Private Military Organizations, Resource Concessions, and Conflict Termination

How Private Military Organizations Impact Conflict Duration in African Civil Wars

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Abstract

This paper attempts to address the lingering question about the impact that private military organizations have in conflicts they engage in. This paper focuses on civil conflicts in Africa which have had private military presence and limits the time frame to the years between 1990 and 2008. Specifically, I seek to analyze the relationship between resource concessions made to a private military organization and the likelihood of conflict termination. I utilize both case study analysis and survival analysis to address the research question. In the survival model, I find a trend that indicates that a conflict in which the private military organization is awarded a resource concession is less likely to terminate at a given year *y*, but was unable to reject the null hypothesis due to insignificant models. The case study analysis demonstrates that private military organizations that have been awarded resource concessions are more likely to impact the conflict on multiple levels, being politically and militarily.

An Overview on Private Military Organizations

Private military organizations (PMOs) have long been discussed as being covert contingencies for armed conflicts. Scholars have studied the rationale for utilizing PMOs, their impacts on conflicts, and their evolution throughout periods. In popular media, there are many stories concerning the ethical implications of using "mercenaries" and how they are tools for regimes to carry out their agenda outside of the public domain.

During the early onset of the war in Ukraine, media outlets reported that a mercenary group called the Wagner Group was recruiting Russian prisoners to fight. There were many questions about what the Wagner Group was and why they were allowed to fight against the Ukrainian armed forces on behalf of the Russian government. Similar to their deployments in

countries like Mali and Mozambique, there was suspicion that the Russian government was ordering a private military organization (PMO) to carry out foreign influence operations while maintaining the image that they were operating independently without consent from the Russian government. There were also narratives circulating that these members were simply fighting for money and that they were committing war crimes. Videos were posted on social media platforms showing Wagner groups soldiers beating up and torturing prisoners while others laughed in the background. However, even with the multitude of negative impressions of the Wagner Group being made public knowledge, there is still an incomplete understanding of how their behavior impacts conflicts, how they are being financed, and what their long-term objectives are.

Private Military Organizations and Civil Conflict in Africa

The Wagner Group is but one of many private entities operating in the collective private military industry. For the context of this study, I will be looking at Executive Outcomes, Sandline International, and related companies and subsidiaries along with the Wagner Group. This study focuses on the impact of private military organizations on conflict duration in African civil wars. Civil wars in Africa in the post-Cold War era have several unique factors that warrant additional analysis. One such factor revolves around the colonization aspect and its ramifications for wars waged by colonial powers (Musah and Fayemi 2000). There were numerous wars between the British and the French on the continent that served as colonial proxy conflicts. There was also a large number of conscripted soldiers from colonial territories to fight in World War II. In this regard, scholars argue that these conscripted soldiers became “empowered by their

association with white soldiers during the world war".[1] Additionally, the number of well documented civil conflicts in the continent post-cold war also provided a large enough sample size to study the effects of private military intervention.

The Typology of Private Military Organizations

This study utilizes a working definition of private military organizations that encompasses the typologies set forth by previous studies and publications. The typology of PMOs is important as it may contribute to determining the role and scope that a firm or group may play in a conflict area. There are PMOs that operate in countries that may not be experiencing conflicts or that are not providing services to a client who is conducting conflict. In the case study, the role and scope of the PMO is defined as a military provider firm, or an organization that engages in the conflict itself (Singer 2003). Firms that provide training services or offer organizational tactics may not directly engage in the conflict itself and can be considered indirectly involved as military consultant firms (Singer 2003). And a large portion of the private military industry is categorized as being military support firms, or those that provide logistical support, intelligence, and/or nonlethal support (Singer 2003). These three typologies are vital in understanding why they were contracted in the first place, what they did while being contracted, and what occurred upon termination/end of contract.

There are other functional typologies that categorize these PMOs into further distinctions in services provided. PMOs can additionally be grouped as private combat companies, private military companies, proxy military companies, private security companies, commercial security

[1] Musah, Abdel-Fatau, J. 'Kayode Fayemi, and Lord Avebury. "Africa in Search of Security: Mercenaries and Conflicts – An Overview." In *Mercenaries: An African Security Dilemma*, edited by Abdel-Fatau Musah and J. 'Kayode Fayemi, 13–42. Pluto Press, 2000. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt18fs91v.8.

companies, and freelance operators (Kinsey 2006). However, as this paper will highlight later on in the case study section, the services and functions of these companies can easily overlap these distinctions as part of a larger corporate entity, with diverse portfolios of services and revenue sources.

