

*Disarmament and International Security*

*(DISEC)*

*Ensuring Transparency  
and Ethical Standards in  
the Accountability and  
Regulation of Private  
Military Companies*

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## *I. INTRODUCTION*

The Disarmament and International Security Council (DISEC), often referred to as the First Committee of the General Assembly, was driven by the urgent need for a global forum where peace and security issues could be discussed internationally (General Assembly of the United Nations, n.d.). DISEC's approach prioritizes the foundation of security through diplomatic agreements among states, emphasizing cooperative measures and the reduction of conflict through disarmament efforts (Ministry of External Affairs, 2023.). This is achieved by facilitating diplomatic negotiations, discussing a range of issues related to nuclear weapons, weapons of mass destruction, regional disarmament, and assorted security concerns, and building international consensus to promote disarmament and global security (General Assembly of the United Nations, n.d.).

In 1945, after World War II, nations sought to rebuild and prevent future destruction, focusing on lasting peace. The devastating impact of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki highlighted the urgent need for nuclear control, leading to the recognition that disarmament and international security were essential for peace. (General Assembly of the United Nations, n.d.).

The United Nations' founders understood that peace required regulating armaments and promoting disarmament. At the 1945 San Francisco Conference, where the UN Charter was signed, it became clear that a dedicated forum was needed for disarmament issues. DISEC was officially formed in January 1946, when the General Assembly adopted Resolution I (1), establishing its role in controlling and regulating atomic energy and weapons of mass destruction (General Assembly of the United Nations, n.d.).

Of the 6 Main Committees, the First Committee is the sole organ accredited to verbatim records coverage. On that account, DISEC holds significant power concerning the transcription of the proceedings that occur during assemblies (General Assembly of the United Nations, n.d.). Its mandate includes making recommendations to member states and suggesting specific topics for consideration by the UN Security Council, although it does not directly influence the Council's decisions.

Article 11 of the United Nations Charter entitles the Disarmament and International Security Committee to make recommendations aiming to achieve consensus regarding “the principles governing disarmament and the regulations of armament” (RCW, 2002). Following

this entitlement, DISEC has engaged in resolution development since its foundation. Among the resolutions that have been adopted under the recommendation of the First Committee, Resolution I (1) and Resolution 1378 (XIV) are the most prominent. Resolution I (1), was adopted on January 24, 1964. It pursues the “Establishment of a Commission to Deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy”. Resolution 1378 (XIV), acquired in 1959, strived to end the armaments race and the testing of nuclear weapons (General Assembly, 1959). Taking into consideration the mentioned solutions, it can be acknowledged the active efforts that the DISEC committee has taken to fulfill its objective.

Private Military Companies (PMCs), also referred to as Private Military Contractors, have become widespread in modern conflicts and global security operations. These companies provide a wide range of services, including armed security, logistics, intelligence, and training, to governments, international organizations, and private entities. While not officially part of the military, PMCs work closely with governmental bodies and range from small consulting firms to large multinational corporations. Initially appearing during World War II, the geopolitical shifts and military reorganization in numerous countries after the Cold War significantly accelerated the industry's expansion. Currently, more than 150 companies offer their services in over 50 countries, existing on every continent except Antarctica (The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2004).

However, their activities often raise concerns about accountability, transparency, and adherence to ethical standards. Being unaffiliated with state organs, PMCs are prone to operate outside legal boundaries, thus threatening legitimacy and accountability by menacing human rights. As PMCs offer support during combat, they enable the proliferation and escalation of conflicts, which compromises peace and stability. Moreover, upon the termination of a conflict, disquietude as to the regulation of the weapons and of the fighters from the PMCs emerges (Council of the European Union, 2023).

This issue is evolving with a significant increase in PMC activity over the past few decades. They often operate in conflict zones where legal systems are weak and oversight mechanisms are ineffective. Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Southeast Asia are examples. Determining whether they are recognized as combatants under the Geneva Conventions is also considered challenging. The unclear differentiation between legitimate "private security companies" and illicit "private military companies" enables state actors to employ them without clear guidelines, resulting in immunity agreements between PMCs and contracting states. Thereupon, these PMCs may operate with minimal accountability, disregarding human rights violations and other acts of war crimes (Council of the European

Union, 2023). Addressing these issues ensures that PMCs are transparently and ethically operated, contributing to a guaranteed security and peaceful society.

