

United Nations Special Political and Decolonization Committee



SPECPOL



TOPIC 2: Measures to enhance the transparency and regulations in the use of Private Military Companies by states and the United Nations

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Introduction to the committee

The Special Political and Decolonization Committee is one of six main committees of the United Nations General Assembly.

When it was first created, the Fourth Committee was solely responsible for trusteeship- and decolonization-related matters. However, after independence was granted to all the United Nations trust territories on its agenda, the committee's workload decreased. Consequently, the Fourth Committee was merged with the Special Political Committee, which had been created as a seventh main committee to deal with certain political issues.

It considers a broad range of issues covering a cluster of five decolonization-related agenda items. These are: the effects of atomic radiation, a comprehensive review of the question of peacekeeping operations as well as a review of special political missions, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East ([UNRWA](#)), Israeli Practices and settlement activities affecting the rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories, and International cooperation on the peaceful uses of outer space.

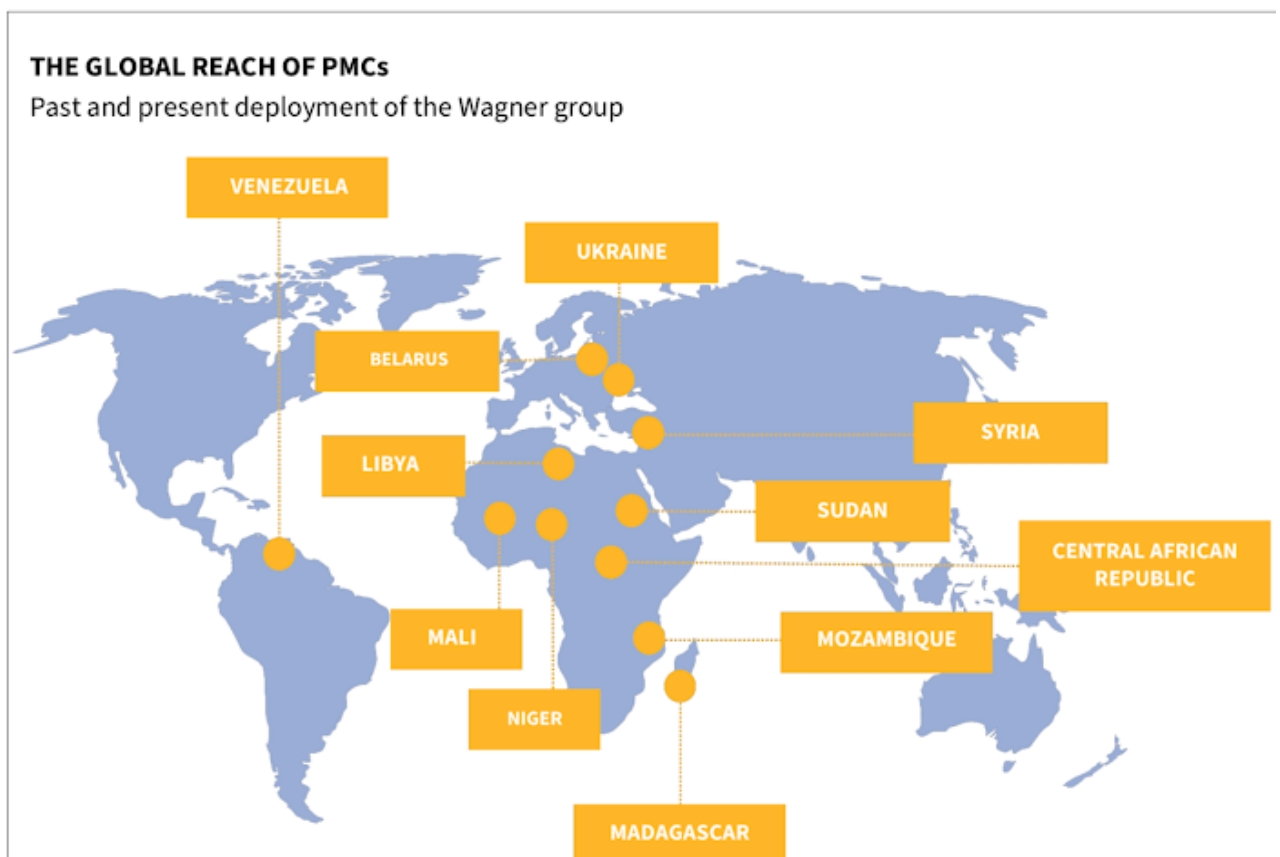
The Fourth Committee meets every year from late September to mid-November, but also convenes briefly in the spring to adopt any resolutions and decisions relating to

conference every year in the spring to adopt any resolutions and decisions relating to peacekeeping passed by the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. All 193 member states of the UN can attend its meetings.

