instead. The military provider firm thereby created an “effective indigenous force and augmented direct military operations with a simple but effective civic action program that won over the local populace and provided the company with valuable human intelligence to supplement its technical intelligence.”\textsuperscript{404}

The crucial role Executive Outcomes played in making this integration successful became clear when the company left a few weeks after the Abidjan peace accord was signed. On January 1997, the military firm and its employees were expelled from the country. EO, however, considered its job to be unfulfilled yet, and predicted President Kabbah would have

“90 days before he would be overthrown in a coup.” Lawlessness within Sierra Leone once again spread through the country as corrupt elements within the RSLMF, as well as resurgent RUF militia, began to pillage and kill along the countryside. This caused tensions between the RSLMF and Kamajor forces to grow. Consequently, as Cilliers and Mason state, after the integrated operations “the trained companies that had been formed by EO were subdivided and the synergy and effectiveness of bonded, cohesive units was lost.”

On May 25, 1997, Kabbah was overthrown. Governance within Sierra Leone descended into chaos. Peace and security disappeared. ECOMOG forces were called in but proved highly ineffectual: killing thousands of civilians in bombings, losing 300 of their own troops due to captures, and in general being highly ineffective in its guerilla warfare in the dense forests of Sierra Leone.

During its stay in Sierra Leone, Executive Outcomes had thus improved the integration within Sierra Leone’s military through its own troop presence, through the creation of Kamajor militia, and by educating and training both RSLMF and Kamajor forces. Its tactical and operational activity was consistent and effective, and supported the broader strategic activity.

**Responsiveness**

Responsiveness is defined as “the ability to tailor military activity to a state’s own capabilities, its adversaries’ capabilities, and external constraints.” Responsiveness ensures that a military is trained, equipped, organized and structured to function in the designated strategically environment, meaning that a military it is capable of responding to new information about itself, opponents, its environment, and external constraints.

Through integrated coordination and response tactics, Executive Outcomes was able to efficiently fight a counter guerilla war in jungle territory, using the difficult terrain to their own advantage through coordinated tactical movement. New insurgent threats and troop placements were quickly assessed and responded to when they surfaced, which was largely made possible because of EO’s intelligence and reconnaissance capabilities. Due to its previous experience in counterinsurgency operations, airborne operations, and working with advanced weapons systems in bush wars with neighboring countries, the firm was able to tailor its military activity to Sierra Leone’s environment. Furthermore, EO made use of Sierra Leone’s own capabilities,

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the Kamajors, and disregarded inefficient external constraints, such as undisciplined and unreliable troops within the RSLMF. The capabilities of its adversaries, the RUF, were diminished due to overwhelming aerial superiority and the resulting psychological effects these attacks had on rebel fighters.

One of the main reasons for its success, however, lay in EO’s proficiency in fighting a counter guerilla warfare.\textsuperscript{410} In each major operation, EO fought against numerically superior opponents. Through radio interceptions and aerial reconnaissance, the company was able to locate rebel forces and release strategic areas from RUF control. The firm aimed to keep enemy forces off balance and was, according to Singer, very successful in doing so. The company was “innovative and adjusted to changing situations by using ad-hoc tactics not found in the books.”\textsuperscript{411} Singer further observes, “Whereas the previous style of warfare prior to EO’s arrival had been roadside ambushes and quick withdrawals, EO strategy mandated the constant pursuit and punishment of the rebel force, whenever it came into contact.”\textsuperscript{412} By controlling enemy movement, tailoring military activity to its own and Sierra Leone’s capabilities, and taking advantage of its adversaries’ weakness, EO deprived the insurgents of their primary advantage: the ability to engage in combat whenever and wherever they chose.\textsuperscript{413}

Through counter-intelligence operations, EO was able to effectively respond to new information about its opponents and its environment. As Herbert Howe asserts, “EO intelligence operators identified possible informants, isolated and trained them, and then supplied them with communications equipment.”\textsuperscript{414} This allowed the military firm to quickly respond to changing threats and circumstances. The firm’s achievement of acquiring strong intelligence capabilities in a short timeframe was remarkable given its foreign, white officership and its Apartheid history.\textsuperscript{415} The company thereby overcame an external constraint in relatively efficient manner.

Additionally, the modest size of Executive Outcome’s armed forces, and the limited command structure that accompanied it, was beneficial to its responsiveness and its reaction time to new intelligence and information. This organizational and structural capacity allowed the military firm to act quickly and decisively on new leads, without being constrained by

\textsuperscript{411} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{412} Idem, p. 113.
\textsuperscript{413} Fitzsimmons, S. (2013), p. 257.
\textsuperscript{414} Howe, H. M. (1998), p. 316.
\textsuperscript{415} Ibidem.
bureaucratic command frameworks. The small size and high mobility of EO allowed the company, as Douglas J. Brooks argues, “to move quickly to most critical areas, making the greatest and most cost-efficient use of resources.” In sum, because of EO’s previous combat experience in similar (geographic) environments, and because of its knowledge regarding its own, its allies’, and its opponents’ strengths and weaknesses, the company was able to specifically tailor its military activity to the strategic environment, and was able to modify this activity when necessary.

Skill
Skill measures “military personnel and their units against some objective standard or benchmark in assessing their ability to achieve particular tasks and to carry out orders.” It reflects the degree to which military personnel are capable and willing to undertake complex tasks in preparation for and execution of combat operations. Motivation, training and education are of prime importance, as are the proper assimilation of technologies and military doctrine.

Fighting a guerilla war in the African jungle, where there are no clear front lines and where reconnaissance is problematic, successful intelligence gathering is a crucial skill. Other factors that play critical roles in such specialized fights include a concentration of firepower, speed in deployment as well as maneuverability, the capacity to successfully plan and conduct ambushes, and the ability to avoid or react to them. As former members of the South African Defense Force—specifically elite units such as the Parachute Brigade, the Reconnaissance Commandos, and 32nd Battalion itself—during previous bush wars, most of the members within EO had the unique capability of having years of training, education, and experience with such an environment, and the tactics required to operate efficiently in it. In all, defense experts believed that Executive Outcomes was “highly skilled in signal and communication and photo interpretation,” which allowed the company to make use of the then advanced technology. Furthermore, due to their elite training with Special Forces units, the firm’s own troops were capable at executing doctrine such as orders and maneuvers in jungle territory.

Executive Outcomes’ employees were “encouraged to think creatively about the tactical situations confronting them in order to adapt their plan and behavior to best suit the

417 Ibidem.
requirements of these situations.”

This allowed them to consider all the factors—own troop strength, enemy forces, terrain, weather, and materiel—before, during, and after combat operations. Such creative thinking, as well as personal initiative, demonstrated tactical innovation in contrast to government and rebel forces alike. It allowed units within EO(-trained) forces to “routinely seek advantages over their opponents by, for instance, using maneuver warfare.” Complex tactical maneuver warfare thus provided EO personnel with strategic advantages against its opponents within jungle territory.

The motivation of units and soldiers, as well as their willingness to undertake complex tasks, was excellent as well, which was largely attributable to the “strict discipline of the force and the cohesive identity it was able to maintain, even when operating in chaotic zones.” The considerable salaries that the firm offered to its own employees bolstered soldiers’ motivation as well, and by providing government RSLMF and Kamajor forces with “food, intelligence, training and some strategic planning,” the military firm was able to motivate Sierra Leone troops likewise.

EO’s presence in Sierra Leone thus brought the state an increase in its military’s skill by adding a motivated force to its own defense. In regards to Sierra Leone’s own troops, as well as enemy RUF forces, EO’s military personnel was skilled, effective, and capable at executing orders and maneuvers. The firm’s own units were proficient in the usage of their weaponry and materiel, and were able to partly transmit this proficiency onto trained RSLMF and Kamajor forces. Furthermore, using at the time sophisticated (air and intelligence) technology allowed the company to provide Sierra Leone’s military with an edge in combat operations. By hiring EO, Sierra Leone thus acquired a highly skilled military force capable of operating in a strategic environment that had previously deterred government troops, ECOMOG forces, and even another mercenary company.

Quality

As Brooks and Stanley mention “holding all else constant, states that are able to supply themselves with better weapons are often able to generate more military power.” Quality measures the ability of a military force to supply itself in preparation for, or during, a conflict.

421 Idem, p. 54.
423 Idem p. 316.
with superior materiel, and how well this is used. Quality is thus in part determined by the extent to which a firm functions as a force multiplier.

By hiring Executive Outcomes, Sierra Leone incorporated a force multiplier into its own forces. Using improved intelligence capabilities, EO was able to gather crucial intelligence on enemy troop movements and positions, which allowed the firm to surprise and overwhelm RUF forces. Such operations ranged from “long-range reconnaissance and aerial surveillance operations to intercept, jamming, and successful counterintelligence.”

When necessary, additional troops were flown in, and additional materiel—such as the Cessna 337 Super Skymaster—was purchased.

On land, EO had no great weapon advantages compared to its opponent, as the company armed itself with weapons found on the open market—which were therefore also available to the RUF. However, the firm did, in this particular conflict, introduce new combat tactics and technology. EO introduced night fighting, and for the first time in its operations made use of infrared night-vision gear. Other capable weapons and equipment the firm provided were the use of napalm, cluster bombs, and fuel-air explosives. Superior firepower was thereby provided by the Mi-24 Hind attack helicopters, along with fighter jets providing air support—both of which can be considered high technological assets within the civil war in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone, by hiring EO (and in effect the air power provided by Ibis Air), was thus able to provide itself with highly capable weapons and equipment. In aerial operations, it can be concluded that the state did have a weapons advantage and was technologically superior to its adversary, which allowed it to develop an edge in ground combat operations. By hiring Executive Outcomes, Sierra Leone was thus able to introduce modern and capable weaponry, as well as equipment and organizational planning, with great effect in its civil war against the RUF.

