



GA1: Disarmament and International Security Committee

Student Officer: Can Baran

Issue: Regulating private military and security companies (PMSCs) in armed conflicts

TIMUN '25 

Turkish International Model United Nations



Committee: Disarmament and International Security Committee (GA1)

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I. Introduction

The conditions of modern security and war in Africa have always been influenced by outsider stakeholders. The role of private military and security companies (PMSCs) is not only global but also very prominent for the African continent, due to the way they function in exchange for natural resources or strategic opportunities. Employed by Member States, private companies, and other non-state actors, PMSCs often offer a myriad of services, ranging from logistics and training to active engagement in hostile behavior with different stakeholders.

Their growth across African states is also driven by the interests of non-African stakeholders and the security interests of multinational private companies within resource-rich environments. As a convenient yet sometimes immoral measure to fill security gaps, PMSC growth is particularly detrimental to the stability of the region, the agency of Member States, and human rights.

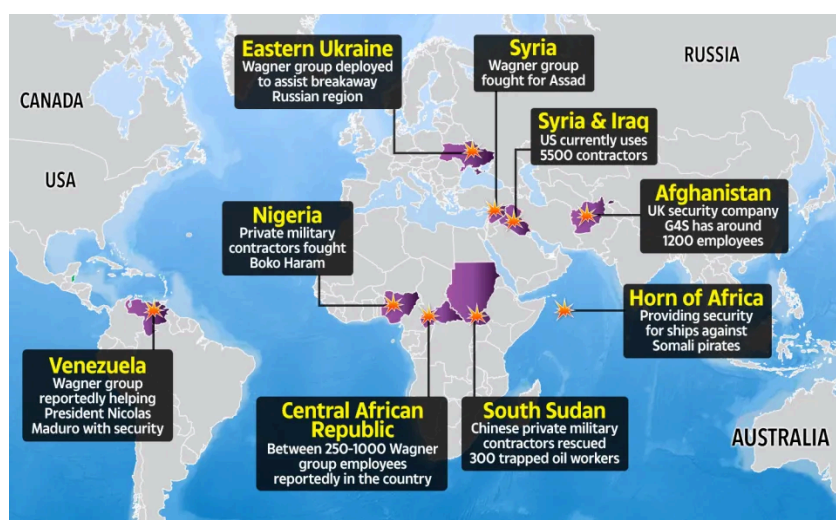


Image 1: The Map of Global Reach of PMSCs (The Sun)

Lack of public contracts and command chains results in these non-state actors being practically impossible to regulate. This situation directly links to the theme of TIMUN'25 "Navigating Uncertainty Through Mutual Trust," as PMSCs only perpetuate the uncertainty, and their proper international regulation can only occur through mutual trust and collaboration.

Global efforts that aim to govern PMSCs are only voluntary and are insufficient. Charting a plan of action ahead is based on a strong foundation of international cooperation and immense trust, not only among the African continent but also globally. Only through open discussions, Member States establish rigid and binding norms focusing on regional and international security.



II. Key Vocabulary

Mercenarism: The 1977 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Convention, Article 47, defines a “mercenary” in six cumulative strict conditions: a person who is specifically recruited to participate in an armed conflict, driven essentially by personal gain, promised compensation much higher than that of the regular armed forces, not a national of a party to the conflict, not a member of the armed forces of a party, and not sent by a state that is not a party to the conflict on official duty. Hence, the act of being a mercenary is mercenarism.

Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs): PMSCs are corporate companies that provide security or military services on a for-profit basis. Their tasks range from protecting installations, training, and providing logistical support in combat. They are contracted privately, unlike the state's armies, and usually, they combine legitimate security assistance with mercenarism.

Proxy Warfare: Proxy warfare is a type of warfare where countries or players pursue their strategic agendas indirectly by supporting non-state armed groups, militias, or PMSCs, but not by deploying their conventional forces. It allows them to influence results with less political and diplomatic exposure. Some consider the Wagner Group to be a proxy of Russia.

Resource-for-Security Contracts: Contracts by which governments or groups pay PMSCs not in money but in concessions on natural resources such as oil, diamonds, or gold are called resource-for-security contracts. This creates a vicious cycle whereby foreign companies receive access to local riches in return for guarding them.

Plausible Deniability: Plausible deniability is a political tactic whereby states or sponsors actively conceal their relationship with PMSCs or armed groups. By doing so, they can derive the advantage of what the companies are doing while denying any responsibility for the abuses or violations of international norms.

Neocolonialism: Neocolonialism is the practice of expanding economic or political influence over weaker countries in a way that is analogous to colonial domination, typically by manipulation of resources, security dependence, or foreign corporate presence rather than direct territorial occupation.

Legal Gray Area: A situation where the law is not explicitly applicable or is applied inconsistently, which allows PMSCs to operate without clear accountability, is called a legal gray area. Being neither purely mercenaries under international law nor fully regularized as state agents, they exploit loopholes in international and local frameworks.



Self-Determination: The right of Member States, or a population, to choose its own fate through elections and wars is called self-determination. This ideology was popularized after World War I, and the use of mercenaries is against this ideology. This is because the individuals who participate in wars as mercenaries are relevant due to monetary interests, rather than “national duty.”

III. Involved Countries and Organizations

The Wagner Group (and its successor, The Africa Corps)

As the most prominent PMSC in the region, the Wagner Group functions similarly to a proxy or an extension of the operations of the Russian Federation. Many regional Member States' primary security mechanisms rely on the Wagner Group. In return for their services, the Wagner Group or its affiliated bodies are often granted access to natural resources within the state, such as diamonds, gold, and timber. It is presented as an insidious and effective security partner that does not impose basic human rights or democratic conditions. With its founding leader recently passing away, its operations are under the direct control of the Russian Defence Ministry, rebranding into the “Africa Corps.”

