

# ENGAGEMENT OF EXECUTIVE OUTCOMES IN SIERRA LEONE – UTILITY ASSESSMENT

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## Abstract

*OBJECTIVES: The article explores combat related Private Military Companies (PMCs) that are authorised to engage in the forefront of the battlefield as dedicated force multipliers. Furthermore, the article participates both in academic and political debate as to whether the utility of Private Military Companies advocates for PMC participation in armed conflict management.*

*METHODS: To supplement empirical data with qualitative observation, the methodology applies the case study synthesis and observation method. Considering assistance in conflict termination as a dependent variable, the methodology evaluates the case study of Executive Outcomes in Sierra Leone and, to impose a streamlined framework for observation, deconstructs that case with seven independent variables: competence, effectiveness, flexibility, field cooperation with conventional forces, cost efficiency, impact on military and the state-to-PMC balance.*

*RESULTS: The applied methodology indicates what factors were prevalent in effective conflict management and what indicators entailed further challenges. The results advocate for the competence, flexibility, effectiveness and cooperation with armed forces to be deemed conclusive in positive PMC engagement in conflict termination, whereas the cost efficiency, impact on conventional military and the state-to-PMC balance require improvement.*

*CONCLUSIONS: Since governments, as well as governmental international organisations, have continued to be hesitant (justified either by financial, geopolitical or social incentives) towards overseas military operations in those places and where asymmetric warfare is taking place, PMCs stepped in to fill the increasing security void. Therefore, this paper argues that PMCs are here to stay; however, the*

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*literature hasn't rigorously (and methodologically) explored the subject matter to determine whether indicators of success and failure exist to evaluate the PMC outcome. This paper also precipitates natural outgrowth in the scholarship by composing the benchmark that compares cases and synthesises relevant data.*

**Keywords:** Private Military Companies, PMCs, Executive Outcomes, Armed Contractors

## **Introduction**

On 31st March 2004, U.S. public opinion was exposed to gruesome coverage by American news broadcasters that revealed the deaths of those who had been deployed in Iraq to overcome an increasing demand for security forces engaged in the Global War on Terror. The fallen, however, were not conventional general-purpose forces, but private security operators contracted by Blackwater (Bennet 2007, p. 15) – the same company that repulsed a militia assault on the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) headquarters in Najaf (Priest 2004, p. 24). Those who oppose private security provision within an area of conflict would call them guns for hire in the old-fashioned way. Nevertheless, both definition and practice distinguish mercenaries from Private Military Companies (PMC). Theatres of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq that followed the U.S. retaliation for the 2001 World Trade Center attacks have highlighted a persistent increase of legitimate, non-governmental, multinational commercial enterprises authorised to utilise violent force by military means. Among the PMCs, Blackwater's unprecedented presence in Iraq included only 20,000 private security personnel who supplemented the thin and overstretched Multi-National Force Iraq, whereas approximately 180,000 multi-purpose contractors (Miller 2007, p. 15), employed both by governmental agencies and corporate entities, filled the gap between the ambitions and capabilities of the Iraqi restoration process.

However, outsourced military operations had already been ignited in the early 90s, when former members of the South-African 32<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, once a spearhead enforcer of the Republic of South Africa's apartheid regime, established a pioneering, blueprint Private Military Company – Executive Outcomes (EO). Simultaneously, EO reflects this article's working conclusion, where governments, driven by armed conflicts, are incapable of opposing hostilities due to the limited effectiveness of their military manpower and, therefore, extend their force by reliance on PMCs that provide

experienced personnel capable of providing a supplementary contribution to force multiplication (Shearer 1998, p. 71). Armed contractors proved they were able to operate as a quick reaction force that sustains casualties and augments local militaries. Finally, PMCs operated in contradictory fashion to the multilateral peace operation as they sought to cease hostilities by dropping the rule of impartiality and winning the war for their client government (Isenberg 1997, p. 17). Additionally, this paper tackles combat related PMCs that are authorised to operate in the forefront of the battlefield as specialist force multipliers that either solely suppress the enemy with dedicated military tactics (Kinsey 2006, p. 13), or specialise in security provision and strategic advice (Shearer 1998, p. 23). Although combat PMCs proved successful in achieving narrow military mandates in armed conflicts, the paper doesn't perceive those corporate military entities as a unitary solution to settle an armed conflict. Instead, the analysis explores the complementary PMC attributes that augment governmental involvement in containing an armed conflict. Therefore, this paper argues that several indicators are conclusive to successful PMC involvement: competence, efficiency, flexibility and field cooperation with armed forces. Conversely, indicators that appeared inconclusive included cost efficiency, impact on the client-government conventional forces and the state-to-PMC balance.