A number of scholars consequently claim that EO prevailed because the military firm had access to more and better materiel than the RUF had. Abdel-Fatau Musah, for example, argues that “EO’s intelligence capacity and air power” allowed it to deal a “telling blow to the RUF on several fronts.” Elizabeth Rubin echoes this sentiment, stating that “the rebels were overwhelmed by EO’s superior firepower.” In all, as Scott Fitzsimmons declares, “the world

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427 Ibidem.
thinks that Executive Outcomes was successful because of the use of overwhelming technology and superior firepower.\footnote{Fitzsimmons, S. (2013), p. 245.}

- **Impact on national power**

Regardless of some observers’ assertions that EO proved to be victorious because of its superior firepower, it is not one attribute, or the successful fulfillment of that attribute, that determines a state military effectiveness. As Brooks and Stanley make clear: a combination of all four properties—integration, responsiveness, skill, and quality—are essential to military effectiveness.\footnote{Brooks, R., Stanley E.A. (2007), p. 13.}

An in-depth analysis has shown that Sierra Leone, by hiring Executive Outcomes—which from then on operated as a type of state agent, as a surrogate national army—was able to increase its national power, i.e. its military effectiveness. By hiring the military provider firm to fight alongside, and in place of, its own military, Sierra Leone exhibited all four attributes crucial to a state’s military effectiveness. Is was thereby able to produce a skilled, quality, integrated, and responsive military that helped ensure the country was victorious in its fight against both foreign and domestic threats, was able to restore its sovereignty and control over its territory, assure its (albeit temporary) survival, and bring back the monopoly of violence under its control. It was able to fulfil its desired outcomes by keeping save the capital Freetown, securing control over valuable mining areas, destroying RUF headquarters, and driving remaining rebel forces from Sierra Leone territory.

Machiavelli argued that “mercenaries and auxiliaries are useless and dangerous,” and thus ineffective in military operations. Executive Outcomes has disproven this view. The military provider firm demonstrated that a small, highly trained group of soldiers have the ability to change the tide in a conflict. Besides demonstrating the ability to fulfill Sierra Leone’s desired outcomes, the military provider firm, in service to Sierra Leone—and in that capacity acting as a state agent as its surrogate army—exhibited a high degree of military effectiveness, adding to its national power.

- **Evaluation**

According to Abdel-Fatau Musah, the conflict in Sierra could be described as a “classic post-Cold War conflict.” Its origins had little to do with traditional superpower rivalry and much
with “the post-Cold War reconfiguration of regional power balances.” Sierra Leone was susceptible to guerilla wars waged by the RUF. Rebels, bandits, even disaffected members of its own society and army conducted assaults on villages, committed atrocities, and killed or maimed civilians. The country turned into a failed state, wracked by violence and social disorder. The national security executive was unable to create a well-trained, disciplined army to combat the civil wars and nation-wide unrest, and as a result the state needed to resort to private sources of military force to restore power, secure its interest, and assure survival.

The nation’s military thus did not function as a balanced defense against the instability, and insecurity—in reality, more often it was ineffective, unreliable, and had an agenda contradictory to that of Sierra Leone’s national security executive. Sierra Leone thus no longer controlled the legal monopoly over armed violence. In this context, in this vacuum, Sierra Leone turned to the military provider firm Executive Outcomes to provide security, ensure stability, and supply Sierra Leone with the necessary state power to allow it to bargain with guerilla and rebel troops from a position of strength and influence. RUF resistance was weakened to the point of being forced to negotiate for its own survival.

Executive Outcomes consequently supplied military professionalism in the form of increased military effectiveness. It brought military expertise and it provided security for the Sierra Leone government throughout 1995 and 1996, restoring the monopoly of violence back into Sierra Leone’s hands—through privatized means. The military provider firm thereby acted as a state agent, operating in Sierra Leone’s interests, and functioned as the only available means that the state had through which it could attempt to control and shape the environment it occupied. EO was thus able to allow a small, struggling, and conflicted state to acquire an immediate and efficient military force with sufficient expertise to end an internal conflict.

Even though the state relinquished responsibilities normally reserved for the state, the Sierra Leone government injected “objective military strength” to combat a chaotic situation by hiring a military provider firm. Much like the Greeks city-states who hired mercenaries from other city-states in the mid-sixth century B.C.; the various lords and kings that contracted Free Companies during the Middle Ages; and the dukes who employed Italian condottieri in Renaissance Italy, Sierra Leone thus went searching for experienced and professional military forces in an attempt to secure national strategic interests. Moreover, by hiring a military provider firm, Sierra Leone was able maintain a degree of control over military forces operating

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within its country, which allowed it to keep its independence from large state support or dependence on regional or international intervention in the form of an African Union or United Nations mission.436

Executive Outcomes had a beneficial effect on Sierra Leone’s state strength by fulfilling all of the country’s desired outcomes. The firm allowed Sierra Leone to regain control over strategic and economic interests such as the mining areas and the capital Freetown, and established security in its territory by eliminating RUF headquarters and clearing areas of rebel occupation. It can therefore be concluded that EO was effective at fulfilling its client’s desired outcomes, and had an advantageous effect on Sierra Leone’s state strength. Furthermore, it was determined that Sierra Leone, by hiring Executive Outcome, was able to increase its national power. By hiring the military provider firm, the state was able to increase its military effectiveness as it exhibited all four attributes crucial to a state’s military effectiveness. Is was thereby able to produce a skilled, quality, integrated, and responsive military force.

In sum, an analysis of Executive Outcomes’ operations in Sierra Leone reveals that the company made a very real, direct, and most importantly, beneficial impact on Sierra Leone’s state power. The country was thus able to achieve levels of state power beyond what it otherwise could gather. By hiring EO, Sierra Leone added resources, capabilities and effectiveness to its existing military force, acquired highly specialized capabilities by hiring professionals in counterinsurgency operations, airborne operations, and work with advanced weapons systems. As such, Executive Outcomes has worked as the restorer of the state by having a strategic impact on the conflict in which the firm was hired to fight.

This section thus undertook an analysis of Executive Outcome’s impact on Sierra Leone’s state power—which was determined to be beneficial—and did so by using neoclassical realism as the theoretical framework through which to conduct the research. Neoclassical realism thereby not only provided the groundwork for which a PMFs’ impact on state power could be analyzed, it also served as a highly useful guide in deducing how Sierra Leone’s foreign policy decision to hire the military provider firm came into existence.

Executive Outcome’s mission in Sierra Leone cost 35 million dollars for a 21-month engagement period. In this period, the state’s interests were secured, the desired outcomes were achieved, and the rebels were defeated and consequently forced to the negotiation table to sign the eventual peace accords.437 The UN mission, which took over after EO was expelled from

Sierra Leone, cost 47 million dollars for an eight-month period. During this time, the conflict resumed, the ceasefire agreement broke down, and internal war returned.\textsuperscript{438}

The case of Executive Outcomes in Sierra Leone demonstrates that a relatively small military provider firm can have a positive and strong impact on a destabilized, chaotic state—at an approximately minimal cost. To quote Shearer: “There is a clear link between the outcome of EO’s military operations and RUF’s willingness to negotiate. Military successes against the RUF made elections possible, most of the one million people displaced by the fighting were able to return to their homes.”\textsuperscript{439} As such, EO’s effectiveness in providing security and stability at the time even resulted in the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) considering hiring EO for further peacekeeping services on the African continent.\textsuperscript{440}

An important note must be made, however. Even though EO was successful in increasing Sierra Leone’s state power while it operated there, the firm was unable to establish a peace that lasted beyond its expulsion from the country. This means that Executive Outcomes, as a PMF, offered only a temporary solution to a deeper underlying, and more challenging, problem. Even though EO granted the Sierra Leone government a strategic pause by heightening its state power for the duration of its contract, it was unsuccessful in establishing a lasting peace settlement.\textsuperscript{441} Over the medium to long term, it can thus be concluded that the effect of EO was negligible. The firm failed to solve deeper lying problems within the armed forces of Sierra Leone related to skill and integration. However, regardless of the long-term implications, this research focused on the impact of military provider firms during their contract’s duration.

On January 1, 1999, Executive Outcomes disbanded. The firm, which could be considered the defining actor within the military provider sector during the 1990’s, ceased operations. During the firm’s employment in Sierra Leone, it had a beneficial effect on the nation’s concept of state power. It demonstrated a remarkable capability for rapid military success in a country plagued by an inept national military, a struggling economy, rising ethnic divisions and tensions, and rebel militant insurgencies. Executive Outcomes thus filled a special security void. The firm could have played an alternative to beleaguered African governments lacking a credible, capable combat force to ensure survival in an anarchic and threatening international system.

\textsuperscript{441} Idem, p. 73.
There are still some commentators, such as Nana Busia, who argue that “the raison d’être and modus vivendi of mercenaries is instability, and it is in their interests that a perpetual state of instability is maintained. With mercenaries, it is the very survival of the state that is at stake. The war against mercenarism is therefore a war to preserve sovereignty, against lawlessness.” With regards to Executive Outcome’s activity in Sierra Leone, this assertion misses the mark. While the company was present in Sierra Leone, it brought stability, ensured the survival of the state and its regime, was able to preserve the country’s sovereignty by clearing it from rebel forces, and was able to restore some measure of lawfulness. During its presence in Sierra Leone, the military provider firm was able to fulfill all of its client’s desired outcomes and it had a beneficial effect on Sierra Leone’s military effectiveness. EO thereby added to Sierra Leone’s state strength and national power that are the components of its overall state power.

As such, up until the new millennium, Executive Outcomes stood as the only private combat force capable, and willing, to enter an ongoing conflict successfully. The firm provided the Sierra Leone government additional state power. EO was therefore considered the first private military company to make a significant impact on world events. The military firm could be labelled as an innovator within the privatized industry due to its effective operations in Angola and Sierra Leone. It thereby provided a blueprint for follow-up firms such as Sandline and Blackwater in the business of providing military combat and security assistance.

Howe mentions in 1998 that “EO’s combat success may not spawn many imitators. Its composition, of proven veterans with shared training and experience, and its permanent structure, have proved unique.” With the rise of Blackwater several years later, he was largely proven wrong.

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6. Case II: Blackwater and the United States of America

Regarding underdeveloped state powers with insufficient state capabilities, who are threatened in their survival and whose national interests are constantly endangered, military provider firms, acting as a surrogate army, seem to provide a quick fix solution. The strategic battleground of such clients is often their own territory or proximate region. When threatened in their survival, these states have a lot to gain by hiring a military provider firm. Sierra Leone is an example. The country, which was on the brink of collapse due to internal wars and severe conflict initiated by insurgent forces, was able to restore and significantly increase its state power by hiring an outside private military force.

