Analysing the evolution of private military companies in Africa since the 1990s

by
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Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Political Science) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University

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December 2023

Declaration

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December 2023

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Abstract

Security challenges have been a longstanding challenge in many African countries. These challenges can be borne out of ethnical differences, religious extremism, political competition and grievances over governance. It is the state's responsibility to contain insecurity in its territory. However, many African states fall short of this vital task. A government's inability to address security challenges in their territory may lead to a crisis of internal and external displacement of their civilians, which could have ripple effects on neighbouring states and, most importantly, loss of human life. Many African countries experience political instability and violent conflict, which are features of fragile states. Traditionally, when conflicts are triggered, and African states cannot contain them alone, organisations such as the United Nations (UN) assist those nations. However, there has been a shift in how certain African governments respond to security challenges in their countries by hiring Private Military Companies (PMCs). PMCs are businesses that provide military-oriented services to clients. Clients of PMCs range from companies, mines, non-profit organisations, and governments. PMCs such as Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) and the Wagner Group are found across the African continent, operating in Libya, Mali, Mozambique and the Central African Republic (CAR). Even nations such as Nigeria, traditionally regarded as having solid militaries, have employed PMCs. PMCs are often criticised by a wide range of civil society and some governments due to the nature of their work.

PMCs are an ever-evolving security apparatus in African conflicts. The two inter-connected questions this thesis will address to understand their evolution are '*Why have certain African governments employed PMCs?*' and '*How has the involvement of PMCs in African conflicts affected conflict outcomes?*' To answer these questions, this study utilises a comparative case study design focusing on four countries that have made use of PMCs. These countries are Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Mozambique and the CAR. The primary PMCs discussed in this thesis are Executive Outcomes (EO), Specialised, Task, Training, Equipment and Protection International (STTEP), DAG and the Wagner Group. The study is qualitative desktop research that utilises secondary data. Fragile state theory is used to illustrate how the fragile statehood of certain African states leads to increased engagement with PMCs. Although PMCs are an unconventional and controversial security tool, African governments continue associating themselves with them. This is despite the political implications which may befall them. These companies, much like any other multinational corporation operating in Africa, have their positive and negative contributions where they are active.

Opsomming

Veiligheidsuitdagings is 'n langdurige struikelblok in baie Afrikalande. Hierdie uitdagings kan voortspruit uit etniese verskille, godsdienstige ekstremisme, politieke kompetisie en ontevredenheid oor regering. Dit is die staat se verantwoordelikheid om onsekerheid in sy grondgebied te beheer. Tog skiet baie Afrikalande te kort in hierdie noodsaaklike taak. 'n Regering se onvermoë om veiligheidsuitdagings in hul grondgebied aan te spreek, kan lei tot 'n krisis van interne en eksterne verplasing van hul burgers, wat rippel-effekte op naburige state en, nog belangriker, verlies van menslike lewe kan hê. Baie Afrikalande ervaar politieke onstabiliteit en gewelddadige konflik, wat eienskappe van brose state is. Tradisioneel, wanneer konflikte ontstaan en Afrikalande dit nie alleen kan beheer nie, help organisasies soos die Verenigde Nasies (VN) daardie nasies. Tog is daar 'n verskuiwing in hoe sekere Afrika-regerings reageer op veiligheidsuitdagings in hul lande deur Privaat Militêre Maatskappye (PMM's) in diens te neem. PMM's is besighede wat militêr-georiënteerde dienste aan kliënte verskaf. Kliënte van PMM's sluit maatskappye, myne, nie-winsgewende organisasies en regerings in. PMM's soos Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) en die Wagner Group is regoor die Afrikakontinent aktief in Libië, Mali, Mosambiek en die Sentraal-Afrikaanse Republiek (CAR). Selfs nasies soos Nigerië, wat tradisioneel beskou word as een met 'n sterk militêre mag, het PMM's in diens geneem. PMM's word dikwels vermy vanweë die aard van hul werk en hoe hulle gebrek aan deursigtigheid in hul operasies het.