For the intents of the case selection of this study, I observe that the PMO (Executive Outcomes) was utilized as a direct force multiplier, in the sense that it enhanced the client force by injecting additional forces directly into their current command structure or by increasing the combat potential of the client force. This begins to address potential selection biases that may be applicable to the selections made for this paper. It can be argued that the states who required the services of a force multiplier were already weak and involved in a severe conflict, leading to the likely outcome that the conflict would have lasted longer than smaller conflicts that may have had PMO presence. I posit that this counterfactual is a legitimate consideration, but that it would be insufficient to conclude in absolute terms that PMOs guaranteed shorter conflict duration in the larger scope of conflict. In this regard, I am seeking to answer whether or not PMOs do affect factors that may increase fragility in a state or political/military turmoil that may lead to further instability, which in result, creates the conditions for continued insurgency. Therefore, with both the case study and quantitative models, I utilize an encompassing term private military organization to capture values of groups/firms/organizations that are hired to impact the course of conflict. Additionally, given the limited sources of empirical data available for the study of PMO activity in these countries, this provides the best framework for analyzing how the essence of being a private actor introduced in the conflict affects the dynamics of the combat area, and by extension, the country as a whole.

Opportunity and Reward Structures for Private Military Organizations

A key component of this study focuses on the motivations and doctrine that results from the receiving of a mining contract rather than direct payment. With mining contracts, there are additional calculations and actions required prior to and during the conflict itself. For example, how will the PMO extract resources from the country and transport it to a facility from which said resources can be sold or traded? The ability for the PMO to obtain the proper equipment and personnel could be done through an existing subsidiary, or the PMO would have to find a third-party firm to handle the finer details of the process. From securing the ability to actualize the resource concession, the actual mining location needs to be identified and established. Again, a firm has several options for operationalizing this step. The PMO could utilize existing mining sites to fulfill the agreed upon contract. The PMO could also have stipulations that allow them to take over any mine that is recaptured from the enemy. The PMO could additionally seek political leverage over the government/insurgent authority that oversees location placement to obtain favorable agreements. Lastly, the PMO would have to possess sufficient resources to commit assets to protect and monitor these locations as well as the resources extracted. With these processes, conflicts with PMOs that have been provided resource contracts open the avenue for additional actors to be involved in the conflict.

For the opportunity structure, there are two competing interpretations of the behavior of PMOs. The first argues that due to the sensitive nature of resource extraction, the PMO is incentivized to engage in activities that would stabilize the resource mining environment (Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski 2013). The opportunity structure in this regard suggests that

PMOs with resource concessions have a positive impact on the conflict by stabilizing it. This model attributes conflict termination with the objectives of the PMO to minimize threats to their resource extraction contract. This structure has been demonstrated to be most applicable to larger scale conflicts, as those governments are more likely to resort to concessions as they have exhausted funds in fighting the conflict. This model has not yielded significant impacts in conflicts that are of low battle-death threshold.

Another interpretation for the role of resource concessions in conflicts is that PMOs are seeking to maintain strategic strangleholds on the client state (Musah and Fayemi 2000). As mentioned previously, the process of actualizing resource extraction requires multiple inputs from both the PMO and the client state. The PMO has a distinct set of preferences to that of the client state. If the opportunity structure is applied here, then it can be assumed that the PMO seeks to maximize profit from its resource extraction operation whereas the client may be seeking a decisive course of action that will restore their stronghold on domestic power. Even with the opportunity structure, there may still be incentive for the PMO to prologue the duration of conflict, albeit, in a sustainable manner that does not leave their assets vulnerable (Berman and Florquin 2005). In order for the PMO to achieve maximum benefits from their concessions, the PMO should have a cohesive internal structure. The PMO may have a board of shareholders who represent the interests and preferences of the organization to the client. A competent PMO would have the military capability to demonstrate performance in conflict, a mining subsidiary/partner, and/or financial channels. Post cold-war PMOs that operated in African civil wars lacked numeric strength, but were able to compensate with supreme tactical skill and experience, organization, and equipment. PMOs in this timeframe had the capabilities to ensure unilateral continuance of conflict, as in, the client would not be able to achieve victory without

the aid and support of PMOs. These components can permit the PMO to directly impact the duration of conflict, by establishing itself as another actor in the conflict (Cunningham 2006). The ability of PMOs to garner political inroads and military dependencies is central to the theory formulation of this paper and suggests that the actual behavior of PMOs in these conflicts only partially explain the military impact that they may have in the country. Because PMOs by nature are temporal (within the bounds of a contract), there is little to no evidence to suggest that they engage in post-war processes prior to the termination of conflict in which they actively participated in. Therefore, a critical component of the theoretical framework is that though there is evidence to support that PMO presence may shorten the duration of conflict (factual or counterfactual), conflict termination does not necessarily suggest that the country will not observe a resumption of conflict soon after. PMOs operate within the opportunity structure as long as they remain actors in the country, wartime or not, and may be incentivized to find ways to formalize their presence in a country after the terms of contract conclude.