An interesting investigation now is whether military provider firms have a similar beneficial impact on the state power of a strong, developed nation with an abundance of state capabilities, whose strategic battleground is larger than its own territory and proximate region due to its position as a global hegemon within the international system and international politics. This section therefore discusses the impact of the military provider firm Blackwater on the United States its state power in the conflict case-study of the Iraq war, particularly Operation Iraqi Freedom (IOF). The structure and research will follow an identical method as the previous section, which means that first the company under consideration is discussed, as well as the conflict in which the firm operated in. This will provide a proper context, will describe the circumstances under which the state decided to contract the military provider firm—and whether these correspond to the neoclassical realist theory—and establish why the particular company can be considered a military provider firm. Most importantly, the impact of the firm on the neoclassical realist conceptualization of state power is analyzed, which is done by disseminating the concept into two component parts: state strength and national power.

As discussed in the introduction, the privatized military industry experienced a rise in actors in the early 1990’s, driven by the end of the Cold War and its related political, military, ideological, economic, and security changes. It is clear that since then, the reach of private military firms has even extended to the world’s remaining superpower. Almost every major U.S. military operation since the end of the Cold War has involved considerable and growing levels of PMF support: in the Persian Gulf, in Somalia, Haiti, Zaire, Kosovo, Bosnia, and more recently in Afghanistan and Iraq.445 This rise in the number of firms employed by the U.S. exploded after the Iraq invasion in 2003, because “insufficient U.S. forces were sent for the mission expected of them”446 Private military contractors provided an appealing solution to this

problem. As such, the invasion of U.S. forces on March 19, 2003, in Iraq was a “defining moment for the privatized military industry.”

- **Blackwater**

One of the leading actors within the private military industry was, and still is, Blackwater. Its notoriety, particularly in conflict situations in Iraq, may explain why the firm changed its name to Xe Services LLC in February 2009, and then to Academi in December 2011. Throughout this research, for the sake of clarity, the company will be referred to as Blackwater.

Blackwater underwent a massive growth during the Iraq War, especially during Operation Iraqi Freedom, which lasted from 2003 till 2011. The war did not only support the growth of Blackwater in particular, it also led to an expansion of the private military and security industry as a whole. In May 2013 there were some 114,404 private military contractor personnel operating in Iraq—most of them in logistical and other support areas. The share of Blackwater troops numbered around 1,000 to 1,500, which seems limited, but often Blackwater personnel played crucial roles in force protection operations. Furthermore, the firm provided protection details for high ranking government officials, such as Paul Brenner, who functioned as the Coalition Provisional Authority. In that capacity, Blackwater was often described as a modern-day Praetorian guard, referring to the elite bodyguards of the Roman emperors of old. It is also implied, however, that Blackwater employees acting in such roles were “arrogant, proactively violent, and powerful.” Regardless, due to OIF, the firm became “a central player in a global war.”

Blackwater was founded in 1997 by Erik Prince, a former Navy SEAL and college graduate, and Al Clark, who had been Prince’s mentor during his career in the SEALs. Initially, Prince called the company Blackwater USA, and aimed to privatize training facilities for the U.S. military. The early development of Blackwater was to a great extend made possible by the privatization trend of the military during the administration of G.H.W. Bush (1989-1993), as well as the continued downsizing of military forces under Clinton in the following years. The original goal of the firm was to, as Axelrod mentions, “privatize nonfrontline, noncombat

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operations.”


Although Blackwater came into the market much later than Executive Outcomes, its development and rise was thus largely made possible by the end of the Cold War and its ensuing changes as well. Blackwater thereby constituted, as Jeremy Scahill, author of a critical Blackwater study titled *Blackwater: The Rise of the World’s Most Powerful Mercenary Army*, writes: “the living embodiment of the changes wrought by the revolution in military affairs and the privatization agenda radically expanded by the Bush administration.”

Prince and Clark, by introducing military training practices, originally set the firm up to fulfil a security-training need: due to reduced government spending, national training facilities were lacking, and personnel had become scarce. Blackwater consequently aimed “to fulfil the anticipated demand for government outsourcing of firearms and related security training.”

Blackwater’s clients were SEAL members, but they were quickly followed by FBI and other law enforcement personnel, as well as other U.S. Special Forces troops. Over the years, Blackwater’s services expanded to specialized training for law enforcement organizations, and force protection services for anti-terrorist training.

The war on terror, brought about by the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre, created an additional need for security contractors. An important event was a request by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 2002 to provide the Agency with twenty highly qualified men to “provide protection for the CIA headquarters in Kabul, Afghanistan,” which was used as an operational base from which to hunt Bin Laden. The CIA’s decision to hire Blackwater operatives functioned as the impetus which transformed Blackwater from a firm that provided solely trainers and facilities, into an actual provider firm. From then on, Blackwater provided force security, and deployed large numbers of personnel to protect the U.S. State Department and other officials in Afghanistan, and later on in Iraq. The firm’s expanded operations included: CIA ‘snatch and grab’ missions, which meant Blackwater assisted in operations intended to capture militants and terrorist; ‘targeted killings’ of Al Qaeda leadership; and conducting covert operations into Pakistan against suspected Al Qaeda training camps. Aside from supporting conventional counterinsurgency operations, Blackwater thus also worked with the military’s Special Forces in support of direct action operations in Pakistan and

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455 http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Xe
457 Ibidem.
Afghanistan. The firm has thereby assisted the U.S. in its counterterrorism strategy since 2002.

Blackwater is primarily known for its considerable involvement in the Iraq War and several post-9/11 operation in Afghanistan. However, the firm also supplied security assistance, logistics, airlift capabilities, and other transportation services to other clients. In 2008, Blackwater had deployed more than 2,300 combat-capable soldiers around the world. The firm maintained an on-call, contract-by-contract database of personnel, much like Executive Outcomes did. Its personnel included former U.S. Special Forces, retired law enforcement personnel, and retired soldiers—all ready to be called up on short notice, which allowed the firm to control its costs and deploy swiftly. Blackwater’s headquarter was located in Arlington Country, Virginia, and its training facilities in Moyock, North Carolina. Its name is derived from its location, as its main facilities were located in blackwater swamp country.

In regard to other private military firms operating in and for the U.S., Blackwater is one of the few firms—and certainly the only large-scale firm—that provides military provider functions. The firm supplied “armed roles within the battlespace” in Afghanistan and Iraq. One of the firm’s most important jobs was to escort high value individuals and convoys, which was arguably the “most dangerous job in Iraq.” Blackwater used “military training and weaponry, to carry out missions integral to the mission’s success, in the midst of a combat zone, against adversaries who are fellow combatants.” In Iraq, the firm “participated in in actual combat engagements with Iraqi insurgents.” As such, Blackwater, too, embodied to a large extent what any definition of a military provider firm is about.

- **Services and materiel: capabilities**

Blackwater’s training facilities and combat fleets were, and still are, considered impressive. The firm owns a 28km² facility, which offered tactical and weapons training programs to military, government, and law enforcement agencies. Moreover, the firm operated a considerable fleet of aircraft, due to its aviation subsidiary, Aviation Worldwide Services (AWS). Most of this fleet was composed of civilian charter transports, but the company’s aerial

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461 Ibidem.
463 Ibidem.
464 Ibidem.
assets also included advanced helicopter gunships, fixed-wing extraction aircraft, and remotely piloted surveillance airships.467 Blackwater was thus able to produce a “combined operational capability; aircraft, vehicle, equipment and weapons resources; and long-established training expertise and facilities.”468

Blackwater had several separate divisions, all fulfilling distinct military, security and logistical functions. For example, Greystone Limited, which was an offshore registered division of Blackwater, provided “proactive engagement teams,” able to “conduct stabilization efforts” and “defensive and offensive group operations.”469 These forces were drawn from a pool of “former special operations, defense, intelligence, and law enforcement professionals” and could be deployed in short notice for global operations.470

As such, the firm provided airlift, logistics, security, transportation, protection, and peacekeeping services. Blackwater markets itself as being "the most comprehensive professional military, law enforcement, security, peacekeeping, and stability operations company in the world."471 For its operations in Iraq, Blackwater was able to draw from an international pool of professionals, most markedly ex-Special Forces units. According to the firm itself, it was able to call on 21,000 former Special Forces troops, soldiers, and retired law enforcement agents.

- **United States intervention in Iraq: a context**

The reason behind the U.S. invasion in Iraq and the state’s consequent reliance on private forces such as Blackwater, stems in large part from the U.S. feeling compelled to deploy military forces abroad in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and the subsequent rise of Islamic terrorism globally.472 It prompted the national security executive to be more aggressive against external threats.473 Additionally, the role of the U.S. as a global hegemon and the perception that as such the nation had to react firmly towards the external attacks, played a crucial role in the decision-making process as well.474

The national security executive and its key decision makers, such as President George W. Bush, Vice-President Dick Cheney, and Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, were of

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468 Idem, p. 225.
471 http://www.corpwatch.org/section.php?id=210
the opinion that the retaliation against the terrorist attacks of 9/11 had to be larger than just the military campaign against Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{475} Rumsfeld believed the terrorist threat had to be combated more effectively so that attackers “had the least chance of recruiting people and the least chance of attacking us again or attacking our forces or our friends.”\textsuperscript{476} By invading Iraq, terrorist recruitment practices would be frustrated, and the possible provision of (chemical and nuclear) weaponry to these terrorist prevented.\textsuperscript{477} Additionally, invading Iraq contributed to a strategy to “deflect terrorists from attacking the US homeland by placing US troops on an activist mission in close proximity to the main bases of terrorist operations.”\textsuperscript{478}

Cheney, too, felt that a powerful message had to be send to demonstrate the U.S. possessed the capability and willingness to strike wherever and whoever.\textsuperscript{479} Thus, in the war on terror, a second operation was required to display to the world that America had the sustained strength and will to fight perpetrators. Therefore, instead of chasing after Al Qaeda in the mountain regions of Afghanistan, the defeat of Saddam Hussein—who had already been painted as a U.S. enemy in the decade preceding the invasion—was seen as “a profitable exercise”, notably because Iraq was viewed as a country “vulnerable to attack because of the lie of the land and the weakened state of its military.”\textsuperscript{480} Succeeding in Iraq was therefore a “vital U.S. national interests because it [would] help win the war on terror and make America safer, stronger, and more certain of its future.”\textsuperscript{481}

However, in light of U.S. commitments in the war in Afghanistan, as well as other broader global commitments, an intervention in Iraq would have had an onerous effect on the national military forces, leading to a military overstretch.\textsuperscript{482} An intervention in Iraq undertaken solely by regular U.S. troops required “the willingness to make real sacrifices.”\textsuperscript{483} After the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan, however, “such readiness [was] no longer in limitless