PMM's is 'n voortdurend evoluerende veiligheidsapparaat in Afrikakonflikte. Die twee vrae wat hierdie tesis sal aanspreek om hul evolusie te verstaan, is 'Hoekom het sekere Afrika-regerings PMM's in diens geneem?' en 'Hoe het die betrokkenheid van PMM's by Afrikakonflikte konflik-uitkomste beïnvloed?' Om hierdie vrae te beantwoord, maak hierdie studie gebruik van 'n vergelykende gevallestudie-ontwerp wat fokus op vier lande wat met PMM's betrokke is. Hierdie lande is Sierra Leone, Nigerië, Mosambiek en die CAR. Executive Outcomes (EO) Specialised Task, Training, Equipment and Protection International (STTEP), DAG en Wagner Group is die PMM wat hierdie tesis sal fokus op. Die studie is 'n kwalitatiewe tafelbladnavorsing wat sekondêre data gebruik. Die teorie van brose staat word gebruik om aan te toon hoe die brosheid van sekere Afrika-staatshoede PMM's toelaat om hulle te penetreer. Alhoewel PMM's 'n onkonvensionele en kontroversiële veiligheidshulpmiddel is, gaan Afrika-regerings voort om hulle daarmee te assosieer. Dit is ten spyte van die politieke implikasies wat hulle mag tref. Hierdie maatskappye, soos enige

ander multinasionale korporasie wat in Afrika opereer, het hul positiewe en negatiewe bydraes waar hulle aktief is.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I give all thanks to God. This has not been an easy journey for me, however His love, mercy and grace has sustained me. All the praise and glory to the Great I Am that I am.

To my supervisor, Dr Lamb, your patience and guidance are much appreciated. I would not have known about PMCs had it not been for your teachings. Thank you for opening my mind to this aspect of Politics and Security. I thank you for taking the time to read and correct my work.

To Samantha De Kocker, thank you for availing yourself to translate my work for me in a heartbeat. I will forever appreciate you, Sammy, and pray that God blesses your territory abundantly.

My friends, Mpho Sedumedi and Nthabiseng Sethapi. I thank you both for the many years of friendship that have become a sisterhood. Although we are separated by time and distance, the random phone calls and texts are highly appreciated. I pray that we all continue to grow into women who overcome their challenges and emerge victorious. May this be one of many testimonies that we will share in our lifetime.

My parents, Nomonde and Stephen Enos. I thank you both for never giving up on me, even in moments when I had given up on myself. I thank you both for being vulnerable with me and sharing your own testimonies with me, which have encouraged me through this journey. Your prayers, support and unconditional love give me the confidence to work towards building myself and embracing all that life has to offer me. I will forever love and cherish you both.

My niece, Senamile Simcelile Adomah-Ahofe Mpofana. My Peanut, you have given me so much joy and taught me the importance of waiting on God's timing and on His plans for our lives. I pray that my testimony will someday inspire you and those who will come after you always to be willing to learn.

Finally, to my sister, Dr Stephane Maame Enos, to whom I dedicate this thesis. Words cannot describe my love and appreciation for you, my sister. Thank you for being my best friend, biggest cheerleader and, most importantly, my prayer partner. Through you, I have seen the importance of working with dignity and being committed to completing what one has started. May Elohim continue to bless your territory.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

Acronym/abbreviation	Full word
ACOTA	African Contingency Training and Assistance
AECOM	Architecture, Engineering, Construction, Operations and Management
AFRICOM	African Command
ANC	African National Congress
AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
DAG	Dyck Advisory Group
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EO	Executive Outcomes
EU	European Union
FADM	The Armed Forces for the Defence of Mozambique
FMF	Foreign Military Financing
GNA	Government of National Accord
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IMET	International Military Education and Training
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LNA	Libyan National Army
MINUSCA	The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR
MINUSMA	The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MINURSO	The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

MONUSCO	The United Nations Stabilization Mission in the DRC
MPLA	Movement for the Liberation of Angola
MPRI	Military Professional Resources Incorporated
MNC	Multinational cooperation
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NP	National Party
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PAE	Pacific Architects and Engineers
PMC	Private Military Company
PSC	Private Security Company
RSLMF	Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
STTEP	Specialized Task, Training, Equipment and Protection
UK	United Kingdom
UNAMSIL	The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UN	United Nations
UNITA	The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UNITAF	United Task Force
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
US	United States of America

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Security and insecurity have always been key and contentious issues in Africa. This matter can be traced back to significant events such as the Mfecane wars, the transatlantic slave trade, and the Cold War proxy wars in countries like Angola and Mozambique (McGowan *et al*., 2006; Ethridge & Handelman, 2016). In recent years, the continent has faced persistent security challenges due to the emergence of domestic terror groups and Islamic extremist entities like Boko Haram and al-Shabaab. Violence caused by poor governance also contributes to the security challenges in Africa. Traditionally, external actors concerned with security, such as the United Nations (UN), will intervene whenever conflicts arise in African states. However, there has been a shift in how African states respond to disputes within their lands, and that is by hiring private military companies (PMCs).