Research Design

To study how PMOs affect civil conflicts within the parameters of the paper, I propose two hypotheses to test interactions:

> **Hypothesis 1:** *The presence of a private military organization that has been awarded a resource concession contract, rather than direct payment, is likely to lengthen the duration of the conflict.*
>
> **Hypothesis 2:** *The higher the number of reported incidents involving members of private military organizations, combined with the state's level of fragility, the greater the possibility that the private military organization will lengthen duration of the conflict.*

The first hypothesis seeks to assess to what extent resource concessions can be empirically proven to affect conflict termination by prolonging duration. This stems from the opportunity structure theory in that the drive to maximize profitability from the resource extraction operation will favor activities/engagements that do not directly put assets in vulnerable situations. This portion of the study aims to build upon the Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski paper, which finds a statistically significant relationship between concessions and conflict duration.

The second hypothesis seeks to analyze the potential interaction term of state fragility and the number of incidents reported. The reported incidents total represents the most complete empirical understanding of the level of engagement a PMO had in a conflict in a given year. This portion of the study seeks to introduce new interactions to a similar study run by Avant and Kingma Neu.

Data and Methods

For this study, a combination of a quantitative and case study approach was used to study the effect of resource concessions to PMOs on conflict termination. I believe that utilizing this dual approach was necessary to capture a holistic understanding of the interactions and dynamics introduced through the awarding of resource mining rights. For the quantitative analysis, I utilized the Cox-Proportional Hazard model to study the effect of a specific covariate (independent variable) on the probability of an event occurring, conflict termination in this case.

The dataset utilized in this survival analysis was constructed integrating components of several major existing datasets on PMOs. For conflict coding as well as values for indicators such as resource concessions and polity, the Correlates of War database was utilized. This was

also used in the Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski study. To capture the event-level data, values from the Private Security Events Database were integrated into the dataset using collapsed variables. GDP per capita based on purchasing power parity (PPP) was utilized due to its ability to better capture the dynamics of a domestic economy. This data was collected from the World Bank dataset on purchasing power parity. Finally, the fragility of a state was integrated into the dataset from the Fragile State Index. Because the FSI values only go back to 2006, the relative estimates were taken by forecasting in R. This was done on the understanding that the relative fragility of the state is unlikely to swing dramatically between years. The dataset itself was constructed using inconsistent panels to incorporate the year-by-year values. This differs from the previous studies' approaches by having a new entry for every conflict for the year following. This manifested as the termination indicator being zero until the year after conflict. The logic for this method was that in a given year, if there was fighting at a threshold set forth by the Correlates of War database, then there was a conflict during that year. The following entry year denotes a termination value of one if there was no conflict in that year for the conflict in question. Hence, if there were multiple conflicts in a country with overlapping years, then they were entered as separate conflicts (ex. Sierra Leone 1 or Sierra Leone 2), with appropriate values being inputted for year *y*.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study was the duration of the conflict. This variable indicates how long the conflict had lasted at year *y.* This data was integrated from the Correlates of War dataset and included conflicts that occurred from the years 1990-2008. Similar to the original logic of the Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski study, conflicts that initiated prior to 1990

but continued into the selected time frame were also included in the dataset. The final dataset included 171 observations, slightly more than the dataset used in the Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski study. This is due to the inclusion of year(s) immediately following the termination of the coded conflict.

Independent Variables

There are several covariates in this study and two models that were employed to study these relationships. These covariates were selected after hypothesizing that there would be an interaction between contract type, behavior/performance, and domestic stability and the likelihood of the event occurring (conflict termination).

These are the covariates:

- Resource Concessions: This dummy variable indicates whether or not a PMO in the conflict was awarded a resource concession. This follows the approach implemented in the Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski and Avant and Kingma Neu studies. This variable was selected because I hypothesize that introducing an economic, and potential political, actor in the conflict would adversely affect the course of conflict.
- State Fragility: This numeric value out of 120 points indicates the level of fragility of a given state. This was utilized to test the interaction term in hypothesis 2. This variable was selected because I hypothesized that conflicts occurring in more fragile states would necessitate increased PMO activity, as those states may have higher levels of grievance expression and a less functional state response capability.
- Number of Incidents: This numeric value captures the total number of incidents that were recorded for a specific year of a conflict. This was directly integrated from Avant and

Kingma Neu's Private Security Events Database. The variable itself was created by taking the sum of incidents that occured in a country in year *y*. It should be noted that this variable only measures the number of reported incidents, the closest factual indication of PMO involvement at the event-level.