Central African Republic (CAR)



Image 2: Russian and Rwandan PMSCs in the Central African Republic (Ruehl)

to them as “Russian instructors,” President Touadéra, when questioned, notoriously said, “If your house is on fire, you don't care what color the water is.”(NBC News)

For its national security, the current administration of the Central African Republic, led by President Faustin-Archange Touadéra, is heavily dependent on the Wagner Group. On the other hand, Wagner-linked businesses are given concessions on the mineral riches, including diamonds and gold. CAR views the partnership as a pragmatic and primitive solution to its never-ending civil war, with its traditional Western partners not being up to the challenge. Even officially, normally referring

Republic of Mali

After the French and other European forces pulled out of Mali, following a military coup, the junta government turned to the Wagner Group. The Group fights against Islamist insurgencies in the region, protects the government officials, and trains national Malian troops. The Malian government declared its



cooperation with the Russian PMSCs as a sovereign choice for security, as they see Wagner as a tool for military victory over insurgents, which they felt wasn't prioritized by previous international deployments. Though they initially refused the existence of PMSCs within their borders, they later confirmed the existence of "Russian instructors" as a part of a state-to-state contract. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov attested that the Wagner Group "provides security services" to the Malian state.

Federal Republic of Nigeria

In 2015, the government of Nigeria, under then-President Goodluck Jonathan, recruited South Africa-based PMSCs such as Specialized Tasks, Training, Equipment and Protection (STTEP), to operate against the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast Nigerian region. The contractors are credited for a set of rapid successes that reclaimed the area from the militants. Nigeria has been ambivalent on the issue. Though they benefited from PMSCs, it was a short-term deployment, out of pragmatic necessity when their military appeared to be facing immense pressure. The government has been shy about supporting the deployment of foreign contractors for offensive purposes, typically presenting their role as being confined to training and technical assistance, though in 2015, they fully utilized their services. The contractors were initially tagged by President Jonathan's government as "technicians" before they confirmed their warfighter role subsequently. Recently, in response to demands for reinstating mercenaries, Nigeria's Defence Chief, General Lucky Irabor, went on record to resist them, stating the army should be left to perform its task.

Republic of Mozambique

To combat the Ansar al-Sunna rebellion, several PMSCs were utilized by the Mozambican government. Initially hiring the Wagner Group, which suffered from heavy casualties and left the region, Mozambique primarily used the South African-headquartered Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) and the Paramount Group. These troops provided air support and tactical support for the Mozambican police and military. The Mozambican state has been very opaque about its utilization of PMSCs, engaging them illicitly without public scrutiny under the guise of state security regulations. Their choice appears to be one of final resort, driven by their own troops' failure to quell the rebellion.

Republic of South Africa

South Africa used to house the base of Executive Outcomes, one of the most dominant PMSCs of the 1990s. Today, many highly trained veterans belonging to the South African Defence Force before 1994 are employed through international PMSCs. Even South African companies such as the Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) and the Paramount Group have been contracted to offer security services in other nations within Africa, including Mozambique. Officially, they are strongly against PMSCs and possess some of the strictest anti-mercenary legislation in the world. The "Prohibition of Mercenary Activities and Regulation of



Certain Activities in a Country of Armed Conflict Act of 2006" criminalizes mercenary activity and forces any citizen who provides security services in a foreign war to obtain approval from the government. It clearly states that its purpose is "to prohibit mercenary activity; [and] to regulate the provision of assistance or service of a military or military-related nature in a country of armed conflict."(UN)

Republic of South Sudan

The Republic of South Sudan has housed many PMSCs, especially after its civil war. The state has been reported to have employed PMSCs in various capacities, including training its forces and protecting oil fields, which are the country's primary source of income. Notably, involvement by firms linked to Erik Prince, the owner of Blackwater, a PMSC, has been reported. Similarly, the government and opposition sides have been accused of using mercenaries and foreign fighters from neighboring countries to fight in the war. The government's official policy on the matter is rare, but the UN Panel of Experts on South Sudan has repeatedly reported the presence of "foreign fighters" and "private security companies" fighting on behalf of several of the conflict parties, reflecting a de facto policy of utilizing such actors (UN).

The Russian Federation

Russia is the primary sponsor of the Wagner Group (The Africa Corps). Russia employs them as a key foreign policy instrument to expand geopolitical influence, access natural resources (gold, diamonds, uranium), and counter Western influence, particularly in the Sahel and Central Africa. Russia's strategy is one of official denial and legal imprecision. PMSCs are illegal domestically, so the Kremlin can disavow any official responsibility for them. Nevertheless, top government officials have been less than circumspect in acknowledging their practical utility. This policy enables Russia to project influence and achieve strategic ends at little diplomatic and political cost, and without needing to report official military setbacks. President Vladimir Putin, in a formal denial of legal responsibility, has called the industry "a tool for the realisation of national interests without the direct participation of the state." Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said that groups like Wagner provide "security services" to African countries on a "legitimate basis" through formal contracts(NBC News).