## *II. HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM*

### *Mercenaries*

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a mercenary is defined as ‘a professional soldier serving a foreign power’ (Barranca, S, 2009). This definition can undoubtedly encompass many individuals engaged in legitimate activities, such as the Gurkha troops in the British Army, the French Foreign Legion, and the Swiss Guard in the Vatican (Wook Y, 2023). It is often said that the oldest professions in human history are prostitution and mercenaries. Throughout history, there have been numerous mercenaries. For instance, during the Late Bronze Age, Greeks and Nubians fought for the Egyptians. Mercenaries seized Jerusalem from the Roman Empire during the Sixth Crusade, and the British employed Hessian troops during the American Revolution (Joel B & Anita M, 2009). After the Hundred Years' War in the 14th century, John Hawkwood, an English soldier, gathered unemployed soldiers and formed the first mercenary company in history, known as the "White Company," which operated as mercenaries in the competitive city-states of the Italian region. (Joel B & Anita M, 2009).

After the Napoleonic Wars, the rise of national armies significantly reduced the role of mercenaries. In well-established states, citizens willingly fulfilled their military duties, and mercenaries, driven solely by money, were in low demand and trusted even less. Therefore, mercenaries were only useful in situations where citizens were unwilling or unable to defend their country, or in cases like the British East India Company, where it took more for the state to intervene directly. In any case, the presence of mercenaries signified chaos, contemplated as the beginning of the issues regarding ethics (Wook Y, 2023).

### *World War II and Cold War: The Emergence of PMCs in the 1990s.*

After World War II, as the modern world order was established, mercenaries became more overtly profit-driven. Leaders in newly formed Middle Eastern and African states, where national order was not firmly established, required mercenaries. For example, David

Stirling, the founder of the SAS (Special Air Service), created a mercenary company called 'Watchguard International' in 1965, dealing with dictators in Arab and African countries to make money while protecting British interests. (Posle, 2023). Following the Industrial Revolution and advancements in military technology, states began conscripting and maintaining standing armies to protect their national interests (Joel B & Anita M, 2009). Consequently, the language of war has traditions rooted in outsourcing.

Numerous mercenaries emerged, but as the new states and dictators consolidated their positions, the mercenaries had to retreat. However, with the end of the Cold War and the resulting ethnic divisions, mercenaries experienced a resurgence. With the retreat of the two major powers to their borders, new challenges such as failed states, terrorist groups, and renewed conflicts—previously managed by imperial powers—emerged (Pałka, W., 2020). These new dynamics created opportunities for private military companies (PMCs), known as modern mercenaries, to expand. The 1990s saw a surplus of discharged soldiers and a large stockpile of Cold War military equipment, which PMCs utilized (Gulan, H., n.d.). The United States addressed the emerging security gap by privatizing support services for its military, including logistics, security, and infrastructure, enhancing its global military projection capabilities. PMCs, having established a strong foundation, solidified their global market position, with the U.S. becoming their primary base while their influence expanded worldwide (Schultz, J, 2015).

One of the earliest and most notable PMCs was 'Executive Outcomes', a South African company that played a prominent role in several African conflicts during the 1990s (Kinsey, C, n.d.). 'Executive Outcomes' was involved in operations in Angola and Sierra Leone, where it provided crucial military support to governments facing insurgencies. The company's effectiveness in these conflicts highlighted the potential benefits of employing PMCs but also raised ethical and legal questions about their operations and accountability. At their peak, they could deploy over 1,000 soldiers. In total, more than 90 companies were active in Africa during the 1990s (Kinsey, C., n.d.).

### *2000's: Expansion and Controversies*

The demand for PMCs surged, especially after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks when the United States launched the War on Terror. Following the 2003 Iraq War and

the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, PMCs played a significant role in maintaining security as the Coalition Provisional Authority struggled with insufficient ground forces. Notably, the largest PMC of the time, Blackwater, was praised for defending the U.S. consulate in Fallujah against insurgent attacks with a small team of elite operatives, earning a reputation as the most formidable armed group. In the late 2000s, the rise of piracy off the coast of Somalia created a new business opportunity for PMCs in maritime security, protecting commercial vessels. Throughout the 2000s, the involvement of PMCs in conflict zones along with changes in the global economy shaped and impacted this industry, leading to its expansion and raising controversies.

