



DIMUN

Dr. İlhami Tankut Anatolian High School Model United Nations
Conference

SPECPOL

Agenda Item:

**The political and Security
Implications of Private Military
Companies in the MENA Region
and Their Impact on Peacebuilding
Efforts**

Under Secretary General: Bersun Akkaya

Academic Assistant: Yasemin Dilek

**DIMUN'25 SPECIAL POLITICAL AND
DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE**

**AGENDA ITEM: The Political and Security Implications of
Private Military Companies in the MENA Region and Their
Impact on Peacebuilding Efforts**

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1.Opening Remarks

1.1. Letter from the Secretary-General

Greetings Esteemed Attendees,

As the secretary general of the conference. It is with great pleasure that I extend gracious hospitality and welcome you all, participants of DIMUN'25, which will be held in Antalya from June 27th to 29th.

As we gather for this Model United Nations conference, we look forward to thought-provoking debates, insightful dialogues, and meaningful opportunities for collaboration. The delegates of this conference may have enlightening discussions and foster their diplomatic skills. With committees exploring a wide array of historical topics, delegates are sure to be both challenged and inspired, cultivating their critical thinking and diplomacy throughout the experience.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the organizing team and academic team for their dedication and hard work in order to raise DIMUN'25 to the pinnacle!

Furthermore, it is important not to place undue pressure on yourself before or during the conference. All participants are here to enhance their personal and academic growth while engaging with new peers in that kind of conference, so please be reminded of that. Therefore, remember to enjoy the experience and make the most of your time. Stay tuned for an enriching and memorable event.

Sincerely,

Erdem Demirci
Secretary-General
DIMUN'25

1.2. Letter from the Under-Secretary-General

Dear Respected Delegates,

It is my honor and pleasure to greet all of you on behalf of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee of DIMUN'25. I am Bersun Akkaya, and I am the Under-Secretary-General of the SPECPOL. I study Sociology at Türk-Alman University in the German stream, and I am excited to be representing this academically rigorous and relevant simulation.

SPECPOL's agenda for the current year "The Political and Security Implications of Private Military Companies in the MENA Region and Their Impact on Peacebuilding Efforts", addresses one of the most serious and sensitive issues of our times. The expanding operations of PMCs in war-torn regions raise fundamental issues about state sovereignty, responsibility, human rights, and the very nature of international peace and security. It's through this committee that we trust to be able to offer you not only the forum with which to negotiate such broad concerns, but also with which room for diplomatic thinking, cooperation, and well considered consideration can grow. I would also like to offer my sincerest gratitude to my Academic Assistant, Yasemin Dilek, for her hard work and valuable input during prep time. It has significantly enhanced the knowledge bank of this committee, and I have no doubt that her voice will be heard in future debates. I can not envision a better academic assistant for this committee both in terms of her experience and expertise on the committee and her academic ability.

To our delegates: thank you for selecting this committee and for taking the time commitment out of your academic calendars to tackle this complex and important issue. Your presence guarantees the validity of this simulation, and I invite each of you to approach it with intellectual interest as well as with diplomatic tact. You are respectfully notified that all materials and external resources you may want to utilize during the committee should be pre-screened by the scholarly staff to avoid irrelevance or inaccuracies. Given the legal and geopolitical nature of the agenda. Preparing while reaching out to us will be greatly helpful. I invite each of you to delve deeply, work together well, and preserve the spirit and practice of the United Nations principles. Through strategic discussion, coalition formation, or policymaking, this committee is a forum for intellectual development and real-world experience. Let us use this platform to examine rigorously the issues of our world and maybe even discover how to make it a better world.

Once again, thank you for being a part of this journey. I hope to see your work throughout the sessions. May this experience be rewarding, challenging, and above all meaningful for all of us. Do not hesitate to reach out to us about our committee, and good luck to each and every one of you, may the odds be ever in your favor!

Cordially,

Under Secretary-General, SPECPOL

Bersun AKKAYA

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1.3. Letter from the Academic Assistant

Dear Participants of the SPECPOL Committee,
I welcome you all as the Academic Assistant of the committee to the annual session of Dimun'25. I am Yasemin Dilek, an 11th grader in Adem Tolunay Anatolian High School.

The committee procedure will be the General Assembly. You will be delegates, that means that you will be responsible for every action following the flow. Every one of you will be obligated to make difficult decisions for your country's sake. The MENA region's conflicts have been a pain in the neck for a lot of colonist member states while it did also affect the countries of the MENA Region economically and politically. The crucial part is to get every member states approval on the final conclusion. It's your turn to discuss, good luck.

Lastly I would like to give some special thanks. First I want to take my Under Secretary General Bersun Akkaya for her presence during the process and always supporting throughout the way. Secondly I would like to thank the Executive team for their hard work. I hope that this conference will be a role model for the future conferences.

If you have any doubts or questions, feel free to contact one of us at any costs. Your questions are valuable and very important for the flow of the committee. Your presence will affect the future of the topic so do not forget to read the Study Guide, study the topic as much as you can.

yasemindilek0908@gmail.com

2. Committee Preparation Process

- i.** Do your research on your allocated country. Research and learn about their policies on the matter. Learn the alliances and blocs between the countries. Know its history, foreign policy, alliances, and position on the agenda item. You have to understand these connections to negotiate your own terms and collect allegiances on your side.
- ii.** Deep-dive in research negotiation tactics. Speak to other delegates in unmoderated caucuses, form blocs, and draft resolutions together. A friendly and solution-oriented attitude makes others want to work with you. Even with opposing countries, aim to find compromise.
- iii.** Read the study guide thoroughly, starting with the "Questions to Be Addressed" part. The study guide will give you clues about the key issues and enlighten your research journey. Learn every word you are not familiar with. Take notes on the study guide. Read the study guide, UN resolutions, and relevant academic articles.

- iv.** Dig through the United Nations website. Read former resolution papers regarding your committee and agenda item. Look for the United Nations bodies that may help you during your dispute-resolution journey. You may read academic articles from Google Scholar; they make a huge difference in conducting preparation for the committee. Choose your research links carefully to verify that the information you have gathered is accurate.
- v.** Read the Rules of Procedure and act accordingly.
- vi.** When you speak in formal sessions, be structured, persuasive, and aligned with your country's policy. Stay respectful and constructive, even when disagreeing. Use rhetoric wisely; a good delegate is both logical and emotionally compelling.
- vii.** Learn how to structure preambulatory and operative clauses clearly and diplomatically. Be ready to explain your proposals and edit them with feedback. Good delegates don't write unrealistic or overly ambitious clauses.
- viii.** Speak, motion, negotiate, and propose amendments, but most importantly, don't be passive. Think about long-term goals: how will your actions move the committee toward resolution? Never break character; you're the voice of your assigned country, not your personal opinion.
- ix.** Keep track of bloc positions, draft texts, and what's being said. Great delegates listen as well as speak.

3. Introduction to SPECPOL



The Special Political and Decolonization Committee, or SPECPOL, is the fourth committee of the UN General Assembly. Originally established with the mandate to handle only decolonization, SPECPOL has broadened a great deal over time. The Fourth Committee was handling the issues of decolonization and another (the Special Political Committee (SPC)) handled all other political issues until 1993. But later in 1993, these two organs merged and developed the modern SPECPOL and enlarged its mandate to a wider diversity.

SPECPOL today addresses an incredibly wide range of political issues beyond the mandate of the other main UN General Assembly committees. While decolonization remains at the heart of its mandate, the committee also

addresses a wide range of complicated and extremely modern affairs of the world. These are: Peacekeeping operations and the overall examination, Special political missions, The effects of atomic radiations, Dissemination of information to the public, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) operations, Israeli policies and practices favorem of settlements related to Palestinian Arabs and other Arabs of the occupied territories, International collaboration on peaceful uses of outer space. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee, or SPECPOL, is the UN General Assembly's First Committee. It exists mainly to take into account all categories of political matters of international peace and security that are not of particular mandates of other large UN organs. SPECPOL is also a very significant platform for member states to come and disagree and settle by diplomacy and negotiations such an intricate political disagreement, decolonization, peacekeeping operations, and other issues pertinent to sovereignty and self-determination.



SPECPOL is an organ established for analyzing the political roots of conflict regions and ensuring universal application of peace through the provision of political policy, peace-building processes, and peace solution processes. SPECPOL also exercises authority over the activities of various UN organizations that act within the framework of decolonization and peacekeeping. Most alarming, though, is that SPECPOL promotes multilateralism and diplomatic negotiation between states in order to achieve mutual understanding of varied interests and perceptions. SPECPOL continues to be an essential component of the United Nations organization by providing and making accessible member states a platform upon which to discuss and decide on extremely sensitive political matters. Such a highly specific role renders SPECPOL one of the

most distinctive United Nations committees. The committee has been at the vanguard of this offering international assistance to end colonialism, solve border disputes, and answer political unrest. This is especially where, previously, there had been foreign occupation or strife.

It must be remembered here that; SPECPOL decisions are not binding, but of the very highest political importance. Without enforcement power, but as a decision-taking institution, they set the international agenda by setting out policy proposals, stimulating debate, and heightening international awareness. These policy proposals form the basis of collective action on behalf of member states, UN agencies, and civil society. Under the paper "The Political and Security Implications of Private Military Companies in the MENA Region and Their Impact on Peacebuilding Efforts," SPECPOL is the agency to look into how the non-state military actors are influencing the sovereignty, stability, and peace processes of the MENA region. The committee analyzes how the UN peacebuilding mandate and the international system of law are intersected by PMCs, and suggests that member states join efforts in order to respond to the threat produced by commercialization of military capacity. Overall, SPECPOL facilitates better and more participatory policymaking. Secondly, it provides nonviolent solutions to long-standing political enigmas and promotes creative consideration of the globe's most entrenched political enigmas by permitting productive exchange and analysis. In doing this, the committee permits the international community to investigate alternative methods of attaining security, sovereignty, and self-determination in a new world system.

3.1. Mandate and Scope of the Committee

The committee mandate is to debate how PMCs impact sovereignty, regional security, and civilian protection within the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. SPECPOL assesses legislation and holding institutions that regulate PMC activities, and catalytic debate on their implications for regional peacebuilding efforts and sustainable conflict resolution.

3.2. SPECPOL and its Relevance to the MENA Region

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region remains the focus of most of the United Nations' political, security, and peacebuilding activities, and thus the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (SPECPOL) remains very pertinent. The complex history of the region, continuing conflict, decolonization efforts, and geopolitical realities on the ground place SPECPOL in a prime position to serve as a central discussion forum for these in the UN.

The rise of Private Military Companies (PMCs) in the MENA brings new dimensions to security and peacebuilding operations. SPECPOL's input towards examining the political and security features of PMCs makes easier international comprehension of the role of privatized military power towards bolstering state sovereignty, regional stability, and peace efforts. By honest debate and policy direction, SPECPOL promotes multilateral response to PMCs-associated threats and

calls for structures that will ensure peacebuilding is inclusive, transparent, and in conformity with global law.

SPECPOL's general operations on that matter provides coordination between sovereign nations and global organizations in the combating of the region's security challenges unique to it, thus providing a useful platform for sustainable peace and political stabilization.

4. Introduction to the Agenda

4.1. Definition and Classification of PMCs and PMSCs

Private Military Companies (PMCs) and Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) are privately owned and operated companies that provide military and security services in a vastly wide field of operating environments, often involving situations of conflict or political unrest. Some of the services that they might provide include direct combat operations, strategic planning, logistics, intelligence, armed force training, and site or personal security. Even traditionally a state monopoly, non-state provision of security and military services has expanded beyond belief in the last three decades and propelled a revolution in international security. The nature, scope, and classification of PMCs and PMSCs create essential legal, ethical, and political issues concerning how they relate to state sovereignty, world accountability, and privatization of legitimate force. Conceptualisation of PMCs and PMSCs on the technical plane is still debatable and not entirely legally codified, as the actors present various conceptualisations. Commonality overall, though, as suggested in NATO documents as well as in international legal debates, accommodates the fact that these firms are for-profit and perform work traditionally the domain of national security actors and armies. This working definition distinguishes them from mercenaries whose motivational and operational characteristics are inherently distinct. PMCs and PMSCs, as opposed to mercenaries, operate in a group setting and are structured under a formal contract, often by states, international institutions, or transnational corporations. Their typology can be studied with reference to their definition based on activities from combat activity to consultancy and logistics. At one end are Private Military Companies (PMCs), i.e., businesses directly engaged in combat or the use of force. At the opposite end are businesses that undertake supporting functions like risk analysis, intelligence analysis, training, and protection services—these would normally be referred to as 'Private Security Companies' (PSCs). However, in reality, the two categories overlap and cross-pollinate, hence the compound noun 'Private Military and Security Companies' (PMSCs) in a bid to cover the entire range of their operational involvement. Absence of an internationally accepted legal code has added to the challenges of regulating PMCs' and PMSCs' activities. International attempts, such as the *1989 United Nations International Convention against the Recruitment, Financing and Training of Mercenaries*, have been attempted, but the instrument captures neither the operational sphere of PMSCs. The model of definition of the mercenaries in the Convention is limited and does not encompass corporate organizations and entities, and therefore the majority of the PMCs and PMSCs are outside its

ambit. Therefore, the legality of PMSCs is in doubt, particularly in their accountability in front of the *International Humanitarian Law (IHL)* and *International Human Rights Law (IHRL)*. PMCs and PMSCs are more and more being used in complex legal and operational environments where state control is absent or contested. This is prone to being seriously challenged on the issues of force delegation and state monopoly of violence. States can contract the services of PMCs with the objective of trying to avoid political constraints or legal burdens, particularly at war, when resorting to their own conventional armed forces would be politically too costly. Secondly, privatization of security and military activities impacts chain of command, civilian control, as well as democratic oversight. Due to the fact that PMCs are motivated by money, accountability, obedience to law and codes of ethics become essential. Furthermore, the PMSC deployment into combat operations is challenging traditional concepts of combatant status and the principle of distinction under IHL. Contractors are not necessarily neatly pigeonholed within IHL's legal classifications of combatant or civilian status, and so existing protection and treaty obligations under the Geneva Conventions are eroded. Although there have been PMSCs which are governed by strict codes of conduct and adherence to international standards, there have also been some which have perpetrated gross human rights and humanitarian law violations, bearing witness to the mixed model of regulation and enforcement mechanisms. Generally, growth and expansion of PMCs and PMSCs reflect deeply the changing nature of the global security governance framework. It underscores existing legal frameworks, blurring the line of distinction between public and private force, and challenging the capacity of international law to compel non-state military actors. Although international and national initiatives for standard setting and regulatory frameworks, e.g., the *Montreux Document* and the *International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC)*, have been made, there is as yet no binding international legal framework. The evolving character of PMCs and PMSCs therefore necessitates ongoing academic, legal, and policy focus to guarantee that the substance implications for international peace and security are addressed.