\textsuperscript{478} Lowenberg. A.D., Mathews. T. (2008), p. 3.
\textsuperscript{480} Ibidem.
Furthermore, there was a shrinking public and political willingness to risk American lives on foreign soil. What Kinsey called ‘the body-bag syndrome’ had a heavy impact on U.S. decisions to deploy troops abroad, as the deaths of U.S. soldiers negatively affected the population’s perception of U.S. conflict involvement, as well as the political standing of its leaders—its national security executive.485

Hiring PMFs such as Blackwater provided the government with a military option that allowed it to secure its interests, provide security, fill the security gap, and reduce “some of the political risk associated with deploying US troops.”486 Contractors would fill the need for additional U.S. troops, and the body-bag syndrome would be circumvented as well, as contractor deaths were underreported and thus had lesser public and therefore political impact. The use of privatized forces thus enabled the U.S. national security executive to respond to external threats, by adding military capabilities to fill a security void that had come into existence because there were an insufficient number of national forces available that were required to complete the mission expected of them in Iraq.487

Hiring a private force such as Blackwater allowed the U.S. to pursue its national interests abroad, as the difficulty the U.S experienced in meeting its recruitment standards would have otherwise impeded its ability to projects its power within the international system.487 For example, Avant mentions that if the U.S. was not able to “mobilize these services through the market, it would either have to mobilize them through the military or reassess its decision to go to war.”488 In all, the use of privatized forces facilitated the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq specifically, and the war on terror in general. Firms such as Blackwater thereby enabled the U.S. national security executive to project its power abroad, allowing military operations to occur that would have otherwise been impossible to conduct.

Throughout Operation Iraqi Freedom, PMFs from all three sectors increased in presence in Iraq, and in the fulfilment of key roles. Military support firms supplied logistics and assisted with technical support; military consulting firms trained the post-Saddam police, army and paramilitary forces, and fulfilled analytical roles as well, providing military intelligence; and military provider firms provided assistance in force protection operations, convoy escort, base protection from rebel attacks, guarding top officials, and thus generally supplied “armed

486 Ibidem.
personnel that operate with troops on the battlefield.” The U.S. government hired these contractors primarily to operate alongside its own national, state-run military forces—unlike Executive Outcomes in Sierra Leone, where the military provider firm acted as a surrogate army, operating as a state agent largely in place of the national military.

Contractors thus fulfilled an assortment of functions. They trained U.S. troops before the invasion; handled logistics and support during the war’s build-up; maintained, loaded and operated combat systems during the invasion; and played even more prominent roles in the post-invasion occupation. This is where Blackwater came in. In the months after the invasion, violence in Iraq escalated. The mission grew more difficult, the situation on the ground deteriorated, the level of violence increased, but there were not enough troops to maintain order. In response, an increasing number of private military and security firms were used as a makeshift solution, instead of sending more regular U.S. troops to fill the security gap. One of the main reasons for this is that contractors such as Blackwater personnel are arguably “less expensive and more efficient” as they require little to no training and can therefore be deployed immediately.

The first contract Blackwater signed was in June 2004, almost a year after the initial invasion. Blackwater contractors from then on “found themselves doubling as combat soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq.” They assisted in U.S. counterinsurgency operations during the stabilization and reconstruction efforts in the post-invasion period. The firm was to be used in “the war zone (and, insofar as any location in that war zone was liable to see combat, on the battlefield as well).”

As the war in Iraq continued, so did the U.S. government’s demand for military expertise. When the national military was subsequently unable to fulfil this demand, private military firms filled the security void. In that capacity, they played a significant part in the international security environment.

PMFs thereby became a permanent element within the U.S. military force structure, which was acknowledged by U.S. field commanders as well. For example, during the Iraq Surge

(which refers to the 2007 increase in the number of American troops to provide security to Baghdad and the Al Anbar province), Army Lt. Gen. David H. Patraeus—the then top commander in Iraq—publicly declared that he counted “thousands of contract security forces among the assets available to him to supplement the limited number of U.S. and Iraqi troops to be used for dealing with the insurgency.” It can thus be said that the U.S. considers its private contracted forces, including Blackwater, as a state agent, in that the firms provide a vital national military capability.

Once again, neoclassical realism functions as a valuable theoretical framework. The theory is able to accurately account for state behavior. According to neoclassical realism, a state is primarily concerned with “advancing the security or power of the entire nation.” Furthermore, the theory stresses the security of the state and the national interests as driving factors behind state behavior and foreign policy decisions. With regard to the invasion in Iraq and the consequent hiring of Blackwater, it can be concluded that this decision overlaps with issues correlating to the neoclassical realist theory. The intervention was conducted because of “concerns over America’s prestige as a hegemon”; because the U.S. national security executive wished to secure the nation by diminishing the chance that terrorists would be “attacking us again or attacking our forces or our friends”; and because a message had to be send that the U.S. was still an influential and powerful actor within the international system. As such, the U.S. responded to external threats to its security, and intervened to protect and assure its prestige, influence and interests. Military contractors were consequently employed by the U.S. to “support its role as a world hegemon.”

Both domestic and international pressures thus resulted in the decision to military invade Iraq. Neoclassical realism is thereby able to accurately account for state behavior and explain why the U.S. chose to intervene and hire Blackwater, as doing so would advance the security or power of the entire nation. Just as Executive Outcomes provided security and survival to Sierra Leone in the 1990’s, and thereby secured the state’s interests, so did Blackwater enable the U.S. government to protect its interests and project its power abroad. In that capacity, Blackwater projected lethal force at the strategic level in support of the public good.

Having established the type of services Blackwater provided, as well as the context of the Iraqi War and the reasoning behind the U.S. decision to hire the military provider firm, this

research will now turn to its main objective: an in-depth analysis into the impact of Blackwater on the United States’ state power. This is done by first determining the U.S.’ desired outcomes in Iraq and to what extent Blackwater was able to be beneficial or detrimental in fulfilling these. And, second, by analyzing Blackwater’s impact on the U.S. its military effectiveness.

- **Blackwater’s impact on strategic interests and desired outcomes**

Two of the main goals of the U.S. intervention in Iraq were thus to show that U.S. strength had not diminished, and that terrorist activity, such as recruitment, would be fought wherever necessary. It is therefore clear what the U.S. desired to achieve with the invasion itself. However, the state’s strategic interests and desired outcomes in the initial post-invasion period—and therefore what Blackwater’s impact on these interests and desired outcomes were—were less transparent. A rapport by the United States Government Accountability Office mentions that “prior to the fall of 2005, the U.S. stabilization and reconstruction effort in Iraq lacked a clear, comprehensive, and integrated U.S. strategy.”501 In response, in November 2005, the National Security Council issued a plan of action for victory in Iraq. The plan elaborated on the national security executive’s strategy for achieving its desired goals.502 The overlapping U.S. goal was to create a secure, peaceful, and stable Iraq. At the national, strategic level, this was defined in the following stages:503

1. **Short term:**
   - To create an Iraq that is fighting terrorists and neutralizing the insurgency, meeting political milestones; building democratic institutions; standing up robust security forces to gather intelligence, destroy terrorist networks, and maintain security.

2. **Medium term:**
   - To establish an Iraq that is in the lead defeating terrorists and insurgents and providing its own security, with a constitutional, elected government in place.

3. **Long term:**
   - An Iraq that has defeated the terrorists and neutralized the insurgency.
   - An Iraq that is peaceful, united, stable, democratic, and secure.
   - An Iraq that is a partner in the global war on terror and the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, integrated into the international community, an engine for regional economic growth, and proving the fruits of democratic governance to the region.

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502 Ibidem.
To accomplish these short-, medium- and long-term goals, eight strategic objectives were developed. These represented the U.S. strategic interests and its desired outcomes.\textsuperscript{504}

1. Defeat terrorists; neutralize insurgents
2. Transition Iraq to security self-reliance
3. Help Iraqis forge a compact for democratic government
4. Help Iraq build government capacity and essential services
5. Help Iraq strengthen the economy
6. Help Iraq strengthen the rule of law
7. Increase international support for Iraq
8. Strengthen public understanding of coalition efforts and public isolation of the insurgents

To accomplish said objectives, the strategy required the U.S. to maintain a sufficient number of troops in Iraq. Consequently, it was necessary to adjust troop strength whenever conditions required such—which meant military firms like Blackwater were hired when troop deficiencies arose. Blackwater’s actions, as a military provider firm conduction operations on the battlefield and in the theatre of war, chiefly had an impact on the attainment of objectives relating to the neutralization of terrorists and insurgents, as well Iraq public understanding of the coalition efforts and the isolation of insurgents.\textsuperscript{505}

The extent to which Blackwater had a beneficial or detrimental impact on the attainment of these objectives will now be discussed.

Blackwater’s first contract with the U.S. government was signed in August 2003, almost six months after the initial invasion. The contract stipulated the defense of Paul Brenner, the coalition’s top official in Iraq. Two months later, in October 2003, the company still only had seventy-eight employees operating in Iraq.\textsuperscript{506} In the next months, however, the number of Blackwater personnel and other contractors rose exponentially in response to the first surge of sectarian and insurgent violence.\textsuperscript{507} By early 2004, Blackwater was heavily involved in Iraq—and was considered one of the most crucial private actors in the theatre of war, fulfilling functions “against insurgents in ways hard to distinguish from military actions.”\textsuperscript{508}

\textsuperscript{505} Furthermore, as stated in the introduction, this paper primarily focusses on PMFs’ impact on issues correlating to the neoclassical conceptualization of state power, thereby eschewing other issues pertaining to, for example, the rule of law, the level of attained democracy, and economic considerations.
\textsuperscript{506} Scahill, J. (2008), p. 133-134.
\textsuperscript{508} Avant, D., Nevers, R. de (2011), p. 90.
In Iraq, however, Blackwater proved to be highly detrimental to the overall U.S. counterinsurgency mission, as well as the attainment of its strategic interest and desired goals. Failures in coordination and communication practices between Blackwater and the U.S. military, as well as a lack of sufficient training and preparation practices among Blackwater contractors, resulted in many incidents which negatively impacted the U.S. mission.\(^{509}\) Most striking of these was an explosion of violence in Fallujah in early 2004 that cost the lives of four Blackwater personnel who were killed by insurgents. The deaths of these contractors caused the U.S. to reexamine its original strategic military plan and launch an offensive in Fallujah as a signal that U.S. deaths would not go unpunished.\(^{510}\) This inflamed the insurgency, causing an increase in tensions and attacks.