From the year 2007 to 2008, the world faced financial distress that had a meaningful impact on the role of PMCs. Although this crisis had a global impact, it mostly impacted the economy of the United States. Prior to the emergency, banks and lending institutions lowered interest rates, thus encouraging civilians to acquire loans that were unaffordable for a vast majority of the population. Consequently, loans eventually defaulted; the debtors passed behind payment deadlines. Upon a large percentage of loans on default, lending institutions faced a financial crisis (Weinberg, 2013). The graveness of the crisis impacted all the sectors, including PMCs.

Amidst the economic weaknesses that the international community faced, multiple strategies were implemented by different governments as measures to combat the developing financial struggle. The services that were previously provided by the public sector, including warfare, were opened to the private sector (Casendino, 2017). This shift had the purpose of reducing costs through market competition. These trends resulted in exponential growth in the industry of PMCs. The mentioned increase was noticeable throughout the United States's military operations in Iraq (Casendino, 2017).

——— The Iraq War, which took place from 2003 to 2011, was one of the events that had the most influence and impact on the development of PMCs, as it affected their expansion and enabled the emergence of controversies. The mentioned conflict has led to the largest involvement of Private Military Companies in conflict zones (DCAF, 2006). This vast involvement led to the rise of concerns regarding the PMC's adherence to ethical standards and legal frameworks. Amidst the development of the conflict between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq (The Iraq War), arose an accusation case brought by the prisoners of Abu Ghraib. This civil case targeted a Private Military Company contracted by

the United States of America. In this case, the unethical actions that soldiers carried out within the Abu Ghraib prison were addressed: torture, humiliation, sexual assault, and other forms of violence aimed at prisoners (Baum & McGahan, 2009). Those contractors involved were never brought to trial, as the Coalition Provisional Authority bore them with immunity from Iraqi law. Consequently, controversies regarding the ethical standards, accountability, and transparency of PMCs emerged.

The addressed civil case drew attention to the necessity of establishing a legal framework under which PMCs should function. Despite the concerns that this conflict brought visibility, it also played a huge role in the expansion of PMCs. As a result of the post-war insurgency in Iraq, the demand for PMCs as a measure to protect civilians and construction workers engaging in restoration had significantly increased. Upon post-war tensions, multiple countries contracted PMCs for risk assessment and security support. Accordingly, due to the increasing demands for the services of PMCs, these agencies became regularized in military operations. The administrative systems of PMCs came to be deeply embedded with national governments, leading to an escalating interdependence.

### *2010s: Wagner Group*

In the 2010, PMCs like Wagner became problematic. The workforce available to PMCs surpassed the total number of US troops in conflict zones like Iraq and Afghanistan. PMCs took on many roles traditionally held by state military personnel, including direct combat, circumventing national rules on military engagement, and often following less stringent engagement rules (Hornus, D., 2023). This flexibility and perceived cost-efficiency have driven their widespread use, despite shifting the financial burden of war's negative externalities to the public.

The ethical issues surrounding PMCs became more pronounced with companies like Wagner. Wagner operates as a blend between a special forces team and a mafia-like organization, engaging in paramilitary and quasi-state criminal activities. In Ukraine, Wagner's impact was evident, operating not just in combat but also through a disinformation network via the Patriot Media Group. This network aimed to manipulate public opinion and influence elections in the West, worsening the ethical issues and transparency in PMCs. After the recent Wagner revolt in Russia failed, Patriot Media shut down (Pieper, O., 2023).

### *III. CURRENT SITUATION*

The flexibility, efficiency, and dissociation from the conflict that PMCs offer are factors that continue to nourish the expansion of the said industry. The presence and influence of PMCs are notorious in ongoing events, including multinational companies exploiting resources in Africa, the invasion of Ukraine, and the conflict between Israel and Palestine. As PMCs are gaining increasing influence over the global military landscape, it is crucial to ensure transparency and ethical standards in the accountability and regulation of these agencies to guarantee sustainable development and global security. Moreover, it is critical to determine a globally accepted picture of what constitutes a PMC.