Control Variables

There were several variables that were not considered as having a significant impact on the dependent variable but still included as to control their potential effects:

- Ethnic Fractionalization: This variable indicates the level of ethnic diversity in the country. This variable was controlled for because ethnic diversity might contribute to prolonged conflict because there may be an effect of higher numbers of ethnic groups on commitment problems (Fearon and Laitin 2003).[2] Additionally, these values were factored into the calculation of a state's fragility.
- Gross Domestic Product per capita by Purchasing Power Parity: This variable measures the domestic economy of a country by analyzing domestic rates and costs, rather than international exchange rates. GDPpcPPP's role in conflicts was derived from the theory that higher levels of GDPpc is associated with shorter conflict duration, as it manifests as higher opportunity costs for insurgent groups.[3]
- Polity: This variable indicates the type of governing regime in place. The theorized impact of polity on conflict duration is such that democratic societies are more likely to

[2] Akcinaroglu, Seden, and Elizabeth Radziszewski. "Private Military Companies, Opportunities, and Termination of Civil Wars in Africa." Journal of Conflict Resolution 57, no. 5 (October 2013): 795–821. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002712449325.

[3] Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." The American Political Science Review 97, no. 1 (2003): 75–90. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3118222.

present higher opportunity costs for insurgent factions, as there is a more diverse array of grievance expression channels.[4]

- Intensity: This variable measures the intensity of a conflict through an analysis of the number of battle-related deaths in a conflict. Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski theorized that the more intense a conflict is, the more likely that both sides would be pushed into a mutually destructive stalemate and thus shortening the duration of conflict.
- Mountainous Terrain: This variable indicates whether or not the country of the conflict has mountainous terrain. Mountainous terrain can create areas for insurgent factions to hide and evade counter-insurgency operations by the government.[5]

Results

For model 1, which was analyzing the relationship between resource concessions and conflict termination, I observe a trend that indicates that a conflict in which the private military organization is awarded a resource concession is less likely to terminate at a given year *y*.

[4] Akcinaroglu, Seden, and Elizabeth Radziszewski. "Private Military Companies, Opportunities, and Termination of Civil Wars in Africa." Journal of Conflict Resolution 57, no. 5 (October 2013): 795–821. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002712449325.

[5] Fearon, James D. "Why Do Some Civil Wars Last so Much Longer than Others?" Journal of Peace Research 41, no. 3 (2004): 275–301. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4149745.

