

Forum: Special Political and Decolonization Committee (GA4)

Issue: Evaluating the Impact of Foreign Mercenary Involvement in African Conflicts



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Position: Co-Chair

Personal Introduction

Dear delegates,

My name is Konstantinos Grafopoulos and I am a 10th Grade student in George Zois School. I have the pleasure of serving as one of this year's Co-Chairs of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (GA4) in the American College of Greece MUN Conference.

This year, along with my fellow chairs, we have the joy of getting to work on topics of utmost importance which concern international stability, independent governance and matters of global security and peace. The following study guide is meant to be utilized as a tool for concentrated research and credible sources, but still, it may not be your only source of information. Consequently, I highly encourage you to delve into your own research and preparation, to be able to form a unique well-rounded perspective on the matter at hand.

Furthermore, should you need any assistance whatsoever in that process, I will be available to answer any inquiries and aid you accordingly. You can reach me at my e-mail address, namely: grafopoulos.k@zois.edu.gr or contact my Main Chair via her e-mail address, ceciliampassa@gmail.com.

Kind regards,

Konstantinos Grafopoulos.

Topic Introduction

Private military companies, private security companies, paramilitary forces and mercenaries have operated in Africa for decades, but in the last ten years or so, the numbers have been increasing exponentially. This significant rise has sparked debate amongst the continent’s security experts as to where this situation could lead.

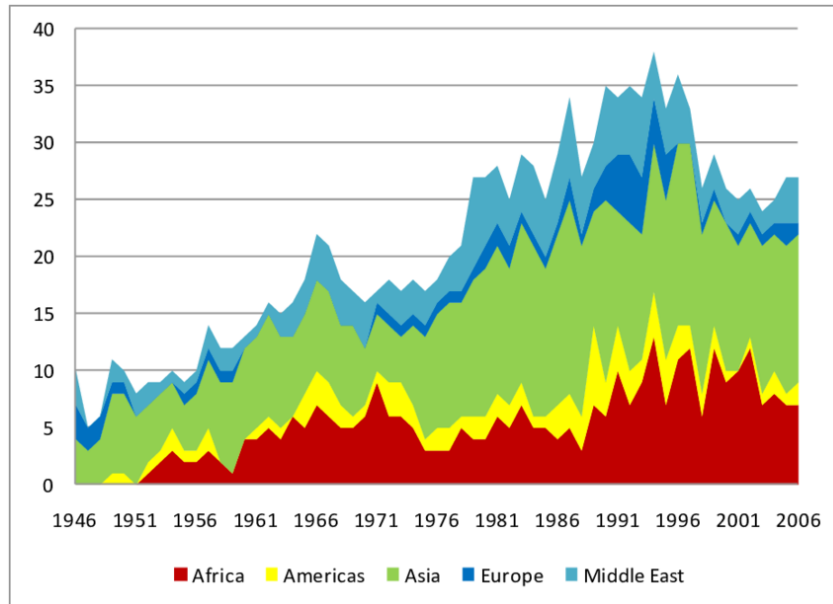


Figure 1: Graph depicting the rise of PMCs/Mercenaries globally. ¹

The United Nations report on the situation estimated its urgency. “We are witnessing the ever-increasing presence of mercenaries and mercenary-related actors in contemporary armed conflicts and the ever-mounting risk of grave human rights abuses and war crimes,” said Sorcha MacLeod, chair of the United Nations working group on the use of mercenaries.²

¹ JOUR Baum, Joel Mcgahan, Anita 2009/10/29 - Outsourcing War: The Evolution of the Private Military Industry after the Cold War

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228191607_Outourcing_War_The_Evolution_of_the_Private_Military_Industry_after_the_Cold_War

² Adf, and Adf. “Preying on Instability.” *Africa Defense Forum*, 11 Aug. 2025, adf-magazine.com/2025/08/preying-on-instability.

Paramilitia groups and shadow forces, meaning unofficial forms of army, are now wielding influence more than ever; war-torn regions in Libya and Sudan and politically unstable zones in the Central African Republic, acting both as instigators of unrest and enforcers of security³.

Nevertheless, their presence in the African continent has become an integral part of the continent's infrastructure. They provide logistical support and infrastructure, contribute largely in intelligence gathering and combat training in underdeveloped and underfunded regions⁴. Presented mainly in the form of Private Military Companies (PMCs), many countries employ them to bolster their armies, while others rely on them to secure private national-scale investments. Just like in Sudan, owing to the Civil War, since 2023, there has been major inclusion of unmarked personnel of Colombian origin in both the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF)⁵. It is an undeniable fact, that the neglect of global stakeholders towards the African land, is what has ultimately led to national leaders requiring the help of unmarked mercenaries.⁶

Regarding the conference theme, "Shaping Tomorrow", it is inextricably linked with the topic of this study guide. Foreign mercenaries have become a substitute for national armies, taking the role of the dominant militia, undermining global procedures, interfering with conflict, escalating territorial disputes and yielding chaos. Thus, the responsibility of shaping a 'better' tomorrow, without arbitrary assailants or shadow forces, falls on all of us.