#### *Unestablished distinction between PSCs and PMCS*

Private Security Companies (PSCs) operate similarly to PMCs. Nonetheless, PSCs abstain from providing military training and support in conflict and focus on the protection of facilities and personnel. It is crucial to consider how the lack of a universally accepted definition of what constitutes a PMC or a PSC represents a challenge to the effective national and international regulation of said agencies.

During April 2023, the European Union subjected certain PMCs, such as the Wagner group and RIA FAN, to restrictive measures that impeded their operations (Council of the European Union, 2023). Concerned about the rising legal boundaries to which PMCs are being tied, certain states, such as the People's Republic of China, have shifted to PSCs to ensure the safe conduct of commercial operations, including the Belt Road Initiative. It is estimated that around 30 Chinese PSCs operate abroad, focusing on territories that are significant to the BRI (Sukhankin, 2023). Bearing in mind that the European Union is a major point of interest for the BRI and that PSCs operate similarly to PMCs, the performance of Chinese PSCs in this territory threatens to weaken the restrictive measures determined for PMCs.

#### *PMCs developing as contracted security*

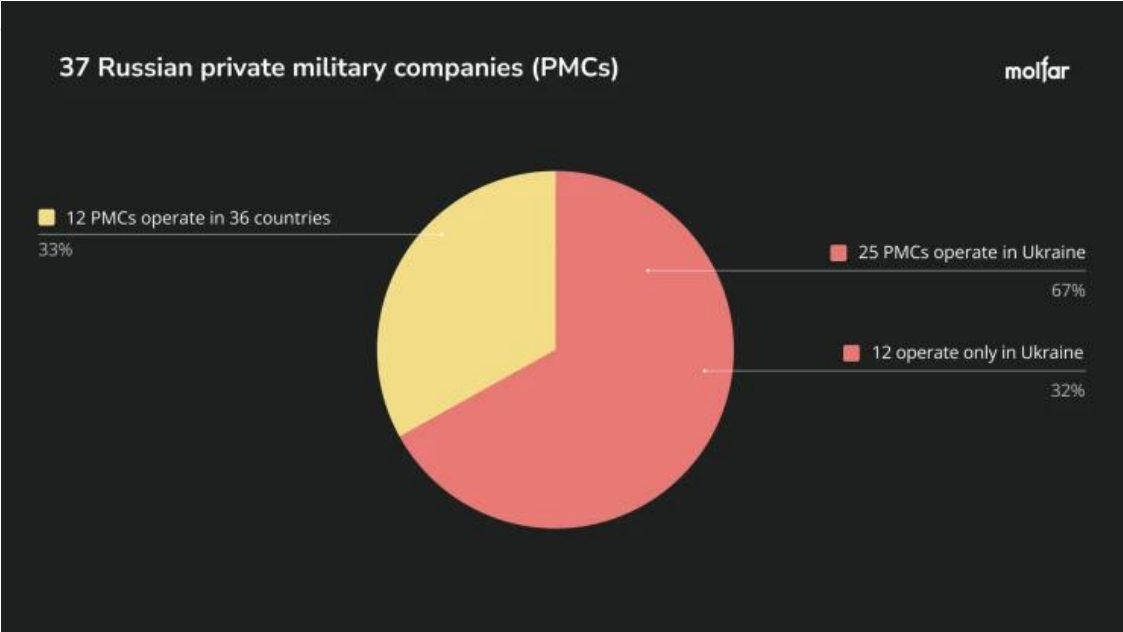


Despite the increase in the contraction of PSCs, PMCs continue to have a greater rate of expansion. As PMCs offer great flexibility, advanced equipment, training, and support during conflict and are cost-effective, they frequently develop as contracted security within national and international territory. Exemplifying the mentioned role, Gazprom, a major Russian oil company, has contracted multiple PMCs. Said action was taken to ensure the protection of oil and gas production and storage facilities in the Arctic (Bauer & Mueller, 2023).