What happened in Fallujah, and how exactly did Blackwater affect the counterinsurgency operations?

On March 31, 2004, Blackwater contract personnel were ambushed by insurgents in the city of Fallujah.\(^{511}\) They were killed, set on fire, and dragged to a nearby bridge to be hanged.\(^{512}\) The scene was aired on television stations throughout the world. In response, the U.S. military was ordered by the national security executive to change tactics with respect to Fallujah and its citizens, and avenge the deaths of U.S. troops. Consequently, four days after the Blackwater casualties, U.S. forces rolled into Fallujah and began an operation that would result in the deaths of at least 36 U.S. troops, about 200 insurgents, and eventually led to 600 Iraqi civilian casualties, many of them reportedly children and women.\(^{513}\) The consequent outcome—the demilitarization of the city—lasted only temporary.\(^{514}\)

Blackwater’s actions in Fallujah reinforced the assumption that the military provider firm did not coordinate competently with U.S. national forces and that the mission “had not been sufficiently planned.”\(^{515}\) A report by the United States House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform into Blackwater’s actions in Fallujah supports these assumptions. The rapport cites a witness employed by another private contractor


\(^{513}\) United States House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (2007), Private Military Contractors in Iraq: An Examination of Blackwater’s Action in Fallujah, September 2007, p. 4.


that Blackwater’s mission was “hurriedly put together and they were not prepared.”\textsuperscript{516} The rapport furthermore concludes that Blackwater “ignored multiple warnings about the dangers of traveling through Fallujah, cut essential personnel from the mission, and failed to supply its team with armored vehicles, machine guns, sufficient threat intelligence, or even maps of the area.”\textsuperscript{517} An internal review conducted by Blackwater itself concluded that the firm’s personnel in Fallujah had “no time to perform proper mission planning” and was “without proper maps of the city.”\textsuperscript{518}

In sum, the events in Fallujah revealed that the military provider firm was operating as an “unprepared and disorderly organization operating in a hostile environment.”\textsuperscript{519} Blackwater had “sent its team on the mission without properly armored vehicles and machine guns.”\textsuperscript{520} Moreover, the firm cut the standard mission team by two members, depriving the team of rear gunners. Blackwater took all of these actions “before sending the team into an area known to be an insurgent stronghold.”\textsuperscript{521}

Blackwater’s actions in Fallujah caused the national security executive to shift its strategic and operational activities, and initiate a large-scale offensive in the area. According to some military observers, this offensive exacerbated the conflict situation in Iraq by “aggravating the negative Iraqi sentiment towards the coalition occupation and fueling an escalation of the insurgency.”\textsuperscript{522} The decision for a stronger conflict involvement in Fallujah as a result of the contractors’ deaths, thus seemed to be made as a desire to avenge American casualties. Rational considerations relating to the eventual fulfilment of desired objectives and outcomes, did not weigh as heavily on the decision-making process. Consequently, the “insurgency heated up in 2004,” which was in large part caused by Blackwater’s actions in Fallujah and the resulting changing national strategic plan.\textsuperscript{523}

Blackwater thus undercut the progress made by the regular military forces in Iraq.\textsuperscript{524} Ralph Peters, a retired U.S. army officer, notes that “time and again, contractor shoot-‘em-ups have either turned back the clock on local progress or triggered greater problems.”\textsuperscript{525}

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\footnote{United States House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (2007), p. 3, 11.}
\footnote{Idem, p. 2}
\footnote{Ibidem.}
\footnote{Ibidem.}
\footnote{Ibidem.}
\footnote{Idem, p. 17.}
\footnote{Ibidem.}
\footnote{Avant, D., Sigelman, L. (2010), p. 248}
\footnote{Ibidem.}
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the response of the national security executive within the U.S. had an inflammatory effect on the insurgency in Iraq, which “proved a disaster for the effort to win hearts and minds.” Eventually, the city devolved “into a base of operations for Al Qaeda in Iraq.” The U.S. response thereby drove a wedge between the Iraqi population and the U.S. coalition forces. It worsened the security situation and had a detrimental impact on several of the U.S. its desired outcomes, particularly the defeat of insurgents, as well as the strengthening of public understanding of coalition efforts and the public isolation of insurgents.

The Fallujah case was not exceptional, but does serve as a specific case whereby Blackwater’s actions negatively impacted on U.S. strategic interest and desired outcomes—hence its elaboration. The company on several other occasions negatively impacted the domestic population’s perception of the entire U.S. military operation by shooting civilians, or by unnecessarily escalating conflict situations. There were many more reported cases of incidents involving Blackwater contractors, causing tensions between the firm and the local populace. For example, on September 16, 2007, a convoy of Blackwater contractors fired on and killed several Iraqi civilians, wounding several more, in a shooting incident in Nissour Square, Baghdad. As a result, “the Iraqi government and populace exploded with anger.” Blackwater employees thereby harmed local perceptions of the U.S. coalition efforts as the regular military had aimed to follow the hearts-and-minds approach in the counterinsurgency warfare.

In September, 2007, after the shooting incident in Nissour Square, Baghdad, the Iraqi government revoked Blackwater’s contract. The U.S. government, however, kept the company under employment and reinstated its license once again in April, 2008. In January, 2009, however, the U.S. State Department informed Blackwater that it would not renew its contract for operations in Iraq.

Likely due to negative publicity caused by the Nissour Square shooting incident, the firm changed its name from Blackwater to Blackwater Worldwide in 2007. Then, in February

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527 Ibidem.
531 Idem, p. 1.
2009, it changed its name to Xe Services LLC, and in December, 2011, the name was once again altered, this time to Academi; the name under which the firm currently operates. The United States’ strategic interests and desired outcomes, as well as the actions taken by Blackwater in support of—or in hindrance to—said objectives, are thus established. Out of the eight strategic objectives that were developed, two are of particular importance when analyzing Blackwater’s impact on desired outcomes: the neutralization of terrorists and insurgents, as well the Iraq public’s understanding of the coalition efforts and the consequent isolation of insurgents. The following segment will encapsulate and outline the findings.

- **Impact on state strength**

The U.S., having sent an insufficient number of soldiers for the mission that was expected of them, found in the use of Blackwater potential additional forces at little to no political cost. While Operation Iraqi Freedom continued, contractor casualties—unlike regular U.S. forces’ deaths—had little to no impact on the commitment of the state to the mission in Iraq or on the approval ratings of the national security executive in the form of the U.S. government led by George W. Bush. The blowback from these deaths were less severe, as knowledge concerning them was far less widespread. As a result, contractors were hired in increasing numbers. Blackwater, as a military provider firm, was hired to operate alongside the national U.S. military forces.

Blackwater’s actions in Fallujah and Baghdad, especially, were damaging to the counterinsurgency operation in Iraq. The firm had harmed its own as well as the military’s relations with the local population. The Iraqi population held U.S. coalition troops accountable for the actions of contractors, because they associated contractors with the U.S. military-led coalition occupying their country. As a congressional testimony describes, “We may try to distance ourselves by the actions of the contractors, thinking they provide convenient temporary manpower whose deaths won’t be marked by a flag draped coffin [but] overseas, where the public opinion really matters in the struggle for minds and will in the insurgency, the contractors are the US and are directly involved in the mission.”

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536 Ibidem.
This had a detrimental influence on the U.S. its ability to fight a counterinsurgency warfare. Fighting such an insurgency requires the support of the local community, as locals can either contribute or hamper the military’s ability to successfully conduct counterinsurgency operations. As Singer describes, the counterinsurgency war in Iraq was “not a traditional military conflict made up of set-pieces battles, but rather made up of a series of small wars and insurgencies […] where the U.S. must sway a broader population from hostility to support if it ever wants to oust terror cells and shutdown recruiting pipelines.” As such, small wars are battles for the support of the population in question. The U.S., as an outside force, must persuade the populace that it acts in their interests if it wants to successfully fight a counterinsurgency warfare.

The use of Blackwater, however, “harmed, rather than helped the counterinsurgency efforts of the U.S. mission in Iraq.” The backlash that Blackwater caused due to its conduct of operations hurt the fulfilment of U.S. desired outcomes in Iraq. The firm’s impact on the counterinsurgency operations, on the effort to fight terrorists and insurgents, and to win the hearts-and-minds of the Iraqi population, has obviously been detrimental. Moreover, Blackwater’s actions within Iraq affected not only the local populace’s opinion of U.S. war effort in Iraq, it also reverberated negatively throughout the Muslim world in general and Afghanistan specifically, thereby threatening the counterinsurgency effort globally.

The military itself had little control over incidents involving private military firms. These firms were located outside of the chain of command present within the military organization. This had a detrimental impact on the cooperation and integration of Blackwater within the larger U.S. military. Such issues consequently influenced the responsiveness of the U.S. military as well, due to limited communication and information exchange, and thereby lowered the military’s skill as it made “effective leadership more difficult.”

Blackwater thus did not assist in the attainment of U.S. desired goals in Iraq. In short term, the firm negatively impacted on the mission “to create an Iraq that is fighting terrorists and neutralizing the insurgency,” able to “destroy terrorist networks.” In the medium term, the firm hampered the establishment of “an Iraq that is in the lead defeating terrorists and insurgents and providing its own security.” And in the long term, Blackwater was not able to assist the

541 Idem, p. 2.
U.S. with its goal to create an Iraq “that has defeated the terrorists and neutralized the insurgency” and is “a partner in the global war on terror.”

That said, Blackwater’s presence in Iraq was valuable in some areas, especially when it came to force protection, and was therefore kept under contract despite the occurrence of incidents that impeded the overall counterinsurgency effort. For example, Scahill cites State Department Gregory Starr in that the decision to keep Blackwater under employment was done “after careful consideration of the operational requirements necessary to support the U.S. Government’s foreign policy objectives in Iraq.” The national security executive apparently still considered the firm essential to the attainment of certain objectives, regardless of the firm’s actual negative impact on its client’s overall state strength.