Introduction to the topic

The issue of whether or not the United Nations should utilize the PMCs has been subject to extensive debate. The United Nations still view PMCs as mercenaries, independent soldiers of fortune, a scourge from the 1970s, when the issue was very different. The United Nations also relies on PMCs today for the security of many humanitarian activities, including disaster relief in conflict-prone regions. With these issues in mind, the United Nations established a working group on mercenaries to help governments recognize the need for a legally binding international agreement to regulate the use and activities of private military and security companies in-conjunction with existing resolutions.

The costs and benefits of using PMCs by both the United Nations and private companies should be assessed critically. Given that the United Nations has used some of these PMCs in the past for humanitarian related work, leaves the United Nations member states sharply divided on whether to get rid of them altogether, or to create a hard-fast standard



The map depicts current and past deployments of the Wagner group as an example of the global reach of some PMCs. Source : GSC.ART based on several sources¹²

to prevent issues arising in the future.

[Get information about PMCs and how they operate](#)

BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT PMCs AND HOW THEY OPERATE

- **Different Models:**

Private Military Companies are corporate entities which are paid to provide military services. These services can be wide-ranging and include specialist tasks such as strategic planning, intelligence, investigation, land, sea or air reconnaissance, flight operations of any type (manned or unmanned), satellite surveillance and intelligence, any kind of transfer of knowledge with military application, and material or technical support to traditional armed forces. Despite apparent similarities, not all PMCs are the same. **South Africa, the US and Russia** provide examples of three basic models.

The South African model is based on the modus operandi of the historical company Executive Outcomes (EO). Its approach is close to that of traditional mercenaries. These are private armies conducting autonomous military campaigns and financing their model from the resources of the country where they operate. In 1996 EO's support to the government forces of Sierra Leone was partially paid for by diamond concessions.

The US Academi model (formerly known as Blackwater) has been described as 'military entrepreneurship'. It is integrated within and strengthens the traditional armed forces of a powerful state. Between 1989 and 1993 the US government made very substantial cuts to the army's budget in response to pressure on the federal budget. It canceled the more expensive equipment programs and reduced the total number of soldiers from 2.2 million to 1.6 million. As part of that process, the Department of Defense began subcontracting a number of back-office tasks, notably in the area of logistics, to civilian companies working under contract with the army, as a way of enabling the military to concentrate on combat operations. The company's development is part of a wider trend since the end of the Cold War to privatize US forces. This subsequently became a key tool in the US strategy in the war against terrorism.