The Wagner Group has provided security to the Libyan National Oil Corporation's (Libyan NOC) personnel and facilities, thus achieving the involvement of the Russian Federation in extraction projects. The effective and appropriate use of PMCs enables enhanced security; however, their inappropriate use raises concerns regarding sovereignty, accountability, and adherence to ethical standards.

*The Wagner Group as a contractor of the Russian Federation*

The armed conflict between Ukraine and Russia has led to the proliferation of the Wagner Group as the most influential Russian PMC. It is estimated that Wagner employs around 50,000 personnel (Rinaldi & Irrera, 2024). Along with the employed personnel, as stated by the Russian BBC Service, Wagner has recruited around 48,000 penal recruits (Mappes. et al., 2024). The addressed conflict has also driven to the expansion of PMCs, leading to the Russian Federation accounting for 37 PMCs, of which 67% operate in Ukraine (OSINT-FR, 2024). The large deployment of Russian PMCs in Ukraine continues to shape the armed conflict between these states, threatening to prolong it. Accordingly, the argument that PMCs extend conflicts as a way to increase their profits emerges.



(OSINT-FR, 2024)

On June 24, 2023, the Wagner forces carried out a mutiny against Vladimir Putin, the president of the Russian Federation. Although this insurgency did not escalate to a major conflict, it gave rise to serious concerns about the legitimacy and accountability of Wagner, along with preoccupation concerning Russia's efforts to regulate PMCs. Successingly to this event, the Wagner Group faced the demise of its leader, Evgenij Prigojin. Consequently, the dynamics between the Wagner Group and the Russian government are changing, which has a significant impact on the global military landscape by augmenting tensions.

### *PMCs developing in the conflict between Israel and Palestine*

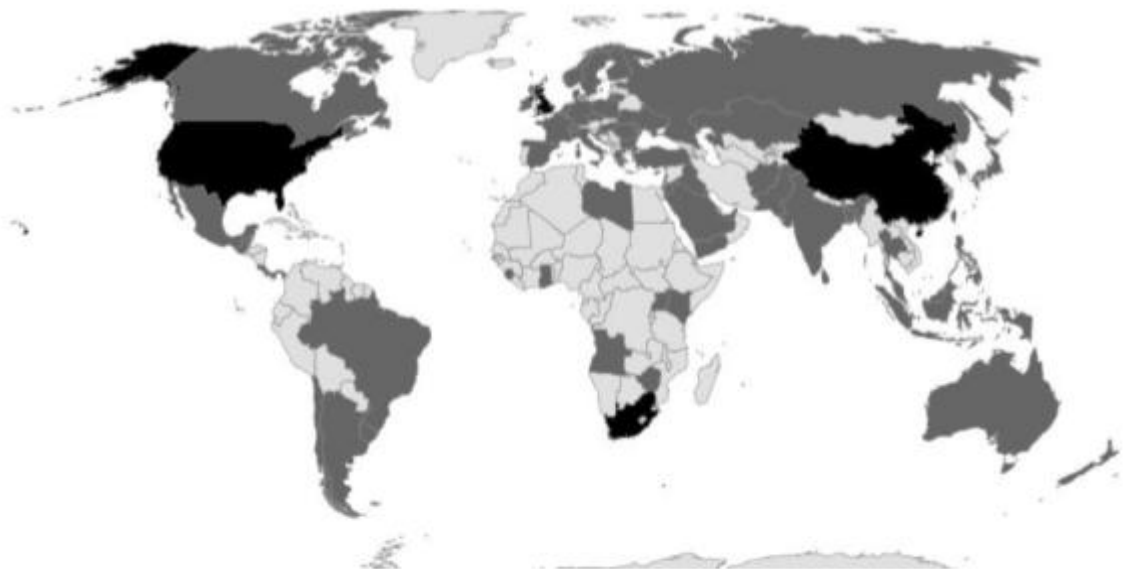
As tensions between Palestine and Israel escalate, humanitarian aid is essential to combat the imminent famine that civilians face. From 2012 to 2023, the United States of America has raised its spending on contracts with PMCs (Council of the European Union, 2023). Considering that the US has resorted to the contraction of PMCs as a way to provide supportive aid to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, the investment is projected to grow by 2024 (Council of the European Union, 2023).