## **Objective, methodology and theory**

The endorsement for using Private Military Companies as a desirable option for managing armed conflicts extends this article's purpose, since the paper explores the question to what extent Private Military Companies are capable of tackling an armed conflict and what indicators and limitations of such operations are required to succeed.

To determine whether armed contractors are indispensable in conflict management, the study applies the case-study method and deconstructs the Executive Outcomes operation in Sierra Leone with seven variables: competence, effectiveness, flexibility, field cooperation with conventional forces, cost efficiency, impact on the military and political control over contractors. Those indicators provide observation criteria and a comparative benchmark that evaluate what factors are deemed conclusive about the eventual outcome of the outsourced military operation. The purpose of such method is to supplement limited empirical data with qualitative observation. Furthermore, the

paper applied case-study criteria that limited case selection to security-related PMCs which, on the government's behalf, are either authorised by their clients to engage directly in combat or indirectly support warfighting with protection services and military advisory. Additionally, the examined PMCs are required to operate in those post-Cold War environments where active fighting is taking place. Therefore, the paper rejected such cases as the 1995 contract (entitled the Military Stabilisation Programme) with Military Professional Resources Inc. (MPRI) to reorganise and professionalise the Army of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in accordance with the Dayton-implemented Train and Equip Programme, because the contract was settled in the post-conflict environment (Silverstein 2000, p. 173). Furthermore, the paper rejected the 1997 contract with Defense Systems Limited (DSL) to secure the Ocesa offshore oil rigs in Colombia (Davis 2002, p. 106). Although the oil infrastructure was a military target for left-wing guerilla fighters and DSL instructed Columbian conventional forces in counterinsurgency tactics, the PMC was contracted by a private agent – British Petroleum (Gillard, Gomez and Jones 2014).

The paper relies on theoretical key assumptions that determine the prudence and agent-centred perception in the decision-making process. Firstly, PMCs are self-interested and rational business ventures, which permit the maximising of profits. Secondly, the prolonged existence of security threats dwells within the interests of companies that specialise in security-related services. Whether the government contracts PMCs to lethally contain the conflict or instruct the conventional forces to offset rebel incursions, the prolonged tensions primarily hold companies in business. The opportunity structure environment determines the PMC's behavior that might either deliberately exacerbate the conflict or enforce the cessation of hostilities (Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski 2013). Additionally, Hal Varian argues that the multiplicity of PMCs ready to operate in a conflict zone means greater security for the client government, since competing PMCs make a single agent significantly limited in justifying lacklustre results (Varian, 1990). In addition, this paper applied the rational choice theory as it sought the prudence behind incentives to contract PMCs. With regard to Hans Morgenthau (Morgenthau, 1978), one can't attach the moral aspirations of the governments to the laws that rule the universe, since agents rather favour their survival and individual interest above morality. Furthermore, Robert Jervis emphasises that agents subjectively determine their interests, since socially structured perception produces multiple interpretations of the same political and military decision (Jervis 1976). For instance, the U.S. referred to the strategy of tribal awakening during Operation Iraqi Freedom that aimed to isolate

al-Qaeda by building local alliances with indigenous forces before the politicians in Baghdad could work out a national reconciliation plan. Military cooperation with the Sunni tribes in Anbar province significantly reduced the violence and American soldier death rate. However, while the U.S. Army reduced their military allocation and achieved a better insight into the local environment, the Shia leaders argued that the tribal awakening would organise forces which might ultimately turn against the Iraqi government. Finally, while governments are the indispensable matter for the research, the methodology takes a bottom-up approach, where rational and prudent individuals (groups of interests) articulate conflicting preferences and attempt to reshape those preferences into the state policy (Moravcsik 1990).

Applied methodology, theory and subsequent deconstruction of the Executive Outcomes' case in Sierra Leone determines the hypothesis where Private Military Companies appear supportive in armed conflict resolution, considering they are competent, flexible, effective and cooperative with conventional armed forces, whereas cost-efficiency and interaction with the state remain inconclusive.

## **General indicators determining significance of Private Military Companies as force multipliers**

Among many, this paper recognises 4 incentives for governments to contract the PMC when it comes to managing an armed conflict – the downsizing of standing military manpower, insufficiently trained and equipped militaries, negative public opinion towards casualties among soldiers and the high level of the PMC competence. As part of downsizing, while the annihilative threat of the two confronting ideologies of the Cold War began to fade away, the main protagonists enjoyed an exceptional opportunity to reduce their military preparedness by 6 million professional soldiers between 1987 and 1996 (Bonn International Centre for Conversion 1998, p. 39). From the late 1980s until 2004, military spending was reduced by 30% and the procurement of military supplies was reduced significantly by 40%. The US defence budget was reduced by about 28% in real terms between the peacetime peak in the 1980s and late 1990s. Moreover, in light of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the 1991 U.S. Defense Authorization Act determined the Department of Defense to reduce the U.S. military strength from 780.000 active duty manpower to 380.000 by 1995. The balance of military structure