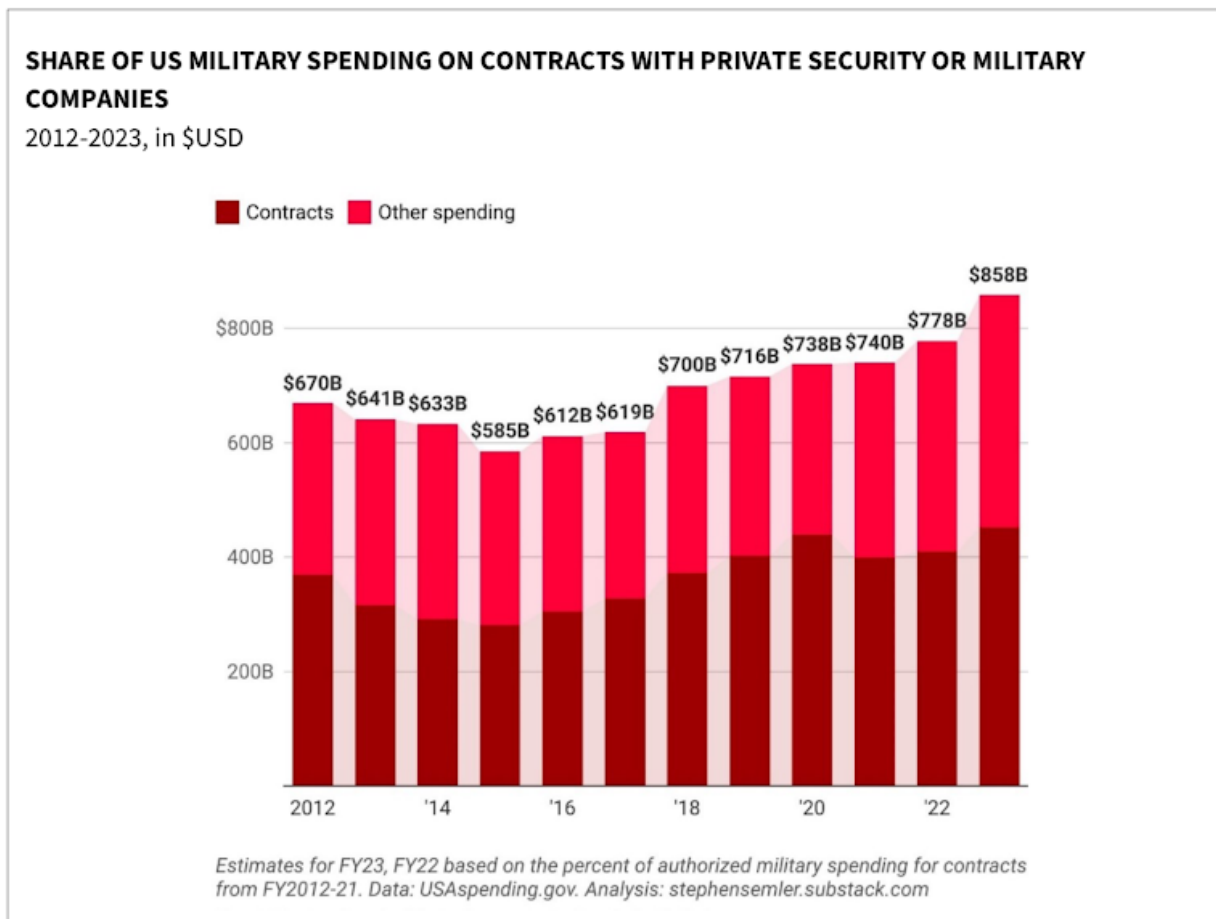
The Russian model, Wagner, constitutes a very different approach and is much more wide-ranging in its activities. Although it could be seen as drawing on elements from both models, it does so in a way which allows it to operate largely with impunity and with no respect for human rights or international humanitarian law. This is a model which emerging powers might be tempted to follow, although the recent Wagner rebellion also served to highlight the limits and associated risks of such an approach. Prior to the invasion of Ukraine, Wagner's forces were active across the globe in challenging Western interests in the Central African Republic, Mali, and Syria. This included attempts to undermine EU missions and activities in Africa as well as those of some Member States. They acted without overt legitimate cover from Russia until recently when the Kremlin recognised a formal link with Wagner. Wherever they go, they are suspected of committing acts of torture, rape, and summary executions. Wagner is a cross between a special forces team and a mafia-type organized crime network. This combination was apparent in Ukraine, where Wagner has been acting as a paramilitary, parastatal criminal group.

([UN research paper](#), accessed: 26th May 2024)

- **Types of PMCs:**

The type of private military companies are usually found in four types:

- **Providers:** their role is to provide logistics, intelligence, and maintenance to military forces of state.
- **Consultants:** they facilitate the state's military forces with training and strategic advice.
- **Military assistants:** they provide direct, organized military assistance, which could also mean fighting at the front line of a battlefield.
- **Security assistants:** being mostly armed, they protect individuals and organizations. Their duties vary from protecting politicians to convoys.