The use of PMCs to supply resources in Gaza has sparked controversy. Repeatedly, US contractors have been accused of performing in manners that avert the attainment of human rights. For instance, on February 29, 2024, a crowd of civilians surrounded an aid convoy of 30 trucks, which was guarded by a private military that attempted to contain the crowd. Sources differ as to what succeeded. However, different case scenarios have been speculated: numerous individuals lost their lives or were injured as a result of violent acts from the military; the density of the crowd raised confusion and resulted in injuries (Kube, et al. 2024). Regardless of the controversy, hiring PMCs as support to provide humanitarian aid is a promising measure, for a non-state actor offers a neutral approach to the conflict.

PMCs have a critical influence on the global military landscape. This is attributable to the global spread of PMCs: 81 countries around the world host one or more PMC

headquarters and make use of its services (Swed & Burland, 2023). This trend is conveyed in the following diagram:

**Global Spread of PMSCs Headquarters**



(Swed & Burland, 2023).

As PMCs continue to expand, they increasingly influence the global military landscape. While these non-state actors can provide security and neutrality by dissociating themselves from conflicts, they also raise concerns about adherence to ethical standards, sovereignty, accountability, and post-conflict resolutions. Establishing the foundations for the appropriate usage of PMCs is crucial to ensuring global security and sustainable development.

***IV. UN ACTIONS***

The rapid expansion and the noncompliance with ethical standards that PMCs exhibit have raised international concern. The UN has attempted to address PMC issues through various means; however, one of the primary challenges the UN has faced was the lack of clear international law governing the PMCs and the legal ambiguity aftermath. Willing to address the crescent concerns regarding the operations and the monitoring of PMCs, the United Nations established the UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries in July 2005

(OHCHR, n.d.). Consequently to the Working Group's recommendations, the General Assembly has adopted several solutions targeting the regulation of PMCs. Remarkably: Resolution 15/26, adopted in 2010, Resolution 36/11, adopted in 2017, and Resolution 74/138, adopted in 2019, take place. Moreover, to gather pertinent data that aided in the development of these resolutions, the Working Group conducted several country visits, during which the impact of mercenaries and PMCs was observed.

Resolution 15/26 was acquired on October 1, 2010, by the Human Rights Council. Pursuant to the resolution, the Council established an "open-ended intergovernmental working group with the mandate to consider the possibility of elaborating an international regulatory framework [...]" (Human Rights Council, 2010). To provide the necessary expertise to the established workgroup, members of the Working Group on mercenary use are certified to participate as resource professionals (Human Rights Council, 2010). Since the appliance of the addressed resolution in 2017, the working group has held six sessions. As a result of the differing positions that state members had regarding how to approach the development of a legally binding instrument (either based on self-regulations or on enforced obligations), it was unable to reach consensus (Special Procedures, 2018).

The non-state nature of PMCs sprouted concerns about the lack of transparency of these agencies. Accordingly, the Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries launched a global study of national regulation concerning PMCs and PSCs in 2012, which later served to recommend resolutions and enhance the transparency of PMCs (Special Procedures, 2018). After analyzing several English-speaking countries in Africa, the Working Group noted that solely South Africa accounted for a legislative framework to monitor PMCs. Further to the analysis of eight Asian States and eight French-speaking countries in Africa, the experts observed existent regulations for PSCs in all countries; however, there were no existent regulations for PMCs. Analysis of four countries in Europe and eight countries in Central America offered similar results. Due to the current discrepancies in national and regional monitoring, the Working Group emphasized the necessity for an international legal framework to regulate PMCs (United Nations, 2016).

Considering the Working Group's global study on the national and regional regulations of PMCs, along with the unsuccessful implementation of resolution 15/26, the Working Group recommended another resolution, which was adopted on September 19, 2017. Resolution 36/11 announces the establishment of a new open-ended intergovernmental working group with the mandate of elaborating the content of an international regulatory framework (United Nations, 2016). Unlike the previous resolution, this one focuses on

building the content of an internationally legally binding instrument, prioritizing the provision of soft laws and self-regulatory measures (Human Rights Council, 2017).