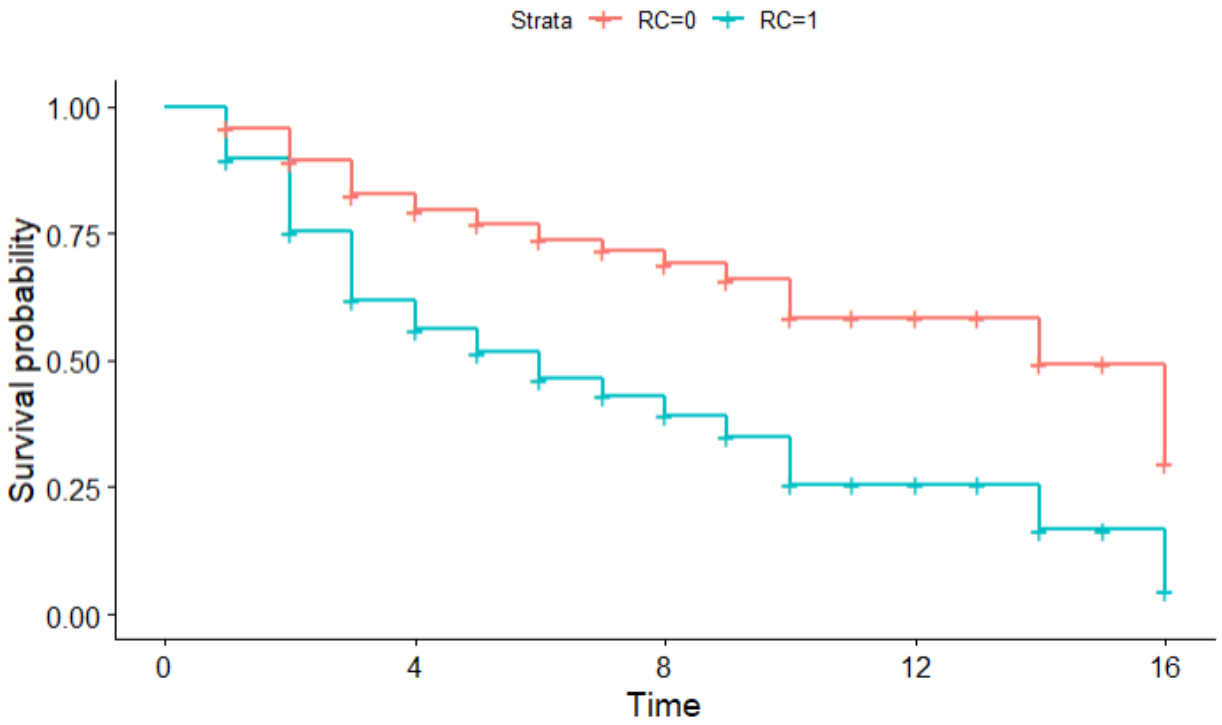

Figure 1. *Relationship between resource concessions and the probability of conflict termination.*

The table above shows that the probability of a conflict with resource concessions awarded to the PMO is less likely to terminate as time in years increases. The blue line represents the values observed from conflicts with PMOs that have been awarded a resource contract. The data does show some correlation between resource concessions and conflict termination, but the model itself was not statistically significant. There was a nine-percent chance that the results of the model occurred to chance probability. However, even though the model itself is not statistically significant, this model does show that, when controlled for the variables mentioned previously, there is a trend between conflict termination and resource concessions. The result differs from that of Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski, who find a statistically significant relationship between resource concessions and conflict termination. The difference in results may be attributed to the utilization of inconsistent panels in this study, as the indicator variable for termination was coded

differently. This introduced additional conflict years in the dataset, holding for other control variables.

In model 2, an interaction term was introduced to measure the impact of the number of reported incidents conditional on a state's fragility on conflict termination. Also introduced in this model were interaction terms between a state's fragility and the type of incident reported and resource concessions.

Impact of Interaction Term on Conflcit Termination

	Dependent variable:
	Conflict Duration
Reported Incidents	-1.623 (-4.921, 1.676)
Fragile State Index	0.007 (-0.040, 0.055)
Resource Concessions	10.169 (-10.774, 31.111)
Incident Type	0.815 (-1.462, 3.092)
Ethnic Frac	-0.382 (-1.968, 1.204)
GDPpcPPP	0.0001 (-0.0001, 0.0003)
Polity	-0.008 (-0.019, 0.003)
MTNEST	0.010 (-0.010, 0.029)
Ethnic Conflict	-0.794 (-1.847, 0.260)
Number of Government Hired	0.026 (-0.712, 0.763)
Number of Rebel Hired	0.336 (-0.490, 1.162)
Intensity	-0.161** (-0.297, -0.026)
Interaction Term: Incidents/FSI	0.015 (-0.016, 0.046)
Interaction Term: Concessions/FSI	-0.104 (-0.347, 0.140)
Interaction Term: Incident Type/FSI	-0.006 (-0.029, 0.017)
Observations	171
R2	0.148
Max. Possible R2	0.867
Log Likelihood	-158.959
Wald Test	28.960** (df = 15)
LR Test	27.343** (df = 15)
Score (Logrank) Test	36.056*** (df = 15)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 1. *The impact of interaction terms on conflict termination*

The results demonstrate a marginal effect of the interaction term on the probability of conflict termination. This is also true for the non-interaction term variables for state fragility, reported incidents, reported incident type, and resource concessions. This model, as well as the model

prior, yield statistically insignificant results about the hypothesized effect of the interaction term. It should be noted that when not controlling for the variables of intensity, polity, GDPpcPPP, and ethnic fractionalization, I observe a statistically significant impact of the interaction term on conflict termination. However, the model without the control variables is open to invalidating factors that may hold other variables responsible for the demonstrated effect.

Case Study

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone prior to the start of the civil war between the government and the RUF was categorized as a weak state lacking sufficient domestic revenue. Even prior to Executive Outcomes' (EO) involvement in the conflict, resource mining was vital to the country's finances. Rebels were able to capture a mineral production site responsible for roughly fifteen percent of the country's total gross national product (Reno 1997). EO was hired by the Strasser government to control the conflict between the rebels and its regime. In this regard, EO's performance in combating RUF was undeniably positive, as they were quickly able to drive out the faction from occupied areas.