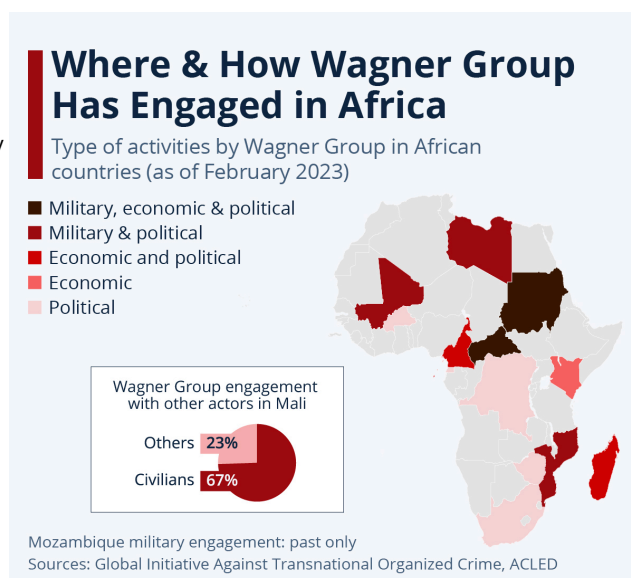


Image 3: The Map of African Operations of the Wagner group (Statista)

The United States of America



One of the largest users of PMSC services globally is the United States (U.S.) government. U.S.-based PMSCs are contracted in Africa to protect embassies and diplomats, secure corporate facilities, and provide logistical and training support for U.S. military commands. The U.S. distinguishes sharply between the legitimate private security companies that it considers and the illegitimate mercenaries. U.S. policies also support the use of PMSCs as a practical tool, allowing them a flexible presence with fewer official military deployments. U.S. actively differentiates its use of regulated countries with “malign” and “destabilizing” Russian-backed groups, even declaring the Wagner Group as a "Transnational Criminal Organization" and placing severe sanctions on it.

Republic of Türkiye

Türkiye has expanded its presence in Africa during the last few decades by means of trade, diplomacy, and aid. While it does not primarily rely on PMSCs abroad, Turkish defense and private security firms have been operating in Somalia and Libya, for instance, through bilateral arrangements. They are presented as state-endorsed cooperation and not mercenarism. Türkiye has also come out in favor of maintaining sovereignty and international law in African conflicts, with a request for the regulation of non-state armed groups to prevent destabilization.

People's Republic of China

Turkish military presence on the African continent

Official and unofficial presence

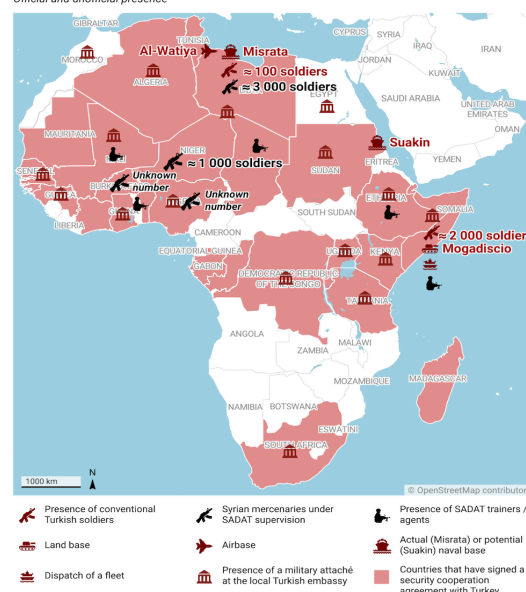


Image 4: The Map of Turkish Presence in Africa (Bouvier)

Chinese Investments in Africa

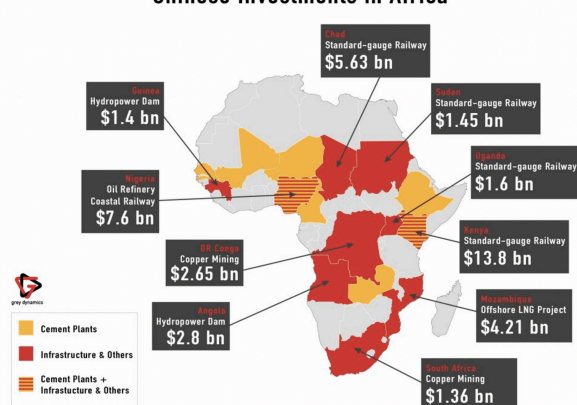


Image 5: The Map of Chinese Investments in Africa (Ersozoglul)

China maintains major economic interests throughout the African continent, including but not limited to infrastructure projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), mines, and oil deposits. China's 2015 National Security Law mandates the defense of the country's overseas interests. To reinforce the protection of their assets, the Chinese government relies on an array of Private Security Companies (PSCs). Unlike PMSCs, these organizations either provide unarmed or lightly armed guarding services, threat assessment, and travel management. They often work in tandem with the military of the host country. China aims not to interfere with the region in any other way. Still, their PSCs are not regulated and are a potential source of instability in the area.



Republic of Sudan

Sudan has always been associated with foreign security actors and PMSC engagement in its domestic conflicts and political transition processes. Countries such as the Wagner Group have been operational within the nation, typically through concessions in gold and other commodities. The government and opposition factions have both been occasionally associated with foreign combatants and contractors at specific times, showing the ongoing weakness of Sudan.

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The UAE has long been a major player in the security dynamics of Africa, often in partnership with PMSCs in securing holdings and protecting investments, most significantly in the Horn of Africa. There have been reports that have identified contractors linked to the UAE within crisis areas such as Libya and Sudan.

The African Union (AU)

The AU has been historically against mercenarism, and the Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa (1977) by the predecessor of the AU, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), has been a legal tool against mercenarism. The AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC) consistently debates the destabilizing activities of PMSCs and is currently actively discussing an upgrade of its anti-mercenary convention to address the realities of modern PMSCs. The AU views PMSCs as a blatant threat to the national sovereignty of its member States.