4.2. Peacebuilding: Definitions and Dimensions

Peacebuilding within the UN setting exists as a spectrum of ceasefire management to institution-level transformation with the aim of war relapse prevention. The cross-section categorizes and analyzes the multiple dimensions of peacebuilding within the political-security setting under the control of private military companies (PMCs) with a focus on the MENA region. This analyzes the impact of deploying PMCs on state capacity, sovereignty, and sustainable peace. Peacebuilding is not the termination of conflict, but the sustained effort of establishing firm, broad-based foundations for politics, security, economy, and society. The committee's agenda, to explore political-security consequences of PMCs in the MENA region, must place on the table how PMCs influence such system foundations. By integrating PMC accountability into UN peacebuilding frameworks through PBC, PBSO, and PBF, the committee can then craft policy interventions that support state capacity, accountability, and enduring peace, rather than establishing dependency, privatized military response.

After Boutros-Ghali's pioneering *An Agenda for Peace* (1992), peacebuilding is "action to identify and support structures which will strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict". Another advance was taken by the 2000 Brahimi Report, in which it was defined as placing the pillars of peace "on the far side of conflict" – that is, beyond stopping fighting. The 2007 UN Secretary-General's Policy Committee then built further upon this and defined peacebuilding as

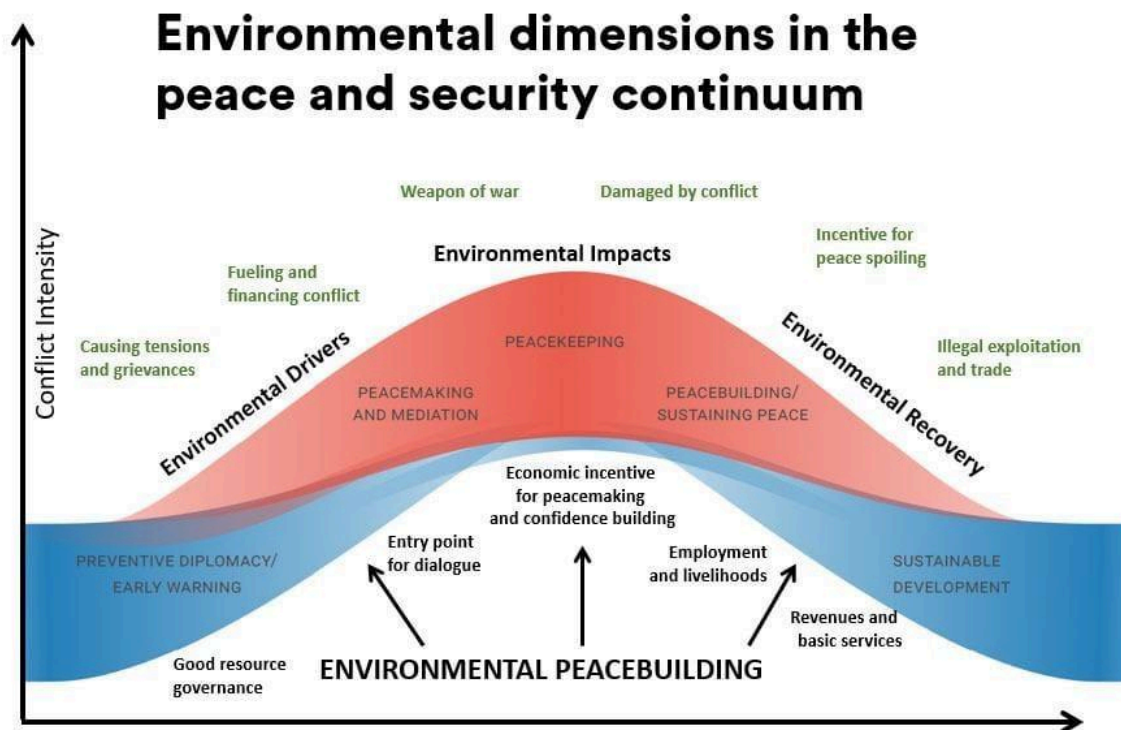
"...an inventory of activities to reduce risk of sliding or sliding back into relapse of war by building national capacities at all conflict management levels, and by building conditions for durable peace and development."



Dimensions of Peacebuilding

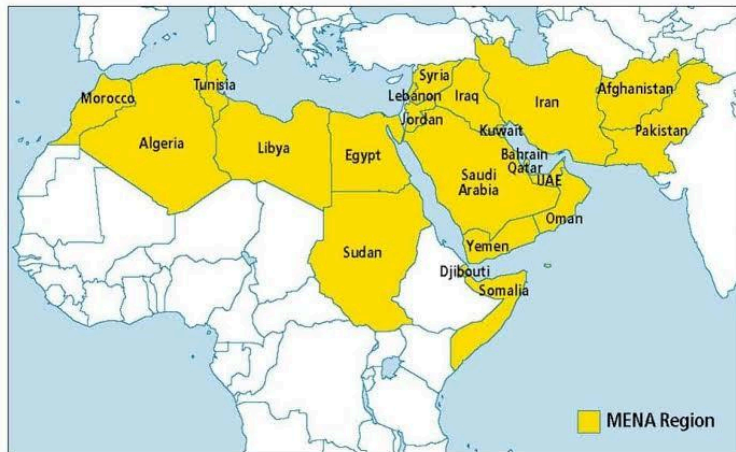
Peacebuilding is multidimensional with more than one dimension like structural, political, security, social, and economic dimensions. Constituent and political dimensions of peacebuilding are constitutional reform, reconstruction of the justice sector, building institutions in governance with a view to inclusiveness, and political reconciliation. Even in the MENA region where Private Military Companies (PMCs) operations are common, even structural dynamics are intricate in the sense that PMCs react to security work by eroding sovereign authority and substituting state-led capacity-building. Security sector is most interested in Security Sector Reform (SSR), demilitarization, and reintegration of veterans. Compatibility of PMCs to these areas conceals its difference from state security officials and private business and denies accountability, governance, and PMC action congruence to SSR objectives. The economic and

the social are best served by peacebuilding, i.e., social reconciliation through counseling and public discourse and infrastructure work and economic recovery and livelihood. PMCs, however, mislead the economies of places by facilitating deals and eliminating economic incentives and thus shedding light instead of darkness on grievances. These same three pillars of the UN also comprise the peacebuilding architecture, which are: the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The PBC offers strategic policy guidance, the PBSO gives advice and facilitates knowledge transfer, while the PBF offers timely funding support. National ownership, being one of the underlying peacebuilding norms, means that it must be done and driven by the mentioned nation and not imposed on them by a third party. PMCs render this challenging to the extent that domestic and international private interests may conflict with each other, and policy coherence and legitimacy are violated. Effective peacebuilding calls for reason and technical processes that are interested in coordination with all of the stakeholders. However, the nature of PMCs whose work is most likely to be described in terms of contract regardless of UN-initiated activities, renders coordination of such initiatives with more indiscriminate peacebuilding programs inconvenient, thereby rendering coordination in general inconvenient



4.3. Regional Focus: MENA Region

The Middle East is a region comprising the land to the south and east of the Mediterranean Sea (also known as the Levant), the Arabian Peninsula, and parts of North Africa. Today, the



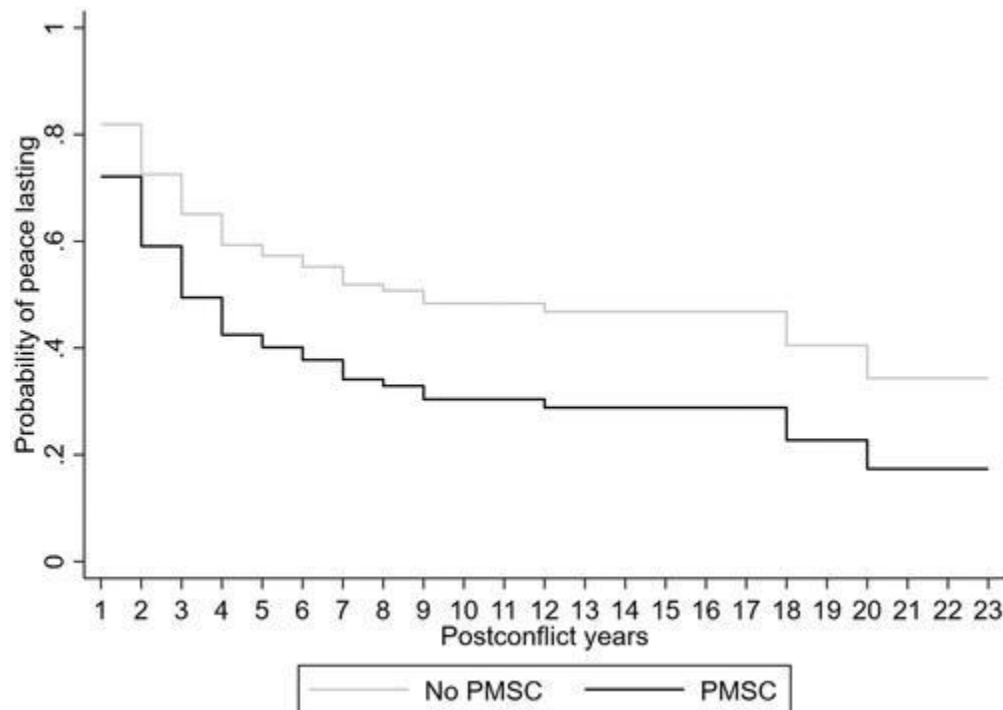
broadest definitions of the MENA region (Middle East & North Africa) include the territories of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, Turkiye, Cyprus, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Sudan, Iran, and Afghanistan, and sometimes even consider Greece and Pakistan.

Countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are particularly vulnerable to climate change, mainly due to water-scarcity and extreme temperatures. Climate change is likely to intensify the effects of drought, which is currently one of the biggest environmental challenges faced by the region. Coastal areas are also under threat. Most economic activities are located on the coast, within urban areas.

4.4. The Nexus between PMCs and Peacebuilding

Private military companies have emerged in the disparity, left by the disinterest of economically developed countries concerning less developed areas of the world. PMCs offer a broad scale of services, including consultations, combat actions, and Third World governments. Among managers of private military companies are experts from armed forces and decision-making structures of states. Critics argue that private military companies are beyond public control and that they are under a strong influence from multinational corporations, in particular mining companies. The fate of the future use of private military or security companies in peacebuilding could be determined by their success in Iraq. Accountability is a serious issue when it comes to carrying guns or flying helicopters in pursuit of US foreign policy goals'. PMCs refute the criticism of a lack of discipline – a phenomenon typical of classical mercenaries – by emphasising their professionalism. Another criticism of PMCs is concern that engagement of such companies could undermine the host state.

This thesis critically analyses the hypothesis that Private Military Companies (PMCs) are a viable option for direct involvement in UN peacekeeping missions in African states. The involvement of PMCs in the affairs of states is a controversial and divisive issue, but since the end of the Cold War, they have become increasingly involved in the security structures of African states, and in post-conflict reform of such structures. They have also become involved in tasks related to commercial activities central to the political economies of African states. Indeed, Africa was the theatre in which PMCs evolved from an opportunist phenomenon that emerged in response to rapid change in the security situation, to become part of the emerging post-Cold War political economy. In the 1990s, PMCs undertook operations in Angola and Sierra Leone that brought about situations where warring factions were compelled to negotiate settlements. While the response of the international community was predominantly one of condemnation of their involvement, others pointed out that operations conducted by PMCs had been remarkably swift and inexpensive in bringing violent conflict to an end, in contrast to those conducted by the UN in African states. PMCs' involvement in peacekeeping operations is becoming increasingly relevant; they have been involved in every major UN peacekeeping mission since 1990, and have carried out tasks spanning a wide range of UN functions. In 1995, Christopher Bellamy speculated that the UN might augment their numbers with private soldiers. While this was dismissed at the time, it is a concept that continues to resurface when the UN has difficulty finding adequately trained troops for its peacekeeping missions. This thesis investigates the hypothesis that PMCs are a viable option, in practical, political, legal, economic and moral terms, for involvement in such missions.