EO was quickly able to gain control of Sierra Leone's diamond market by utilizing its relationship with Branch Mining, a related firm set up by Tony Buckingham and Simon Mann based in the United Kingdom (Pech 1999). The growth of their diamond operation benefited military officers and political officials as well, with some individuals utilizing these privileges to mine diamonds themselves. It is from this evidence that I argue that EO had established a strategic stronghold in the military and political affairs of its client state. This also manifested into a military-political doctrine that conflicts could be won in weak states (Reno 1997). A

beneficial mutual dependency formed as a result of the performance of EO on the battlefield as well as in diamond production. Strasser was unable to maintain the mutual backing of military officials and investors after members of his military felt threatened that he would absorb their private mining operations after running as a civilian in the upcoming elections. This led to the coup by Julius Bio in 1996, but did not impact the relationship EO had with the ruling state. EO was operating in the country to provide security and stability, with a growing dependence on both by the government. This was additionally evident during the 1996 elections that brought Kabbah into power.

The elected Kabbah government was able to bring the insurgent faction to the negotiating table for peace talks, with there being an eventual peace accord being signed. However, the enforcement of the peace accord required a third-party peace-keeping force. Without a stabilizing force, there were no guarantees that conflict would not resume. The legitimacy of the Kabbah government was tied to the ability of EO in providing security, due in part to the fact that Sierra Leone was unable to establish a sustainable force capable of unilaterally halting insurgent encroachment. And thus, when EO left Sierra Leone following the peace accord, there was little the Kabbah government could do in stopping the resurgence of the rebel faction. I argue that the dependency dynamic created by EOs military effectiveness and favorable relations it maintained to protect its mining interests created the conditions for further conflict and instability. By removing the force that unilaterally ensured political leverage, relative stability, and efficient resource extraction, there was no longer an avenue for the government to actualize its efforts for peace between the two major factions.

Angola

The conflict in Angola, spanning several decades, had multiple foreign actors prior to the engagement of EO. The MPLA government was supported by the Soviet Union while the UNITA faction was being covertly aided by the United States. The duration of the Angola conflict between the ruling power MPLA and the rebel faction of UNITA was lengthened by the resource wealth available to UNITA, which subsequently engaged in blackmarket activities to fund its network of arms shipments and other resources. This allowed the rebel faction to circumvent the existing sanctions placed on them by the UN. The profiteering opportunity created by Angola's resource wealth additionally allowed the government to secure foreign military aid through diamond and oil sales.

Executive Outcomes held similarly lucrative oil and diamond operations in Angola as a result of the UNITA-Angola civil war. Through its airwing, Ibis Air, EO provided military aircraft including fighter jets, transport planes, and attack helicopters. At this point, EO had incorporated a large number of companies and operations into its parent company Strategic Resource Corporation. It held controlling stakes and had major shareholders from other financial service companies, energy and metals mining companies, and private military organizations. It utilized its massive network of services to integrate itself into Angola's economy, political system, and military forces.