The European Union (EU)

The EU has been a key player in the region in terms of security, through its Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, which have been focused on training and mentoring national militaries in countries like Mali (EUTM Mali, suspended at the moment) and the Central African Republic. The EU uses private security contractors to protect its missions and delegations. The most significant, the EU is openly engaged in geopolitical competition with Russia on the continent of Africa, and it regards the Wagner Group's activities as a direct threat to its security alliances, values, and interests. The EU is a strong supporter of state-led security policy rooted in the rule of law, good governance, and respect for human rights. It actively rejects the use of combat-capable PMSCs like Wagner, which is viewed as a source of destabilization that acts contrary to state-building.

The International Code of Conduct Association (ICoCA)



ICoCA is a multi-stakeholder, non-governmental organization created to develop standards for the private military and security industry. It is an independent regulatory organization composed of governments, private security companies, and civil society organizations. Currently, only 8 Member States are a party to ICoCA, and none are from Africa. Private security companies join voluntarily as members, after which they must adapt to the International Code of Conduct, a code of conduct based on international humanitarian and human rights law. Its code of conduct can be taken as a point of reference for wider legislation.

Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)



Image 6: Working Group on the use of Mercenaries (OHCHR)

Because the UN's flagship human rights office, the OHCHR, documents, monitors, and reports on PMSCs and every other party responsible for human rights violations in armed conflict. It discloses publicly and through its country offices abuses that take place in countries where PMSCs operate. The OHCHR provides valuable assistance and technical cooperation to other UN entities, like the Working Group on mercenaries, which is the most specialized UN body on the issue. It comprises five independent individuals who serve in their capacity and report to the Human Rights Council

and the General Assembly. Following its mission to the Central African Republic, it reported that it had received "accounts of heinous violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including arbitrary detention, torture, disappearances and summary execution" by state actors and their "Russian instructors." (OHCHR)

IV. Focused Overview of the Issue

In 1965, WatchGuard International, the first official private military company, was founded. However, the phenomenon of hiring outsiders to help with conflict resolution predates this instance by ages. Even African kingdoms in the pre-colonial era resorted to foreign fighters in exchange for goods and currencies during regional wars. Moroccan use of European gunners at the Battle of Alcácer Quibir in 1578 is an example. The concept of "mercenarism," a soldier motivated by private gain rather than national allegiance, is currently politically charged. This is because its roots coincide with those of decolonization in the region.

1. Historical Context



The early 1960s consisted of an active political climate with rapid changes. Former colonies whose borders were arbitrarily drawn by departing European forces experienced immediate instability. As these borders often did not consider ethnic, ideological, geopolitical, or cultural differences, immediate instability was seen. This instability was further propagated by the tense dynamic between the Cold War's superpowers: The United States of America and the United Soviet Socialist Republics.

During the Congo Crisis (1960-1965), the mineral-rich region of Katanga declared its independence from newly independent Congo, which resulted in a violent conflict. Congolese factions, United Nations peacekeepers, and hundreds of foreign mercenaries were involved. Many of these mercenaries were of the French Foreign Legion or World War II, hired by the Katangese leader Moïse Tshombe and his Belgian supporters to wage war against the Congolese government. Violent and indiscriminate, mercenarism was depicted as a destabilizing force in African affairs.

During the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), foreign soldiers aided Biafra. In the Comoros, Bob Denard, a French former paratrooper, orchestrated various coups between 1975 and 1995, backed by foreign stakeholders. Similarly, "Mad Mike" Hoare, a British-South African, led many mercenary units in the region and later attempted a coup in the Seychelles in 1981. These men attempted external manipulation in order to destabilize the region for financial gain.

Through various experiences of the African leaders, mercenarism was agreed upon as a threat not only to individual states but to the whole region's collective stability and sovereignty. In 1977, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted the Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa, declaring it a crime against peace and security. The convention was the first to criminalize a specific type of foreign aid in conflicts, and to frame their actions as an assault on the self-determination right of Member States. However, the Convention targeted a specific type of typically independent or loosely organized foreign soldier. It assumed mercenarism was an act of individuals or small groups acting directly outside of any formal structure.

When the Cold War ended, the superpowers effectively discarded their major efforts in Africa in terms of military aid. Fragile states that were already overly dependent on Western or Soviet assistance were immediately left alone, in an even more insatiable environment. This allowed for a kind of private military stakeholder to emerge, the corporate PMSC.



Image 7: Executive Outcomes (Journeyman Pictures)



One of the first PMSCs was Executive Outcomes (EO), founded in 1989 by former members of the South African Defence Force (SADF). Unlike previous mercenaries, EO was depicted as a legitimate security business, complete with offices, formal contracts, terms of conditions, and a command hierarchy. It, like many contemporary PMSCs, offered a myriad of services, from army training and logistics to full-scale combat assistance. EO could even deploy heavy weaponry, including Mi-24 Hind attack helicopters, armored personnel carriers, and complex communications systems. EO intervened in Angola's government to combat the rebel movement. It recaptured key oil installations and many strategic towns within months, reversing years of stalemate. In Sierra Leone, the EO was tasked to repel the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). EO's forces not only defended the capital, Freetown, but pushed the RUF deep into the countryside, reopening access to vital economic resources. Compensation for the services of EO often was in the form of concessions of resources. Affiliate firms like Branch Energy purchased rights to diamond mines in exchange for military victories.