All in all, a close analysis of Blackwater’s actions and operations in Iraq reveals that the firm impacted negatively on the attainment of strategic interests and desired outcomes. Blackwater’s actions caused an increase in insurgent attacks against U.S. troops and its coalition partners; a growth in sectarian violence; and a rise in activity of militia forces. The firm thereby had a clear detrimental effect on the counterinsurgency effort, particularly the rise of insurgent attacks and the growing negative perception of the public in regards to the U.S. mission and its deployed troops. Thus, by taking over conventional state tasks and responsibilities, Blackwater functioned as a disadvantageous (f)actor on U.S. desired outcomes. The firm did not fulfil, or assists, the attainment of the United States’ objectives in Iraq, and consequently had an undeniable negative effect on its state strength.

- **National power: military effectiveness**

Whether Blackwater was beneficial to the U.S.’ national power—i.e. its military effectiveness—during its presence in Iraq will be discussed in this segment.

**Integration**

Integration is defined as “the degree to which different military activities are internally consistent and mutually reinforcing.” The three essential aspects to a military’s integration are

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544 For example, according to a RAND research (see Cotton, S.K., Petersohn, U., Dunigan, M., et al. (2010), p. 52), Blackwater—when it operated in the capacity of a client’s security guard—had not lost any of its clients to enemy fire. This implies that, in certain areas, Blackwater did successfully fulfil certain desired outcomes. However, looking at the firm’s deployment in Iraq as a whole, in other areas it was less successful, and overall had a detrimental impact on desired goals, especially in regard to the fulfillment of national strategic objectives.
546 See note 544.
the consistency in which strategic, operational, and tactical goals are achieved; the training and education troops receive in support of said goals; and the communication and coordination practices between military forces.

Unlike in Sierra Leone, where Executive Outcomes guided the security and military activity—and operated as a state agent by functioning as a surrogate army that provided military services in place of the national military—the relationship between the national and private forces within the U.S. military structure differed. Here, they worked alongside each other, and therefore their relationship was based on “cooperation and coordination of activities and the desire to work from a common operating picture.” Consequently, coordinative practices between Blackwater and the regular military forces determined to a considerable extent the degree to which different military activities were consistent and mutually reinforcing.

Blackwater initially provided a military apparatus that was well trained, had previous military and combat experience, and generally shared a “common professional background and training with the military.” However, as the war in Iraq progressed, increasingly untrained and underequipped troops were sent to combat zones. This had occurred in Fallujah as well, where the firm had “rushed together a team of 4 men who had never trained together and sent them out without armored vehicles and even good directions.”

Incidents involving “poor or non-existent coordination and cooperation between PMC personnel and the regular military” occurred on an accumulating basis during Blackwater’s deployment. Consequently, the company’s actions had a detrimental impact on the national military’s ability to wage war in accordance with its strategic goals—specifically to battle the rise of insurgent attacks and the growing negative perception of the Iraqi public in regards to the U.S. mission and its coalition troops. Furthermore, at the operational and tactical level respectively, it was often unclear where or how Blackwater was placed in the military chain of command, or what their rules of engagement in the field were. These issues often caused co-deployment problems. Overall, there was thus an insufficient availability of information surrounding the roles of contractors in conflict operations, which obstructed interaction in the field.

552 Idem, p. 80.
In this regard as well, the Fallujah episode is not a singular incident relevant to Blackwater’s co-deployment alongside U.S. national forces. Coordination problems were widespread, and often the result of a lack of knowledge concerning military providers’ activities, which in turn was caused by a structural lack of communication between the national military and the private contractors.\textsuperscript{554} For example, in 2005 the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a rapport in which it noted that contractors “continue to report incidents between themselves and the military when approaching military convoys and checkpoints,” and that regular forces do not “have a clear understanding of the role of contractors, including private security providers, in Iraq or of the implications of having private security providers in the battle space.”\textsuperscript{555} In follow-up reports in 2006 and 2008 (respectively three and five years after Blackwater’s initial deployment to the Iraqi area of operations), the GAO found that integration and coordination problems continued to persist and recommended a pre-deployment training program to train both military and private actors in their coordinated activities.\textsuperscript{556}

The integration between national and private military forces was thus lacking. Dunigan mentions that “reports of hostilities, tensions, and a general lack of coordination between these forces have emerged from the field.”\textsuperscript{557} Other reports, Dunigan continues, indicate that contractors “act in a hostile or threatening manner toward civilians in their area of operation. Such actions, if pervasive, can have a great impact on the overall military operation and long-term strategic goals in that region.”\textsuperscript{558} It was a valid point; coordination issues, as well as the threatening manner in which operations were conducted, impeded the effectiveness of military operations and several main strategic objectives of the military operations in Iraq.\textsuperscript{559}

When coordination did occur, it was ad hoc, rather than a continuous, institutionalized exercise.\textsuperscript{560} The failures in coordination and communication practices between Blackwater and the U.S. national military forces, as well as the lack of training in regards to some Blackwater personnel (particularly further on in the Iraqi war) thus had a negative impact on the integration

\textsuperscript{557} Dunigan, M. (2011), p. 53
\textsuperscript{558} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{559} U.S. Government Accountability Office (2006), p. 4. See appendix II at the end for an overview for the U.S. national strategy for victory in Iraq. This strategy can be considered the objectives—the desired outcomes—of the United States in regard to its intervention mission in Iraq.
and effectiveness of the U.S. military as a whole, as well as the consistency in its tactical, operational and strategic activities.\textsuperscript{561}

**Responsiveness**

Responsiveness is “the ability to tailor military activity to a state’s own capabilities, its adversaries’ capabilities, and external constraints.”\textsuperscript{562} Responsiveness ensures that a military is trained, equipped, organized and structured to function in the designated strategically environment.

Lack of coordination and communication between Blackwater employees and national military forces had a significant impact on the U.S.’ responsiveness as well. Lack of communication increased the probability that movements and manoeuvres of Blackwater’s personnel caught national military forces of guard. This, consequently, prevented a coordinated, unified activity between the private and national troops, and their subsequent ability to respond to their enemy, the environment, and other external constraints.\textsuperscript{563} The firm’s actions thereby caused confusion on the battlefield, whereby the responsiveness of the U.S. forces overall decreased.\textsuperscript{564} Fallujah serves as an example where failure in coordination and communication practices had a negative impact on the U.S. its military effectiveness, and where the absence of well-trained, organized and sufficiently equipped contractors hampered Blackwater’s ability to respond appropriately to the designated strategic environment.

Successful coordination practices between Blackwater and the national forces would have allowed the U.S. its entire force to be more responsive to external constraints and conditions, as well as to its own needs and capabilities. However, a lack of coordination between Blackwater and the regular U.S. forces decreased the state’s military effectiveness instead.

It must be noted that over time these issues were ameliorated as structural changes were made to improve private-national military communication problems.\textsuperscript{565} However, these changed occurred late into the war and did not correct communication and coordination issues entirely.

Skill
Skill measures “military personnel and their units against some objective standard or benchmark in assessing their ability to achieve particular tasks and to carry out orders.” It reflects the degree to which military personnel are capable and willing to undertake complex tasks in preparation for and execution of combat operations. Motivation, training and education are of prime importance, as are the proper assimilation of technologies and military doctrine.

According to Axelrod, Prince and Clark had “originally conceived Blackwater’s security function in U.S. Special Forces terms as small, elite, and ultra capable.” Troops were hired from the ranks of retired SEALs and other special forces formations. In that capacity, they were highly capable and had received expert training. However, as Operation Iraqi Freedom continued, the U.S. government’s request for more operators caused the company to broaden its recruitment pool. Recruitment standards were lowered to meet the requested demand, which meant lower-paid and less qualified personnel were deployed. The company went outside the U.S. Special Forces, even outside the United States itself. Contractors were consequently drawn from countries like Chile, the Philippines, and Bosnia.

To illustrate, in a U.S. Government Reform report concerning Blackwater’s operations in Fallujah, a Blackwater employee describes the operations conducted by Blackwater, and the personnel in its service, in the following manner: “The caliber of most of the people here is not where it needs to be. More training, more discipline, and a more selective screening process are needed.” The Blackwater organization in Baghdad especially was considered “chaotic and staffed by unqualified individuals.” Overall, Blackwater’s employees lacked “up-to-date ‘urban counter-insurgency’ training” and most employees were young former U.S. Marines with little “crowd control and combat experience.”

Blackwater troops, sent to Iraq as the counterinsurgency war progressed, thus did not undergo a combined pre-deployment training program. They were also equipped with inferior technological materiel such as “impoverished civilian rolling stock—jeeps and various SUVs—instead of adequately armored purpose-build military vehicles” suitable to the counterinsurgency environment. The extent to which this occurred is difficult to examine.
due to underreporting of incidents involving training deficiencies or coordination problems by Blackwater itself.\textsuperscript{574} The firm had little incentive to report such incidents involving undertrained, poorly equipped personnel, as it might negatively impact the amount of contracts it was offered. As a 2008 Human Rights report states: “a high number of compromising incidents may be viewed by the military contracting authority as evidence of improper training, supervision or conduct, leading to potential cancellation of contracts or a decreased chance to secure future contracts.”\textsuperscript{575} It seems that, with regard to Blackwater, this was the case with several of its operatives.

One of the few elements of skill that Blackwater did initially affect in a positive manner, was the motivation and morale of the U.S. forces as a whole. At first, morale and motivation rose, as private contractors such as Blackwater employees were motivated by patriotism, since many were prior military.\textsuperscript{576} Blackwater had motivated soldiers among its ranks, who were often willing to undertake complex tasks in preparation for and execution of combat operations.

However, as co-deployment progressed, the large differentials in pay and responsibility between contractors and national forces caused a drop in morale from national military personnel, who resented the exorbitant pay and additional benefits contractors received.\textsuperscript{577} Specifically, a RAND survey found that the pay disparity during OIF caused friction between contractors and U.S. military personnel.\textsuperscript{578} It can therefore be concluded that even though the patriotism of Blackwater personnel initially affected the level of morale and motivation within the U.S. force in a positive manner, resentment over wage differences eventually had a detrimental effect on these issues.\textsuperscript{579}

There is thus some uncertainty in assessing the impact of Blackwater on the skill of the U.S. military force. In the earlier phases of deployment, Blackwater's impact was likely positive, as the firm provided highly capable personnel that had received expert training. These units were motivated, skilled, effective, and capable at executing complex orders and

\textsuperscript{574} The limited availability of reports and reliable information concerning Blackwater’s operations also become apparent in the United States House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (2007) report. This report describes the refusal of Blackwater to supply the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform with the necessary information to research the Fallujah incident, stating that the requested information was “classified” or “privileged”. Only after threats to hold Blackwater on contempt of the Congress did Blackwater finally produce the subpoenaed documents.