Definition of Key Terms

Conflict Economics

Conflict economics maintains that the concepts, principles, and methods of economics can be fruitfully applied to the study of conflict activities, either if these are not finance-related. Thus, diverse

³ Muhammed, Joshua. "Mercenaries and Militias: Shadow Forces Shaping Africa's Conflicts - African Leadership Magazine." *African Leadership Magazine*, 19 Feb. 2025, www.africanleadershipmagazine.co.uk/mercenaries-and-militias-shadow-forces-shaping-african-conflicts/?q=intraafrican-trade-fair-2025-welcomes-arise-iip-as-official-premier-partner&pr=353082&lang=fr.

⁴ *The Increasing Presence and Role of Private Security Firms in Africa: The Russian Company "Wagner" as a Model.* epc.ae/en/details/featured/the-increasing-presence-and-role-of-private-security-firms-in-africa-the-russian-company-wagner-as-a-model.

⁵ "From Sudan to Ukraine: Why Colombian Mercenaries Keep Fighting Foreign Wars." *Middle East Eye*, 2025, www.middleeasteye.net/news/sudan-ukraine-why-colombian-mercenaries-keep-fighting-foreign-wars.

⁶ Adf, and Adf. "Mercenaries, Drones, False Information: The Future of African Warfare Takes Shape." *Africa Defense Forum*, 9 Sept. 2025, adf-magazine.com/2025/09/mercenaries-drones-false-information-the-future-of-african-warfare-takes-shape.

phenomena like war, arms races, alliances, and terrorism are analyzed and understood as outcomes of purposeful choices responsive to changes in underlying incentives.⁷

Counterinsurgency (COIN)

A COIN is the blend of comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously contain insurgency and address its root causes.⁸

Coup-Proofing

Coup-proofing refers to the various strategies and tactics political leaders use to prevent the military or other powerful groups from overthrowing them in a coup d'état, often by fragmenting security forces, creating rival agencies, purging disloyal officers, and fostering ethnic/religious loyalties.⁹

Coup Support

Coup support refers to public or elite backing for a coup d'état, the sudden, illegal seizure of government power, often by the military, which differs from a popular revolution as it's usually a small group taking over, but support can make it succeed, leading to rapid leadership change but not always lasting stability or policy shifts.¹⁰

Hybrid Warfare

Hybrid warfare is a subset of hostile activities against a state, falling under the category of hybrid threats but representing an escalated phase.¹¹

Insurgency

“An insurgency is an armed uprising against a recognized government, typically characterized as a guerrilla war. It aims to overthrow a government or resist foreign invasion by winning popular support for the rebel cause.”¹²

⁷ Anderton, Charles H., et al. *Principles of Conflict Economics : A Primer for Social Scientists*. Cambridge University Press, 2009.

⁸ “2009-2017 State Gov. Report COIN.” *State Gov.*, State Gov., [2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/119629.pdf](https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/119629.pdf).

⁹ De Bruin, Erica. “How to Prevent Coups D’État.” *Cornell University Press*, 7 Jan. 2021, www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/how-to-prevent-coups-detat/.

¹⁰ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. “Coup d’État | Political Intervention.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 15 Dec. 2014, www.britannica.com/topic/coup-detat.

¹¹ “Hybrid Warfare - Hybrid CoE - the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats.” *Hybrid CoE - the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats*, 8 Apr. 2025, www.hybridcoe.fi/hybrid-warfare/.

¹² “Insurgency Meaning.” *Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/insurgency.

Mercenary

A “mercenary” is a person who takes a direct part in hostilities motivated essentially by the desire for private gain.¹³

Plausible Deniability

Plausible deniability is the ability to deny any involvement in illegal or unethical activities, because there is no clear evidence to prove involvement. The lack of evidence makes the denial credible, or plausible. The use of the tactic implies forethought, such as intentionally setting up the conditions to plausibly avoid responsibility for one’s future actions.¹⁴

Private Military Company (PMC)

“A private military company (PMC) refers to an independent corporation that offers military services to national governments, international organizations and substate actors.”¹⁵ They have been seen as the ones utilising mercenary and providing them to the nations.

Proxy Forces

Direct or indirect use of non-state and parastate groups to carry out militarized intimidation or control territory to exert influence or achieve specific security or political outcomes.¹⁶

Resource Security Contracts

“Legally-binding agreements ensuring contractors protect government or company assets, data and national interests.”¹⁷ These are a kind of precautionary means against territorial violations and breaches of large-scale agreements.

¹³ “Mercenaries | How Does Law Protect in War? - Online Casebook.” *Casebook.icrc.org*, [casebook.icrc.org/a_to_z/glossary/mercenaries](https://www.casebook.icrc.org/a_to_z/glossary/mercenaries).

¹⁴ Goddard, Taegan. “Plausible Deniability.” *Political Dictionary*, 27 Mar. 2013, politicaldictionary.com/words/plausible-deniability/.

¹⁵ “Private Military Company (PMC) Meaning.” *Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/private-military-firm.

¹⁶ “Proxy Forces.” *U.S Gov*, securityanddefence.pl/Introduction-to-the-Special-Issue-Proxy-forces-in-modern-warfare-132287_0_2.html.

¹⁷ Publicus. “What Is Contract Security?” *Publicus*, publicus.ai/glossary/contract-security.