Source: Speaking Security Newsletter¹⁰

Definition of keywords related to the topic

- **Non-Self-Governing territories:** “Under Chapter XI of the Charter of the United Nations, the Non-Self-Governing Territories are defined as “territories whose people have not yet attained a full measure of self-government”.” ([UN](#))
- **Administering powers:** Member States which have or assume responsibilities for the administration of Non-Self-Governing territories ([UN](#))
- **Private Military Companies:** Private military security companies are private business entities that provide military and/or security services, irrespective of how they describe themselves. Military and security services include, in particular, armed guarding and protection of persons and objects, such as convoys, buildings and other places; maintenance and

operation of weapons systems; prisoner detention; and advice to or training of local forces and security personnel. [Red Cross](#)

A short history on the topic & past UN actions

Private Military and Security Companies form part of a growing transnational market for force which exists alongside, and is intertwined with, governmental and intergovernmental actors. The existence of such companies is not a new phenomenon, since PMCs first appeared during World War II, but it is a lesser known fact that some of them have been present in most UN operations since the 1990s.

In early 2011 the UN Department of Safety and Security ([DSS](#)) initiated the development of a policy proposal which offers recommendations for more responsible and coherent PMSC contracting practices, however, the initiative has not yet been finalized.

While the industry has certainly managed to gain entrance into what can be called a 'peace operations segment', there is not yet much written specifically on UN use of PMSCs.

In 2021, the EU acknowledged that the use of Private Military or Security Companies (PMSCs) could be legitimate in some situations but decided to impose sanctions on the Wagner Group for a series of violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

In April 2023, the Council added the Wagner Group and RIA FAN to the list of entities subject to EU restrictive measures for undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence of Ukraine. This decision complemented an earlier package adopted on 25 February which targeted several individuals and entities deemed responsible for the subversive activities of the group, in particular in Africa.

In UN debates:

[General Assembly, Third Committee, Seventy third session \(30th October 2018\)](#) (accessed: 26th May 2024)

Most affected Regions

• Hiring nations:

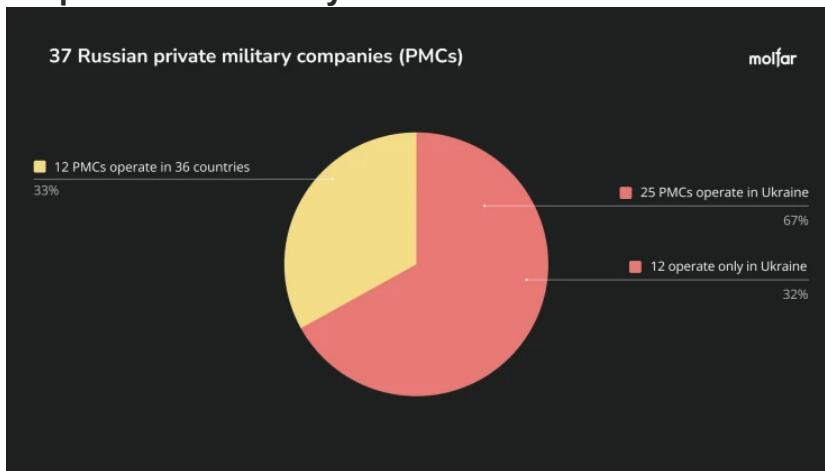
- *United States*: The United States has several PMCs that work closely with the government, particularly the Department of Defense. Companies like Blackwater (now known as Academi), DynCorp, and Triple Canopy have been contracted by the U.S. government for various military and security-related operations.
- *Russia*: Apart from the Wagner Group, Russia has other PMCs like RSB Group and MAR Group that have been linked to the Russian government and have operated in conflicts such as Ukraine and Libya.
- *United Kingdom*: The UK has PMCs as e.g. Aegis Defence Services and Control Risks, which have worked alongside the British government on security and military contracts in different parts of the world.



operations around the world.

- *France*: France has PMCs like Groupe d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale (GIGN), which is a specialized unit within the French Gendarmerie. They operate both domestically and internationally to provide security and law enforcement support.

● Operated nations by Russian forces:



● Biggest PMCs:

○ G4S

G4S, also known as Group 4 Securicor, is one of the world's largest private security companies, with operations in over 85 countries. The company provides a wide range of services, including security personnel, technology solutions, and cash transportation. The company states that it has an extensive network of more than 800,000 employees and has an annual revenues of \$18 billion. G4S has been the subject of controversy and criticism for several reasons. One of the main controversies surrounding G4S is its involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The company provided security services to Israeli

... settlement borders. The company provides security services to Israeli settlements in the West Bank, which are considered illegal under international law.

