

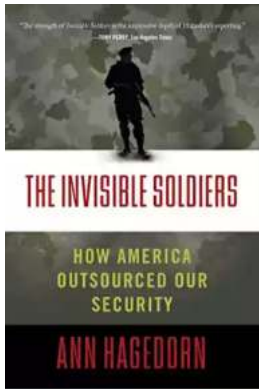
The Invisible Soldiers: How America Outsourced Our Security



The use of private military contractors is a controversial topic that has gained significant attention in recent years. These invisible soldiers, often referred to as mercenaries, have become an integral part of modern warfare and security operations around the world. This article delves into the outsourcing of America's security and explores the implications and consequences of relying on private military contractors.

A Shift in Paradigm

In the past, military operations were primarily handled by regular armed forces such as the Army, Navy, and Air Force. However, over the past few decades, there has been a significant shift towards outsourcing security-related tasks to private contractors. This outsourcing trend emerged during the post-Cold War era, where governments started to downsize their military forces while facing new security challenges.



The Invisible Soldiers: How America Outsourced Our Security by Gordon Chism(Kindle Edition)

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Private military contractors offer a range of services, including combat support, logistics, intelligence, training, and security consultancy. These contractors are often highly specialized, well-trained individuals who possess unique skill sets acquired from former military or law enforcement careers.

The Pros and Cons of Outsourcing Security

Advocates argue that outsourcing security to private military contractors allows governments to focus on core military missions while reducing the costs and risks associated with maintaining large standing armies. Private contractors offer flexibility, rapid deployment, and specialized expertise that can be tailored to fit specific needs.

However, critics raise several concerns about this approach. One major concern is accountability and oversight. Unlike regular armed forces which are subject to rules of engagement and military law, private contractors often operate in a legal gray area. This lack of accountability can lead to human rights abuses, excessive use of force, and a lack of transparency.

Moreover, the financial motivations for private contractors can sometimes conflict with national security interests. Contractors prioritize profitability, which may create incentives for prolonging conflicts or engaging in dubious activities for personal gain.

From Iraq to Afghanistan

The use of private military contractors gained significant attention during the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Private contractors played a substantial role in these wars, taking on tasks ranging from convoy protection to combat operations.

However, incidents involving private contractors have also raised concerns. Perhaps the most infamous incident was the 2007 Nisour Square massacre in Baghdad, where Blackwater contractors shot and killed 17 unarmed Iraqi civilians. Such incidents serve as a reminder of the challenges associated with outsourcing security to profit-driven entities.

The Ethical Dilemma

Beyond the legal and political aspects, there is an ethical dimension to consider. The use of private military contractors raises questions about the fundamental nature of war, the role of mercenaries, and the potential ramifications on international relations.

Is it morally justifiable to outsource the responsibility of security to private entities motivated by profit? Does this outsourcing blur the distinction between military forces and corporate armies? These questions remain contentious and have sparked debates within the international community.

Moving Forward: Regulation and Accountability

As the use of private military contractors continues, it is crucial to establish effective regulations and mechanisms for accountability. Governments must ensure that contractors operate within legal frameworks, adhere to international humanitarian laws, and are subject to proper oversight and disciplinary measures.

Additionally, promoting transparency and public access to information regarding the activities of private contractors is essential. This transparency allows for informed public debates and helps shape public opinion, influencing future security policies.

The issue of outsourcing security is not unique to the United States. Many other countries around the world have also relied on private military contractors for various operations. It is a global issue that requires balanced, informed discussions to find the right balance between efficiency, accountability, and ethics.

The rise of private military contractors has transformed the landscape of modern warfare and security operations. While outsourcing security offers advantages in terms of cost and flexibility, it also presents significant challenges regarding accountability, transparency, and ethics.

As we navigate through an increasingly complex world, it is essential to critically evaluate the role of private military contractors and strike a delicate balance

between utilizing their expertise and ensuring proper oversight. Only then can we address the concerns surrounding these invisible soldiers and mitigate potential negative consequences.



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The urgent truth about the privatization of America’s national security that exposes where this industry came from, how it operates, where it's heading—and why we should be concerned.

Thirty years ago there were no private military and security companies (PMSCs); there were only mercenaries. Now the PMSCs are a bona-fide industry, an indispensable part of American foreign and military policy. PMSCs assist US forces in combat operations and replace them after the military withdraws from combat zones; they guard our embassies; they play key roles in US counterterrorism strategies; and Homeland Security depends on them. Their services include maritime security, police training, drone operations, cyber security, and intelligence analysis (as Edward Snowden has famously revealed). Even the United Nations employs them.

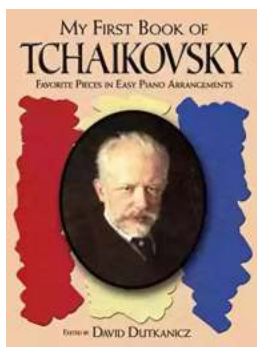
When did this happen? The turning point came when the US found itself in a prolonged war with Iraq, but without adequate forces. So the Bush Administration turned to the PMSCs to fill the gap. Private contractors and subcontractors eventually exceeded the traditional troops. The industry has never scaled back.

Ann Hagedorn profiles the members of Congress who recognize the dangers of dependence on PMSCs, but have been unable to limit them or even determine their true scope. She takes us to the exclusive club in London where the PMSCs were created, and she reveals the key figure in the evolution of the industry. She introduces us to a US Army general who studies new developments, such as PMSCs' drone operations, and worries about PMSCs potentially fighting American troops. *The Invisible Soldiers* will inspire a national dialogue about a little-known international industry on which our security rests.



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