Background Information

Historical Background

Early Mercenary Development

During and after the African Independence movement¹⁸, foreign nations utilised mercenary influence to spread division, exhibiting the first signs of civil war in the newly created states. These mercenary groups helped political leaders rise to power and be in control of the previously colonizing states. These were considered practically as an extension of the national army, while officially, as an anonymous, unnamed group. This granted them a veneer of secrecy and deniability, helping government officials act arbitrarily in the shadow of their ‘ghost’ military forces. The Congo Crisis¹⁹, the Rhodesian Bush War²⁰, the Angolan Civil War²¹ and the South African Border War²² were all by-products of mercenary involvement. These military measures were utilised as a means of maintaining economic stability and territorial dominance.

Subsequent Mercenary Progress

The second wave of mercenaries was deployed by Cold-War actors, primarily by the United States and the Soviet Union. This time, the concern was not economic, but rather ideological. The United States exploited mercenary dominance to influence Africa and eventually emerge as a winner in the fight against Communism. By gathering ideologically aligned supporters, they expanded this political “fight” and used their resources as an influential means. Specifically, in Operation Condor, in November 1975, owing to the Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet's spy chief, Manuel Contreras, there were more than 2.000 assassinations of left-wing sympathizers in South America.²³ This was orchestrated by intelligence officers from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay. The operation was significantly backed by the United States, which financed the necessary operations and influenced the mercenary settlements in the intelligence agencies.

¹⁸ “Oxford History of the British Empire - Volume 4 : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive.” *Internet Archive*, Feb. 2007, archive.org/details/oxfordhistoryofthebritishempirevol.4oxford1999.

¹⁹ “The Congo, Decolonization, and the Cold War, 1960–1965.” *Office of the Historian*, history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/congo-decolonization.

²⁰ Beyer, Greg. “What Was the Rhodesian Bush War?” *TheCollector*, 27 Oct. 2024, www.thecollector.com/what-was-rhodesian-bush-war/.

²¹ Knapp, Alyssa. ““Burning with a Deadly Heat”: NewsHour Coverage of the Hot Wars of the Cold War.” *Americanarchive.org*, 2021, americanarchive.org/exhibits/newshour-cold-war/angola.

²² *Border War – SASFA*. www.recce.co.za/border-war/.

²³ Tremlett, Giles. “Operation Condor: The Cold War Conspiracy That Terrorised South America.” *The Guardian*, 3 Sept. 2020, www.theguardian.com/news/2020/sep/03/operation-condor-the-illegal-state-network-that-terrorised-south-america.

The use of mercenaries allowed the United States government to maintain an unseen role, characterized by neutrality and respect for self-determination, while simultaneously being heavily involved in the founding of right-wing dictatorships in many of these new African states. These mercenaries additionally allowed the United States government to provide supplies and technical support for the apartheid-era (1948-1994) South African military while the government of South Africa was suffering international sanctions and embargoes.²⁴



Figure 2: Photograph depicting activists during the apartheid-era of South Africa against the U.S intrusion and domestic infringement.²⁵

The Legality of Mercenaries after 2001

The United Nations General Assembly had been focused on the issue of foreign mercenaries for over 30 years. Additionally, because of the ever-growing reliance of the Russian Federation on Wagner Group, the topic became a crucial issue of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Mercenaries are explicitly banned by the 2001 United Nations Mercenary Convention, but many nations, namely the United States, France, South Africa, the United Kingdom, China and Russia, have not ratified or officially signed it and in addition, nations such as Belgium and others have signed with some reservations, which significantly weakened the

²⁴ African Union. "AUHRM Project Focus Area: The Apartheid." *African Union*, 2025, au.int/en/auhrm-project-focus-area-apartheid.

²⁵ "Ending Apartheid in South Africa." *Peace Works: Century of Action*, 30 Nov. 2015, peaceworks.afsc.org/ending-apartheid-south-africa.

jurisdiction of the treaty.²⁶ South Africa, the primary base of many African operating PMCs, has taken steps to restrict and finally ban the operation of mercenaries within the state, but has run into constitutional challenges, along with issues of being able to prosecute under the faint legislative regulations.

The situation in the last decade

This situation has evolved with the corporatization of mercenary activity, as some states have introduced legislation that legalizes private military operations, they act in the interests of the country in which they are based. In September 2021, a United Nations working group called for the establishment of a “binding international legal framework” to regulate private military companies. In February 2022, at the 35th African Union summit, the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Bankole Adeoye, called for the “complete exclusion of mercenaries from the African continent, signaling steps towards the complete erasure of mercenary presence globally.”²⁷

Causes of Foreign Mercenary Involvement

Economic Causes

The perennial conundrum of intra-state strife within the African continent has long-since been a leading cause of division and disparity. The inability to reach intercontinental agreements or plan unilateral strategic moves has led to forcing most African nations to rely on external actors. Furthermore, poverty-stricken and Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) are unable to act independently and are forced to base their operations on global funds or foreign mercenaries. To demystify the support Africa receives as a continent, it is merely a 5.2%²⁸ of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP); which is later divided equally amongst all African stakeholders.

²⁶ “The United Nations Mercenary Convention Bans Killing for Money. So Why Has the UK Refused to Sign It?” *Young Fabians*, 2016, www.youngfabians.org.uk/the_united_nations_mercenary_convention_bans_killing_for_money_so_why_has_the_uk_refused_to_sign_it.

²⁷ Ruehl, John P. “Private Military Companies Continue to Expand in Africa.” *NE Global Media*, 31 Aug. 2023, www.neglobal.eu/private-military-companies-continue-to-expand-in-africa/.