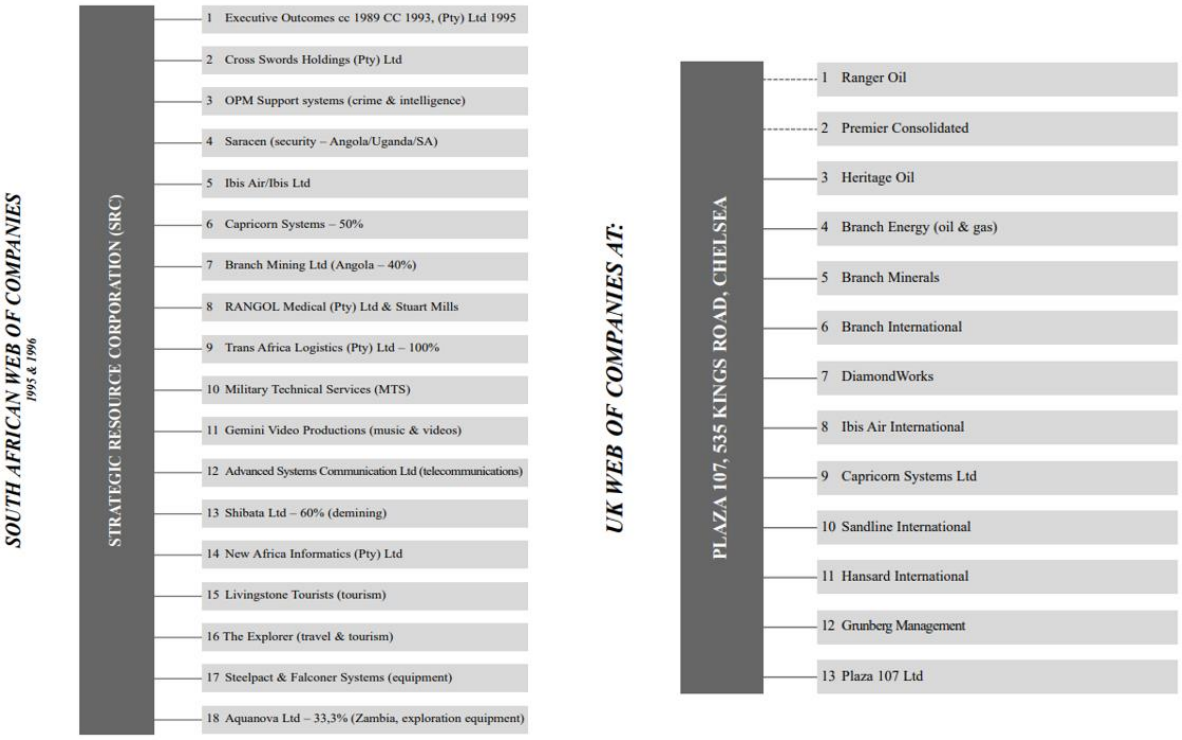

Figure 2. *Subsidiaries and controlling stakes of Executive Outcomes (Pech 2000)*

As well equipped as EO was, UNITA were also able to buy arms and manpower. Their illicit diamond trade generated over three billion dollars from 1992 to 1998 (Sherman 2000). The vast resource wealth of UNITA created the promise of greater material benefits from fighting war than engaging in political grievance expression. EO was able to quickly capitulate a well-armed and battle-tested opposition, while suffering several casualties. UNITA, after facing major defeats, was forced to enter peace negotiations with the ruling party in 1994.

EO faced greater international pressure regarding its engagements in Angola and Sierra Leone, and eventually backed out of its mining contract with the ruling powers in Angola. However, it had a contingency plan in place to continue benefiting from its oil and diamond projects. EO contracted out the services of Saracen International, Stuart Mills international, Trans Africa Logistics, OPM Support Systems, and others to maintain its mining interests in Angola. Additionally, EO oversaw the merger between Branch Energy and Carson Gold

Corporation (owned by Robert Friedland, a Canadian businessman), which became DiamondWorks Limited (Pech 1999). Another key shareholder of this new venture was Tim Spicer, founder of Sandline International. Through this new company, EO was able to reenter the mining operations.

During the conflict leading up to the peace negotiations, EO was largely unable to mitigate the flow of arms into the country. Stipulations in the Lusaka Peace Agreement called for demobilization of both sides, but little enforcement mechanism was in place for the condition and neither side truly sought to uphold those terms. EO had benefited from Angola's status as a weak state to gain financial inroads for its mining operations and the termination of contract did not change the fact that the MPLA had insufficient governmental control to fully legitimize its claim to power. The period of MPLA military dominance did not translate to governance in rural areas and areas formerly controlled by UNITA. The ruling party was also plagued by corruption due to the enormous riches from its diamond and oil production and contributed heavily to the growing grievances between the government and its citizens. Conflict would resume shortly after the peace accords and last until the early twenty-first century.

Wagner Group

The Wagner Group targets fragile states with high levels of resource assets. I argue that the patterns of behavior observed in Sierra Leone and Angola are similar to present-day Wagner Group activity in Africa. Like EO in previous case study, the Wagner Group posits counter-insurgency contracts and security in exchange for resource concessions, commercial ports, and

other viable locations.[6] One contrasting element is that of an indirect link to a state. Russia has been accused of utilizing groups like the Wagner Group to exert its influence abroad with plausible deniability. Legally, mercenarism is outlawed in Russia, but groups like the Wagner Group have enjoyed financial backing from Russian oligarchs. Russia has also utilized port/base concessions to the Wagner Group from its client state. The Wagner Group's demonstrative performance in the conflicts they are in do not suggest that they are engaged in the conflict to achieve victory for the client state. Rather, I argue that the Wagner Group's footprint in unstable countries in Africa form a satellite network of dependent states on Russian arms, training, and security.

In Sudan, I observe a similar instance of PMO-mining company links that introduce more actors in the country. The Wagner Group was hired to combat rebels against Omar al-Bashir.[7] The mining rights were given to M-Invest, a company owned by the same financier of the Wagner Group, Yevgeny Prigozhin. After securing its mining operations in Sudan, the Wagner Group began actively securing political and military support to the regime by organizing the suppression of anti-Bashir protests. The major actor in suppressing these protests was the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a militia group that grew in power during the political crisis and seized a controlling stake in the ruling new Sovereign Council. After the removal of Bashir, Wagner Group forces were able to utilize their new relationship with a powerful actor to maintain their

[6] Rondeaux, Candace. "Decoding the Wagner Group: Analyzing the Role of Private Military Security Contractors in Russian Proxy Warfare." New America (November 2019):https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/decoding-wagner-group-analyzing-role-private-military-security-contractors-russian-proxy-warfare/