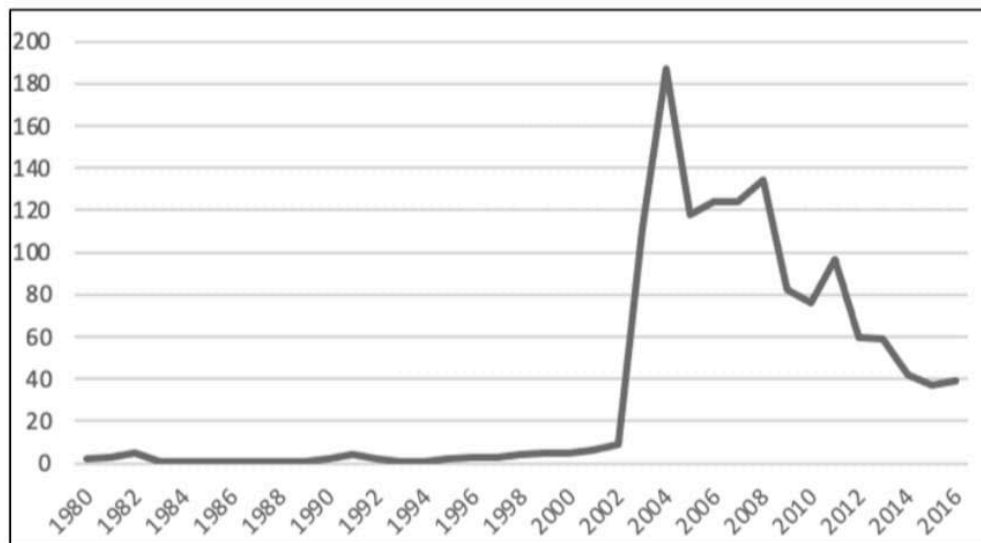


5. Statement of the Problem

5.1. Expansion of PMCs in MENA Conflict Zones

In the early 21st century, the private military and security companies (PMSCs) market has been considerably growing worldwide. PMSCs can provide a number of services, including security, training, and combat, to different actors, such as private companies, governments, and individuals. Private military companies (PMCs) are becoming an integral part of how conflicts are fought and managed, and their involvement can be traced in almost every conflict of this century. The PMSC phenomenon has also expanded in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. This is due, in part, to multiple conflicts, crises, and unstable socio-political conditions in many of the countries in the region, as well as its strong reliance on natural resources, which drives the economic sector. While the use of PMSCs in the region is not new, in the past, mercenaries followed a similar pattern of activities in the MENA, but with a stronger focus on combat operations. By providing an overview of the PMSC industry, this article aims to explore the drivers for the boom in this industry and its effects on the overall stability of the region. As the MENA region has faced many threats and challenges to overall stability and security, it is not surprising that many PMSCs strive to enter the region. Several more specific factors and events contributed to the increase in PMSCs' presence in the region. The events of 9/11 (September 11, 2001) in the United States that spurred the “global war on terrorism” formed a turning point in this respect. Multiple terrorist groups based or seeking refuge in the MENA region posed a growing security problem to the world and especially to the national governments. Increasingly aware of this threat, many governments were quick to employ several PMSCs to guard their premises, protect natural resources and critical infrastructure, and gather intelligence. Another factor that boosted the presence of PMSCs in the MENA has been the war in Iraq where, as of 2007, the number of contracted security personnel was already at a ratio of 1:1 to the U.S. military personnel. The 2008 financial crisis and the crash of the global and regional markets led to recession in many economies, while the number of piracy attacks on maritime commercial vessels increased. In the following years, the inability of governments of the region to manage socio-economic development, combined with growing dissatisfaction among the population, led to the Arab Spring events that erupted in late 2010. The increase in protests and rebellion required more protection for both the region's ruling (mostly autocratic) regimes and foreign entities based in the MENA, which further spurred the expansion of the market of PMSCs. In many countries of the region, both during and after conflict, the presence of PMSCs is still evident.

Figure 1. The number of private military and security companies operating in the MENA region, 1980–2016



5.2. Sovereignty and State Authority Challenges

To many observers the Middle East state system since the Arab uprisings stands at a critical juncture, displaying contradictory patterns of fragility and durability. The uprisings, which started late in 2010, were undoubtedly revolutionary in their initial impact, but beyond Tunisia, it is the counter-revolutionary movement that has proved the more durable.¹ The region has witnessed multiple regime changes alongside high levels of popular mobilization, violence and transnational activism. The results have been highly destabilizing, resulting in challenges, not only to regimes, but also to the very sovereignty and territorial integrity of states.

This, in turn, has contributed to a shifting regional power balance and repeated episodes of external intervention. Some commentators have argued that the whole regional system, always fragile and contested, is finally undergoing radical transformation; others point to its resilience. This article evaluates the latest wave of instability and its consequences for Middle Eastern states, their sovereignty and regional order, introducing themes and discussions taken up in other articles in this special issue. It argues that despite recent upheavals (and multiple predictions to the contrary), the Middle East system of states and borders will likely remain intact—at least in the medium term. This does not mean that states are necessarily ‘strong’ in a Weberian sense or that sovereignty at different levels is uncontested, but that continuity, state survival and border preservation, is likely to prevail over major change.

5.3. Accountability and Legal Ambiguity

The firms exist in the gray area of law that enables them to remain outside the immediate reach of host governments, and international regulatory bodies. The ambivalent legal status of PMCs under international law, not necessarily combatant and not civilian, raises essential questions on the operation of international humanitarian law (IHL), human rights obligations, and the imposition of state responsibility. PMCs are even contracted by state and non-state entities for performing security activities such as performing military training, logistics support, intelligence services, and even combat activities. Although their peacebuilding and conflict dynamics role is paramount, their legal role is unclear. While there are international legal codes such as the Geneva Conventions or codes of military practice that bind national armed forces legally, PMCs need not be legally bound by them. It is the lack of codified responsibility that provides the basis on which responsibility can be diffused across contractors, clients, and hiring states and then bursts the chain of responsibility for behavior that is otherwise a breach of international law. It is such ambivalences intertwined with failing state institutions, war, and post-colonial power imbalances in the MENA. The majority of host states lack regulative authority to police or prosecute PMCs' exploitation, especially where the state itself relies on their services for regime survival or national security. Additionally, transnational business organization and privatization of violence to PMCs will most assuredly ensure that operations are carried out with less transparency, and victimized civilian populations lack jurisdiction of legal recourse or reparatory action. Accountability is particularly vital in peacebuilding, as international and national interventions are judged on their credibility by respect for human rights and the rule of law. Privatization of power can disempower such goals by bringing in actors not bound by the same institutional and normative restrictions as conventional military forces. In addition, PMCs can potentially drive agendas that are profit-driven and counter to sustainable and inclusive peace agendas. Peace processes' use of PMCs, if not regulated, can have the capacity to erode public confidence in transitional justice processes, as well as generate cycles of violence driven by impunity.

5.4. Civilian Harm and Human Rights Concerns

The expanding employment of Private Military Companies (PMCs) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has created heinous problems of civilian harm and legalized human rights abuse. Selected in advance into conflict-ridden and unstable countries, PMCs are blessed with insufficient regulation, due legal ambiguity, and have loose contract terms like environmental conditions that raise the stakes significantly for civilian population damage. Standing independent of state military forces who are subject to codified codes of conduct and answerable to national and international organizations, PMCs have previously been outside these organs, and accountability has been lacking. The effect of the divide has been readily visible in Iraq, Libya, and Yemen, where PMCs have faced accountability for charges of disproportionate use of force,

arbitrary detention, and threat to civilians' lives. These effects are normally exacerbated by the lack of open avenues through which redress or justice can be pursued by the victims.

Commercialization of violence also discourages impunity, with PMCs acting behind the umbrella of foreign contracts or where the state legal systems are weak. Destabilization of the dichotomy between combatants and civilians (a cornerstone of IHL) amplifies challenges of protection of civilians in regions of asymmetrical warfare. Operations of PMCs also raise broader human rights issues. They have been used in destabilizing democracy post-conflict and undermining public confidence in reconstruction. Such instances include the deployment of foreign security guards for police patrols or prison management that has seen common abuses, ill-treatment, and torture—contrary to international norms like the Convention Against Torture (CAT). These tendencies can not only increase prevalent bitterness but also undermine shaky peacebuilding by displacing indigenous peoples and entrenching occupations, neo-colonialism, or foreign mentality of control.

5.5. Peacebuilding Setbacks and Dependency Risks

The MENA peacebuilding process is defined by a chain of faults that render post-conflict reconstruction processes ineffective and unsustainable. One of the most straightforward disadvantages to this process is the creation and consolidation of networks of dependency between weak states and Private Military Companies (PMCs). Even while PMCs are usually contracted most often for the very reason of security provision and stability generation, their deployment can have the effect of undermining sovereign power, upending institutional balance, and leading to habitual overdependence on external security providers. PMCs act as a response to aberrant security needs in battered states that are incapacitated, institutionally poor, and whose governing capacity has run out. But this then usually comes at the expense of outsourcing core state functions to unaccountable, non-democratic private providers. Host states then become dependent on PMCs for regime maintenance instead of deep security sector reform, and this discourages incentives for building good quality national military or policing capacity. This realignment threatens to recreate cycles of insecurity in so far as power privatization is spreading power and increasing the difficulty of restoring authoritative, centralized security structures. Apart from that, PMCs are contracted to make profit more of an agenda than peacebuilding objectives of integral security, human rights. Their contribution to security will most likely be one of short-term tactical gains at the expense of long-term institution-building and social coherence and consequently local legitimacy and trust are eroded. Intransparent and secret PMC operations and lack of clearly defined legal status also leave themselves open to accountability deficits and thereby further reduce the potential for open and community-sensitive peace processes. Dependence on PMC is also latent in sustaining dependence on outsiders and outsiders who provide finance, as compared to internal capacity and sovereignty. Foreign dependence risk scares to uphold neo-colonial paradigms of peacebuilding under which peacebuilding depends upon the contracting state or business strategic interests and priorities, as compared to citizen needs at home. Such paradigms will create resentment, polarization, and

fragmentation within a political and social context and ultimately prevent sustainable peace and reconciliation processes.

5.6. Escalation of Conflicts due to PMCs

The action of the PMCs has a profit motive to achieve, and this creates incentives to prolong conflict and not end it. It is a risk model of business to convert local conflicts into protracted wars since there will always be a market for security services to support ongoing operations. The activities of the PMCs also have the result of blurring the distinction between combatants and civilians, resulting in human rights and IHL abuses such as indiscriminate attacks and disproportionate use of force. The dubious legal status and discredited system of responsibility of PMCs also deter conflict management by containment. Lacking troops of their own, PMCs are beyond the normal military chain-of-command and international normative regulatory responsibility oversight and thus do not accept responsibility for IHL breaches, i.e., war crimes. Not only do they nurture cycles of violence but also undermine the legitimacy of local governments as well as extrastate peace efforts. Outsourced security operations by PMCs also compromise the state's monopoly on force, threatening public security institutions and the sovereignty of the state. In Iraq, large-scale deployment of contractors prior to and after the 2003 war created governance challenges and erosion of confidence in the official security institutions. This makes public confidence in state institutions necessary for sustainable peace.

5.7. Legal and Accountability Gaps

The most important one is arguably the absence of an internationally universally binding law specifically for Private Military Companies' operations. Although the 1989 International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries seeks to address some of the problems of private military activity, it is not applied properly to PMCs. Most modern-day PMCs are in a gray area of regulation in between the traditional mercenary definitions and are therefore not covered by this convention. Additionally, influential contracting states and home states of key PMCs such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Russia are not party to this convention and hence it doesn't work. Although International Humanitarian Law (IHL), comprising the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols thereto, applies in the event of an armed conflict, it remains ambiguous in determining the status and role of PMC personnel. Whether PMC operators are civilians, combatants, or a combination thereof is extremely ambiguous. Such imprecision contributes to the challenges of prosecuting them under IHL and holding them accountable for their violations, especially owing to the nature of asymmetrical warfare common in the MENA region. The majority of the MENA states have indigenous legal systems lacking political will or institutional capability to adhere to and prosecute PMCs' abuse. Home states intermittently destabilized by conflict or political instability cannot invoke foreign contractors or judicial recourse to exploitation. PMC home states do not generally apply extraterritorial jurisdiction or an effective regime of control, and consequently, criminal activity abroad can be carried out with impunity. A paradigmatic case of such impunity

is the 2007 Nisour Square Baghdad massacre by Blackwater contractors. Even while some legal penalties have been imposed, PMCs' operators are in no way treated equally with regular militaries and therefore go unpunished while undermining public confidence in peacekeeping initiatives. Attempts to close loopholes in law through non-binding tools such as the Montreux Document (2008) and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC) have issued norms and standards of best practice but without enforcement capacity. While such mechanisms institutionalize compliance with international standards, they depend on the good faith of states and businesses and have no binding compliance provisions that assure enforcement. It is thus contested whether they are actually capable of drawing out compliance in war zones and zones of conflict. Accountability deficits and law weaknesses as applied to law enforcement undermine peacebuilding. Unregulated PMCs tend to institutionalize and perpetuate such abuses that generate local grievances, erode the processes of closure of cycles of violence, and jeopardize the legitimacy of international intervention. They are also incompatible with the state monopoly on the use of legitimate force—a very significant requirement of post-conflict reconstruction and sovereignty. This risks replacing state authority with commercially motivated security provision, which is in contra-venor to the ends of sustainable peacebuilding.