was maintained by reductions in every rank, including personnel not yet vested in the military retirement system (Warner and Pleeter 2001, p. 34). While the 9/11 attacks pushed the U.S. military into an increased operational tempo, the Department of Defense intended to overcome the personal shortages by introducing Private Military Companies in the federal core and non-core functions. The latter was directly linked to the warfighting and exclusively performed by the governmental forces, whereas the combat support and operational sustainment (housing or utility services for military installations) defined mechanisms for partnerships with private firms (United States of America Department of Defense 2001). In other words, in comparison to 10 overseas military deployments during the events of the Cold War, the U.S. Army only entered theatres of operations on 36 occasions between 1990 and 2000. The aftermath of the Operation Iraqi Freedom alone was believed to require a sustainable force between 300.000 to even 500.000 U.S. soldiers, while almost 50% of the active-duty troops had already been ordered to overseas missions (Crock and Armistead 2003). In order to demonstrate such intense strains on troops required to successfully accomplish the 2004 post-Saddam stabilisation effort, Michael O'Hanlon reports that among the 480.000 active duty U.S. Army soldiers, roughly 150.000 units were deployed throughout Iraq, approximately 10.000 men stationed in Afghanistan and over 25.000 were ordered to Korea. In 2004, the approximate strength of the U.S. Army in overseas missions reached 200.000, while 320.000 in total were easily deployable at any given time. Nevertheless, when the unexpected wave of violence was unleashed in Iraq in the wake of spring 2004, the U.S. foreign coalition partners were reserved in increasing their contribution of 25.000 troops, while the stabilisation mission required another 80.000 U.S. ground forces to cope with the hostilities. However, the conclusions of the Congressional Budget Office claimed that recruitment and development of additional two divisions (with associated support) would take 5 years and bring an annual cost of \$6.5 billion (with additional investment cost of \$20 billion).

The downsizing of military manpower had a peculiar impact on African states. Since the Cold War, superpower rivalry had become history, and soldiers of the apartheid military, the SADF, marked themselves as defenders of African security in the 1990s. Such irony, however, arouses out of South Africa's charred political and military landscape. When the Brazzaville Accords prevented South Africa from involvement in Angola and Namibia in 1988, both the 32nd Battalion (a special light infantry battalion primarily made up of black Angolans to hunt down the *Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola*) and the Koevoet (a major paramilitary combat force composed mostly of Ovambo people and

initially created for internal reconnaissance in South-West Africa) were disbanded by 1993. As apartheid was abandoned in 1994, the 82,705 strong South African Defence Force underwent a parallel transition. Although the South African military integrated its former belligerents – the Azanian People’s Liberation Army (APLA) and *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation), the newly formed South African National Defence Force with manpower of 74,709 was thinner than its predecessor in 2004. Simultaneously, genuine SADF soldiers made up 37,233 portion of that force (Mashike 2007, p. 606–611). Consequently, many of those veterans were marked by their exceptional experience in combat, but not effective social integration in the sense of restoring them to their communities that s involved access to employment, anti-marginalisation programmes and supportive social networks. Therefore, a number of South African ex-combatants regrouped within corporate armies and commercially took care of the security in those African fragile states, where militaries couldn’t handle asymmetric warfare throughout the 1990s.

Back to the past, the bedrock on which the reputation of security contractors’ professionalism was built, came from the vicious two-month battle for the Soyo oil installation in Angola’s far north between UNITA’s forces and Executive Outcomes backed by two EO trained Angolan battalions. Although South African private military strength was limited – the EO never had extended its contingent of 500 contractors and was outnumbered when compared to the Angolan Armed Forces with roughly 100,000 soldiers enlisted – it was still perceived as critical in securing the ceasefire and subsequent peace agreement in Lusaka (The Stationery Office 2002, p. 11). Such reason is defined by the majority of security contractors that are not merely ex-military, but also veterans of elite forces regiments, usually associated in close interaction networks of the special forces’ community. For instance, veterans of the Navy SEAL that graduated from rigorous training with a reputation as one of the toughest in the world, and a 2.5-year pre-deployment training in all environments (sea, air and land, including climate extremes), were among the most sought-after contractors with a paycheck greater than \$100,000 per year (Stetz 2004). Furthermore, the Navy SEALs that numbered 2,300 active duty members in 2004 were a small community that made the vetting process and evaluation of credentials more reliable. The contractors are usually deployed in their 40s, which means they bring a lifetime of combat experience, higher immunity to heavy stress conditions and a level of trust among young soldiers recently graduated from their training. In contrast to the conventional army, contractors operate in a less isolated environment and have wider opportunities to establish relationships

with members of local communities, which gives more insight to the intimate array of threats that affect the area (Isenberg 2004, p. 24).