PMCs are companies that offer military inspired services to their clients. These companies specialise in providing services such as participating in direct combat, intelligence gathering and providing military weapons and equipment to clients who contact their services (Bearpark & Schulz, 2007; Varin, 2018; Amoah, 2023). Their clients range from non-governmental organisations, private businesses and governments. Companies such as the defunct Executive Outcomes (EO), Academi, and the Wagner Group are examples of PMCs. Against this backdrop, this thesis will analyse the evolution of PMCs in Africa from the 1990s to date. It does so by analysing four countries that have all engaged with the services of PMCs, namely Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Mozambique and the Central African Republic (CAR).

1.2 Background and rationale of the study

Governments rely on their security forces to restore peace and security during violent conflicts. When these security forces cannot restore order independently, governments may turn to external actors such as the UN and regional bodies such as the African Union (AU) to provide military assistance. However, relying solely on these resources often proves inadequate in restoring public order and security, leading to prolonged conflicts and unnecessary loss of life. This is best demonstrated by the dismal performance of the UN in the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and the ongoing United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA), which was activated in 2014 and still has not brought about stability in the CAR as of 2023 (Klabbers, 2018; Al Jazeera, 2019; United Nations, 2023). In situations where security forces, in collaboration with organisations like

the UN, fall short, PMCs may find it easier to establish themselves as alternative security provider due to favourable conditions.

There is a common consensus amongst scholars researching PMCs that the end of the Cold War contributed significantly to creating a marketplace for contemporary PMCs. This was due to the vacuum in military assistance created at the end of the Cold War, with the Superpowers withdrawing their support from their allies. Amongst the authors who attribute the rise of the PMC industry to the end of the Cold War are Howe (1998) and Foaleng (2007). Essentially, after the end of the Cold War, countries in Africa previously used as proxies by the United States of America (US) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) were left without foreign allies to support their military efforts. This resulted in a significant loss of political and military aid they had previously relied on. Consequently, the need arose for countries that had previously relied on the superpowers and their allies to look into alternatives to assist them during violent conflicts and insecurity. This point is further elaborated by Foaleng (2007:43), who states,

> "With the end of the Cold War and the subsequent restructuring of intrastate systems on the African continent, a number of non-state actors came to occupy the scene, especially in situations of armed conflict characterised by the nexus under consideration. Among the non-state actors involved in and taking advantage of the networks underlying this nexus were private security companies (PSCs) and private military companies (PMCs)".

Due to the diversity that exists on the continent, security crises on the continent can be born out of various factors such as religious extremism in Nigeria with religious terrorist groups such as Boko Haram determined to enact Sharia Law throughout Nigeria, or political differences and ethnical intolerance such as the case of the CAR, which has experienced multiple coups which have resulted in governments being toppled due to political differences (Mehler, 2012; Carayonnis, 2017; Varin, 2018). Often many violent conflicts and insecurity that plague many African countries can be born out of the combination of such factors, further escalating tensions and resulting in prolonged periods of insecurity. Violent conflicts and insecurity often lead to destruction, resulting in the demise of innocent civilians, abject poverty, and mass internal and external displacement. Countries such as Sierra Leone, Mozambique, the CAR, and Nigeria know too well the consequences of conflicts and

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insecurity as they all have been subjected to them. All these countries have turned to hiring PMCs.

Although PMCs are often referred to as controversial mercenaries, some scholars such as Brooks (2000) and Messner (2007) have tried to differentiate between the two. As Brooks (2000:4) states, "It is important to differentiate PMCs from freelance mercenaries: PMCs behave like normal companies. Their primary motivation is long-term profit, and they are constrained by domestic and international laws. Freelance mercenaries are motivated by short-term profit or adventure. They are often stateless and show little regard for rule of law". In essence, the distinctions between rogue or freelance mercenaries and PMCs lie in the fact that PMCs are official business entities obliged to follow the laws of their countries and those they operate in. This means that they are prohibited by law from acting recklessly during their operations. These are the primary distinctions between freelance mercenaries like Simon Mann and PMCs like Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) or Specialised Task, Training, Equipment and Protection International (STTEP). Despite attempts to differentiate modern PMCs from mercenaries, certain sections of society still refer to PMCs as mercenaries. For instance, the reports of PMC activity in Sierra Leone, CAR, Nigeria and Mozambique all refer to these companies as mercenaries (Howe, 1998; Cropley & Lewis, 2015; Abdullahi & Durmaz, 2022; Felbab-Brown, 2023; Doxsee *et al*. 2023).