²⁸ “Demystifying Africa’s Dependence on Foreign Aid.” *Mo Ibrahim Foundation*, 2025, mo.ibrahim.foundation/news/2025/demystifying-africas-dependence-foreign-aid
<https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/our-research/iiag>

Additionally, while over 48% of rare minerals are produced in Africa, only 2% of that is actually traded internally, to benefit the African region.²⁹ In that instance, the unfairness and exploitation of the African resources and geopolitical state is clear, and by segregating the African people from their internally-produced benefits, the financial gap is created and enlarged. Ergo, African nations are driven towards reliance on foreign bodies, hoping for stability and a chance at domestic independence.

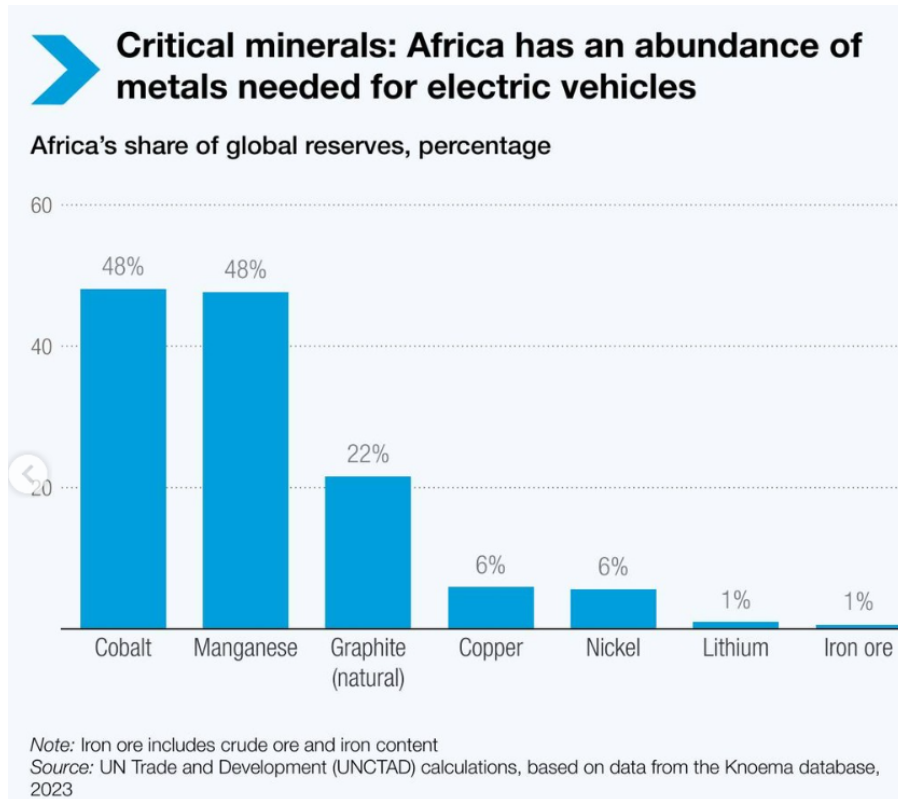


Figure 4: Graph depicting the percentage of African minerals as part of the global reserves.³⁰

On a final note, the financial interests that lie in illicit arms trade, are not to be disregarded. Through foreign mercenaries, the geopolitical flow of arms or smaller weapons has become

²⁹ Boafo, James, et al. "The Race for Critical Minerals in Africa: A Blessing or Another Resource Curse?" *Resources Policy*, vol. 93, 1 June 2024, p. 105046, [www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0301420724004136](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2024.105046), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2024.105046>.

³⁰ UNCTAD. "Economic Development in Africa Report 2023." *UNCTAD*, 2023, unctad.org/publication/economic-development-africa-report-2023.

easier, allowing transcontinental trade and passage by canals of utmost importance, like the Suez Canal or the link between Mediterranean, Red Sea and the Yemen blockade.³¹

Political Causes

Foreign mercenary involvement has played a crucial role in political stability. Nevertheless, it has also acted as a means of political manipulation, meant to promote those who can fulfill interests. Fragile states with less financially-developed national military powers often turn to mercenaries to suppress rebellions, guard leaders, or maintain order, as seen during post-colonial Africa, including Togo, Ghana, and Nigeria, which soon reversed the gains of political development.³² The extensive measures taken to suppress any possible 'movements', known as coup-proofing, has led to many actions that involved violence via the shadow of foreign mercenaries. World powers use mercenaries to intervene indirectly and secretly in other nations, supporting secessionists or governments to further strategic goals without direct military commitment, a tactic prominent during the Congo Crisis. Undercover missions, political reforms and sudden changes in political power.

Powerful corporations hire mercenaries to protect valuable assets in unstable or critical regions, especially against governments threatening nationalization, blurring the already-faint lines between state and private security. Post-Cold War, the rise of Private Military Companies (PMCs) and market-based solutions to security problems led to greater acceptance and integration of contracted soldiers in various security-protection sectors.

In essence, mercenaries fill voids left by weak state capacity, or on a broader perspective, less global attention and aid. Thus, mercenaries serve as tools for external actors to exert and strictly manage power, thrive on instability and most of all challenge national sovereignty for political gain, even if that eventually turns into chaos, just as the Russian Wagner Group did in the Boko Haram conflict in Nigeria.³³

International Definition and Legislation of Mercenaries

³¹ Kumar, Ashok. "Weaponising the Supply Chain: Yemen's Blockade and the Contradictions of Maritime Logistics Capital." *Antipode*, vol. 58, no. 1, 14 Dec. 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.70107>.