When it comes to sustaining casualties, the Vietnam War was the first where disturbing media images revealed drug abuse on the battlefield, discipline disorder and the U.S. soldiers being heavily pinned down by the Viet Cong. The media's highly negative coverage of the 1968 Tet offensive entailed heated discussion as to whether the U.S. military lost the fight in Vietnam or whether the American news agencies had given up on the war at home. When the broadcasters revealed the battles on the grounds of the U.S. Embassy in the heart of Saigon and reported on casualties, the American public could not sustain further support for the images they saw. Even though the *Tan son Nhut* air base saw far larger assaults during the Tet offensive, the minor, but symbolic strike on the embassy and its accessibility to journalists dominated the coverage. The importance of media as a conduit to public opinion would later be acknowledged in the scholarship as the CNN effect or, taking this paper's account, the body bags effect (Belknap 2001). The body bags effect assumes a correlation between mounting casualties among deployed soldiers and declining public support for their presence on the battlefield (Freedman 2000, p. 337).

Among more recent cases, the most brawling body bags effect and, simultaneously, the pinpoint of the debate as to whether the state militaries should intervene to fight the humanitarian crisis, unearthed alongside the U.S. operation to seize Mohamed Farrah Aidid's high-echelon advisers in Mogadishu on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1993. Although the aftermath of the Battle for Mogadishu claimed the lives of 18 U.S. soldiers and took down 2 Black Hawk helicopters, the disturbing images of dead American soldiers being dragged by an angry mob through the streets of Mogadishu were too graphic for public opinion to endure, and, subsequently, brought the 2:1 poll ratio of those pressuring for U.S. withdrawal from Somalia (Burk 1999, p. 69). Today, public outcry behind the body bags effect might determine the agenda of imminent threats to state interests (but not survival) such as Operation Iraqi Freedom or overseas contingencies, such as Bosnia, that might indirectly affect state security, but not directly threaten its interest. Initially, escalation of the violence in Somalia pushed it into the media spotlight and fired public opinion towards an incentive to intervene, but the Mogadishu aftermath instigated great reluctance to accept casualties and interfered with reinforcement of the UN peacekeeping force in Rwanda (Nye 1999, p. 12–15).



The literature suggested that public opinion might accept the increased rate of casualties if the strategic policy had state interests at stake. After 9/11, the Americans revisited the Gulf and suffered losses, but the threat of WMDs, allegedly possessed by Saddam Hussein, reciprocated with the impulse to eliminate a terrorist-friendly government. However, when Iraq was cleared of dictatorship and the irregular warfare intensified, the body bags effect pushed Iraqi Freedom to another level of difficulty. With regard to a Wall Street Journal Poll, the initial widespread acclaim of the U.S. military intervention in Iraq was reflected by 76% of respondents. Although that support gradually decreased by 13% by November (the bloodiest month with th 82 U.S. soldiers dying), the capture of Saddam Hussein on 13th December spurred some optimism and increased the poll to 69% satisfied. Unfortunately, the spring of 2004 brought escalated fighting that claimed 268 U.S. soldiers' lives between March and June (in comparison, 175 were killed in action before the 2003 Mission Accomplished speech given by George W. Bush on the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln). Hence, those who advocated for the intervention dropped to 56% in June 2004 and the poll of respondents in opposition to the military action increased by 10% after January 2004.

With accumulated reluctance to tolerate casualties, the private military contractors might lower the political cost of conducting war and bypass fragile public opinion. Unlike regular forces, private personnel are not enlisted in active military service, so their losses remain unnoticed by the media and yearning for the fallen doesn't extend the threshold of the family home. For instance, according to the New York Times (mostly based on Labour Department data), the total number of casualties among contractors in Iraq reached at least 917 in May 2007, with more than 12.000 wounded on duty. When casualties among the U.S. conventional forces mounted to 3.400 dead in the same period, such statistics suggest that for every U.S. soldier who died in Iraq, one contractor was killed. That data, however, only partially reflects the scale of killed PMCs, since neither the U.S. government is required to track deaths of private military personnel and nor are the companies themselves responsive to questions regarding victims. Although the U.S. Labour Department is capable of estimating deaths among contractors, its calculations come solely from processed insurance casualty claims (Broder and Risen 2007). Consequently, the military benefits from the PMC shadow force, since limited awareness of the private personnel losses doesn't interfere with public perception and its evaluation of war.