PMCs are non-transparent about their operations' finer details; therefore, obtaining their financial records takes much work. It is widely agreed upon that the PMC industry is highly profitable, generating millions of dollars annually. In a 2006 article on PMCs, Kinsey estimated that the industry brought in approximately $100 billion annually. Since then, the creation and expansion of PMCs such as DAG, STTEP, and the Wagner Group in the 2010s suggest that this figure has likely increased. This trend has not spared Africa, where these companies have established a significant presence. These companies are often rewarded for their services through mining concessions and other business deals. This guarantees their financial positions in the long run, but it is a controversial practice. One example of the give-and-take relationship between PMC and certain African states is between the CAR and Midas Resources, a company associated with the Wagner Group. In exchange for Wagner Group's services, Midas Resources was granted mining concessions in the Ndassima gold mines (Doxsee *et al*., 2023).

During the 1990s, it was considered socially unacceptable for governments to employ PMCs. In present times, African governments still utilise the services of PMCs to compensate for the security gaps left by their national armed forces, although they are still widely socially unpopular. Hiring PMCs is often not transparent, as exemplified in situations like those in the CAR, Mozambique and Nigeria. The African continent is a significant area of operation for PMCs, with their services being contracted in countries such as Libya, Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the CAR, and Mozambique, among others. (Abdullahi & Durmaz, 2022; Doxsee, 2023). This is despite the continent being home to the largest and often most expensive UN peacekeeping missions worldwide, such as MINUSCA, the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which is set to end in December 2023 following the Malian government's request that the mission be terminated due to its poor performance (Klobucista & Renwick, 2021; Mohamed, 2023).

This thesis will primarily discuss four PMCs that operate in Africa: EO, STTEP, DAG, and the Wagner Group. These four PMCs that have been selected for this thesis were chosen out of the author's interest. EO is the blueprint for the current PMCs, which is why it was chosen for this thesis. Analysing PMCs in Africa without mentioning EO would be incomplete as it paved the way for the growth of the PMC industry. For STTEP to be contracted by Nigeria, which presumably has a strong military, means that it is a force to be reckoned with, which needs to be analysed. DAG was selected due to its operations in the SADC region, particularly Mozambique. The SADC region is mainly peaceful compared to other regions; therefore, one would not expect PMC activity. At the same time, quantitative data shows that the Wagner Group is currently the most active PMC operating in Africa, which was one of the most important determining factors that led to it being selected for this thesis. The countries where these PMCs have operated, namely Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Mozambique, and the CAR, will be the focus of this study.

The reason for conducting this study is that PMCs are becoming an integral and favoured part of security in numerous African countries. In some cases, they take over the tasks and responsibilities the state should primarily provide. This has already happened in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Mozambique, and the CAR. The topic is significant in both politics and international relations. These companies compete with intergovernmental organisations, security providers like the UN and AU, and regional bodies such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). Multiple

sources have raised the alarm about the presence of PMCs in various African conflicts. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the reasons behind this increase.

Below is a table which demonstrates the prevalence of PMCs in specific African conflicts, which the author of this thesis has compiled:

Country:	PMC:	Period:	Operation:
Angola	1. EO. 2. Defence Systems Limited.	Late 1992/early 1993. 2. 1998.	Assist the Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) government in combat against the National Union for the Independence of Angola (UNITA) rebels. 2. Protection of South African embassies.
Sierra Leone	1. Gurkha Security Guards. 2. EO.	1995-1996.	1. Regain control of areas captured by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). 2. Contain RUF guerrilla fighters. 3. Provide military training.
DRC	1. Defence Systems Limited. 2. The Wagner Group.	1. 1998. 2. 2022-present (2023).	1. Protection of South African embassies. 2. Undisclosed. Presumably to provide protection services to valuable mineral sites and to prop up the government.
Liberia	1. DynCorp. 2. Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI).	2005-2009	Assist with peacebuilding processes alongside the mission of Africa Contingency Operations Training & Assistance (ACOTA).