³² Akinola, Adeoye, and Ratidzo C Makombe. *The Nature of Post-Colonial African States and Military Coups: A Convergence*. 1 Jan. 2024, pp. 65–92, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-51019-9_3.

³³ Center for Preventive Action. "Violent Extremism in the Sahel." *Council on Foreign Relations*, 23 Oct. 2024, www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violent-extremism-sahel.

According to the International Humanitarian Law Database, a mercenary is a person who is specially recruited locally or abroad in order to fight in an armed conflict and who does, in fact, take a direct part in the hostilities. Such a person is motivated to participate by the desire for private gain and is promised, on behalf of a party to the conflict, material compensation that is substantially more than that promised or paid to combatants of similar rank and function in that party's armed forces. A mercenary is neither a national of a party to the conflict nor a resident of territory controlled by a party to the conflict, is not a member of the armed forces of a party to the conflict, and has not been sent by a state which is not a party to the conflict on official duty as a member of its armed forces.³⁴

Mercenary status grants the right of detaining an individual, it does intervene with their right towards a fair trial. As the UN Secretary-General reported in 1988, the Islamic Republic of Iran claimed to have captured nationals from other countries whom it alleged were mercenaries, but it asserted that, rather than punish them, it chose to treat them like other prisoners of war, explaining the legal nature of mercenaries, with real-life precedents.³⁵

In conclusion, while mercenaries are generally defined as detainees and are held accountable under circumstances, the procedures which recognize them as mercenaries are very strict and easily bypassed. If simply one of the prerequisites is not met, then subsequently, one cannot be deemed a mercenary. Even after detention, procedures meant to act as punishment are only possible in the long-range. The lack of immediate punishment and harsher penalties had somewhat contributed to the prevalence of this phenomenon until today.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Central African Republic (CAR)

The CAR has relied extensively on foreign mercenaries due to the collapse of its national armed forces following the 2013 Civil War.³⁶ In the following years, the CAR government invited Russian military instructors and Wagner Group personnel after receiving a UN exemption³⁷ to import weapons.

³⁴ "Mercenaries." *Icrc.org*, 2023, ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1/rule108.

³⁵ Law Database, International Humanitarian. "IHL Treaties ." *Icrc.org*, 2022, ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties.

³⁶ "Sudan's Civil War Reignites the Illicit Car Trade into Chad | ISS Africa." *ISS Africa*, 2025, issafrica.org/iss-today/sudan-s-civil-war-reignites-the-illicit-car-trade-into-chad.

³⁷ "Arms Embargo | Security Council." *Un.org*, 2020, main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/sanctions/2653/exemptions/arms-embargo.

With the excuse of insufficient military equipment, the UN allowed for standardized exports from Russia to equip it adequately. Wagner mercenaries were providing direct combat support to President Faustin-Archange Touadéra³⁸, protecting the capital Bangui, training government forces and above all, securing strategic mining regions. In exchange for constant security assistance, companies of Russian origin obtained guarantees for abundant gold and diamond mining, embedding economic interests into the conflict.³⁹

Libya

Since the murder of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011⁴⁰, Libya has become a key destination and illicit trade hub for foreign mercenaries. Prior to his death, Libya followed a restrictive policy, both in exports and imports, something that changed after Gaddafi's death. Armed factions recruited fighters from Sudan, Chad and Niger, while regional and international actors increasingly relied on the acquisition of mercenary forces to influence the domestic conflict externally. Since late 2018, the Libyan National Army (LNA)⁴¹ has employed Russian Wagner Group mercenaries, who have illegally provided unmarked snipers, artillery coordination, drones and undetectable air defense systems. Even after the 2020 ceasefire, thousands of mercenaries remained in Libya, along with the designated illicit artillery, undermining UN peace initiatives, violating the directives of the United Nations Mercenary Convention and perpetuating instability across North Africa and the Sahel region. Their presence undermines all current efforts and begs the question of their in-depth ties with the current government of Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh.⁴²

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation is one of the most involved stakeholders in the use of foreign mercenaries. It has used proxy forces, such as the Wagner Group and African Corps, predominant in Mali, to affect the African continent.⁴³ It has provided mercenaries with select military equipment,

³⁸ CAR's Government Faustin-Archange Touadéra.

www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/6-national-authorities-and-stakeholders-bios.pdf.

³⁹ PISM REPORT AFRICA CORPS-A NEW ITERATION of RUSSIA'S OLD MILITARY PRESENCE in AFRICA. 2024. <https://www.pism.pl/webroot/upload/files/Raport/PISM%20Report%20Africa%20Corps.pdf>

⁴⁰ "The Death of Gaddafi." *Al Jazeera*, 2018, www.aljazeera.com/video/the-big-picture/2018/11/5/the-death-of-gaddafi.

⁴¹ Lyubarsky, Nikkie, and Gabriella Tejada. "ISSUE BRIEF."

<https://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/TSC-IssueBrief-The-War-in-Sudan.pdf>

⁴² "Libya: Government." *Globaledege.msu.edu*, globaledege.msu.edu/countries/libya/government.