\textsuperscript{579} Ibidem.
maneuvers due to their professional military background. However, as OIF and the deployment of Blackwater continued, the firm’s impact on skill deteriorated. Less qualified personnel was deployed to meet the U.S. government’s requests for more operators. Additionally, strain between contractors and official U.S. military personnel worsened as tensions over pay differentials, as well as communication and coordination problems, surfaced. These issues had a negative impact on morale and the motivation of national forces. It can therefore be concluded that even though Blackwater’s initial impact on the U.S. military’s skill was likely beneficial, over time it proved to be detrimental.

Quality

Quality measures the ability of a military force to supply itself in preparation for or during a conflict with superior materiel, and how well this is used. Quality is thus in part determined by the extent to which a firm functions as a force multiplier.

While Blackwater’s impact on U.S. military effectiveness in terms of integration, responsiveness and skill was predominantly detrimental, its impact on quality was both positive and negative. Blackwater personnel did function as a force multiplier by providing additional troops and materiel, and thereby provided “needed surge capacity.” The firm permitted the U.S. army to deploy fewer national combat support personnel and allowed “the operational commander greater leeway in designing a force.”

However, the firm did fail in providing sufficient firepower and technologically superior equipment, as an examination into Blackwater’s actions in Fallujah displays. For example, prior to the Fallujah incident, the firm’s own operation’s manager in Baghdad had already contacted Blackwater headquarters, stating: “I need new vehicles. I need new COMs, I need ammo, I need Glock and M4s. ... I’ve requested hard cars from the beginning. ... Ground truth is appalling.” It reflected Blackwater’s own eventual troubles with providing an adequate amount of well-trained troops, supplied with effective materiel and weaponry suitable to the environment in which they operated. Blackwater was not equipped for the situation. It lacked “appropriately armored vehicles” and other capable material and weaponry.

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580 See note 544 for other benefits offered by the firm as well.
583 United States House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (2007), p. 3.
584 Idem, p. 7
As OIF and the deployment of Blackwater troops continued, the firm’s impact on the quality of the U.S. military deteriorated. Although its initial deployment added quality, its latter involvement in operations proved to be detrimental to this attribute of military effectiveness.

- **Impact on national power**

Blackwater, as a military provider firm, was hired to operate alongside the national U.S. military forces. An in-depth analysis has shown that the U.S., by hiring Blackwater—which from then on operated as a co-deployment state agent—dissipated its national power, i.e. its military effectiveness. By hiring the military provider firm, the U.S. added a military capability to its army that negatively impacted all four attributes crucial to a state’s military effectiveness. It was thereby unable to produce a skilled, quality, integrated, and responsive force during the counterinsurgency operations in Iraq, which was undertaken to support vital U.S. national interests. Instead of assisting its client state in prevailing in the war on terror, Blackwater’s presence exacerbated the situation and caused a surge in terrorist and insurgency activity.

Therefore, as a co-deployment force in the field, Blackwater had a clear detrimental effect on the U.S. its military effectiveness in the long term. The company initially provided well trained, combat experienced units, who acted as a force multiplier and filled a security gap that had come into existence due to the unavailability of national troops. However, after a longer period of deployment, these advantages diminished. The firm operated according to different training procedures and doctrines, and had its own separate command structure. This caused compatibility, communication and coordination problems between the firm and the regular armed forces. As such, Blackwater’s co-deployment alongside the U.S. national military forces had a detrimental effect on U.S. national power. The firm was deployed to augment the U.S. military and assist the state in achieving its desired outcomes, but was unsuccessful in that conduct.

- **Evaluation**

The United States undertook the military intervention in Iraq because it considered its national interests endangered by external threats in the form of possible terrorist attacks originating from Iraq soil, using weapons obtained therein. The goals—to prevent further attacks on U.S. territory, to protect America’s prestige as a hegemon, and to project U.S. power in the international system—would be pursued by the military intervention. National troops were

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mobilized, and when those proved to be insufficient in order to maintain control and order on
the ground, private actors such as the military provider firm Blackwater were hired to fulfill
U.S. desired interests. As such, the U.S. responded to internal pressures and external threats to
its security, and intervened to protect and assure its prestige, influence and interests. Both
domestic and international pressures therefore resulted in the decision to military invade Iraq.

However, to conduct such foreign policies in pursuit of strategic interests, the U.S.
national security executive required additional forces. Therefore, in order to “pursue a national
strategy of engagement,” the U.S. needed “the ability to generate forces that can respond across
the spectrum of conflict.” For this, the assistance of private military firms—military provider
firms included—was required.

Blackwater, among many other contracting firms, was consequently hired to fill a
security gap. The military provider firm was able to quickly provide tools, skills, materiel and
personnel for the mission in Iraq when regular military forces were unable to do so. It is
therefore clear that the U.S. government would not have been able to conduct the invasion and
occupation of Iraq for lack of manpower and expertise, both of which private military firms
were able to provide.

Consequently, the use of Blackwater permitted the U.S. government to pursue its
geopolitical interests. Blackwater, as one of many other private military firms, thereby
contribute “significantly to U.S. foreign policy projects.” However, despite Blackwater
emerging as an important new security and military actor for the U.S. in Afghanistan and Iraq,
the firm had a detrimental effect on the nation’s state power. While the firm initially had a
beneficial effect on the military effectiveness of the U.S. forces as a whole due to its
employment pool of highly capable Special Forces units, the end result was that the company
had a detrimental impact on the U.S. its national power. Blackwater was unsuccessful in
working collaboratively and cooperatively with regular forces, which was caused by severe
communication and coordination problems. What exacerbated the situation was the disparity in
pay, discipline, attitude, and accommodations that caused resentment among regular troops in
regard to Blackwater contactors. The firm thereby had an adverse impact on all four attributes
crucial to a state’s military effectiveness—and consequently a detrimental influence on its
national power.

Moreover, and arguably more importantly, the military provider firm was unsuccessful in pursuing and fulfilling (foreign policy) goals vital to the national security of its client. Blackwater troops were often detrimental to military operations. The Fallujah debacle, for example, exposed how inadequately trained, poorly equipped, and poorly led some of the Blackwater employees were. The firm’s actions necessitated a costly change in U.S. strategy, which caused a rise in counterinsurgency activity, and thereby detrimentally affected U.S. strategic interests and desired outcomes—i.e. its state strength. Blackwater’s actions in Iraq, particularly those in Fallujah and Baghdad, thereby negatively impacted short-, medium-, and long-term goals of the mission to neutralize the insurgency, to destroy terrorist networks, and to build Iraq into a partner in the global war on terror. As such, Blackwater was unable to beneficially affect the United States its state power during its insurgency warfare in Iraq.

Ironically, the United States have “over-outsourced to the point that it is unable to imagine carrying out its most basic operations without [private military firms].” 591 Consequently, firms such as Blackwater are “not only operating in warfare today, but are, in fact, integral to many military operations.” 592 Yet despite reliance on military provider firms to conduct operations abroad and thereby project power within the international system, the use of contractors in general, and Blackwater specifically, has impeded national strategic goals such as the effort to win the counterinsurgency campaign. 593 As such, the war in Iraq epitomizes how the U.S. is unable to win with contractors, but cannot go to war without them either.

593 Idem, p. 18.
7. Conclusion

From the dawn of civilization, and as long as human conflict has existed, military skills and expertise have been in demand—and will likely remain so. Whether it are regional powers planning for war; decrepit militia attempting to reverse battlefield losses; peacekeeping forces seeking logistical and deployment support; multinational companies hoping to end rebel attacks against facilities; drug-cartels seeking high-end technological capabilities; superpowers aiming to limit defense costs and improve effectiveness; failing governments trying to prevent further degradation of their sovereignty or even the complete loss of its capital: when confronted with various security needs and threats, each has at one point or another sought military support to fill a security gap to fulfill certain strategic interests or desired outcomes.

It is clear that private military firms are increasingly turning into important actors within the contemporary international security environment. They not only provide the goods of war, but certain (military provider) firms such as Executive Outcomes and Blackwater even provide the complete services package of war. Yet despite these developments, the rise of private military firms in general, and the influence they have on the state and the concept of state power specifically, remains a poorly understood phenomenon. This research has aimed to improve this understanding. Its main purpose was to provide an analytical assessment of the impact of military provider firms on the concept of state power, and it did so through a neoclassical realist lens. This research has thereby hoped to make a contribution to the literature of international politics by providing a theoretical analysis and explanation of private military firms—specifically military provider firms—and their influence on the clients that hire them.

To do so, this research examined the evolution of mercenaries and the companies they operated in. Classic conceptions of mercenaries were—and to a certain degree still are—often that of a blight. These actors supposedly ruin human lives, cause material and human losses, are able to destroy states and sovereigns, create chaos on the battlefield, aggravate conflicts, and in general are considered irresponsible and negligent. Historical examples are abound. Whether these are the mercenaries fighting for Carthage in the First Punic War, the Grand Catalan Company in 1311, the numerous Free Companies roaming Europe during the Middle Ages, or the Italian condottieri. The long history of these actors’ role in warfare points to the importance and relevance of these actors to the state, and to their national security executive.

However, the French Revolution (1789) and the subsequent Napoleonic Wars (1789-1815) signaled the end of hired soldiers fulfilling an important role in warfare for the next two centuries. It wasn’t until the Cold War ended that mercenaries once again appeared on the international stage—albeit in an evolved state. Many professional armies had been downsized
or restructured, defense budgets had been diminished and military apparatuses were reformed in a desire for cost savings. What developed was a security gap where the demand for troops was greater than what the market for security could supply. This culminated to the emergence of the modern private military industry, as governments and leaders came to rely on private troops to supplement or replace their own militaries in order to balance against threats, preserve their interests, ensure their national security, and guarantee their sovereign autonomy.

This research has placed the emerging forms of private military firms in a proper context in relation to their heritage. The various firms operating around the globe were classified to make research more manageable and specific by providing relevant groups. This allowed for the establishment of linkages between the types of firms and the military functions they perform in order to reveal what level of force a firm is able to provide. It thereby became clear what the private military industry entails, where it came from, and of primary importance to this research, what kind of influence it has had on states, and on the concept of state power.