The 1990s onwards saw a major increase in PMSCs globally. In other conflict areas such as the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan, PMSCs provided armed guarding, logistics, intelligence, and training. The "War on Terror" idea of post-9/11 brought a new market for private security services, especially for government officials. This placed the industry on the professional map and created an international labor market for veterans. African states observed these developments with keen interest. PMSCs were offering speed, discretion, and deniability, which were qualities that appealed to governments handling insurgencies or political upheavals. Above all, they were offering services that international peacekeeping missions, constrained by mandate and bureaucratic considerations, could not.

Russia had re-emerged as a major security force in Africa by the mid-2010s, using the Wagner Group as one of its prime instruments. Wagner's approach built on the EO model but added an openly geopolitical dimension. For military services, from presidential guard to offensive action, Wagner received mining, forestry, and energy concessions for Russian-interest ventures. Its operations in the Central African Republic, Mali, and Sudan have been the most egregious instances of the new "security-for-resources" market. Unlike EO or Western PMSCs, Wagner possesses a significantly more clandestine reality. It operates in a gray legal area, since technically banned in Russia, in which the Kremlin can officially disavow owning it but capitalize on its actions. Such "plausible deniability" has made Wagner a preferred friend for African authoritarian Member States worried about steering clear of foreign political conditionality.

2. The Accountability Vacuum

The most significant governance challenge that PMSCs pose is that they exist in a legal and accountability vacuum, a space where relevant laws are antiquated, fragmented, and broadly



unenforceable. This vacuum exists both at the international and national levels, and it is this very vacuum that allows PMSCs to conduct their affairs with remarkable freedom in combat zones.

As previously mentioned, mercenarism is defined in a very specific and strict manner. The problem is that PMSCs are specifically crafted not to fulfill all six requirements simultaneously. Their personnel are not hired as individuals for a particular conflict but as employees of a registered firm with a long-term service contract. They may be nationals of the client state, or their contracts may emphasize "security" rather than "combat" to evade definitions. States and international organizations have addressed these gaps by creating soft law instruments, guidelines, or best practices that are not legally binding but persuasive. The Montreux Document (2008), prepared by Switzerland and the International Committee of the Red Cross, lists existing legal obligations and "good practices" for states recruiting or hosting PMSCs. It clarifies that states remain responsible for ensuring that PMSCs respect international humanitarian law and human rights law. However, it establishes no new binding rules, and implementation depends exclusively on the political will of states.

Similarly, the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC) and its governing body, the ICoC Association (ICoCA), promote human rights standards. But membership is voluntary, and some of the most abusive PMSCs, such as Russia's Wagner Group, simply don't join. And for signatories, punishment for violations is gentle, typically limited to warnings or decertification rather than criminal prosecution.

Even where a crime by PMSC personnel is made out clearly, it can be practically impossible to prosecute due to jurisdictional complexity. A single operation can have many components, such as a host state, the home state of the company, and the home state of the personnel. The host state can lack capacity, evidence, or political will to prosecute, especially if the PMSC is protecting the governing regime. The home state of the company may not have laws dealing with extraterritorial crimes by companies. The home state of the personnel may not have jurisdiction over crimes committed extraterritorially or may choose not to investigate cases to protect diplomatic relations.

To illustrate, take the situation of a Nepalese guard employed by a UAE-based PMSC on contract to the Central African Republic government, who is alleged to have killed civilians during a counterinsurgency mission. Which court has jurisdiction? The CAR may lack judicial independence, the UAE may consider the matter as outside its domestic jurisdiction, and Nepal may lack the evidence or the extradition treaties to try. The result is usually complete impunity.

This situation has repeatedly shielded suspected violators of serious crimes. In Iraq, Blackwater contractors shot and killed 17 civilians. Only after heavy U.S. and international pressure were four contractors tried in U.S. courts, and their subsequent pardoning by President Trump reawakened



international concern. Considering how prosecutions are even more sparse in Africa, the accountability vacuum is vividly present for PMSCs.

Human Rights Violations

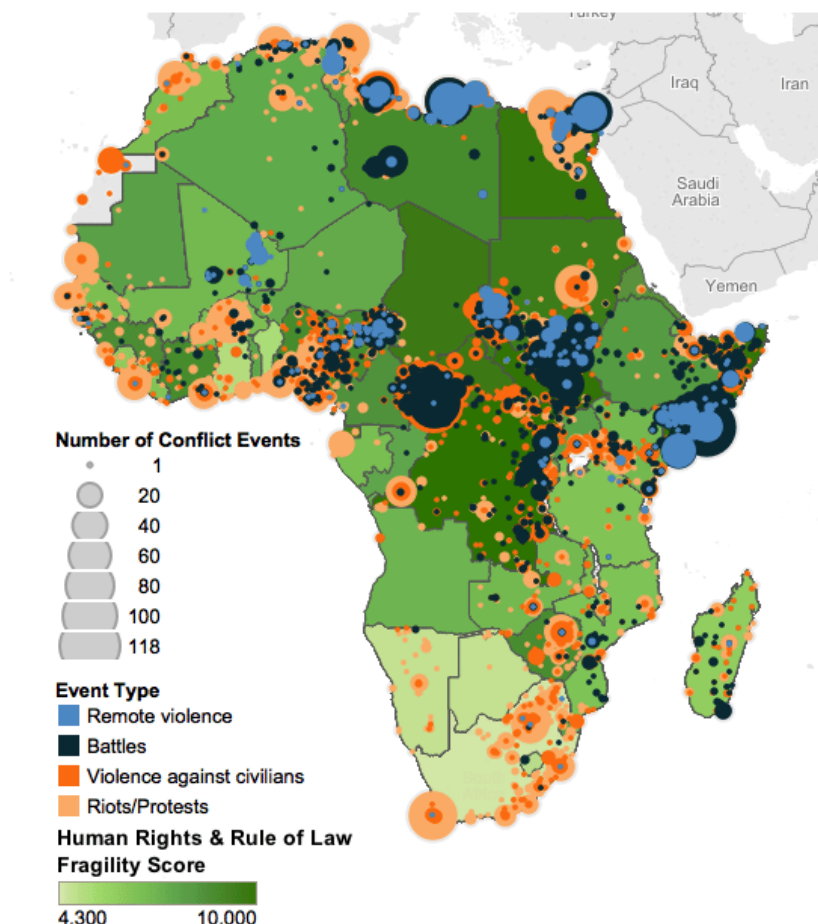


Image 8: Human Rights, Rule of Law, and Political Conflict in Africa in 2014 (ACLED)