5.8. Erosion of State Sovereignty

Private Military Companies in the MENA region have established a more sophisticated security environment that erodes the state monopoly on the tool of force and seriously jeopardizes the principle of state sovereignty upon which the international legal order as well as the United Nations Charter rest. Governments employ PMCs in war and post-war regions where institutions of the state are underdeveloped or weak and, as such, need to buy military capacity, logistic services, or security from them in regions where states cannot. Even though it has the benefit of quick security, it makes states dependent in the long term, and state capacities are outsourced to private operators who are accountable only to shareholders and not to people. This steals democratic control of security policy and turns national armed forces on their heads. Deployment of PMC troops for missions traditionally performed by state armed forces can potentially create discrete chains of command and blur responsibility. Where foreign contractors are hired with or as part of domestic forces, specifically on cooperative operations, confusion does exist in exercising the operational control, which creates ineffective operation and incompatible interests in politically delicate settings. Foreign state PMCs used in the MENA region as tools of influence but not interference is the second factor of erosion of sovereignty. Countries like the US and Russia have used PMCs to attain strategic aims at lower political expense and less parliamentary oversight. The move dismantles host nation sovereignty by applying foreign pressure through unregulated, deniable surrogates. PMCs destabilize peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts through institution-building for a double security sector, challenging local legitimacy, and demobilizing the local forces. In accomplishing key missions such as border security, security of VIPs, counter-insurgency, PMCs render the national institutions of the nation

ineffective in exerting control and hinder the formation of a consolidated and autonomous national security establishment.

5.9. Human Rights Violations and Civilian Impact

PMC use is preceded by rising concerns about human rights abuse and an excessive impact on civilian populations. Unlike traditional state militaries, PMCs do not have oversight, exploiting gaps in the law with no authority to hold them accountable for what they do. Numerous reports and investigations attributed extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, and cruel treatment of civilians to PMCs. The case in point is the 2007 Baghdad Nisour Square shooting where Blackwater contractors killed 17 Iraqi civilians. While some were eventually held accountable, the case brought structural flaws in monitoring, enforcement, and legal recourse to the fore. Unlike state armies, who benefit from codified rules of engagement, military codes of justice, and standardized training in the laws of war and human rights, most PMCs employ staff from diverse backgrounds with minimal ethical control. These imbalances offer windows of opportunity for abuses of power under ambiguous circumstances when civilians are exposed. Foreign private military involvement/operation, more so when they commit atrocities, erodes civilian confidence in international peacekeeping and in their governments. This is contrary to social cohesion, breeds resentment, and may lead to radicalization of the local population. This in turn makes unacceptable final goals for peacebuilding by forming new causes and ongoing cycles of violence. The victims of PMCs typically face insurmountable legal barriers in seeking justice. These include jurisdictional issues, extraterritorial activity, immunity clauses in contracts, and complaint procedures that are hollow. Victims typically do not get names in most of the cases, and reparations just never happen and therefore perpetuate a culture of impunity.

6. Historical Background

6.1. Evolution of Mercenarism to Modern PMCs

The mercenarism institution, widely regarded with suspicion and moral disapproval, developed in the past centuries to emerge as the modern institution of Private Military Companies (PMCs). This is not a matter of semantic shifts; this is a sign of far-reaching changes in international norms, state sovereignty, military turn of the military forces, and commodification of security. Historically, mercenaries were groups or individuals who sold their military forces to the highest bidder and who served under no political cause or state. From the Renaissance-era Italian condottieri to the early modern Swiss Guards, mercenaries have shaped the course of politics around the globe. Their function was most significant where there were no professional armies in central governments and they had to resort to the use of hired soldiers as the basis of their waging of war or exercising dominion. Mercenarism increasingly became associated with instability, strife, and violation of human rights. The 20th century consolidated such a perception, particularly post-colonial Africa, where mercenaries began to be perceived as neocolonial

intervention, undermining national sovereignty and perpetuating civil war. The global community, responding to the dreaded effects of uncontrolled militias, legalized an official reaction in the 1989 International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries (also the UN Mercenary Convention). The convention, although lacking in the area of signatures and enforcement, legalized mercenaries as individuals acting on behalf of private interest and beyond regular military control of a state. It did not, however, reverse the deeper structural transformation occurring in international security provision. In the post-Cold War era, came the new geopolitical reality and neoliberal policy overhaul that reshaped the world security order. Military retrenchments by states, privatization was becoming a global logic not just in economics but also in military affairs. Private Military Companies became corporate-type entities offering a range of military and security services from support and training to strategic advice and combat operations. In contrast to traditional mercenaries, PMCs emerge as disciplined and professional groups held together in accordance with the law of contract, normally established in industrially advanced nations and formally contracted with governments, international organizations, or multinational companies. The difference between mercenaries and PMCs is primarily legitimacy and corporate structure. Mercenaries are independent fighters, occasionally in defiance of state or international law, and PMCs fall under the flags of states and engage in increasingly conventional missions once the prerogative of national armies. PMCs rent up soldiers, even special forces, and peddle themselves under corporate monikers, internal codes of conduct, and even public relations efforts to not use the "m" word. But still, the difference between PMC activity and mercenarism remains unclear. It has been debated among scholars and international bodies whether the PMCs today are merely new wrappers for mercenarism, especially when they battle in a foreign country, earn substantial salaries, and continue with less transparency and accountability. The 2006 NATO research note, "Definition and Classification of PMCs and PMSCs," speaks about this vagueness. It attempts to demythologize jargon by distinguishing between Private Military Companies (PMCs), which are primarily combat-serving, and Private Security Companies (PSCs), which are primarily static defense, asset protection, and servicing that is not combat. The report recognizes the intersections in which the two intersect in the broader classification of Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs), even though their functions intersect in operation. The NATO memo also mentions regulation and classification issues and states that existing structures of law such as Geneva Conventions and the outlined Mercenary Convention are not sufficient to cover the modern manifestations of privatized force. Modern PMCs will generally operate in legal limbo, particularly in theaters of combat where there is weak regulation. Their increasing war involvement (i.e., Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and Ukraine) raises serious issues of responsibility, chain of command, and disruption of state monopoly of the means of coercion. In general, the evolution from classical mercenarism to modern PMCs reflects broader changes in the nature of warfare, state power, and global capitalism. As PMCs seek professional legitimacy and operational transparency, they are offspring of the mercenary tradition and inherit much of its abiding contradictions. Their emergence presents a challenge to rethink the very primitive assumptions of international political theory and law, for example, what sovereignty means, whether privatized force is moral or not, and the fate of state-based models of security.

6.2. PMCs in Global Conflicts: From Cold War to Present

The role of Private Military Companies (PMCs) in international conflict has expanded significantly from their first emergence during the Cold War to where they are today in international security. Their evolution is evidence of an even greater metamorphosis of the character of war, state sovereignty, and the privatisation of violence. The first large-scale contemporary example of a PMC was found in 1965, when British SAS veterans David Stirling and John Woodhouse established WatchGuard International. As a security and military advisory firm, WatchGuard's first ventures, its Yemen intelligence project is one such example, had already articulated the possibility of PMCs existing as foreign policy tools in disguise as profit-seeking businesses. This double function, strategic war mission with corporate organizational structure, would become typical of PMCs. WatchGuard's brokering of arms, foreign advisory missions, and even a failed attempt to topple Libya's Muammar Gaddafi in 1971 demonstrated how these firms blurred the line between state and personal objectives. During the Cold War, these firms were reasonably circumscribed in their business, but their early origins created a foundation for the mass-scale business that came to develop. The post-Cold War period was the reference point for global PMC expansion. After the end of the bipolar international order and the wholesale demilitarization of Western, and partially non-Western, national armies, tens of millions of soldiers were demobilized out of uniform. The pool of trained ex-soldiers that resulted was rich soil in which PMCs were free to plunder. As a result, new companies such as Vinnell Corporation and Military Professional Resources Inc. (MPRI) in America, G4S in Britain, and Executive Outcomes in South Africa began plugging the strategic void left by the withdrawal of state troops. Contrary to the traditional mercenary companies, PMCs employed corporate legitimacy, formal contract, and even state sanction, thereby operating formal military campaigns in Angola, Sierra Leone, Iraq, and the Balkans. When the 21st century rolled around, PMCs were highly effective at military logistics, training, and combat. Blackwater (Academi), Aegis, and Wagner Group were notorious names in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine. They count in the millions, the PMCs international business was worth more than \$240 billion with more than 600,000 by the 2020s. Not only did these companies provide tactical services, but fought war, counterinsurgency, intelligence, and regime stabilization themselves, occasionally directly for or on behalf of national military units. But the development of PMCs also instigated horrific legal and ethical concerns. Their indeterminate status under international law makes provision of accountability all the more difficult. PMCs occupy the juridical middle ground between combatants and civilian contractors and thus cannot be placed in customary paradigms of the Geneva Conventions or national military justice. In addition, they have undermined the classical state monopoly on violence, allowing governments to farm out war and avoid political penalty. The built-in accountability deficits of PMC actions have yielded high-profile human rights violations and are vulnerable to the obscurity of military operations, particularly in regions already at war. The contemporary strategic appeal of PMCs is not so much their capacity for combat but rather their ability to provide states with a measure of plausible deniability and reduced political risk. It has rendered them in high demand in proxy wars, hybrid war, and covert

action, where state powers would perhaps like to keep their salience secret or escape global visibility. Their penetration into what some writers call "new wars" is a broader structural change in globalized conflict, a one in which war is no longer present in nation-states, but as a disseminated, privatized, and transnational enterprise. PMCs evolved out of post-Cold War advisory firms to worldwide forces that alter the nature and shape of war. From WatchGuard to Wagner, from support missions to combat missions, their path is a reminder how war has been commercialized. With them efficiency, adaptability, and specialization arrive but with them arrive profound questions regarding sovereignty, legality, and moral responsibility in the age of private war. With the growth of PMCs and their increased mandate, the world as a whole must establish governing frameworks that bring their activities to the same level as humanitarian law and international accountability.

6.3. Privatized Warfare in Post-2003 MENA

The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 was one of the highlights of the privatization and militarization of security in the MENA region. Post-conflict environments of state failure, institutional collapse, and unbalanced conflict provided fertile ground for the spectacular growth of Private Military Companies (PMCs). Privatized war, over the last two decades, has been a typical feature of conflict management and security provision in the region.

Deployment of PMC in Afghanistan and Iraq

Following the invasion of Iraq, the US and coalition forces outsourced most of their military and logistical tasks to PMCs. Tasks involved armed escort convoy, facility guard and detainee security, interrogation and intelligence collection. The big players were companies like Blackwater (now Xe, formerly Academi), DynCorp, and Triple Canopy. Contractors even outnumbered US troops in Iraq in 2007, and accounted for nearly 50% of US military expenditure in Iraq. This trend was followed in Afghanistan and extended to other areas of conflict, where the logistics strain of long-term military deployment created pressure for the private sector to be utilized. The activities started to mix combatant and contractor roles, creating legal status, command responsibility, and rules of engagement issues.

Security Marketization and Competitive Bidding

Post-2003 saw security marketization as states and global players treated armed strength more and more as a commodity to buy. Price competitions instead of accountability led to indiscriminate screening, poor monitoring, and human rights violations. Politically favoured corporations were routinely contracted habitually despite the principles of meritocracy and to help facilitate corruption in fragile states.

PMCs in Proxy Conflicts and Non-State Actor Engagements

The privatised war paradigm has extended to local proxy conflicts now from Iraq and Afghanistan. Syrian, Libyan, and Yemeni state and non-state actors have subcontracted PMCs to

provide military services at arm's length. Russia's Wagner Group, for instance, has supported Assad-aligned Syrian militias and General Haftar's Libyan National Army with combat assistance, training, and intelligence services. These operations occur within legally gray zones, unmarked by publicly declared war declarations or openly traceable procedures. This outsourcing model enables states to conduct deniable activities, enhance leverage, and minimize political costs but enhances levels of violence and destabilizes conflict resolution mechanisms through the infusion of already inflammatory conflict actors whose allegiances are unclear and whose interests are financial.

Implications for Peacebuilding and Security Governance

The entry of privatized war has slowed the creation of enduring peace and legitimate security governance in the MENA region. PMCs tend to operate outside the technical peacebuilding process for financial remuneration and not for political concession. They can create violence economies, fragment provision of security, and delay demobilization and reintegration of armed actors. Privatized military power, among other factors, legitimizes a fundamental transformation of security management away from national institutions towards transnational corporations with very low levels of accountability. Privatized military forces erode sovereignty, military control by civilians, and democratic accountability as a whole, all factors essential in the construction of peace on solid ground.