## Detailed case study analysis: Executive Outcomes in Sierra Leone

Proclaimed independent in 1961 and endowed with fabulous diamond resources that generated \$200 million in profit for the state economy by 1968 (Reno 1998, p. 116), Sierra Leone was the paradigm of bureaucratic kleptocracy that bought the loyalty of eighteen different ethnic groups (Migdal 1988, p. 129) to Siaka Stevens' regime and dwindled the GNP to a mere \$965 million (one of the lowest in Africa) in 1985. Extremely expensive patronage had not only crippled legal governmental diamond export revenue to a paltry pf \$100.000 in 1985, but also devastated the human development index by reducing expenditure on education from 15.6% to 6.6% (Abdullah 1997, p. 211). When a former corporal of the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF), Foday Sankoh, crossed the border from Liberia in March 1991 under the rebel flag of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to overthrow Siaka's successor, Joseph Momoh, Sierra Leone was additionally abandoned by the most fertile foreign corporations – Sierra Rutile (a US-Australian Rutile producer) and SIEROMOCO (a Swiss bauxite mining firm) that together generated 57% of export earnings in 1994 (Reno 1997, p. 180). Although RSLMF captain, Valentine Strasser, forcibly took the presidential office in May 1992 to save the regime from defeat, the government's capability to resist the RUF was undermined by its very corrupt nature. When Strasser battled prevailing RUF forces just outside Freetown in April 1995, Executive Outcomes entered the country the next month and saved the day.

### Competence

Executive Outcomes offered Sierra Leone a competent military solution for the type of insurgency that Strasser faced, in much the way that EO approached the same fighting in its parallel operation in Angola and redeployed most of its personnel directly from Luanda. Akin to Angola, Executive Outcomes focused on air-ground assaults and brought a Soviet Mi-17-armed transport helicopter (with medics onboard), and Mi-24 gunships operated by Ukrainians from another PMC – Ibis Air (Venter 1995, p. 65). With additional deployment of two BMP-1 armored carriers, EO solely handled logistics for the assignments in which the PMC participated (Douglas 2008, p. 182).

Executive Outcomes recognised Sierra Leone's low-intense conflict with all the tactics of roadside ambushes and quick withdrawals, and consequently either sought to confront the RUF in air-supported stand-up battles that the rebels were loath to encounter, or engaged helicopter-borne assault troops in constant pursuit until annihilation of the hostile group was possible (Singer 2007, p. 113). Moreover, the PMC emphasised the intelligence that the EO personnel gathered from two prime sources. The first one was the countryside's civilian population, which suffered severe atrocities from the RUF and informed on enemy maneuvers to Executive Outcomes who were perceived as saviours. Another source was found among the local tribal militias – Kamajors (*Kamajoista*, which means the hunter in local Mende dialect), who had vast knowledge of the jungle and a substantial incentive to fight the RUF (Abdullah 1998, p. 185). Consequently, the network of experienced military professionals that Executive Outcomes capitalised on to meet the contract, heralded the modern PMC competence.

## Efficiency

Although Executive Outcomes deployed 160 contractors against 15,000 Revolutionary United Front militias, the EO tackled the counterinsurgency operation by storm. Ironically enough, the head of the beleaguered National Provisional Ruling Council, Valentine Strasser, offered Executive Outcomes three interconnected security contracts following the recommendation of Anthony Buckingham, whose ubiquitous Branch-Heritage had sights on the Sewa River's alluvial diamonds and the Koidu kimberlite pipes (Vines 1999, p. 53). The original plan assumed three months to win the battle. However, within just 10 days in May 1995, Executive Outcomes, primarily through the coordinated strikes of the Mi-24 helicopter gunship and the EO 30 personnel infantry force, had lifted the siege of Freetown and forced the inexperienced (often marijuana-dazed) RUF rebels to withdraw 126 kilometres into the jungle interior. Another phase was to remove the RUF rebels from the alluvial diamond area around Koindu in June 1995, which was accomplished within a few days. The diamond fields in the Kono district that were the critical source of the EO payment, were subsequently cleared in two days. Finally, Executive Outcomes assisted Sierra Rutile and Sieromco in recommencing extraction in the southern coastal rutile and bauxite mines by January 1996. The final objective was to destroy the RUF headquarters that were spotted roughly eighty kilometres east of Freetown and eventually destroyed by the EO in

December 1995 (Douglas 1999, p. 182). A cohesive EO task force with coordinated intelligence and air-ground assaults pushed the RUF to the border regions and facilitated a ceasefire in February 1996, which allowed the new Sierra Leone government of Julius Bio (who seized power in the coup against Strasser) to conduct a presidential election. Although Sankoh withdrew from the peace agreement in October 1996, Executive Outcomes counteroffensive brought another demise to the RUF headquarters in the south-east and forced the Front to sign the Abidjan Peace Accord on 30th November. Consequently, the PMC is perceived as effective in contract accomplishment.