Resolution 74/138, adopted in 2019, brought continuity to the previously mentioned resolution, and significantly influenced the regulation of PMCs. This resolution condemns mercenary activities, most notably in developing countries, as they are considered to “violate the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations” (General Assembly, 2019). Although this resolution does not condemn PMCs, it encourages states to establish national regulatory mechanisms for the registration, licensing, and export of PMCs. Furthermore, the General Assembly emphasizes the value of the Montreux Document as a legal framework, invigorating States to take it into account (General Assembly, 2019).

The mandate of the open-ended intergovernmental remains in force, having been renewed on the following dates: October 6, 2020, and October 12, 2023. Similarly, the injunction of the Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries has been ratified multiple times since its foundation, most recently in 2022 for three years. As both Working Groups continue to fulfill their mandate, they hold three sessions per year, working closely with the Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and with the DISEC. In addition, the Working Group continues to perform country visits, aiming to examine the influence of the adopted resolutions.

While the UN has made progress in raising awareness of the issues associated with PMCs and promoting greater accountability, the challenge of regulating these entities remains complex and ongoing. The solutions previously implemented had served to determine some of the aspects necessary for a successful international regulatory framework for the accountability of PMCs: implement licensing, soft laws, and self-regulatory measures. Advances toward the international regulatory creation framework are being made each year; nevertheless, consensus has not been reached, and the effectiveness of these efforts has been limited. On that account, the Working Group, UNHRC, and DISEC continue to make a call for international cooperation in the accountability and regulation of PMCs.

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## ***V. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS***

To address the pressing need for transparency and ethical standards in the regulation of private military companies, the following detailed solutions are proposed: These measures aim to enhance accountability, ensure ethical conduct, and promote international cooperation. By implementing these solutions, a meticulous framework that holds PMCs to high standards

of integrity and responsibility, thus mitigating risks associated with their operations, can be robust.

- International Regulatory Framework
  - a. Detailing an internationally accepted picture of what constitutes a PMC. This definition would be crucial to developing the regulatory framework, as it would facilitate the reach of consensus between states. The definition should detail the differences between a PMC and a PSC agency.
  - b. Developing and implementing standardized legal frameworks and ethical guidelines that all member countries must adopt, ensuring consistent oversight and accountability. This law would cover aspects such as the use of force, transparency, ethical conduct, and accountability.
  - c. Enforcing international standards for PMC operations. It would oversee licensing, conduct regular audits, and ensure compliance with ethical guidelines. Initial discussions and negotiations, facilitated by the United Nations, led to the establishment of a charter and operational guidelines for the regulatory body.
  
- Establishing Mandatory Licensing and Certification
  - a. Require PMCs to renew their certification every two years, undergoing a thorough review of their operations, compliance with international standards, and any reported incidents of misconduct. Impose penalties such as fines, suspension, or revocation of licenses for failure to meet renewal requirements or for violations detected during the review process.
  - b. Develop rigorous criteria for licensing, including background checks on company directors, verification of financial integrity, and assessment of operational history. Publish the names of licensed PMCs and the criteria met, ensuring public access to licensing information.
  
- Enhancing Transparency over Mechanisms

- a. Mandate quarterly and annual reports detailing operational activities, contracts, financial transactions, and compliance measures. Reports should include information on the use of force, human rights impact, and measures taken to mitigate risks.
- b. Enact laws to protect whistleblowers who report unethical or illegal activities within PMCs, ensuring they are not subjected to retaliation or discrimination.
- c. Establish anonymous reporting channels and provide legal and psychological support for whistleblowers, funded by the global regulatory body.

## **VI. COUNTRIES INVOLVED**

### **1. Russian Federation**

The Russian Federation is the leading country in fostering the trend of PMCs developing as combat surrogates, raising concerns about accountability and transparency: PMCs serve as principal forces in combat missions and are closely embedded with the government (Swed & Burland, 2024). Russian PMCs, especially the Wagner Group, have shown a varied record of operational effectiveness. They have contributed to instability, undermined governmental legitimacy, exploited resources from vulnerable nations, and been implicated in human rights violations (Doxsee, 2022). For instance, the large deployment of Russian PMCs in Ukraine amidst an armed conflict threatens to prolong the event, while the presence of the Wagner Group in oil extraction operations has added pressure to the energy crisis in Europe. Russian PMCs continue to have a profound impact on the development of ongoing events in the global military and economic landscape, which is crucial to evaluate in order to ensure the transparency and adherence to ethical standards in the regulation and accountability of PMCs.