⁴³ Niko Vorobyov. "Wagner vs Africa Corps: The Future of Russian Paramilitaries in Mali." *Al Jazeera*, 16 June 2025, www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/6/16/wagner-vs-africa-corps-the-future-of-russian-paramilitaries-in-mali.

political cover and has managed to execute illicit operations, such as the extraction of gold, oil or other rare minerals. It did so, while still maintaining plausible deniability. Additionally, it also utilised foreign mercenary powers for regime stabilization, as seen in Sudan or the Central African Republic (CAR).⁴⁴ The expansion of Wagner operations intensified after 10 November 2018, when the group began large-scale deployments in Libya in support of the Libyan National Army (LNA) under Khalifa Haftar, contributing to major offensives between 2019 and 2020.⁴⁵ Following the death of Yevgeny Prigozhin in August 2023, Russia began restructuring its mercenary presence under the Africa Corps, placing these forces under closer control of the Russian Ministry of Defense.⁴⁶ This greater scheme of enhancement towards offensive operations not only weakened the validity of global initiatives, but also undermined the value of collaborative frameworks.

Sudan

Sudan has been both directly and indirectly involved in mercenary activity equally as a provider and user of mercenary forces. During several conflicts, the Sudanese government has relied on paid military forces such as the Janjaweed⁴⁷, operating with autonomy over the artificial shadow of financial incentives. From 2015 and on, Sudan has deployed over thousands of paid-fighters to Yemen to fight for the Saudi-led conflict in exchange for financial compensation, effectively exporting Sudanese mercenaries and equipment abroad.⁴⁸ Domestically, successive Sudanese governments have continued to invite foreign mercenaries, notably Russian-linked Wagner personnel from 2018 onward, to provide security assistance and protect economic assets.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, Wagner ties have also been a result of strategic alliances and deals that include national settlements and geopolitical compensations. Internationally, due to Sudan's ongoing civil war, steps towards tackling this form of infringement are limited.

United States of America (USA)

⁴⁴ "A LOCAL PEACE AGREEMENT BRINGS HARMONY to CAR-SUDAN BORDER COMMUNITIES." *United Nations Peacekeeping*, 2025, peacekeeping.un.org/en/local-peace-agreement-brings-harmony-to-car-sudan-border-communities.

⁴⁵ "Russian Group Wagner "Fighting in Libya." *BBC News*, 7 May 2020, www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-52571777.

⁴⁶ Fenbert, Abbey. "Wagner Group Greatly Reduced 1 Year after Prigozhin's Death, UK Defense Ministry Reports." *The Kyiv Independent*, 24 Aug. 2024, kyivindependent.com/wagner-group-greatly-reduced-1-year-after-prigozhins-death-uk-defense-ministry-reports/.

⁴⁷ "UNTERM." *Un.org*, 2025, unterm.un.org/unterm2/en/view/d5eb4654-b0ed-4f5c-894d-92a33e2d574d.

⁴⁸ "Huge Sudanese Losses in Yemen Highlight Fighters' Role in the Conflict." *Middle East Eye*, www.middleeasteye.net/news/thousands-saudi-paid-sudanese-mercenaries-die-frontline-yemen.

⁴⁹ Neves, Yuri. "Saudi Arabia's Sudanese Mercenaries in Yemen." *Georgetown Security Studies Review*, 24 Feb. 2019, georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2019/02/24/saudi-arabias-sudanese-mercenaries-in-yemen/.

The United States has been a major global actor in the use of PMCs rather than traditional mercenaries, especially since the end of the Cold War. In the meantime, while presidencies shifted, the goal of the United States of America remained, being the expansion of all trades, trans continentally. Following the September 11, 2001, Twin Towers attacks, the USA's reliance on contractors expanded significantly in overseas military operations, because of its limited geographic military expansion.⁵⁰ Companies such as DynCorp, Blackwater and other defense firms provided logistical support, training, base security and intelligence services in conflict zones, including parts of Africa, such as Somalia and Djibouti, but also increased the USA's overview over the Middle East.⁵¹ Although these contractors operate under USA law and government oversight, their use has raised concerns over accountability, about civilian harm and the privatization of military-executionary warfare. These overlooked legal loopholes gave space to illicit unmarked operations and illicit global trade. Officially, the USA opposes the use of unregulated foreign mercenaries and supports international legal frameworks governing mercenary activity, while it has chosen to sign the UN Mercenary Convention with reservations. Those refer to the withholding of domestic records and the condemnation of any attempts to seize military equipment in foreign regions.

Executive Outcomes

Executive Outcomes (EO) was a South African private military company active primarily in the 1990s, most notably in Angola and Sierra Leone. Unlike Wagner, EO operated through formal contracts with recognized governments and was openly hired to defeat rebel groups and protect strategic assets such as oil fields and diamond mines. In Sierra Leone, EO played a decisive role in pushing back the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and restoring temporary stability to the government. However, Executive Outcomes raised serious ethical and legal concerns about the privatization of warfare. Its involvement demonstrated how weak states could become dependent on foreign mercenaries for national security, thereby reducing incentives to build professional domestic armed forces. The company's close links to extractive industries also reinforced perceptions that mercenary activity was driven by profit rather than long-term peace or governance objectives. EO's operations contributed to international debate and eventually to stronger regulatory efforts, including the UN Mercenary

⁵⁰ 9/11 Memorial & Museum. "9/11 FAQs." *9/11 Memorial and Museum*, National September 11 Memorial & Museum, 2023, www.911memorial.org/911-faqs.