## **Flexibility**

Executive Outcomes demonstrated great tactical flexibility in Sierra Leone. The EO overcame the RSLMF's fairly non-existent military capabilities and poor Sierra Leone infrastructure with long-range aerial reconnaissance and interpretation operations. When the RUF was visually identified, the EO conducted air-ground strikes from the Hind-Ds and heavy mortar fire, whereas the airborne assault units dealt the final blow. Using these tactics that additionally inflicted psychological fear, Executive Outcomes pushed the RUF from Freetown with 2 contractors killed in action, while 200 rebels had been dispatched and more than 1000 deserted. As Strasser's authority was limited to Freetown, the EO had to organise the supply, communication and logistics network, and to establish an intelligence service from scratch (Venter 1995, p. 74). Furthermore, Executive Outcomes was officially assigned as the force multiplier to the RSLMF, which hardly resembled an army. Despite the economic mess engulfing Sierra Leone, Joseph Momoh encouraged the army to expand from a crumbling 3,000 to 6,150, but the poorly designed conscription consisted of drug addicts, thieves and large masses of the countryside's unemployed (Ero 2003, p. 238). Hence, the EO recognised the Kamajors, who were determined enough to protect their families from the RUF and RSLMF, and whose cohesion and terrain knowledge were instrumental in retaking the Kono area. Finally, the PMC appeared flexible with the financially strapped Strasser regime and issued credit to the government by securing 50% of the tax revenues from the Sierra Rutile mine once it recommenced extraction (Avant 2005, p. 88). Therefore, this paper considers that the PMC can operate flexibly and is dependent on current tactical requirements.

## **Interaction with conventional army**

Although Executive Outcomes conducted an effective counterinsurgency in Sierra Leone, the EO cooperation with the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force was limited. The RSLMF had remained highly factionalised, which consequently eradicated the last remnants of cohesion in the conventional forces. Additionally, Strasser further expanded the army to 14.000, but the process enlisted street thugs, homeless and illiterate youths that were literally paid in AK-47s and, similarly to the RUF, pillaged civilians to compensate for lack of budget. The RSLMF also remained antagonistic to the EO, whose victories in the diamond fields were perceived as a diminished opportunity for diamond theft. Hence, the EO operated outside the military chain of command in Sierra Leone and rendered the intelligence data and access to EO Operations Room off-limits to the majority of Sierra Leone's officers. 150 governmental soldiers were still instructed by the EO in counterinsurgency and demonstrated combat effectiveness, but the RSLMF was afraid of the new elite force among its ranks and refused more trainees (Howe 2004, p. 192). That relationship forced the EO to cooperate with the Kamajors, who were maneuvering almost invisibly in Sierra Leone's southeast and simultaneously countered both the RUF that looted the countryside and the RSLMF rebels that abused the areas surrounding its bases (Abdullah 2004, p. 168). The Kamajors were supplied by the EO with weapons and counterinsurgency tactics, which augmented Executive Outcomes to the extent that the esteemed hunters became a significant regional defence force. Although the PMC had almost non-existent cooperation with the conventional forces, the contract was still accomplished successfully. Therefore, the issue related to interaction with governmental military remains inconclusive.

## **Cost-efficiency**

When Executive Outcomes withdrew from Sierra Leone according to the terms of the Abidjan Peace Accords, the PMC had received \$15.7 million out of a total contracted value between \$35 million and \$60 million. Whatever substance there might have been to objections against Executive Outcomes presence in the country, its military operations were extremely cost effective when compared to Sierra Leone's \$115 million diamond export to Antwerp in 1997 (Smillie, Gberie and Hazleton 2000, p. 31),

or the annual \$607 million cost of the United Nations Mission in Angola (McGhie 2002). Additionally, Sierra Leone enjoyed Executive Outcomes presence regardless of non-existent financial assets, as the EO agreed on \$13.5 million debt until December 1995 and subsequent \$2 million monthly payments. Furthermore, there was another secret protocol, which incurred a further potential bill for \$5 million and deployed an additional 200 EO contractors to increase the stability during the February 1996 elections (Douglas 2008, p. 187). Akin to Angola, however, Branch-Heritage relied for its security on the PMC and had resources to fund Executive Outcomes, while the governmental payments were delayed. Nevertheless, this paper doesn't take the cost indicator into decisive account, since the question of the cost of the state's survival extends objective evaluation and causes rather normative debate.