	3. Pacific Architects and Engineers (PAE)		
Sudan/ Darfur	1. DynCorp. 2. MPRI. 3. PAE. 4. The Wagner Group.	1. 2006 2023 (Wagner)	1. Assist with peacebuilding processes. 2. Wagner reportedly supplies missiles and other weapons to the Rapid Support Forces.
Equatorial Guinea	MPRI.	2001	Protect the oil-rich waters, which Exxon Mobile was utilising.
Nigeria	1. MPRI. 2. STTEP.	1. 2000 2. 2015	1. Build capacity within the national military as part of U.S. assistance. 2. Assist in recapturing the kidnapped Chibok schoolgirls. Provide military training in the offensive against Boko Haram.
Guinea Bissau	MPRI	2009/2010	Assist with democracy promotion in ACOTA.
CAR	The Wagner Group	2018-present (2023)	Undisclosed. Presumably, to prop up the presidency of Faustin-Archange Touadéra by providing direct military combat services alongside the military. Furthermore, Wagner operatives have been reported to provide security services to mines and other mineral resource points of interest.

Mozambique	1. The Wagner Group 2. DAG 3. The Paramount & Burnham Global Consortium	1. 2019-2019 2. 2020-2021 3. 2021	1. Undisclosed. Presumably to assist the government in combat against the Islamic insurgency in northern Mozambique. 2. Provide military and aerial support as well as logistics support. 3. Train and provide military equipment and support.
South Sudan	The Wagner Group	2018-present (2023)	Undisclosed. Allegedly to provide security at gold mines, funnel funds for politicians and elites, and give weapons to Sudan.
Mali	The Wagner Group	2021-present (2023)	Provide military training, support and security as political instability in the country persists.
Djibouti	PAE Government Services	2010	Provide harbour security, logistics support, vehicles and equipment.
Libya	The Wagner Group	2018-present (2023)	Fight alongside the Libyan National Army (LNA) under the leadership of Khalifa Hifter against the UN- UN-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA).
Somalia	1. DynCorp International. 2. PAE Government Services.	2007 2012	To equip, deploy and train AU peacekeepers. To assist local coastguards. Anti-piracy operations.

	3. Architecture, Engineering, Construction, Operations and Management (AECOM) 4. Triton International. 5. Hart Group Operations.		
Burkina Faso	The Wagner Group	2022	Undisclosed.
Niger Republic	The Wagner Group	2023	Providing assistance to the military junta.

Table 1: Reported PMC activity in African armed conflicts.

Although many of these governments initially denied that PMCs were operating on their land, presumably due to the negative image of PMCs, evidence has shown that they have indeed contacted PMCs. An example of this denial, which was later proven to be, in fact, true, is the contract between the Nigerian government towards the end of President Goodluck Jonathan's tenure in 2015 and the PMC STTEP (Varin, 2018). The Nigerian government had initially dismissed reports sighting STTEP's presence, which was later debunked. The same happened in the CAR with Wagner when the government initially denied the Wagner Group's presence. This shows that although certain African governments employ PMCs, they are hesitant about coming forth with the truth about hiring them, hence the consistent denials.

Another critical aspect of why PMCs need to be studied, particularly concerning African states, is the issue of the political implications of associating with certain PMCs. Many African states have had dependent relationships with their colonial masters, such as the United Kingdom (UK), France and the US, which is one of the legacies of colonialism. These dependent relationships have often meant that many African nations are reliant on their former colonial masters for various forms of assistance, such as with security, which in turn directly impacts the policies that a country adopts. An excellent example of this would be with France and its former colonies, which includes the CAR, whereby France has

traditionally had its troops deployed across these nations. This forms part of the French Legion. This is better stated by Amoah (2023:3), who states,

> "As a result of French foreign policy towards its former colonies, francophone African countries signed bilateral defence and technical assistance agreements with France at independence, which allow for stationing French special forces and military facilities in these countries to intervene against coups and insurrections of any kind that threaten the sitting heads-of-state".

In essence, countries such as France and its former colonies have policies that enable their forces to be activated in the event of insecurity. This has protected French monetary interests and ensured their continued presence on African soil.

However, these ties have shifted in recent years, with many former dependent states aligning themselves with PMCs and severing relations with their former colonial masters and allies. Former dependent states are not only aligning themselves with PMCs, but most contract the services of the Wagner Group, which has strong ties with the Kremlin. This has created tensions amongst these states and places African states in a position that they are all too familiar with, which is either choosing to align themselves with the Wagner Group and the Kremlin by extension and to isolate themselves or to reject these PMCs and remaining in the good books of those who oppose them. Therefore, these political implications have to be analysed, which is another rationale for this study.