Military provider firms were chosen as the main object of analysis. This was a deliberate choice. Military provider firms perform a rather specialized function. These companies operate closest to the battlefront, are engaged in actual fighting, and provide the most immediate and direct capacity for violence. They offer more offensive and tactical military services than other firms, are more combat orientated, and therefore have a more direct and imminent impact on the outcome of conflict situations.

Defining the object of analysis so specific limited the available cases under research to a few companies. This selection was narrowed down even further because of the restricted availability of relevant and accurate information relating to military provider firms. It made research particularly challenging because in many areas, there exists a severe lack of collected data. For example, Avant and Sigelman describe that in relation to the United States and its profound use of contractors, among which the military provider firm Blackwater, “information about which PMSC personnel are deployed, where, and in what ways is (or was) de facto not available.”

The objects of analysis in this research were limited to the firms Executive Outcomes operating in, and in service of, Sierra Leone; and Blackwater operating in Iraq, in service of the United States. These case studies are the only large-scale occurrences in which a military provider firm has been involved in a relatively modern-day conflict. The two cases thereby form the basis for understanding the role of military firms in modern warfare.

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• **Theoretical framework**

The main purpose of this research was to analyze to what extent military provider firms influence a nation’s concept of state power. This was done by providing an analytical assessment of the extent to which Executive Outcomes and Blackwater fulfilled their client states’ strategic interests and desired outcomes, and whether they have a beneficial or detrimental effect on their client’s military effectiveness in combat operations.

Neoclassical realism provided a precise and detailed conceptualization of state power and thereby build the theoretical framework required to undertake this research. It did so by disseminating the concept of state power into two component parts: state strength and national power. State strength regarded power as a means to realize an outcome. It referred to a state’s strategic interests and desired outcomes, and the extent to which a firm was able to fulfill said interests and outcomes. National power regarded power as capabilities/resources, which this research equated to a firm’s war-fighting ability, meaning its military effectiveness in combat. It considered the degree to which the military provider firm exhibited four attributes, which are essential to a state’s military effectiveness: integration, responsiveness, skill, and quality.

Conducting this research in such a manner allowed for a diverse, but specific, analysis of a military provider firm’s impact on the concept of state power, which is consistent with the eclecticism and flexibility that is at the core of the neoclassical realist research program. The theory offered an understanding of the privatization of force and the influence of privatized firms on the clients that hire them. Through an analytical study of two conflict cases, this research thereby sacrificed a reduction in theoretical parsimony by increasing explanatory depth. As a result, this research has been able to account for the world as it is, not as it ideally should be for the sake of theoretical convenience. Rigor and parsimony were thereby sacrificed in favor of richness and detail.

Additionally, neoclassical realism served as a valuable theoretical lens through which to analyze and determine state behavior. The theory was able to accurately account for state interests and intentions, and the consequent foreign policy choices made by a state’s national security executive.

• **Military provider firms’ impact on state power**

The implications of the role of military provider firms within conflicts in Sierra Leone and Iraq were discussed in order to develop a better understanding of the powerful influence such firms may have on the state, its interest, and its conduct of foreign policy.
Executive Outcomes has been able to present itself as a firm able to react rapidly to its client’s request, by surmounting the challenges and external constraints that existed in its client’s—Sierra Leone’s—strategic environment at the time. By hiring EO, Sierra Leone’s national security executive was able to add tangible military assets in the form of a military provider firm. It was consequently able to fulfil its strategic interests, desired outcomes, and conduct its aspired foreign policy.

This research has thus shown that in the case of Sierra Leone and Executive Outcomes, a military provider firm can clearly have a beneficial impact on its client’s state power. The firm affected the course of the war and forced oppositional movements to sign peace accords. Despite EO taking over what are considered conventional state tasks and responsibilities, the firm functioned as a crucial beneficial (f)actor on Sierra Leone’s state power, operating during its employment as a state actor. It fulfilled Sierra Leone’s interests and desired outcomes, and as such had an undeniable positive effect on its state strength. Additionally, Executive Outcomes had a positive impact on the military effectiveness of Sierra Leone’s regular forces as well—the firm was beneficial to the integration, responsiveness, skill and quality of the state’s forces it was hired to assist. By hiring Executive Outcomes, Sierra Leone was thus able to generate additional military capabilities and increased military effectiveness. Executive Outcomes was thereby able to allow a small, struggling, and conflicted state to acquire an immediate and efficient military force with sufficient expertise to end an internal conflict, and thereby control and shape the environment it occupied.

This research has thereby shown that a military provider firm can have a beneficial effect on its client’s state power. It thereby demonstrates military firms’ “strategic impact on the political and security environment of the countries in which they operate.” PMFs, particularly military provider firms, are thus able to function as a resource or capability that states can hire and employ to enhance their national power and state strength. In that capacity, a military firm operates “as a weapons system, which is what they are.”

The case of Executive Outcomes in Sierra Leone demonstrated that a relatively small military provider firm can have a positive and strong impact on a destabilized, chaotic state—at an approximately minimal cost. For weak powers with insufficient state capabilities, who are threatened in their survival and whose national interests are constantly endangered, military provider firms therefore seem to provide a quick fix solution. Their strategic battleground is


their own territory, and by being threatened in their own survival, such states have a lot to win by hiring a military provider firm. This proved to be the case with Sierra Leone and Executive Outcomes. Here, the country, on the brink of collapse due to internal wars and severe conflict initiated by insurgent forces, and consequently threatened in its own survival, was able to restore and significantly increase its state power by hiring an outside military force.

This stands in clear contrast to the U.S.’ employment of Blackwater. Here, the firm, involved in a conflict alongside of the national military, operated detrimentally to its client’s desired outcomes and military effectiveness, and thus had a negative effect on its state power.

Contracting Blackwater initially allowed the U.S. government to pursue its geopolitical interests abroad, particularly in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The firm thereby contributed significantly to U.S. foreign policy projects. However, Blackwater was unsuccessful in pursuing and fulfilling (foreign policy) goals vital to its client’s national security. Blackwater troops were often detrimental to military operations. The Fallujah debacle, for example, exposed how inadequately trained, poorly equipped, and poorly led some of the Blackwater employees were. The firm had a detrimental impact on short-, medium-, and long-term goals of the U.S. counterinsurgency mission in Iraq. As such, Blackwater had a negative impact on its client’s state strength. Additionally, while the firm initially had a beneficial effect on the military effectiveness of the U.S. forces, the end result was a detrimental impact on the U.S. its national power. As such, Blackwater was unable to beneficially affect the United States its overall state power.

The United States has thereby observed how the use of unregulated military provider firms can affect the outcome of an entire mission, and can have a detrimental impact on a country’s state power.

- **Concluding remarks**

While it is evident that military provider firms offer an appealing alternative to, or substitution for, national military forces, there are some clear challenges associated to the outsourcing of core military functions to private contractors in support of state power. First, the influence of such firms may only be temporary. In the case of Executive Outcomes, this influence lasted as long as its employment to Sierra Leone. Upon being expelled from the country, the firm declared that its work was unfinished, and predicted that the country would be thrown back into conflict once it was expelled. This proved to be correct, as Sierra Leone turned into a failed state when the military provider firm was compelled to leave, forcing the state’s national security executive to once again fight for its security and survival.
With regards to Blackwater, the firm’s positive influence on the U.S. its state power was of even shorter duration. Although the company initially provided expertly trained and led troops with years of military and combat experience, who clearly filled a security gap left open due to a shortage of national troops, and thereby functioned as a force multiplier during its employment, it quickly became apparent that the company was detrimental to the fulfilment of desired outcomes, as well as to the U.S. its military effectiveness. Coordination and communication problems resulted in severe co-deployment issues only a few months into Operation Iraqi Freedom, and the level of expertise, effectiveness, and training of corporate soldiers deployed by Blackwater diminished as the mission dragged on.

What this study made clear is the existence of an unmistakable relationship between the use of private military firms—or rather, military provider firms—and the attainment of a state’s desired outcomes. Furthermore, it illustrated that said firms can impact a force its military effectiveness as well. As such, this research had provided an insight into the questions how and to what extent private military firms impact a nation’s state power.

Although the limited availability of appropriate case studies denies, or at the very least problematizes, the establishment of conclusive verdicts, it does seem that military provider firms, which are hired to operate in place of the national military forces, have a more beneficial impact on its client’s state power in contrast to firms operating alongside national military forces. It therefore seems that in substitution operations, military provider firms—by acting as a surrogate state army—contribute to a nation’s state power. The reverse is true for military provider firms employed in co-deployment operations. Here, the firms have a negative impact on a client’s state strength and national power—i.e. its military effectiveness—and thereby have a detrimental effects on its overall state power.

- **Avenues for further research**
Further research should therefore be aimed at developing policy recommendations to strengthen and improve the impact military provider firms have on their clients, as well on the fulfilment of their clients’ strategic interests and desired national security outcomes. Firms within the private military industry generally, and military provider firms specifically, evidently are influential actors within contemporary international politics and international relations.

The firms are likely here to stay. They possess the ability to affect a nation’s state power considerably. For policy-makers, it is therefore imperative that they develop a clear conception of the current private military firms operating around the world, and the consequent influence such firms have on a nation’s state power. An appropriate point of departure is an assessment
of the four attributes of military effectiveness. Improving the integration, responsiveness, skill, and quality of military provider firms to enhance a state’s national power can, in turn, positively influence its state strength—and hence its overall state power.

Another avenue of research concerns the question whether other firms within the private military and security sector—i.e. military supporting and consulting firms—show a similar correlation in regard to their impact on combat operations. Such research will help policymakers determine whether to hire private military and security firms in order to increase a nations’ state power—and if so, what kind of firms are most effective in certain situations. By analyzing under what circumstances certain PMFs are most effective in helping a state fulfill its desired outcomes as well as increase its military effectiveness, policymakers will be able to decide how to make use of such companies in support of national interests in an ever increasing hostile system. The end result should offer policy-makers a detailed and specific perspective of private military firms and their impact on state power. Neoclassical realism will serve as a useful and applicable theoretical framework through which to analyze this impact. The theory is able to accurately account for state interests, intentions and behavior, and provides a detailed conceptualization of state power.

This research has hoped to contribute to explaining the impact of private military firms on states and on conflicts, and thereby be beneficial and valuable to the broader academic community, as well as to policymakers deciding how or if to make use of private military firms—particularly military provider firms.
## SOUTH AFRICAN WEB OF COMPANIES 1995 & 1996

### STRATEGIC RESOURCE CORPORATION (SRC)

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