### **Impact on conventional army**

Although Executive Outcomes brought stability to Sierra Leone, its presence further factionalised the RSLMF – even though the mutual antagonism between the state militaries and the government had been the hallmark of Sierra Leone's administration since Siaka Stevens regime. As the RUF operations progressed, the RSLMF – bloated, ill-trained, underpaid and conscripted in panic – behaved rather like bandits and became another Sierra Leone disease. Additionally, the RSLMF collusions with the RUF abounded and the army fought against itself for a share of the alluvial diamond fields. As soldiers killed their senior officers, Strasser's authority was artificial and civilians had no safe zones, the civil war turned into civil chaos (Rubin 1997, p. 47). Consequently, Executive Outcomes relied significantly on the Kamajors – the eyes and the weapons of the EO - by strengthening and legitimising the new military institution, the Civil Defence Force of Sierra Leone, beholden to local rather than national authority. That cooperation made the RSLMF suspicious of increasing Kamajor recognition, however, and even pushed the army to disrupt the February elections (Avant, 2005, p. 88 – 89). Although Executive Outcomes witnessed Strasser deputy Julius Bio's coup (it was later revealed that Bio's sister, Maada, was in the RUF high command) just before the elections, the bloody events appeared after the EO departure, when the RSLMF renegade soldiers led by Commander Johnny Paul Koroma assaulted the Kabbah government in May 1997 (Mill and Sremlau 1999, p. 53) and brought cruelty back to Sierra Leone. The force that replaced Executive Outcomes consisted of 900 Nigerians from The Economic

Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and quickly withdrew back to its camps, whereas the U.N. officials and surviving governmental officials (with Kabbah) sought asylum in the offices of the EO-surrogate Lifeguard company that stayed behind to protect extraction assets. Nevertheless, this paper doesn't argue that Private Military Companies and their impact on the conventional forces is conclusive to conflict management, since the contract was to eliminate military threats to the state's internal security, while the condition of the governmental military and its relation to peace building echoes the reconciliation and peace-building processes.

### **Political control over a Private Military Company**

The government of Sierra Leone might have contended whether Executive Outcomes, given the PMC profit-driven ethos and financially strapped regime, would have withdrawn from combat and undermined the offensive against the RUF. Although Executive Outcomes carried a broken Sierra Leone's budget on its financial shoulders between May and November 1995 and threatened Valentine Strasser's departure, the PMC maintained its loyalty to the government after the coup and February elections – even though the new President Kabbah didn't learn of the contract with the EO until April. Furthermore, the PMC maintained stability in Sierra Leone even though Ahmed Tejan Kabbah incurred \$300.000 per month in arrears and gradually reduced the payments to \$700.000. By December 1996, Executive Outcomes intelligence sources had forestalled two coup attempts and warned president Kabbah that their premature departure in January 1997 might result in another coup in less than 100 days. Eventually, the government was overthrown on 12 May, but the contractors, then under Lifeguard, only secured Strategic Resources Corporation's assets. The scholarship argues, however, that Executive Outcomes became a political player on behalf of the SRC, which financially covered the PMC operations and the fighting intersected with commercial interests rather than national security (Francis 1999, p. 333). Although securing the Kono diamond fields' pipes coalesced with Branch-Heritage's interests, it's still an overstatement that the EO/SRC imposed particular decisions on Sierra Leone's administration, since the corporations were balanced by the International Monetary Fund that rejected Branch-Heritage's request to obtain petroleum assets and maritime surveillance through a noncompetent bidding process (Howe 2004, p. 207). Furthermore, the literature tends to highlight the lack of transparency, but doesn't

correlate such drawbacks with the outcomes in conflict management. Executive Outcomes and their intimate interactions with extraction corporations and the government stood behind the reason to intervene and maintain the presence in Sierra Leone; however, such balance can't be concluded as decisive in effective conflict management.

## **Conclusions**

The question of whether PMCs should engage in peace enforcement has remained controversial and that discourse is likely to persist. The mistrust, engrained either by the academia or journalists, echoes the belief that contractors create lethal encounters which significantly contradicts the U.N. defensively oriented operations intended to peacefully achieve a negotiated agreement. While Executive Outcomes were proceeding with the contract in Angola, the EO chief of staff – Chris Grove – pre-designed a military operation to fight the 1994 Rwandan crisis (Ronayne 2001, p. 179–180), but Kofi Annan, then the U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, concluded that the world was not ready to privatise peace on the international community's behalf. Yet the paper indicates that PMCs are valuable in conflict termination.