7. Case Studies

7.1. Wagner Group in Libya

Wagner Group deployment in Libya is the paradigm case of private military companies (PMCs), foreign intervention, and international peace and security. Both from Russia and globally regarded as an unregistered spin-off of Russian military intelligence, Wagner Group has been deployed into war theatres where Russian geopolitics are at stake. While the Russian government neither confirms nor denies direct membership with Wagner, the group acts according to Russian foreign policy interests, establishing a deniable level of control where local contingencies are at their most volatile. Wagner was in Libya in 2019 when the Second Libyan Civil War erupted. The company had been hired to offer military services for Libyan National Army commander Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar to counter United Nations-supported Government of National Accord (GNA) forces in Tripoli. Wagner troops were dispatched in huge contingents-United Nations estimates place them at more than 1,000 troops at the peak of the war-and even engaged in battles. Their work included sniper support, artillery coordination, drone operations, logistic support, and electronic warfare. Haftar forces were also supplied with advanced arms by the group, including anti-air defense systems and guided missiles, augmenting Haftar's forces' military capabilities. The consequences of Wagner's operations in Libya extend far and wide. To start with, their deployment was a breach of the United Nations weapons embargo against Libya under Security Council Resolution 1970 (2011) and its subsequent reaffirmation. Different UN

Panel of Experts reports have established evidence of the group engaging in illegal arms dealing and combat operations. Secondly, Wagner's actions had raised very grave humanitarian concerns. The group has also been linked to potential war crimes, including indiscriminate deployment of landmines—most of which were booby-trapped and left behind as forces retreated from the southern suburbs of Tripoli—resulting in civilian casualties and long-term threats to civilians. Thirdly, Wagner's entry added depth to the proxy nature of Libya's conflict, increasing foreign rivalry for influence in the nation. That dynamic undercut the UN-sponsored peace process and prolonged the civil war, ultimately setting Libya's political balkanization and state failure. International responses to Wagner Group actions have been, on the whole, one of censure and sanctions, mainly from Western countries. The United States, for instance, slapped targeted sanctions on the actors and entities responsible for Wagner's activities in Libya. Meanwhile, the United Nations is still calling on all foreign militias to withdraw from Libyan ground according to the October 2020 ceasefire agreement. Enforcement is weak, and the overt structuring of PMCs such as Wagner makes it hard to implement measures for accountability. Operating in legal gray areas and under the veil of state-sponsored uncertainty, these groups test the boundaries of international norms on the use of force and that of state sovereignty. Wagner Group activities in Libya therefore illustrate the greater difficulties the use of PMCs pose in contemporary wars. It also preserves key questions about regulation of non-state actors in the war context, application of international legal tools such as arms embargoes, and undermining traditional mechanisms of conflict management. For SPECPOL, the study of Wagner's operation in Libya is crucial to understand how PMCs can be utilized in order to influence the course of civil wars, complicate peacemaking, and as geopolitical weapons.

7.2. U.S. Contractors in Iraq

US private security and military contractors' (PMSC) deployment in Iraq is a paradigm for the overall deployment of armed non-state actors in contemporary conflict and post-conflict intervention. After the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime, the United States and coalition forces were confronted with the need for logistical, security, and operational support in the wake of growing insecurity and insurgency. This tension privateering of combat in the war by, and as a result, contracting out to private bidders, and therefore Iraq was the most privatized war in history. There were as many contractors as Americans during the height of U.S. involvement, and safely more than 160,000 contractors—again including backroom logistic support staff in supplies through combat-equipped private security troops—were estimated to be employed one way or another across the country. All these private contractors like Blackwater (Academi now), DynCorp, and Triple Canopy were hired to execute some of the missions which had a broad array of activities ranging from the protection of U.S. diplomats and convoys, protection of strategic assets, training security forces of Iraq, and supplementing intelligence operations. All these they executed under contract with the U.S. Department of Defense, the State Department, and other government agencies. Their function, while typically secondary in character, entailed direct involvement in hostilities and

consequently united the time-honored distinction between combatant and civilian for international humanitarian law. Legally problematic to this extent has been open to public disapproval, most notably in the aspects of accountability and control. The most infamous American contractor scandal in Iraq occurred in 2007, when Blackwater security contractors opened fire on civilians in Baghdad's Nisour Square and killed 17. The shootings outraged the world, helped put Iraqi-American relations in a poor light, and provided grist for argument over the legal standards that apply to the activity of PMSCs. While some of the Blackwater guards were subsequently prosecuted in the United States, the politically convenient and late justice system highlighted the failings of current mechanisms for accountability. Iraqi contractors consequently had disproportionately limited legal powers, with immunity under Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Order 17 from Iraqi jurisdiction. This absence of legal definition allowed a culture of impunity that undermined legitimacy for the American mission and fostered anti-Americanism among Iraqi citizens. From a leadership point of view, the utilisation of contractors by the US government has been defended on the basis of flexibility, cost-sensitivity, and quick mobilisation. En masse privatization of military personnel have had profoundly disastrous effects, though. Balkanized command and control arrangements, hybrid rules of engagement, and piecemeal training standards for the contractors generated interservice coordination issues. The contractors were also magnets for insurgent activity, as visible targets, and the presence, being perceived as neo-colonial or mercenary profit-seeking, lent itself to the war mythology of foreign mercenaries. The long-term implications of having U.S. contractors in Iraq are monumental. They also refer to wider trends towards the privatization of war, towards disappearing state military spaces, and towards reconfiguring security governance. The US adventure in Iraq elicited national and international attempts to improve contractor management, including codes of conduct like the Montreux Document (2008) and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC, 2010). The regimes of compliance lack binding rules of enforcement under international law and are voluntary.

7.3. Turkish PMCs in Northern Syria

Turkish private military companies have acquired significant roles in conflict dynamics in Northern Syria, especially following the Turkish military operation into Northern Syria. An example is SADAT International Defense Consulting, a Turkish PMC that presents itself as a center of military training and consultancy services on terms normally acceptable to the interests of the Turkish state. SADAT presence is a testament to Turkey's move to advance its influence in the region through its use of proxy warriors and civilian contractors along with traditional military invasions. They are a technologically advanced field at the mercy of regional geopolitics and power vacuums that only contributes to more questions regarding their legality and accountability. Turkish PMCs have altered traditional state-sponsored conflict dynamics by introducing half-private military units into the equation whose behavior makes state policy and

mercenary work increasingly indistinguishable from one another. It is just a component of bigger patterns of privatized soldiers employed as a tool of statecraft for neighborhood war.

7.4. UAE and Foreign PMCs in Yemen

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has sent massive numbers of mercenary soldiers and private military companies (PMCs) to Yemen as part of its military campaign. Its strategy is to use foreign PMCs with advanced skills such as the Spear Operations Group, giving tactical guidance and close combat support to Yemeni soldiers. These mercenary forces are a component of UAE's broader regional endeavor, which enables it to project force and realize strategic objectives without overtly deploying national soldiers. As a result of the out-sourcing of security services in the guise of PMCs, UAE is able to intervene in the complex socio-political dynamic in Yemen without accruing political cost in terms of casualties and foreign reaction. However, the policy has been an ethical and legal concern regarding the destiny of PMCs in the war environment, the implications on sovereignty, and danger of undermining native systems of governance.

7.5. Iran-Linked Militias and Proxy Networks

Iranian use of militias and proxy networks across the Middle East is an asymmetric warfare doctrine deployment. These militias, ideologically aligned with Tehran and supported by the presence of finances, training, and logistical capabilities, span wide areas of territories in nations such as Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen. These militias are used by Iran to be the force multiplier of its geopolitical agenda but with deniability. The proxies, in the form of Hezbollah and other militia groups in Iraq, are combatants as well as political players who have leverage in the local government and security institutions. This network-based approach creates challenges for the traditional efforts at conflict management of inscribing Iran's influence in host country political and social fabric. The fuzzy boundary between PMCs and militias here also makes it difficult to justify the state sovereignty, regional security, and legality of such proxy war programs under international law.

7.6. Israeli Cyber PMCs and Surveillance Export

Israeli private military companies offering cyber capability and surveillance technology capacity are now global leaders in the export market for digital security and intelligence service. Israeli cyber companies produce advanced surveillance computer programmes and hacking capacity sold overseas and sometimes to governments with questionable human rights records. This export of cyber capacity is geo politically and economically in Israel's interest as Israel desires strategic allies and expands its influence in cyber space. Israeli cyber PMCs are, however, raising extremely serious ethical and legal concerns regarding the right to privacy, digital sovereignty, and abuses of surveillance technologies to repress. The Pegasus spyware affair that unmasked mass usage of Israeli-hardware-based hacking tools for repressing journalists, activists, and political dissidents globally is used to illustrate the threat posed by regulating this new industry.

The actions illustrate the intersection between technological advancement and national security needs and international human rights standards.

8. Key Actors and Stakeholders

8.1. State Employers and Sponsors

State employers and sponsors are states that contract Private Military Companies to carry out some of their military and security roles. States lack the ability or political will or international prestige to send out their own troops to carry out given tasks, hence seeking to employ PMCs to offer military service, training, intelligence, or combat operations. Sponsors may also be strong and settled states wishing to increase their presence in private or weak or war-torn states requiring additional security personnel. State action to recruit PMCs poses challenging legal and ethical problems, especially if PMC action intrudes across national borders or into human rights. States typically exert degrees of control over PMC operations, some employing them to promote strategic interests by using indirect accountability.

8.2. Major PMC Corporations and Networks

PMC mega companies are corporate networks that offer private security and military services globally. They are as immense as giant multinationals with humongous operations on a global basis, but as tiny as regionally focused, small businesses. Some of them are corporations like Wagner Group, Academi (formerly Blackwater), G4S, and others. They organize their activities in networks of contractors, ex-soldiers, and security experts. They have intricate structures with governments, intelligence units, and business clients. They offer armed protection services, transportation, logistics, intelligence, training, and even offensive missions. The PMCs' structures are characterized by secrecy, loosely governed, and competitive forces that tend to disintegrate the difference between genuine security services and mercenary operations.

8.3. Regional Bodies: LAS, AU, GCC

Regional players such as the League of Arab States (LAS), African Union (AU), and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have a mandate to establish the normative and regulative environment within their respective regions for PMCs. Regional solutions to security issues being generated by PMCs are sought through regional dialogue, policy responses, and peacekeeping missions. As an example, the AU would like to establish regional peace and security capacity that would dilute the demand for PMC, while the LAS and GCC do not have private military players in present-day conflict or proxy wars within the Middle East and North Africa. The ability of such regional institutions to control PMC activities is generally eroded by political cleavages, differences in national interests, and availability constraints.

8.4. The UN and International Civil Society

The United Nations (UN) is also a key international actor for monitoring, regulating, and responding to the effects of PMC activities globally. The UN specialized institutions and organs function on promotion of norms, legal instruments, and responsibility on PMCs matters, among others by way of treaties like the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries. Global civil society, including NGOs, advocacy groups, and human rights organizations, also has a role as watchdogs in alerting PMC abuses, advocating transparency, and holding states and corporations accountable. Their campaigns place mounting international pressure on better governance, ethical behavior, and protection of targeted civilian populations from PMC action.

8.5. Local Communities and Victims

They are most likely to be the most directly affected stakeholders in discussions regarding PMCs. They can witness the physical and socio-economic damages of PMC activities as displacement, brutality, human rights violation, and interference with the local administration. Their victims range from combatants among armed citizens who get caught in crossfire to those undergoing abuse or exploitation. Citizens' attitudes towards PMCs in and of themselves also vary extremely widely within their host population from seeing them as securities and protectors to illegitimate armed groups or sources of insecurity. The lack of adequate redress and accountability mechanisms for harm inflicted by PMCs compounds grievances and threatens to activate cycles of violence and mistrust, which have negative effects on long-term peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts.

9. International Legal Frameworks

9.1. Geneva Conventions & IHL Applications

Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) are increasingly central actors in today's wars, particularly the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) war. Their involvement is problematic because it is problematic because it is problematic. It is problematic because it is problematic to apply international legal mechanisms such as the Geneva Conventions and International Humanitarian Law (IHL). How, if at all, provisions of the Geneva Conventions should be applied to private security soldiers is extremely contentious and extremely context-dependent. Most of the provisions will be anything but universally applicable, ad hoc in nature. This is so primarily because international humanitarian law has mainly regulated the conduct of 'states' and chiefly concerns 'international conflicts' among states. The state has exclusive jurisdiction over its own border, and non-state belligerents who fight in internal wars are therefore generally beyond the formal purview of international criminal law as well as much of the Geneva Conventions. That limitation was acutely experienced in the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) cases, and the seminal case of Tadić, which

established important precedents for the jurisdiction of IHL over non-international armed conflicts. Several fundamental questions must be clarified in order to determine whether or not PMSCs and private security units are subject to IHL norms: Are they involved in an 'armed conflict' according to the IHL? Is the conflict international or non-international? Are they state-organized and under state control? Do they wear uniforms or fly a displayed state flag? Do they occupy or hold territory? These considerations determine when and whether the members of PMSCs are legitimate combatants or not. Private security forces are least protected in law in that they can fail as legitimate combatants. That is, they would be deprived of protections such as prisoner-of-war (POW) status or combatant immunity, just as unarmed spies or saboteurs. Article 47 of Additional Protocol I explicitly withholds mercenary status from being legitimate combatants, a narrowly defined category, at other times overshoots and applies to some PMSC staff. That withheld status subjects private security forces to exposure under international law and complicates accountability and protection. In conflicts of arms internationally, Geneva Common Article 3 enumerates at least humanitarian obligations that are binding on all the parties, including those non-state parties like PMSCs working in the domestic market. They cannot inflict violence to life and person, torture, inhuman treatment, and taking hostages, but equally must be treated humanely without discrimination. But beyond these minimum regulations, Geneva Conventions apply only to interstate war (as regulated under Common Article 2). Second Additional Protocol (1977) tried to bring some international juridical regulation to non-international armed conflict between armed non-state groups with an organised command structure, but only where the groups are command structured, are involved in continuous armed combat, and have territory sufficient to launch military operations. APII further prohibits sexual violence, looting, attack on medical personnel, and child soldiers. But even with all these innovations, Geneva Conventions and Protocols do nothing and are strictly situational provision to bring PMSCs and private military forces within internal armed conflict. The conventions had not been formulated to intrude quite profoundly into the internal affairs of a state. Consequently, PMSC activities are governed initially by the host state's domestic law and latter's extraterritorially enforceable law to its own citizens. This lacuna in law is the source of lack of accountability, especially within weak governance regimes in conflict or post-collapse settings. States that hire PMSCs are not higher than IHL in regards to upholding respect for human rights and humanitarian principles. States have to exercise strict licensing, issue clear rules of engagement, monitor, and punish the contractors for misconduct. Initiatives offering state guidelines to manage PMSCs in upholding international norms of transparency, accountability, and compliance with human rights include the Montreux Document and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Providers (ICoC). In the MENA, expanding PMSC involvement has far-reaching political and security implications. PMSC operations erode the traditional state monopoly on legitimate force, blurring the distinctions between public and private security providers. This decentralization of power undermines sovereignty, especially if the foreign governments deploy the PMSCs without the ostensible host government's approval. Such deployments will be undermining the state's legitimacy and obscuring the security sector

reform, which is relevant in the context of constructing sustainable peace. PMSCs prefer short-term physical security outcomes at the expense of bottom-up, local peace processes. PMSC actions destabilize local security structures and create external dependence, which undermines good governance and social cohesion. The technocracy and commodification of PMSCs also stifle trust relations between authorities and populations, which is a key element in the process of post-conflict reconstruction. PMSC opacity also derails transparency, transitional justice, and democratic accountability in fragile environments.