[7] Fasanotti, Federica Saini. "Russia's Wagner Group in Africa: Influence, commercial concessions, rights violations, and counterinsurgency failure." Brookings Institute (February 2022). https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/02/08/russias-wagner-group-in-africa-influence-commercial-concessions-rights-violations-and-counterinsurgency-failure/

mining operations. They continued to leverage instability in the country to their advantage and deployed disinformation campaigns to maintain political turmoil.[8]

This is evident in the Central African Republic as well, with Wagner Group forces being deployed to the country and being compensated with resource concessions. Their objective is to support the weak government of President Faustin Touadera against a rebel faction that controls most of the territory. Wagner Group forces and other Russian businesses have been able to profiteer from the Central African Republic's diamond wealth while not actively contributing to the fulfillment of objectives. Reports indicate that Wagner Group members worked with rebel factions to access diamond mines in rebel-controlled territory.[9]

The Wagner Group additionally entered Mali recently to aid the military junta that took over in 2020. Though there are no formal reports, it is likely that the government is providing resource concessions through its abundance of uranium, diamonds, and gold.[10] Over a thousand personnel were deployed to Mali to train Malian soldiers to fight against Islamist militants in the region. Mali is also categorized by weak governance and fragmented autonomy. These conditions suggest that the Wagner Group will again take advantage of the government's inability to control the conflict to leverage its mining operations.

A common characteristic of Wagner Group involvement in conflict is torture and mass killings, often against civilian targets. This behavior is also compounded by their clients willingness to use brutal tactics to maintain control. Though information about Wagner's

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[8] Espanol, Marc. "Russia, Wagner Group expand ties with Sudan." Al Monitor (April 2022). https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/04/russia-wagner-group-expand-ties-sudan

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[10] Fasanotti, Federica Saini. "Russia's Wagner Group in Africa: Influence, commercial concessions, rights violations, and counterinsurgency failure." Brookings Institute (February 2022). https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/02/08/russias-wagner-group-in-africa-influence-commercial-concessions-rights-violations-and-counterinsurgency-failure/

presence in these conflicts is limited, I believe that the trend is unmistakably similar to that of Sierra Leone and Angola. The underlying conditions are largely unchanged: weak state, high level of grievance, low legitimacy, insufficient military capability, and resource wealth. If the case study operates on the aforementioned theoretical models, it is most likely that Wagner Group presence in conflicts will create more conditions favorable for insurgency, thus diminishing any possibility of legitimate power-sharing agreements. And in the case of the Wagner Group, instability is favorable, as it creates a larger dependency on Russia for arms and security. By extension, this leads to more opportunities for Wagner Group to extract from these countries.

Conclusion

An interesting conceptual finding is that empirical approaches to the impact of private military organizations on modern civil conflicts operate on the assumption that these hired companies/groups/individuals are involved in the conflict in a way that positively impacts the course of conflict. I find that the loose correlation between private military organization behavior and conflict termination is not well explained by the measurements we currently have. The covert nature of private military organizations and the time period in which this paper focuses leads to an incomplete empirical explanation. I argue that the causation element that I was seeking to find with the survival analysis lies in the case study of Sierra Leone and Angola, with further contextualization with the evolution of the Wagner Group.

I also argue that PMOs demonstrate engagement for the sake of asset protection, not the sake of the conflict. This doesn't necessarily equate to shortened or lengthened duration, but rather, that it makes it more difficult to finitely measure the direct impact of PMO's behavior on

conflict termination. Additionally, I find from my data collection that indirect command and control between client and provider permits incomplete assessment of performance and behavior (Musah and Fayemi 2000). There are incentives to indicate optimal performance, but there is little to no method for clients to verify those assessments. This is based on the theoretical assumption that governments that hire the services of private military providers are unable to unilaterally control the conflict.

The primary argument for this paper has been that resource concessions allow PMOs to shape conflicts into favorable opportunities to extract as much as possible while supporting the political/military leaders who permit continued extraction. This differs from standing literature that either argues that resource concessions shorten conflict duration or that PMO engagement prolongs immediate conflict. I sought to address the nuance of PMO behavior by demonstrating the multiple levels on which conditions for continued conflict are exacerbated. Thus, it may not be the measurable behavior that is causing conflicts to be of shorter/longer duration.

Further research can build upon this concept by utilizing a detailed analysis of the interpersonal relationships between governmental/military officials and PMO leadership. This case study used several secondary sources on these communications and effects. Additionally, further empirical research can incorporate new methods of capturing PMO behavior by analyzing specifics of mining profits and corresponding that to the resource revenue of client states during a defined period of time.

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