⁵¹ McKelvey, Tara. "Sure, Blackwater Is Bad, but What about DynCorp?" *The American Prospect*, 3 Sept. 2009, prospect.org/2009/09/03/sure-blackwater-bad-dyncorp/.

Convention and later the Montreux Document, which sought to clarify state responsibilities regarding private military actors.

Blocs Expected

Alliance 1

In this alliance, there will be nations which, although condemning violence and initiation of unwanted conflicts, will be countries that directly or indirectly is a supplier or hubs of mercenary settlements. African nations may be more willing to join this bloc as it represents a stance which is undeniably linked to the topic but still expresses an opinion against threatening acts. Other actors like Russia, through the Wagner Group and the African Corps, are definite members of this expected Bloc.

Alliance 2

In this Bloc, there will be states which rely heavily on legislative measures to officiate penalties against mercenaries. They must have co-signed the United Nations Mercenary Convention, even with certain reservations, expressing their need to uphold immediate justice and adequate punishment. They may still be indirectly linked with past mercenary actions, but their involvement in global legal measures is a defining point of the participation of each Member-State. They are the nations with the intention of cooperating and tackling the phenomenon of infringement by foreign mercenaries yet may hold a restrictive approach towards its effective implementation.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
12 March 1947	Start of the Cold War. ⁵²

⁵² The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Cold War | Causes, Facts, & Summary." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 19 Jan. 2024, www.britannica.com/event/Cold-War.

1 January 1948	South Africa - Apartheid Era - U.S Domestic Intrusion. ⁵³
11 November 1975	The initiation of Operation Condor. ⁵⁴
1 January 1993	South African PMC hired to fight UNITA rebels. ⁵⁵
20 October 2001	The signing of the United Nations Mercenary Convention. ⁵⁶
2011	Libya becomes a major hub for foreign mercenaries. ⁵⁷
20 October 2011	The fall of Muammar Gaddafi – Libya. ⁵⁸
10 November 2018	Russian mercenary group begins large-scale operations. ⁵⁹
January 10 2021	Introduction of an African-tied legally binding framework before the African Summit. ⁶⁰
31 May 2022	35th International Diplomacy African Summit. ⁶¹
23 August 2023	Death of Yevgeny Prigozhin - Russian Ministry of Defense Reform. ⁶²

⁵³ National Archives. "Truman Doctrine (1947)." *National Archives*, The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 8 Feb. 2022, www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/truman-doctrine.

⁵⁴ A. THE INTERNATIONAL BILL of HUMAN RIGHTS.

www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/Compilation1.1en.pdf?

⁵⁵ Wikipedia Contributors. "Wagner Group Activities in Africa." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 2 Dec. 2025.

⁵⁶ "International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries." *Un.org*, 2020, legal.un.org/avl/ha/icruftm/icruftm.html?

⁵⁷ ADF. "With Eyes on Sahel, Russia Shifts from Syria to Libya." *Africa Defense Forum*, 22 July 2025, adf-magazine.com/2025/07/with-eyes-on-sahel-russia-shifts-from-syria-to-libya/.

⁵⁸ "The Death of Gaddafi." *Al Jazeera*, 2018, www.aljazeera.com/video/the-big-picture/2018/11/5/the-death-of-gaddafi

⁵⁹ "1975." *Coat.ncf.ca*, 2025, coat.ncf.ca/our_magazine/links/issue43/articles/1975_angola.htm.

⁶⁰ "African Union | an Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa." *Au.int*, 2022, au.int/en/summit/35.

⁶¹ "African Union | an Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa." *Au.int*, 2022, au.int/en/summit/35.

⁶² Fenbert, Abbey. "Wagner Group Greatly Reduced 1 Year after Prigozhin's Death, UK Defense Ministry Reports." *The Kyiv Independent*, 24 Aug. 2024, kyivindependent.com/wagner-group-greatly-reduced-1-year-after-prigozhins-death-uk-defense-ministry-reports/.

Relevant UN Resolutions, Treaties & Events

- [Montreux Document Agenda item 76 Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 \(2008\)](#)
- [The United Nations Security Council \(UNSC\) Resolution 2759 /2024](#)
- [The United Nations Resolution A/77/462/2022](#)
- [The United Nations Resolution 61/151/2007](#)
- [The United Nations Resolution 323/UNGA/2001](#)

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

African Union-led missions reducing reliance on foreign contractors

AU-led missions such as African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in Somalia⁶³, now changed into ATMIS, have been taking on security and stabilization roles that might, on a different occasion, have been handled by foreign private military contractors. These missions provide a structured, primarily multilateral presence with regional legitimacy and oversight, bypassing plausible deniability, which helps reduce reliance on unregulated external actors. By supporting Somali security forces and protecting important political processes, AU missions also create conditions for long-term stability and state building, offering a more accountable and sustainable alternative to contractor-led interventions. However, gaps in logistics, intelligence and air support sometimes still need outside assistance, showing the limits of this approach. AMISOM was first deployed in 2007 and later reconfigured into ATMIS in 2022⁶⁴ in response to the growing threat posed by Al-Shabaab and the limited capacity of Somali state institutions. The mission has operated through multinational troop contributions from African Union member states such as Uganda, Kenya, Burundi and Ethiopia, in coordination with the Somali National Army and under mandates authorized by the African Union and the United Nations. The impact of these efforts can be seen in the recapture of major urban centers such as Mogadishu and Kismayo and in the facilitation of Somali electoral processes in 2012, 2016–2017 and 2022, which reduced the operational space for private military contractors and mercenary forces to assume primary

⁶³ African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) <https://au.int/en/ti/amisom>

⁶⁴ ATMIS <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/atmis>

security roles. Nevertheless, the continued dependence on external funding and technical support demonstrates that AU-led missions can reduce but not fully eliminate reliance on foreign contractors.

Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)

In the Central African Republic, MINUSCA has been sent to provide a rules-based, multilateral security presence in areas previously dominated by private military actors, including Russian-linked mercenaries. The mission focused in-depth on protecting civilians, helping restore state independent authority and strengthening security institutions, ergo trying to reduce the influence of unaccountable actors. By offering a transparent and internationally backed alternative, MINUSCA⁶⁵ helps reinforce state sovereignty and curb abuse associated with privatized foreign security forces. Despite challenges like funding issues and sometimes the government preferring mercenary support to remain anonymous, the mission represents a really important step toward re-establishing formal security structures and limiting reliance on private military actors. MINUSCA was first deployed in 2014 following the escalation of sectarian violence and the collapse of national security institutions, with the purpose of stabilizing the country and preventing further human rights violations. Its implementation includes joint patrols, disarmament and demobilization programs, and support for the reconstitution of the Central African armed forces under international supervision. The impact of the mission can be observed in the protection of civilian populations in key urban areas and in the gradual re-extension of state authority beyond Bangui⁶⁶, even though continued cooperation between the CAR government and private military groups has limited the mission's overall effectiveness and demonstrates the tension between international peacekeeping frameworks and state preferences for deniable security assistance⁶⁷.

Possible Solutions

Setting definite responsibilities and obligations for Contracting Parties and responsible actors

As mentioned in the Montreux Document⁶⁸, there are some correspondent obligations with the contract of foreign mercenaries. In response, then there must be an international legislative measure that will specify under all circumstances what falls under the umbrella of duties of a contracting party

⁶⁵ UN MINUSCA Mission Overview <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/minusca>

⁶⁶ Electoral support and security role of AMISOM

<https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/april-2018-july-2018/amison-role-stabilizing-somalia>

⁶⁷ CAR and mercenary involvement context <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/central-african-republic>

⁶⁸ Montreux Document on Private Military and Security Companies

https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/icrc_002_0996.pdf

and analogically, the chosen actor of it. Thus, as an addition to the UN Mercenary Convention⁶⁹, there could be a section tailored to the prerequisites of upholding humanitarian law and safeguarding legally binding conventions. In this way, legal loopholes could be avoided, and now all violations of the co-signed measures would be clear, resulting in the penalties of the responsible Member-states accordingly. Additionally, the concept of plausible deniability would be denied, and there would not be states acting under the cover of foreign mercenaries. This solution would work by creating standardized reporting requirements and enforcement mechanisms for states that employ private military companies, including mandatory disclosure of contracts, rules of engagement, and accountability chains. The impact of such regulation would be a reduction in legal ambiguity and fewer opportunities for states to outsource violence while avoiding responsibility for violations of international humanitarian law.⁷⁰ However, its effectiveness would depend on political will and compliance by powerful states, which remains a significant limitation of international legal instruments.

Support of inclusive political settlements in conflict states

The African Union (AU) as a connecting link between Member-States in the African continent, should be more inclusive in its policies. Accordingly, by sharing political and social benefits equally amongst nations, it can reach a sense of equality. There could be strategic alliances in the region between them, without having to rely on external actors, like foreign mercenaries. Their intercontinental ties could be strengthened, and just like the European Union (EU)⁷¹ has been practicing, can share crucial intelligence support and practical equipment. By this, there will be internal reliance, and no nation will need to be indebted, exploited or managed by a contracting actor. Inclusiveness in this context refers specifically to incorporating marginalized political groups, ethnic communities, and opposition actors into peace negotiations and post-conflict governance structures, thereby reducing grievances that create demand for private military assistance. This solution would be implemented through AU-mediated peace talks⁷², power-sharing arrangements, and regionally coordinated security frameworks. The impact would be a decline in the political and security vacuum that foreign mercenary groups exploit, although progress would likely be uneven due to weak institutions.

⁶⁹ UN International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-6&chapter=18

⁷⁰ African Union Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) <https://au.int/en/peace-and-security>

⁷¹ EU intelligence and defense cooperation (PESCO) <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/defence-security/pesco/>

⁷² Inclusive peace settlements and conflict reduction (UNDP) <https://www.undp.org/publications/inclusive-peace>

The imposition of direct sanctions to private military companies and non-state actors

The imposition of this solution would create clearer international legal measures, which should directly criminalize the recruitment, financing, and deployment of private military companies in armed conflicts, establishing binding rules that define their responsibilities and ensure compliance with international humanitarian law. Enforcement mechanisms such as blacklisting firms, freezing assets, and imposing sanctions could deter their use and limit the commercialization of conflict, although the effectiveness of this approach would ultimately depend on strong international cooperation and political will.

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