When PMSCs are deployed for armed conflict, the absence of effective regulation and accountability allows for significant human rights abuses. These abuses are not just overlooked missteps, but rather are integral to the operations of the PMSC industry and the political climate under which they operate. PMSCs, by definition, work to fulfill their clients' short-term security requirements as efficiently as possible, most often to ensure regime survival, suppress insurgency, or protect strategic infrastructure. With the lack of institutional restraints that would tie national militaries, PMSCs can operate in secrecy under “confidentiality,” which limits transparency and accountability.

In fragile states, this brings about catastrophic consequences. Overall, the UN Working group on mercenaries, and such organizations report a perpetual line of human rights violations regarding PMSC operations, such as but not limited to killings of civilians and bystanders, indiscriminate attacks to highly populated areas through artillery and aerial bombardments that has many casualties, torture, kidnapping, sexual abuse and gendered violence, looting and destruction of civilian property occasionally as collective punishment. These kinds of behavior are in no way, shape, or form exclusive to a particular company or organization, and are pertinent throughout the African continent. However, some notable examples should be mentioned to further understand the extent to which PMSCs violate human rights in many ways.

The Moura massacre in central Mali is perhaps the most gruesome example. For five consecutive days in March 2022, Malian security forces, with the help of “foreign military personnel,” which was the



Wagner Group, encircled a village. Men were singled out from women and children, charged with being aligned with jihadist organizations, and executed en masse. UN reports estimated that around 500 civilians were murdered then. Witnesses said they saw bodies incinerated or buried in large grave pits. The Malian government has closed off further UN inquiries, labeling them "unfair" and reiterating its security pact with Russia. No foreign or Malian individuals have been put on trial.

In CAR, Wagner's deployments were also notable. Local journalists and UN experts have described torture cells, extrajudicial executions of local leaders, and humanitarian aid workers being targeted. Hospitals and schools, normally privileged with protection by international human rights law, have been stormed or occupied. At least 20 civilians who had fled to a Bambari mosque in 2021 were shelled by CAR soldiers and foreign fighters. The CAR government has, in turn, repeatedly denied or downplayed these reports, claiming "disinformation campaigns"(Africa Intelligence) from hostile stakeholders.

In northern Mozambique, the Cabo Delgado province insurgency has endangered multi-billion-dollar natural gas projects. The government originally hired the South African PMSC Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) to provide helicopter support and rapid-response soldiers. Amnesty International's 2021 report alleged DAG's indiscriminate helicopter fire into civilian areas, killing civilians, even though they were supposed to be protecting them. Even though DAG claimed it did not intentionally target civilians, the government canceled the contract, but no official judicial investigation was conducted.

3. Role of PMSCs in Geopolitical Competition

While Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) like to present themselves as neutral, commercially driven service providers, the most influential actors on the African continent are manifestations of state power. Particularly in the case of Russian, Chinese, and Western PMSCs whose activity closely tracks their home governments' strategic interests, so it is. Pragmatically, they are located at the intersection of security provision, political influence, and economic extraction.

To weakened African states beset by insurgencies, secessionist uprisings, or political crises, PMSCs deliver not only military muscle but diplomatic support. The latter may shield client regimes from international isolation, facilitate access to arms technology, and shore up the regime's control over society. However, it also ensnares states in lopsided relations of uneven partnership, whereby the sharing of benefits overwhelmingly accrues to the foreign sponsor.

As seen before, the PMSCs in question work internationally through various means. This not only allows for increased interest from Member States with various needs, but also blurs their ranges of operations to an extent that is technically legal or at least not strictly prohibited. Furthermore, the lack of transparency within their operations only propagates the human rights abuses mentioned.



While less militarized than Wagner, Chinese PMSCs have expanded far across Africa to protect Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects, particularly in high-risk areas like South Sudan and Ethiopia. The companies tend to provide unarmed or lightly armed railway, port, and mine security. Yet, they are large enough, and their ties to Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) make them effective tools for Chinese foreign policy. The effect is a more subtle but no less profound intertwining of security provision with economic influence.

Western PMSCs such as G4S, Control Risks, and former U.S. military contractor Triple Canopy also enjoy more limited legal frameworks and restrict themselves to guarding locations, training soldiers, or log support but avoid actual combat. Their presence is, however, still problematic in terms of sovereignty when they are guarding the properties of multinational corporations in regions where the host state security apparatus is rudimentary.