The competence indicator reflects effective assistance in conflict management and assumes additionally that the majority of PMCs will maintain that competency level in order to compete for future contracts, whereas client governments will increasingly seek PMC assistance in further soldier procurement. With regard to Executive Outcomes, private military contractors originated from the dissolution of the SADF, which, consequently, provided EO with unprecedented access to the special operations personnel experienced in counterinsurgency tactics and acquainted with the African tactical environment. Moreover, Executive Outcomes, usually perceived as an old-school combat company, utilised airborne operations to bypass the substandard road structure and conduct targeted strikes against RUF concentrations. Furthermore, the indicator of effectiveness appears to correlate with successful contract accomplishment – only if perceived within the frames of an outcome achieved by military contractors, who effectively utilised their skills to execute contracted mission tasks. That concluded, the paper rejects those cases where the contract is accomplished more by accidental circumstances than conscious maneuvers. Furthermore, Executive Outcomes appeared to be a successful venture in a time before streamlined academic and political discourse on



the use of privatised military occurred. When contracted in April 1995 to dispatch RUF forces, the approximate 160 personnel converged on the operational area to the point that eventually brought adversaries to consent to a ceasefire in February 1996. The factor of versatility remains no less influential. Executive Outcomes proved extremely versatile, since the company recognised the post-modern guerilla warfighting to counterstrike the asymmetrical hit-and-run tactics, incorporated aerial night strikes and capitalised on the indigenous population to gather intelligence. The assessment of the cost effectiveness remains equivocal and subsequently makes the indicator inconclusive. This paper asks whether the state's survival should be financially calculated and takes into consideration both the costs of outsourced operations and the costs of sustaining conventional forces. Executive Outcomes operated in the past-inflated market and augmented the state with vast natural resources. On Sierra Leone's territory, extraction corporations demanded a stable economic environment - with either the international community or the private military industry cooperation, whereas the government lacked the capabilities to contain the conflict by itself. Although Executive Outcomes were criticised for utilising predatory capitalism and neo-colonial trends in resource-rich countries, the contract cost only a slither of the revenue that Sierra Leone could achieve from the annual export of diamonds. The extent of PMC cooperation with the conventional military does affect the outcome of outsourced operations, since the governmental legitimacy in executing its authority is shaped by all the representatives operating on its behalf. In Sierra Leone, the governmental military forces, substantially disorganised in the wake of the conflict, couldn't capitalise on Executive Outcomes military training to reestablish the structure and conduct joint-operations with the PMC. Furthermore, the EO reliance on the Kamajors contributed to intensified intra-state factionalism and kindled another conflict in Sierra Leone after Executive Outcomes departure. Finally, Executive Outcomes established a close relationship with the governmental executive, but simultaneously neglected parliamentary oversight and public scrutiny. Although the state-to-PMC balance suffered from reduced transparency and questioned the PMC political credibility to operate as a proxy authority, the factor remains inconclusive since the case proved successful in conflict termination. Although Executive Outcomes participated in the SRC corporate holding and benefited from Branch-Heritage's close relationship with the RSMLF, the EO enjoyed tacit social support for operating in Sierra Leone and no violent resistance occurred.

The Sierra Leone case study concludes only a portion of the PMC assessment, where the competence, effectiveness, flexibility and field cooperation with conventional military

are deemed critical in assessing Private Military Companies' outcomes in conflict management, whereas the cost efficiency, impact on governmental armies and the state-to-PMC balance remain inconclusive at the time of this research. However, all the seven factors derived by this article are interrelated and the interplay between indicators contributes to the outcome as much as the individual indicators themselves. That conclusion provides further insights into the research question and states that Private Military Companies may provide competent and versatile force augmentation as the U.S. Global War on Terror appears to continue and the debate on armed humanitarian intervention questions the usage of the U.N. multinational peacekeeping force. Additionally, PMCs operating with self-sufficient resources and alongside conventional armed forces could integrate security contractors with non-governmental organisations such as the Red Cross and Medicines Sans Frontieres in managing the potential for infectious disease outbreaks or humanitarian aid provision. The conflict spillover caused by the GWOT would increase the PMC adaptation to army facilities, such as medical services and logistics, and enhance the interoperability between contractors and military contingencies in overseas operations. Although the paper highlighted the Private Military Companies' competence, versatility and cooperation with armed forces, the state-to-PMC balance requires either a covert nature or greater oversight. Therefore, military contractors mustn't be used to solely shore up the deficiencies such as impoverished government and dissembled conventional forces. The PMC is interested in order accomplishment to receive the contracted profit, but if the government considers eventual challenges to its legitimacy once the ceasefire is achieved, the standing army must step in and become proficient both in collaboration with PMCs and maintaining stability once the PMC departs. Furthermore, PMCs achieve military success while managing parallel political processes that remain outside the PMC's responsibility. If the PMC gradually embeds in conflicts, the governmental agents must still manage an effective solution to prevent the violence from re-erupting.

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