9.2. The Montreux Document (2008)

The 2008 Montreux Document is a pioneering worldwide effort to establish legal and regulatory guidelines for Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) in conflict and post-conflict areas. Though not a treaty, the Document is of utmost normative significance as best practice and undertakings by states that are involved in contracting, employing, or hosting PMSCs. The Montreux Document aims to fill necessary regulatory loopholes in the PMSCs regulation, an industry that has surged at a pace leaving traditional legal frameworks behind, particularly in infamous conflict areas such as in the MENA region. Effectively, the Montreux Document outlines states' roles according to current international law-i.e., international humanitarian law (IHL), human rights law, and refugee law-regarding PMSCs. It must be noted that the states are solely responsible for ensuring that PMSCs within their jurisdiction or control meet these standards of law. This is whether they outsource PMSCs to provide security services abroad, the home states of PMSCs, or the incorporation and registration states of PMSCs. The Document creates a chain of guidelines for contracting parties and states and to properly manage and control PMSCs through the course of their life cycle from training, supervision, and licensing to accountability measures in case of malfeasance. The strength of the Montreux Document lies in the fact that it acknowledges that PMSCs operate in legal grey areas and precisely during moments of armed conflict or peacebuilding after conflict when state sovereignty and power can be undermined. It absolutely identifies the risks to state monopoly on legitimate use of force PMSCs pose and the risks to civilian defense and human rights that may be created when the companies are not properly controlled and can act independently. In the context of MENA, where several states have experienced civil instability, foreign interference, and multi-dimensional security environments, values embraced in the Montreux Document are highly applicable. The Document is a blueprint to mitigating the risk caused by PMSCs to governance and stability by encouraging transparency, accountability, and compliance with IHL and human rights. A second essential provision of the document is a call to states to adopt effective national regulatory regimes. Such regimes would properly license and register PMSCs and strictly oversee their staff in a way that would bar companies with documented abuse track records from operations. It also proposes the insertion of provisions in contracts for adherence to IHL and human rights standards and investigation and punishing of abuses. The Document prioritizes legal training of PMSC staff to reduce breaches and improve performance in the field. The Montreux Document also addresses coordination between states because of the international character of PMSCs. It promotes information exchange and coordination to enhance control and eliminate impunity. As an example, it requests that states share information on PMSC abuse and cooperate in prosecuting criminal behavior by private security providers. In the MENA region, as an example, different domestic and international PMSCs have a tendency to act simultaneously within several different national jurisdictions, perhaps taking advantage of

loophole opportunities as wide as possible in the area of accountability. Aside from states, the Montreux Document also invites PMSCs themselves to institutionalize policy in an attempt to win compliance with international norms, e.g., codes of conduct and grievance mechanisms up to international standards. This is an activist notion of corporate social responsibility in the security sector and is seriously striving to bring about a culture of compliance and respect for peacebuilding objectives. Even though the normative contribution of the Montreux Document to the subject matter is remarkable, it is also mapping the failure of international law to offer regulation of PMSCs. Since it is a non-binding document, its political will and ability to be followed in states is its most significant asset. In addition, in weak environments that are prevalent in the MENA region, deplorable governance and deplorable rule of law continually hinder enforcement. But the Document remains a valuable guidance for policymakers, practitioners, and representatives from civil society interested in regulating PMSCs and making them play a positive role in peacebuilding. The Montreux Document (2008) is an international, non-binding baseline standard that defines states' legal obligations with regard to PMSCs and offers operational best practice to minimize threats to their operations.

9.3. UN Draft Convention on PMSCs

The United Nations Human Rights Council reacted in 2005 to enhanced global reliance on Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) by establishing the Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries. The group's finest effort has been the UN Draft Convention on PMSCs, written in 2009 and presented officially in 2010. The draft is a step towards legislation of PMSCs and towards prosecution of corporate and state actors for international human rights and humanitarian law violations with respect to PMSCs. The working convention draft legally defines PMSCs as commercially owned and operated military and/or security services comprising armed guarding, training, intelligence, and logistical support in conflict or at-risk regions. Notably, the draft recognizes that the majority of PMSCs are currently in a position of legal uncertainty, far too often without regulation and accountability mechanisms in place. It therefore attempts to establish international law concerning registration, licensing, regulation, and accountability of companies. The convention calls for three forms of responsibility: (1) states that employ contract PMSCs to extend such actors' human rights and humanitarian law; (2) host states of PMSCs to control and regulate PMSC operations; and (3) host states of incorporated or registered PMSCs to make sure that such companies remain under the effective legal control. The proposal also requires the establishment of an international authority to control PMSC activities at the global level and coordinate state action. But for all its lofty ideals, however, the draft convention itself never actually is adopted by the General Assembly and never actually does get overridden by a state. Its most vocal critics, influential states close to PMSC industries, the United Kingdom and the United States, have not been enthusiastic about binding legislation. Thus, the draft remains a soft law document, exercising its gargantuan influence in circles of policy and academic debate without the force of obligatory legal jurisdiction. It remains, nonetheless, a normative framework of debate regarding sequelae and establishes the newly emergent priority in the UN system for the privatization of relief security.

9.4. UN Mercenary Convention (1989)

The General Assembly of the United Nations accepted the International Convention for the

Prevention, Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training for Mercenary Purposes in 1989 and came into force in 2001. The convention is the first multilateral one to attempt to limit the destabilizing menace of mercenarism, particularly in the newly independent African states. The convention defines the mercenary both in general and specifically in the sense that there are six cumulative elements: (1) is employed specifically to serve as a member of an armed force or an armed group; (2) who participates directly in the hostilities; (3) whose primary motivating reason is basically private gain; (4) who is not a national of a party to the conflict; (5) who is not a member of the armed forces of a party; and (6) who has not been sent on official mission by a state not a party to the conflict. This definition has effectively been seen as too narrowing down, this rendering the Convention impossible. The UN Mercenary Convention criminalizes the recruitment, use, training, and financing of mercenaries and obligates State Parties to translate their prohibitions into their national law. The convention has been designed to assist with international cooperation in prosecution and extradition of persons found to be violating its terms. Under vision to its own magnificence, the convention does not have global backing in terms of numbers. Up to this point, as of 2025, there are fewer than 40 state parties to the convention, and more importantly, none of the significant private security-exporting nations like the United States, United Kingdom, Russia, or China is a party to the convention. The critics find the Convention anachronistic in the new war and PMCs' operations context, the latter of which also tend to appear in shapes not conformable with the convention definition of a mercenary. But the UN Mercenary Convention itself is a symbolic norm in international efforts at delegitimizing mercenarism and encapsulates the challenge of attempting to police non-state actors in contemporary armed conflict. It is a normative and legal norm for allegations regarding the transformative use of private force in international security.

9.5. Jurisdictional and Legal Loopholes

The fluid, dynamic character of Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) in modern conflict and post-conflict environments illuminates deep jurisdictional and legal lacunae. These directly arise from the paradigm of international law to be powerless to regulate PMSC conduct in any effective form, especially in such conflict environments as the MENA region. This presents extremely grave challenges to accountability and reconciling PMSC activity with international efforts in peacebuilding. Behind the issue is the fragmented nature of legal frameworks over PMSCs. International humanitarian law (IHL), human rights law, and national laws deal proportionately and in some cases inappropriately with addressing their application on PMSCs. States bear the initial duty of keeping military and security operations within their boundaries, but PMSCs are operationally transnational, enjoying weak or ambiguous state regulation. This regulatory gap allows companies to make a living in regulatory in-betweens, barring efforts at imposing responsibility or discipline. By way of example, PMSC extraterritorial operations will probably be outside the host state or home state's local jurisdiction and creates "jurisdictional gaps" where neither have clear duty to prosecute criminal activities (Bures, 2017). PMSCs also tend to dissolve the old combatants and noncombatants dichotomies in international law. Compared to state governments, PMSCs never fit the Geneva Convention-approved categories, and as such, their status and protection in armed conflict are in doubt. It has implications for legal protection and obligation and makes enforcement and regulation more difficult (Tardy, 2016). Even the government may not be ready and capable of providing full legal protection to PMSCs, especially because they are outsourced and

commercially minded. This legislative ambiguity threatens breaches of the sort of such proportionality of force, human rights abuses, or breaches of international humanitarian law. Concerning the scope of the issue, regimes of international criminal justice and responsibility only have jurisdiction over PMSCs to a limited extent. The International Criminal Court, for example, has an enormous task in prosecuting PMSCs or their members given the challenge of allocating criminal liability and evidence across borders. Courts in the respective states where PMSCs are registered or have headquarters can also lack the political will or legislations for the accountability of such companies. It generates a de facto culture of impunity that erodes justice and peacebuilding (OpenEdition, 2021; Bures, 2017). In addition, privatizing military services tends to create fuzzy lines of command, and legal accountability becomes tricky. States or international authorities and PMSCs get bound through contractual agreements that have a tendency to blur lines of accountability, especially in areas of conflict involving high-tech groups. Fragmentation makes it impossible for enforcement authorities to monitor or prosecute criminal activities conducted by PMSCs (International Review of the Red Cross, 2017). These efforts at closing the loopholes involve soft law efforts such as the Montreux Document (2008) and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC), which attempt to set legal expectations as much as promote responsible conduct by PMSCs. They are not enforcement-contingent, however, but rely on state and firm voluntary cooperation. As helpful as normative efforts are, they are insufficient to completely close the legal loopholes. The United Nations has increasingly acknowledged such problems, proposing more effective regulatory structures and improved state coordination in an attempt to keep PMSCs within legal and moral boundaries. The UN Working Group on the mercenary employment, and special rapporteurs on human rights and PMSCs, propose greater international cooperation, more precise national laws, and capacity development in an attempt to control PMSCs (UN Human Rights Council, 2017). In MENA, political instability, violence, and weak governance are the status quo, and such jurisdictional and legal voids have next-generation consequences. PMSCs can perpetuate fueling inflation or dismantle peacebuilding by extending their operations beyond effective control or regulation. They should be dismantled to align PMSC operations with general peace and security objectives, to facilitate, not compromise, peacebuilding. The jurisdictional and legal gaps in regards to PMSCs are one of the main hindrances to their regulation and accountability. Sustaining such gaps is a task on several levels that includes more efficient international legal mechanisms, full-fledged national legislation, and greater international cooperation between states and international organizations. Only through effective concerted action of this kind is it possible to limit the risks of PMSCs and unlock their potential for useful contribution to security and peace-building in complicated places like MENA.

10. Impact on Peacebuilding and Stability

Activities of private military firms (PMFs) in areas of conflict and post-conflict have brought complex challenges to lasting peacebuilding and political stability in fragile states, such as the MENA countries. PMFs may be in a position to provide immediate tactical gains in security issues, yet their overall impact on peace processes, state legitimacy, and reconstruction for the longer term is extremely controversial. Where the majority of cases are in question, PMC access has transformed the peace agenda from building institutions for peace to transactional military victory, most times supported by foreign patronage or domestic elite agendas at the expense of

national inclusivity programs. This void has assisted in projecting crucial questions about the sustainability of post-conflict healing and the legitimacy of national institutions.

10.1. Short-Term Military Gains vs. Long-Term Fragility

PMCs are usually contracted to conduct direct military assistance in the guise of combat missions, logistic support, or facility security. In conflict zones such as Libya, Iraq, and Syria, these have offered tactical advantages to host governments or factions and been used to shift ground-level balances of power. These tactical advantages can come at the expense of institutionalization over the long term. PMCs operate typically in secret, escaping from normal military command and state-based accountability systems. This undermines the creation of responsible, accountable security forces, rather than sustaining cycles of violence and fragility in place of more stable peace.

10.2. Peace Processes Undermined by Armed Contractors

PMCs' operations have also undermined peace processes and post-conflict agreements. Their regular presence at or after the ceasefire can cause bad faith assumptions among negotiating parties and create suspicion regarding the motives of local or external players. Libyan players' motives were doubted, for instance, by the intervention of the Wagner Group in Libya simultaneously with UN-facilitated negotiations in Geneva. Concurrently, in Iraq, recent U.S. contractor history of the likes of Blackwater has rendered reconciliation nugatory and created lingering resentment against such acts as Nisour Square killings undermining trust in intervention by foreigners. Independence of the PMCs from the peacekeeping mandate and diplomatic process makes them capable of furthering policies contrary to negotiated agreements and undermining delicate political processes.