V. Important Events & Chronology

Date (Day/Month/Year)	Event
11/07/1967	The UNSC adopts Resolution 239, in which it officially condemns the use, recruitment, and financing of mercenaries, and urges Member States to take measures to prevent mercenaries from operating within their borders.
14/04/1977	UNSC adopts Resolution 405, following a mercenary-led coup attempt in Benin. It denounces mercenary activities and calls for international assistance to the affected state.
03/07/1977	The OAU adopts a legally binding treaty, which criminalizes mercenarism.
11/07/1989	The UN opens the treaty for signature and aims to criminalize mercenary activities worldwide, through Resolution 44/34
31/01/1993	EO is contracted by the Angolan government to combat the UNITA rebels. This is the first of many large-scale, corporate-style mercenary operations in Africa
20/10/2001	The Mercenary Convention becomes legally binding for its ratifying states, though major military powers and many PMSC-hosting countries do not join.
16/09/2007	Blackwater personnel kill 17 Iraqi civilians in Nisour Square, Baghdad. This resulted in criminal trials in the U.S.



17/09/2008	Switzerland and the ICRC publish a non-binding text reaffirming states' obligations regarding PMSCs and proposing best practices, called the Montreux Document.
30/09/2015	In the rise of the Wagner Group, Russia intervenes in the Syrian civil War, and afterwards expands to multiple African zones of conflict.
27/03/2022	The Moura Massacre took place, in which Malian forces and suspected Wagner operatives killed an estimated 500 civilians.
30/06/2023	The UN peacekeeping mission ends operations after tensions with the Malian junta; the country's reliance on Wagner deepens.

VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties

- [United Nations Security Council Resolution 239 \(1967\)](#): By this resolution, voted on 10 July 1967, those states that tolerate or enable mercenary activities or recruitment are condemned, particularly when for the overthrow of governments. It called upon Member States to be attentive to and refrain from permitting their territories to be used for mercenary planning or transit.
- [Organization of African Unity \(OAU\) Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa \(1977\)](#): This is a regional convention on mercenaries as a serious crime against peace and security. It is directed against persons, not corporate entities, limiting its applicability to modern-day PMSCs.
- [United Nations Security Council Resolution 405 \(1977\)](#): This was enacted on 14 April 1977 in response to a mercenary incursion in Benin. It reaffirmed censure of mercenary operations and called for material assistance to help restore the invaded state.
- [Human Rights Council Resolution 15/26 \(2010\) \(Use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination\)](#): This declaration expressed profound alarm at the threat posed by mercenaries and private military companies, and urged states to prohibit their employment in armed conflicts and to strengthen controls over them.
- [International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries \(1989\)](#): This Convention was endorsed by Resolution 44/34 on 4 December 1989, and became effective on 20 October 2001. The Convention criminalises mercenary activity, including recruitment and financing, and obliges states to bring perpetrators to justice. It has 37 signatories and parties, including most African states such as Cameroon and Mali.



- [The Montreux Document \(2008\)](#): It was developed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Switzerland, as an informal code outlining present legal obligations and best practice for states about PMSCs operating in armed conflicts. It is currently endorsed by 59 Member States.