### **2. Republic of South Africa**

Throughout the 1990s, South African PMCs, remarkably Executive Outcomes, gave place to the trend of PMCs developing as combat surrogates. Alarmed by the menace to legitimacy and transparency that the influence of PMCs represented, The Republic of South

Africa implemented regulations seeking to address the concerns concerning PMCs. Currently, this Republic stands as the sole African country that subjects PMCs to officially established legal boundaries. In the course of multiple conflicts that occurred throughout Africa, South African PMCs demonstrated high operational efficiency. For instance, the efforts of South African PMCs in Nigeria served to reclaim the territory taken by Boko Haram (Klaassen, 2023). However, miscommunication between the contracted PMCs and the Nigerian military threatened Nigeria's state legitimacy and raised public mistrust (Klaassen, 2023). The models followed by the Republic of South Africa to employ and regulate PMCs are valuable sources from which the opportunities that PMCs offer can be observed.

### **3. United States of America**

The United States of America is the major investor of PMC services. The United States of America, upon the ending of its armed conflict with Iraq, played a major role in fostering the expansion of PMCs, currently providing continuity to it by greatly investing in said market. Repeatedly, PMCs from the USA have been accused of violating human rights, especially when operating abroad. Aiming to approach the mentioned concerns, as remarked by the Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries, the USA has demonstrated the following regulation efforts towards PMCs: demanding the registration of these agencies with national authorities, constant licensing, and the establishment of jurisdiction for violation of human rights that occur when PMCs under their legal boundaries operate abroad (Special Procedures, 2018). PMCs from the USA are involved in ongoing events, such as the conflict between Israel and Palestine, hence, they have a major influence in the global military landscape; the cooperation of this State is crucial to reaching a consensus and guaranteeing effective and transparent employment of PMCs

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### **4. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

Manifold PMCs from the UK are registered to operate in said country and abroad. Due to improper registration and major omissions in official reports about PMCs from the UK, this country has failed to ensure transparency in the accountability of these agencies. Although the United Kingdom has considered establishing legal frameworks that follow international



recommendations, it eventually opted to encourage self-regulation (MFARF, 2023). Nevertheless, this country has expressed its openness to the establishment of an international legal framework. The United Kingdom is a major investor in the market of PMCs while also being host to the manifold headquarters of PMCs.

## **5. People's Republic of China**

Despite the illegal boundaries to which PMCs are subject in the People's Republic of China, PSCs were cleared of said frameworks in 2009 (Markusen, 2022). These agencies are becoming increasingly involved in economic projects that urge for high-security provision, most prominently the Belt and Road Initiative. The inexistence of a globally accepted picture of what differentiates a PSC and a PMC enables an untransparent and unethical usage of PSCs, as they do not operate within a legal framework. Undeterred by the severe lack of documentation regarding the contraction and employment of Chinese PSCs, it is estimated that around 30 Chinese PSCs operate abroad (Sukhankin, 2023). Considering that PSCs operate similarly to PMCs, the abroad performance of Chinese PSCs outside the legal boundaries of PMCs threatens to weaken said measures. This risk factor is fueled by the lack of transparency in the accountability and registration of Chinese PSCs, along with the high investment that the People's Republic of China provides to PSC headquarters, representing about 17%, located worldwide. (Swed & Burland, 2024).

6. Ukraine
7. Republic of Iraq
8. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

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9. State of Israel
10. State of Libya
11. Federal Republic of Nigeria
12. Confoederatio Helvetica
13. Republic of Mozambique

14. Republic of Honduras
15. Commonwealth of Australia
16. New Zealand
17. French Republic
18. Federal Republic of Germany
19. Kingdom of Spain
20. Republic of Poland
21. Kingdom of Belgium
22. Central African Republic
23. Republic of Tunisia
24. Federative Republic of Brazil
25. United Mexican States

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