10.3. Trust Deficits in Post-Conflict Environments

Peacebuilding is dependent on trust between state and citizens, among ex-combatants, and between governments and the international community. PMCs are, however, more generally attached to impunity, secrecy, and profit. Their actions, particularly those that lead to civilian casualties, secret operations, or extrajudicial killings, also produce extremely high levels of trust deficits. Population in the aftermath of conflict can perceive PMCs as illegal or predatory entities, and thus destroy trust within the state and peace process. This is most discreditable where government monopoly of force is involved and government legitimacy is compromised.

10.4. Parallel Security Forces and State Fragmentation

PMCs can potentially entrench state fragmentation by becoming parallel security forces. The covert character allows for political leadership, warlords, or states to employ military resources outside of the national chain of command. The duality precludes efforts towards consolidation and professionalization of national armies. In Libya, for example, both the Tripoli-based

Government of National Unity and the opposition Libyan National Army utilized various foreign PMCs, ending up in a fragmented security landscape. The presence of such actors slows disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs and promotes competition instead of collaboration among local players. At its ultimate end, the presence of formal and informal armed players complicates governance emptiness and negates war-to-sustainable-statehood transition.

11.Past UN and Regional Actions

Over the past decades UN peacekeeping has evolved substantially. Beginning with original observer missions, whose comparatively simple mandates involved monitoring ceasefire lines between states. The United Nations itself has also historically been an ubiquitous, if oft-debated, presence in areas of chronic conflict and humanitarian crisis, including areas of the Middle East and North Africa. Its intervention dates to the earliest years of the organization as part of a first-hand recognition of the extreme humanitarian reach of regional instability. Across the decades, many UN institutions have contributed to these interventions. The UN General Assembly and Security Council have been key to crafting mandates, passing resolutions, and debating crucial issues of peace and security. The Secretariat, guided by the Secretary-General, regularly deploys Special Envoys and political missions, using "good offices" and mediation in an attempt to prevent escalation and establish dialogue. Key agencies participating in the operational aspect of the UN engagement include the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), an early mission tasked with monitoring ceasefires, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), established to address the long-term humanitarian needs of displaced populations. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) also plays a central role in coordinating humanitarian action in most complex emergencies, in partnership with a vast range of actors. Relief is also directed by agencies like the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), providing aid and protection to forcibly displaced people, and the World Food Programme (WFP), delivering life-saving food assistance. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) focuses on child health in emergency situations, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) focuses on long-term development, recovery, and strengthening resilience. The World Health Organization (WHO) works on public health emergencies, and other technical agencies like the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) assist in fulfilling sectoral needs. Despite the collective efforts of these different actors, the efficacy of UN intervention has always been undermined by the intricate dynamics of geopolitical rivalries, deeply rooted local conflicts, and the conflicting interests of powerful member states. Complicated issues, such as fragmentation of state authority, extension of non-state armed actors, and active outside interference, routinely limit the UN from achieving significant and lasting peace or completely meeting the colossal humanitarian demand. Scholarly accounts tend to underscore the "intractable nature" of such

cases, highlighting the persistent difficulty of the UN in dealing with political deadlocks and obtaining substantial advances in settings dominated by chronic instability and extreme human suffering.

11.1. Key UN Resolutions and Reports

United Nations activity in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has been influenced to a large extent by an outstanding series of reports and resolutions, sustained efforts at addressing its varied and most frequently intractable conflicts and the related humanitarian and development challenges. A detailed listing of all documents would be a task of undue space, but some of the most significant resolutions and thematic reports have had a lasting and deep influence on world policy and action within the region.

Key Resolutions Addressing Underlying Conflicts

Numerous UN resolutions have centered around the very old conflict regarding control of a specific area in the eastern Mediterranean, one which defined much of the UN's original engagement in the region.

Early General Assembly Resolutions (e.g., GA Res. 181, 194): These very early resolutions, adopted in the organization's early years, established the tone for later diplomacy through the prescription of a template for partitioning a mandated land and affirming the right of return of a huge displaced group. Those early statements established the conditions that continue to be disputed and appealed to in today's peace efforts.

Key Security Council Resolutions Following Serious Hostilities (e.g., SC Res. 242, 338): Following serious military confrontations, the Security Council issued resolutions that served as bases for subsequent diplomatic activities. One such resolution, adopted in 1967, established the policy of "land for peace" by urging the troops to pull out from recently occupied areas and reaffirming the imperative of the respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence of all the states of the region as well as of their right to live in peace in secure and recognized borders. A subsequent resolution, adopted in 1973, reiterated these principles and invited negotiations towards a just and lasting peace. These resolutions, for all their susceptibility to diverse interpretation, have constituted the principal terms of reference for attempts at conflict resolution.

Resolutions on Extended Occupation and Settlements (e.g., SC Res. 2334): From the later decades, the Security Council adopted resolutions that explicitly condemn the continued settlement growth in occupied land as a blatant infringement of international law and a main impediment to a two-state solution. These resolutions express the international community's concern about actions that alter the demographic and geographical nature of the occupied territories.

Resolutions Confronting Rising Crises (e.g., recent SC resolutions on a current conflict in a specific region): Confronted with intense and devastating cycles of violence in highly populated areas, the Security Council has struggled to ensure immediate ceasefires, unrestricted passage for humanitarian aid, and the protection of civilians. These crisis resolutions relate to the profound concern of the international community regarding the unprecedented human suffering and humanitarian catastrophes happening in war theatres.

Resolution on Broader Regional Security and Stability

Resolutions on Specific Peacekeeping Missions (e.g., SC Res. 1701): Following armed conflicts in various parts of the country, the Security Council has directed the deployment of robust peacekeeping missions to monitor ceasefires, arrange withdrawal of military contingents, and help establish a safe environment. Such resolutions typically define the mandate, number, and rules of engagement for such missions.

Non-Proliferation Resolutions: The General Assembly and Security Council have consistently expressed alarm regarding the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region and suggested the establishment of a weapons-free zone, and urged all states to abide by relevant international treaties and safeguards.

Resolutions on Internal Conflicts and Political Transitions: Where there is a severe internal conflict or political crisis, the UN has often adopted resolutions calling for humanitarian access, political dialogue, protection of human rights, and the establishment of inclusive governance structures. While these resolutions are likely to have daunting implementation problems as a result of shattered authority and interference from external actors, they are the normative stance of the international community.

Comprehensive and Thematic Reports

OCHA Humanitarian Situation Reports: The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) publishes periodic detailed humanitarian response plans and situation reports for various areas in the region that are confronting severe crises. The humanitarian response plans and situation reports provide critical information regarding displacement, food insecurity, health emergencies, restrictions in access for the provision of assistance, and the overall scale of humanitarian needs and are gold standards for facilitating coordinated international relief operations.

UN Human Rights Council Reports: The Human Rights Council and its independent Special Rapporteurs produce numerous reports that document allegations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law violations across the region. These reports often highlight issues such as arbitrary detention, torture, excessive force, restrictions on fundamental freedoms,

and the impact of conflict against civilians. They are a key instrument of guaranteeing accountability and raising public knowledge of human rights abuses.

UNRWA and UNHCR Reports: The UN Works and Relief Agency of a specific displaced population and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) submit periodic reports on the humanitarian situation, protection needs, and socio-economic challenges of displaced populations, including refugees and internally displaced persons, throughout the region. They point out the protracted nature of displacement and the persistent need for international support.

UNDP and Other Development Agency Reports: UNDP and other development agencies publish reports on sustainable development goals, levels of poverty, youth employment, the impact of climate change, and post-conflict recovery efforts in the region. The reports highlight structural challenges and suggest areas of long-term stability and prosperity, typically emphasizing the intersection between humanitarian, development, and peace efforts.

11.2. Role of the UN Working Group on Mercenaries

The United Nations Working Group on the use of Mercenaries has a crucial and multifaceted role to play in addressing the complex and often destabilizing involvement of mercenaries and private military and security companies (PMSCs) across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. This independent expert body of the UN Human Rights Council is a global watchdog with particular focus on areas where conflict and political transition give fertile terrain for the engagement of foreign armed actors. Their mandate extends beyond identifying individuals or groups that are mercenaries; they examine the broader picture of how their activities affect human rights, peace, and the ability of people to determine freely their own political status and future.

One of the basic responsibilities of the Working Group in a region like MENA is intensive monitoring and in-depth research. They gather information systematically from a range of sources, including UN missions, regional organizations, civil society groups, and media reports, to track the deployment and activities of mercenaries and PMSCs. This involves looking at the reasons they are present, the scope of services they provide—from combat and logistics to intelligence and security training—and who is hiring them, whether state or non-state actors. For instance, in situations of drawn-out conflict or internal strife, the Working Group closely considers reports of foreign fighters outside of regular national armed forces, who are more frequently than not motivated by the prospect of gain. Above all, the Working Group has a keen interest in the human rights implications of these activities. Where mercenaries or PMSCs are involved in armed conflicts, there is a significant danger of severe human rights abuses. The Working Group collects and verifies reports of such abuses, which can involve extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary detention, sexual and gender-based violence, and other serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. They try to document the abuses, identify potential perpetrators, and advance accountability and justice for victims. This focus is

particularly relevant in MENA, where civilians have borne the brunt of armed conflicts between a multitude of actors. To be effective on these concerns, the Working Group regularly engages with governments of concern and other stakeholders. They hold dialogue with states of the MENA region, providing technical advice on how to prepare and pass national legislation to regulate the activities of PMSCs and prohibited mercenarism in line with international standards. They also bring individual cases of suspected human rights violations to the attention of the governments involved, urging them to investigate and ensure perpetrators are held to account. Furthermore, they encourage collaboration with international organizations, civil society organizations, academics, and national human rights institutions in order to receive diverse perspectives and enhance their understanding of the new face of mercenary activities. A primary output of their work is the production of comprehensive annual reports. These long reports, which are submitted to both the UN Human Rights Council and the General Assembly, provide an overview of global trends in mercenarism and PMSCs, and often highlight specific concerns that are relevant to regions like MENA. The reports not only present their research on new trends in mercenary activity and its funding but also offer concrete suggestions for the strengthening of international legal regimes, greater transparency, and accountability for those involved in the "market for force." These reports are valuable resources for shaping international policy debate and rallying concerted action. Furthermore, the Working Group makes country visits as and when necessary and at the invitation of governments. Such field missions allow the experts to gain a firsthand insight into the impact of mercenaries and PMSCs on human rights in a specific country context. During these visits, they consult with government officials, civil society organizations, legal practitioners, and, quite often, victims of alleged abuses, which provides an overall assessment of the situation and helps to inform their recommendations for legislative and policy reforms. In effect, the UN Working Group on the use of Mercenaries is a precious mechanism for exposing a murky and often unregulated aspect of modern conflict. Through its constant monitoring, research, promotion of human rights, engagement with states, and comprehensive reporting, the Working Group makes a solid contribution to the protection of civilians, the promotion of the rule of law, and improved accountability on the part of all parties to armed conflicts in the MENA region and beyond, undergirding the UN's broader goals of peace and human dignity.

11.3. Regional Initiatives and Peace Missions

The MENA region has been the stage for a wide array of peace and stability-enhancing diplomatic efforts and direct interventions, tapping the resources and mandates of international and regional organizations. These activities, often called peace missions or regional initiatives, are concerted efforts to defuse conflict, resolve disputes, and lay the groundwork for enduring peace and development. A prime illustration of international involvement is the United Nations (UN), which has been deploying numerous peacekeeping missions to the various parts of the MENA region for decades. For instance, the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO),

established in 1948, has the distinction of being the first-ever UN peacekeeping mission, with an ongoing presence overseeing truces in the region at large. Similarly, the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) has maintained a vital buffer zone between opposing forces in a specific contested region since 1974, and it has been instrumental in deterring military escalation. The UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), established initially in 1978 and later reinforced, monitors the cessation of hostilities and assists the national armed forces of a specific nation, bringing stability to a volatile border area. These UN operations, which consist of military and civilian personnel from various member states, engage in monitoring ceasefires, verifying withdrawals, and disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating former combatants to establish secure environments favorable for political negotiations and humanitarian aid. They function pursuant to precise mandates adopted by the UN Security Council, which mirror the international community's resolve for preventing resumed fighting and safeguarding civilians. These global efforts are complemented by a host of regional initiatives, typically spearheaded by organizations composed of MENA nations themselves. The League of Arab States, the classical regional organization, has been actively involved in a number of diplomatic initiatives, particularly in the peace process of a specific historical conflict. An example is the Arab Peace Initiative (API), introduced in 2002, which offered the hope of a comprehensive peace and normalization of relations with a specific state in exchange for its full withdrawal from occupied territories, the establishment of an independent state, and a fair solution for displaced individuals. While its immediate impact in the sense of reaching a comprehensive agreement has been limited, it still embodies a significant set of Arab collective ambitions for peace. The other key regional player is the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which, while primarily focused on the economic and political integration of its member states, has also taken on mediation roles and provided extensive humanitarian and development aid in certain regional crises. The GCC has itself often been engaged in diplomatic initiatives to ease tensions, as with efforts on the crisis in one Arabian Peninsula state, or in brokering talks between regional actors. GCC member states have also taken leading roles in mediating specific disputes or providing large-scale humanitarian assistance to the afflicted. Other regional and sub-regional organizations have also had a role to play. The African Union (AU), for instance, has been engaged in the response to crises within its member states bordering or part of the MENA region, such as in a large nation in Northeast Africa, often through mediation and peace and security councils. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), to which most MENA states belong, has also occasionally taken diplomatic action and called for collective action on important regional issues, particularly those affecting Muslim communities. In addition to such official bodies, unofficial diplomatic networks, facilitated by leading regional players, have also been instrumental in crisis management, conciliation, and stabilizing tense situations, at times leading to breakthroughs in diplomatic relations that have come as a surprise. Each of these regional initiatives, either independently or in collaboration with the UN, leverages its own understanding of regional dynamics, cultural sensitivities, and historical relationships to build trust and facilitate dialogue,

trying to move the MENA region towards a future of lasting peace and stability despite the inherent complexities and challenges.