VII. Failed Solution Attempts

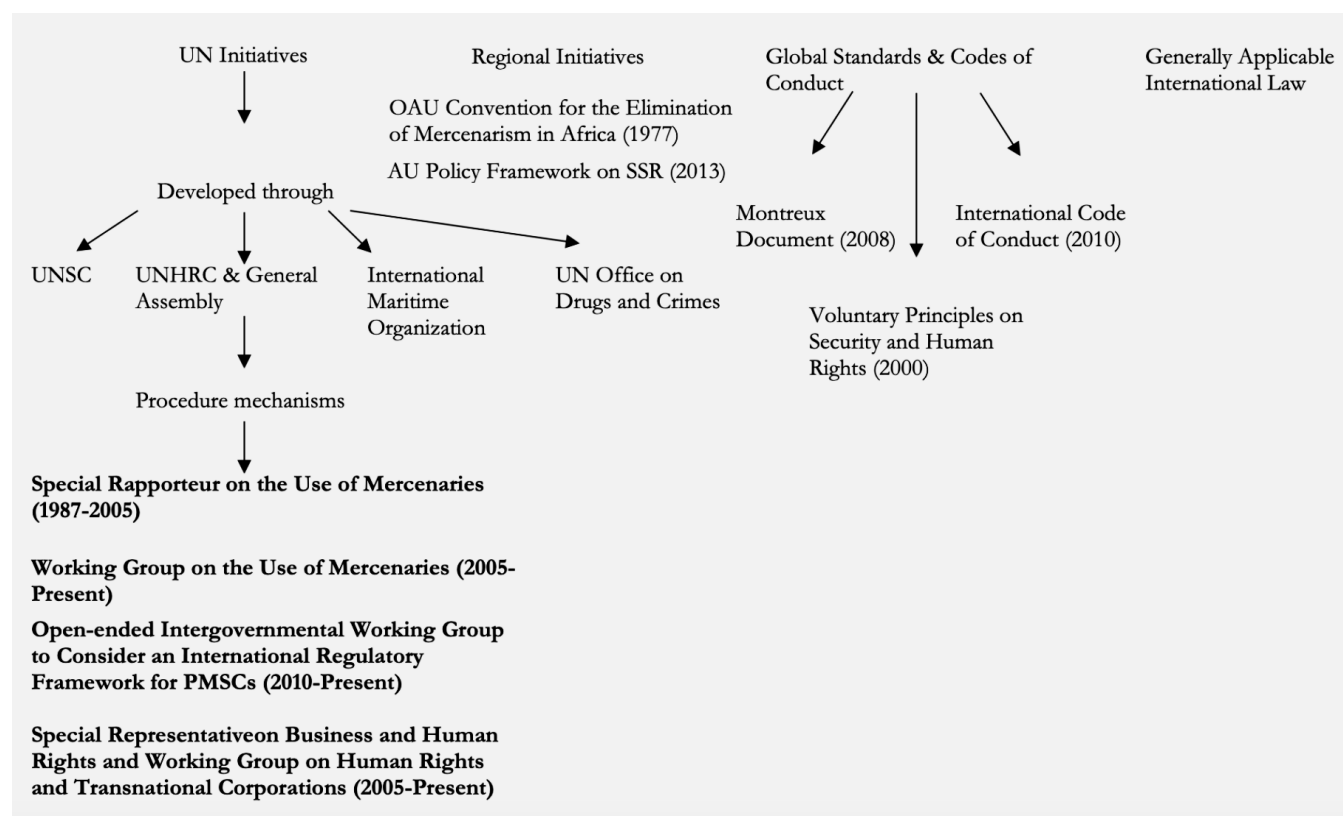


Image 9: Flowchart Detailing International and Regional Standards Regarding PMSCs and Mercenaries (Mquirmi)

Over the past 60 years, the UN and other bodies have been endeavoring to regulate mercenarism and its current predecessor, PMSCs, through various resolutions and conventions outlined above. Since 1967, numerous attempts have been made, albeit in one way or another, to eradicate the harmful effects of mercenarism and PMSCs. Since the UN could not take effective action against PMSCs other than condemning Member States who maintain mercenarism or urging countries to take action against mercenarism, the issue still remains. Beyond individual resolutions, the most significant binding convention was the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries (1989). This convention entered into force in 2001. Though it effectively criminalizes mercenary activities, obliges states to prosecute offenders, and prohibits the recruitment and financing of such actors, it currently only has 37 signatories. The only regionally accepted framework remains the 1977 OAU Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa. However, both of these conventions were conceived with individual freelance fighters in mind and do not directly address the corporate structure of PMSCs. Attempts to close the gap between the applicability of the accepted framework and the modern landscape have largely been



through non-binding instruments. The Montreux Document is an example, but it is supported by only 59 Member States. It is present voluntarily only. Other regional and intergovernmental initiatives have subsequently followed. In 2025, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Resolution 2582 expressly mandated dealing with human rights violations by PMSCs during armed conflict. It urged member states to establish licensing regimes, uphold compliance with international law, and adopt binding tools such as the Mercenary Convention and the Montreux Document. Its geographic scope is still constrained. Overall, these are either limited in extent or signatory type and therefore allow the PMSCs to maintain operation.

VIII. Possible Solutions

To solve the regulation of PMSCs in armed conflict is necessary to apply both international legal reform, stronger national control, and collective multilateral action. At the core is the need to close the gap in the law that allows corporate security actors to evade accountability. One option is to negotiate a new, binding international convention to regulate PMSCs, modeled after the pattern of the 1989 Mercenary Convention but with terms addressing corporate actors rather than individuals. Such a treaty could require mandatory licensing of all PMSCs operating outside their home states, establish an independent monitoring body, and impose enforceable obligations on home states as well as host states to investigate and prosecute violations. While it would be difficult to reach an agreement on such a treaty, particularly in the context of geopolitical splits, its acceptance could offer the first truly global framework for supervision.

Meanwhile, current non-binding tools could be made more effective by political obligation and conditionality. States might be persuaded to adopt the good practices of the Montreux Document within national law, where they could be enforced domestically. Similarly, membership in the International Code of Conduct Association can be made a prerequisite of eligibility for any PMSC to obtain government contracts or partner with multinational corporations. By linking compliance with tangible economic benefits, states and businesses could create market incentives for improved standards.

At the state level, governments can institute effective systems of registration and licensing of PMSCs, subjecting them to tough vetting, training, and reporting procedures before they are deployed. These need to include established rules on force usage, mandatory human rights training for staff, and obligations for collaboration with domestic or foreign investigations. In the case of weak states with inadequate administrative capacity, these would be supplemented by international technical assistance programs, possibly through the AU or ECOWAS. Another idea would be to address the economic incentives of PMSC growth in a particular region and the dependence of the host state. Resource-for-security structures, such as those employed by Wagner in portions of Africa, can be dealt with by implementing efforts that will render these structures more transparent. International financial institutions and governments



can require comprehensive public disclosure of all PMSC and natural resource concession contracts, subject to an independent audit to verify that such contracts are advancing the national economy, not private foreign interests. Increased transparency over time will discourage predatory bargains and make governments better security partners. Operationally, regional African organizations and the United Nations can render peace support and peacekeeping operations more effective to provide an attractive alternative for PMSC deployment. This would involve more flexible mandates, rapid deployment capability, and better coordination with host authorities. At the same time, security sector reform initiatives should be given top priority in order to make national armies and police strong and capable of performing their constitutional duty without relying on foreign contractors for core activities. Together, these steps will try to merge legal accountability, market incentives, institutional build-up, and public openness. None of them is a silver bullet, but a coordinated effort that addresses the supply and demand sides of the PMSC industry has the best chance for substantial regulation. If the delegates can include something from each of these categories within their resolutions, they will be best placed to write solutions that are not only principled but also politically feasible.

IX. Useful Links

- [The Montreux Document on Private Military and Security Companies | International Committee of the Red Cross](#)
- [OAU/AU Treaties, Conventions, Protocols & Charters](#)
- [Africa | ACLED](#)
- [Working Group on the use of mercenaries | OHCHR](#)
- [4. Private military and security companies in armed conflict | SIPRI](#)
- [Mercenaries and private military security: Africa's thin grey line](#)
- [Russia and Chinese private military and security companies in Africa: two competing models? | Foundation for Strategic Research](#)

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