



The Issue of Regulating Private Military and Security Companies

Firstly, it is important to understand what a PMSC is. According to the European University institute:

Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) usually provide specialized expertise or services of a military or police nature, particularly high-tech intelligence, military training and support as well as surveillance and protection to strategic installations, high-ranking officials and economic plants of special importance. They are either hired by governments to supplement regular military forces or employed by private corporations and firms. PMSCs' activity can take place both in peacetime (usually providing police and security services) and in time of war, frequently involving recourse to armed force through the performance of typical conflict operations.

It is evident that PMSC operations might affect human rights, given that they most likely involve armed conflicts or other situations of emergency. PMSCs have unfortunately been associated in some cases, with the abuse of authority and an excessive use of force by some security personnel, due to generally low professional standards, inadequate legal accountability mechanisms and noncompliance with the law. Indeed, a UN report of 2017, concluded that “outsourcing creates great risks of human rights abuses, including impediments to accountability and remedy for victims.”

The issue lies with finding a way to regulate private military and security companies, globally, such that they can be accountable for human rights violations. A particularly prominent example is that of PMSCs being deployed to help manage migration at national borders, where many human rights abuses are reported. Sadly, these often go under the radar, undetected. Several powers within the UN, as well as other organisations such as the EU, have called for more objective international legislation regarding the matter, in order to produce a conclusive framework, according to which PMSCs can be held accountable for their actions.

In considering this issue, it is important to think about your country's stance on the outsourcing of security. Many would argue that employing PMSCs is an effective method of ensuring security under certain circumstances, so their benefits certainly shouldn't be discounted. The ideal, would be to find a way of successfully regulating these companies so that they can complete their roles successfully, without abusing power.

Points to consider

- Can PMSCs be a force for good within your country and the world more generally?
- If so, how can we regulate these private militia to prevent human rights abuses?
- Consider researching particular case studies to support your arguments
- How can PMSCs be held more accountable?
- What minimum standards should be maintained in PMSCs, for example regarding who is employed, and how they are trained?



Useful Links

- <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/08/02/the-invisible-army-explaining-private-military-and-security-companies/>
- <https://www.ohchr.org/en/Issues/Mercenaries/WGMercenaries/Pages/Callroleprivatemilitary.aspx>
- <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Mercenaries/WG/MercenarismandPrivateMilitarySecurityCompanies.pdf>
- <https://www.amnestyusa.org/themes/military-police-arms/private-military-security-companies/>