12.Ongoing Debates and Dilemmas

12.1. Regulation vs. Ban of PMCs

Their legally uncertain nature and destabilizing impact on international humanitarian law give the case against banning or regulating PMCs. Their possibility of subjecting PMCs to the rule of law through licensing, regulation, and accountability systems is also viewed by regulators. For critics, regulation threatens to consecrate an activity whose essence cannot be domesticated by the state, scattering violence at the cost of loss of sovereignty. Inability to agree on international standards impinges on coordination of PMC activities.

12.2. Privatization of Security vs. Public Accountability

Security privatization is also focused on accountability and transparency. State military forces are governed by states, but PMCs are beholden to private contracts that are subject to very limited regulations. This can result in the supremacy of profit over morals, and malfeasance won't be rectified because of jurisdictional issues. The task is to hold PMCs accountable to the same moral norms of conduct and responsibility as public security officials. The goal is to preserve legitimacy and confidence on the part of the people.

12.3.PMCs as Tools of Neo-Imperialism?

PMCs have also been called neo-imperialist instruments to project power without sending their own military personnel. PMCs enable the governments to go around political and legal restraints by sending them into combat operations, projecting power into critical areas of interest without assuming accountability through plausible deniability. It is dangerous for destabilizing an area by putting foreign interests ahead of domestic interests and sovereignty, encouraging dependency, and eroding local government.

12.4. The Ethics of Private Peacekeeping

Private military company peacekeeping is ethically suspect on issues of incentives, accountability, and host country population impact. Though PMCs provide the response benefit of speed and technical expertise, profit motive would inherently conflict with the altruistic peacekeeping goal. Of particular concern are human rights violations, lack of transparency, and discrediting legitimate state control. Making sure that PMCs work under ethical code and complete transparency is cardinal to the preservation of peacekeeping integrity.

13. Bloc Positions

13.1. Western & NATO States

Western and NATO nations have been the prime movers of modernizing the world of private military companies, especially through their war efforts in the MENA world. Western nations tend to make use of PMCs to augment the military, minimize personnel risk, and offer operations flexibility. NATO strategic doctrine tends to engage private contractors to perform logistics, security, intelligence, and training operations in war theaters like Iraq and Afghanistan.

But this dependence is a matter of responsibility and control, since PMCs exist in the gray zones of legal ambiguity beyond conventional military command structures. The United Nations has shown concern at private contractors' deployment in conflicts, underlining compliance with international humanitarian law and human rights obligations (see UN Human Rights Council reports on mercenaries, A/HRC/31/34, 2016). Western and NATO countries have come under constant fire for lacking proper regulatory systems guaranteeing transparency and respect for human rights in PMC activities.

13.2. Non-Aligned Movement and Global South

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and Global South nations tend to be more skeptical regarding the use and role of PMCs by Western and NATO powers in the MENA region. The nations advocate respect for sovereignty, non-intervention, and international law and consider expansion of private military contractors as a new neocolonialism and destabilizing tendency towards regional stability. NAM members urge stricter international legal regulation of PMCs and greater protection of civilian populations. They insist on peacebuilding through political dialogue, development, and human rights monitoring according to UN principles of sovereignty and self-determination.

13.3. Human Rights and Neutral Advocacy Groups

Independent human rights bodies and human rights organizations have been vocal critics of PMCs, citing the moral and legal gap that surrounds their operations in conflict zones like MENA. They bring to light a plethora of reports of human rights abuses, impunity, and civilian suffering due to PMC operations. They call for robust international legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms against which to hold PMCs to account. Well-established organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have always called upon the states and the United Nations to close loopholes in the regulation, bring about greater transparency, and make sure that operations of the PMCs abide by international humanitarian law. These organizations would rather be watchdogs, documenting abuses and pushing for victims' causes.

14. Glossary of Key Terms

Private Military Company (PMC):

A Private Military Company, or PMC, is a self-governing business corporation that offers military services to national governments, international agencies, and substate groups. PMCs primarily specialize in combat and security units and are capable of performing missions from small-scale military training missions to dispatching combat detachments of tens of highly trained troops with heavy equipment including tanks and attack helicopters.

Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs):

Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) are profit-making companies offering a variety of services with war, security, and risk management. PMSCs include both security-based services and military-based services, which are much wider than PMCs alone.

PMSCs can provide services including: Armed combat, Military training, Logistics support, Close protection of valuable individuals or assets, Intelligence gathering, Surveillance, Risk assessment. PMSCs are typically deployed within a war zone, conducting operations typically the purview of state security forces or the military. PMSCs are umbrella terms for Private Military Companies (PMCs) doing combat and military support jobs, and Private Security Companies (PSCs) doing non-combat security jobs such as guarding embassies or escorting convoys.

Offensive Private Military and Security Companies (Offensive PMSCs):

Contracted private companies for carrying out active combat activities like direct fighting, target attacks, offensive strategic operations, or deadly activities. These actors corrode the classical state monopoly over violence and function in lawful twilight areas, which create concerns according to international humanitarian law. Offensive PMSCs are also most commonly linked with destabilizing interventions in armed conflicts and are most problematic due to their quasi-mercenary nature.

Defensive Private Military and Security Companies (Defensive PMSCs):

Firms offering defensive, non-combat security services like safeguarding individuals, buildings, and facilities. They are preventive, not combative. Defensive PMSCs are mostly known through international conventions (e.g., the Montreux Document) and commonly hired by states, NGOs, or private institutions to complete security gaps in unsafe environments.

Reactive Private Military and Security Companies (Reactive PMSCs):

PMSCs undertake missions against emergent threats, by way of rapid deployment, crisis response, or extraction missions. They use force, but it is extended as a defense response, not a preemption attack. Reactive PMSCs are at the border between offensive and defensive roles and thus are difficult to categorize legally and regulate.

Private Security Companies (PSCs):

A category of PMSC that operates solely in non-combatant services, i.e., guarding embassies, escorting convoys, safeguarding strategic infrastructure, surveillance and threat analysis. Although operating in hostile environments, PSCs are not involved in direct military combat. Their legal status is usually more defined, and they operate under civilian security regimes and risk reduction as opposed to combat.

Security

International security in international relations is safeguarding a nation's political sovereignty, territorial integrity, and citizens from foreign as well as domestic aggressions. For the MENA region, PMCs are generally sent on the understanding of delivering superior security but, in a few instances, end up disturbing long-standing peace and stability.

Post-Internationalism

Conceptual framework that articulates the disintegration of classical Westphalian state-hub predominance, where power is diffused across international institutions, corporations like PMCs, and non-state actors. A framework that helps us explain how PMCs breach sovereignty and state control principles.

Globalization

The increasing entwinement of states, economies, and actors within each other's territories. Transnational collaboration among PMCs within war theaters across the MENA region is facilitated and made possible by globalization to become involved and influence regional politics and security institutions beyond the control of states.

Non-State Actors

Organizations that conduct foreign affairs but are not sovereign states. PMCs are a type of non-state actors, who are often coordinated with other organizations such as armed militias, terror groups, and NGOs in the MENA.

Combat Support Services

Non-combatant military operations required to meet the mission. The most commonly contracted PMSC activities are transportation, logistics, communications, equipment maintenance, and intelligence analysis that produce dependencies and oversight issues in fragile states behind.

Security Sector Reform (SSR)

Means restructuring a country's security institutions for greater effectiveness, civilian oversight, and democratic accountability. PMSCs' contribution to the SSR process in the MENA region is questionable since it can substitute or cut out national capacity rather than transforming it.

Use of Force

The deployment of physical force, usually for security or military goals. Wherever PMCs employ force, it blurs state and non-state violence and is accompanied by implicit ethical, legal, and sovereignty implications, particularly under international humanitarian law (IHL).

Accountability Gap

Legal vacuum where PMCs operate, i.e., in conflict areas where the state is weakly controlled. Such a vacuum allows human rights abuses and violations to occur undetected since jurisdiction or enforcement agencies are weakly established.

Contractual Warfare

A form of modern warfare in which states hire out military and security activities to private contractors. In the MENA, it leads to power decentralization, and lasting peace and state legitimacy are harder to achieve.

Mercenarism vs. Privatized Security

Mercenarism is the employment of the war fighter for pay and without state loyalty and is prohibited in international law. PMSCs acquire legitimacy based on contracts, but the functional differentiation quickly gets into trouble, especially when it reaches direct involvement in hostilities or regime protection in weak MENA states.

Mercenary

A foreigner who fights in a war for private motives, rather than as a member of either the belligerent. Mercenaries have long been viewed as traitorous and unwanted, and are banned under the UN Mercenary Convention but others assume PMCs do something very much the same from time to time.

Condottiere (pl. Condottieri).

Early precursors to contemporary PMC leaders, they were mercenary captains of Renaissance-era Italian city-states. Loyalty, as with PMCs in the present, tended to be commodified in pursuit of profit, rather than a mission, with catastrophic and destabilizing consequences.

War Crime

Perverse contempt for humanitarian international law, i.e., civilian attacks, torture, and the employment of prohibited weapons. Rogue PMCs acting uncontrolled and directly taking part in combat operations are most likely to commit such war crimes with little justifications, particularly in MENA's ungoverned territories.

Plausible Deniability

States' deniability of disputed or illicit activities of PMCs. It denies responsibility and transparency and is at the core of SPECPOL concepts of sovereignty and international peacebuilding.

Proxy Conflict

Conflict in which external powers project influence by supporting third-party actors, i.e., militias or PMCs. The MENA is a hotspot of such conflicts that spread regional instability and complicate peace processes.

Sovereignty

Premise that the state has unlimited control over government and territory. PMCs erode sovereignty by denying the rightful state security duties.

Peacebuilding

Sustained peacebuilding in conflict-torn nations through institution-building, reconciliation, and conflict-avoidance. Unregulated PMC operations subverts these efforts by legitimizing violence, bestowing rewards upon elites, or manipulating local governance structures.

Human Rights Abuses

Abuses like extrajudicial killings, torture, and illegal detention. PMCs are guilty of these abuses in MENA theatres of conflict with little accountability through loopholes in the law and decayed oversight mechanisms.

Ceasefire

Intermittent cessation of hostilities commonly employed as a tactics of negotiations. PMCs have also acted as spoilers by ongoing operations outside state control, sabotaging weak peace processes in the region.

Accountability

The accountability dimension for the actions of institutions and individuals. Successful PMCs' accountability mechanisms need to be in place to hold international law and ethics.

Non-State Armed Actors

Militias and terrorist groups, and PMCs are military security power brokers but illegally outside the state's military. Militias and terrorist groups have competing mandates in the MENA and blend a mosaic security space.

Neo-Imperialism

By economic, political, and military means, i.e., PMCs, to exert pressure on the failing states, sometimes in the form of stabilization or aid. MENA missions by PMCs have been accused of mirroring the classic neo-colonial control models.

Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs)

Commercial firms providing military and security services for commercial use. They have overwhelmed the MENA region in significant numbers, and this has created controversy regarding legal status, chain of command, and compliance with international standards and UN principles.

Combat Operations

Participation in war. Wherever PMCs are involved in such an activity, they are *de facto* combatants, and their legal designation and accountability of those states who employ them become problematic.

Logistics

Manpower, machines, and control over resources. PMCs are employed to tackle logistics in war zones, which, though a requirement as it might be, also bestows on them the advantage of operations.

Terrorism & Piracy

Irregular threats against which PMCs can be employed to combat. Their operation, however, gets confused for police-like and military-like roles, causing overextension or unintended escalation.

Natural Resources

MENA oil, gas, and minerals will inevitably be the *causus belli*. PMCs are sometimes hired to guard resource facilities, getting them involved in neo-colonial business and commercial activity.

15. Questions to be Addressed

- In regions already devastated by war, how can the United Nations ensure that the involvement of Private Military Companies (PMCs) respects the sovereignty of affected states and doesn't violate the core UN principles of non-interference?
- How do PMCs and historically dominant (or colonizing) states risk undermining the UN's efforts to build lasting peace in the MENA region? And more importantly, how can their actions be monitored without harming the fragile hopes for long-term peace and reconciliation in these communities
- To what extent are contracting states responsible for actions by PMCs if international human rights or international humanitarian law is misused or violated?
- In how far can the UN create or strengthen international legal institutions in an attempt to fill the gap of accountability through transnationality of PMCs in failed or weak states?
- As political polarization is hastened through increased privatization of security and fragments legitimate institutions of governance in MENA nations, what can member states and the UN do to stem this tide?
- How can the UN's current peace missions and current regional coalitions be bolstered to minimize PMC dependency and establish the groundwork for a shift towards security sector reform and post-conflict stabilisation?
- How do the operations of PMCs enhance or disrupt Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) in conflict states of the MENA region?

- Would the UN recommend an international binding treaty that would govern PMCs, and what would their enforcement and compliance regime, particularly in areas of conflict like MENA, have to be determined?

16. Further Research Links

[Ch_XVIII_6p.pdf](#)

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