In addition, G4S has been criticized for providing equipment and services to Israeli prisons, where Palestinian political prisoners are held, including child prisoners.

Another controversy involving G4S is its role in the deportation and detention of immigrants in the UK and other countries.

The company has been criticized for its role in the detention of asylum seekers and the removal of failed asylum seekers. In particular, there have been reports of abuse and mistreatment of detainees in G4S-immigration removal centers, leading to calls for the company to be removed from the UK's immigration detention system.

G4S employees have been accused of abuse, mistreatment, and wrongful deaths of people in their custody.

- **Wagner Group**

The Wagner Group, also known as PMC Wagner, is a Russian private military company that has been involved in various conflicts around the world, including in Ukraine. The group is linked to Yevgeniy Prigozhin, a Russian businessman with close ties to the Kremlin.

Besides the employment in Ukraine since 2014 one of the most notable controversies involving the Wagner Group is their involvement in the civil war in Syria. The group has been accused of providing military support to the Assad regime, including training and advising Syrian government forces and participating in combat operations.

The group also supports the Libyan National Army (LNA) led by Warlord Khalifa Haftar in their civil war. The Wagner Group has been linked to several incidents of human rights abuses, including the use of chemical weapons and the targeting of civilian areas.

PMC Wagner has also been accused of involvement in other conflicts around the world, including in the Central African Republic, Sudan, and Mali.

- **ACADEMI (formerly known as Blackwater)**

Blackwater Academi, also known as Blackwater USA or Xe Services LLC, is a private military company founded in 1997 by former Navy SEAL Erik Prince. In 2014, the company was sold and rebranded again as Constellis. Operating in more than 50 countries, Constellis Holding has 14,000 employees and an annual revenue of \$1.3 billion.

Blackwater gained notoriety in the early 2000s for its involvement in the Iraq War, where it provided security services to the United States government and private contractors. Blackwater's role in the Iraq War was controversial, as the company was accused of several incidents of misconduct, including the killing of unarmed Iraqi civilians.

An incident involving Blackwater occurred on December 24, 2006, in which a Blackwater contractor shot and killed an Iraqi vice presidential guard. This incident led to a diplomatic crisis between the United States and Iraq.

The incident also raised questions about the legal status of private military contractors operating in Iraq, as they were not subject to the same rules and regulations as U.S. military personnel.

Blackwater had a presence in Iraq and Afghanistan during the US wars in these countries. Blackwater also provided private security services to various clients in the region, including oil companies and other businesses.

In addition to such incidents, Blackwater has been accused of other questionable actions, such as weapons trafficking, illegal arms sales, and

questionable actions, such as weapons trafficking, illegal arms sales, and bribery.

- **CACI International**

CACI International is a US-based defense contractor. Founded in 1962, CACA has a revenue of \$6 billion.

One of the most notable controversies involving CACI concerns the company's role in the Abu Ghraib prison scandal in Iraq. In 2003, CACI employees were present at the prison during the time when prisoners were subjected to brutal and inhumane treatment, including sexual abuse and torture.

In the wake of the scandal, CACI was accused of being complicit in the abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib. The company was also accused of failing to properly supervise its employees at the prison, and of failing to report the abuse to the appropriate authorities. CACI has denied any wrongdoing and has stated that it was not aware of the abuse at Abu Ghraib until the photographs were leaked to the media.

Despite CACI's denials, several former employees of the company have come forward to testify that they reported abuse to CACI management, and the company did not take any action to address the issue.

Helpful sites

[SSG/R Democratic Control of Armed Forces \(DCAF\) backgrounder on PMCs](#)

[The Role of Private Security Companies \(PSCs\) in CSDP Missions and Operations](#)

[Mercenarism and PMSC](#)

[Chart: Contracted Security | Statista](#)

[The private military services industry, SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security no. 2008/1](#)

[Transparency and Governance of Private Military and Security Services](#)

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[Catalog of Russian PMCs](#) (accessed: 26th May 2024)

[Private Military Contractors in Conflict Zones](#) (accessed: 26th May 2024)

Chairs; Luis Keller, Milena Fritsch and Lujza Lukács