1.3 Problem statement

Africa currently has the most significant number of ongoing UN peacekeeping missions. There are currently 12 ongoing peacekeeping missions, and 6 of those missions are found in Africa (United Nations, 2023). However, most of these missions use a generic approach towards addressing African security issues, which has proven largely ineffective. These missions often continue for a long time and ultimately lose their credibility, such as MINUSCA and MINUSMA (Mohamed, 2023). Though not a new concept, there has been a recent increase in the use of alternative security providers, such as PMCs, in Africa. Reports from academic scholars, watchdog organisations such as Amnesty International and the media have revealed sightings of PMCs in several African countries like Nigeria, Mali, the CAR, Libya, and Botswana, among others (Oriola, 2021; Abdullahi & Durmaz, 2022; Fabricius, 2022; Felbab-Brown, 2023). This trend has significantly increased since the 1990s when PMCs were sighted in Angola and Sierra Leone. Despite the negative reputation of

PMCs and the political implications of associating with them, their use continues to gain popularity in Africa.

1.4 Research aims and questions of the study

The aims and objectives of this thesis are:

1. *To understand the reasoning behind why certain African governments hire PMCs.*
2. *To understand the contribution PMCs make towards resolving or perpetuating African armed conflicts.*
3. *To understand the political implications for African governments who associate themselves with PMCs.*

These are the aims and objectives which this paper intends to achieve by the conclusion of this thesis. In order to achieve these aims and objectives, there are two research questions set out in this thesis, which are:

1. *Why have certain African governments employed PMCs?*
2. *How has the involvement of PMCs in African armed conflicts affected conflict outcomes?*

The primary focus of this thesis revolves around question 1, which aims to comprehend the rationale behind some African governments' decisions to associate with PMCs despite the controversies surrounding them. The second research question that follows delves into the outcomes of conflicts involving PMCs in Africa, providing valuable insights.

1.5 The theoretical and conceptual framework

A state, as defined by McGowan *et al*. (2006:106), is "a legal, political entity that has ultimate power over its own affairs [sovereignty]. It is an entity with capacity to enter into and assume rights, duties and obligations in the international system". One of a government's responsibilities is to ensure its citizens' safety and protection from internal and external threats. Internal threats may include conflicts within the state and increased criminal activity. On the other hand, external threats refer to violence from another state or interstate violence - violence between two or more states. Regardless of the type of threat, it is the government's responsibility to provide security within its territory for its citizens. In its capacity as a security provider, the government must utilise its security apparatus, namely its police and military, to ensure that it provides security for its citizens or community during periods of

relative stability and periods of violence and insecurity. This demonstrates that the state has adequate state capacity.

State capacity refers to the government's ability, capability and willingness to use its resources for the well-being of its territory (Andersen *et al*., 2014; Lindvall & Teorell, 2016). States which lack or have inadequate capacity cannot handle their affairs and become fragile states, which is the theory of this thesis.

1.5.1 Fragile states

Osaghae (2010:283) states that fragile statehood is "a distressed state that lacks the elements necessary to function effectively". When explaining fragile states and the state's security functions, Schneckener (2004:9) states,

> "A key function of the state is the guarantee of internal and external security, particularly of the citizens' physical security. The control of state territory through the state's monopoly of the use of force is, therefore, essential. This relates to establishing a public administration to control resources and a security apparatus for resolving local conflicts or the disarmament of non-state actors. States that cannot or can no longer fulfil this function often cannot efficiently control their territory and external borders".

This has been the reality for states such as Sierra Leone, Nigeria, the CAR and Mozambique, as their governments have largely been unable to control their territories due to insecurity. All these states have high internal and external displacement levels resulting from violent conflicts and a weakened security apparatus. Furthermore, they are also characterised by a failing economy, poor quality of policies, and mass migration (Schneckener, 2004; Osaghae, 2010; FSDR/DEVINVEST, 2016).

These types of states cannot fulfil their security function independently, resulting in the need to seek external assistance due to their weakened security apparatus. This creates an environment for PMCs to thrive. Countries such as Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Mozambique, and the CAR all have the markers of fragile states. These countries have demonstrated that they lack military capacity, which has led to them being fragile states, which this study will further elaborate on in chapter three. There are two components of a fragile state that this thesis focuses on, which are administrative and military capacity. The lack thereof can either create or exacerbate fragile statehood.

1.5.2 Administrative capacity

Andersen *et al*. (2014:1307) state, "Administrative effectiveness [capacity], on the other hand, involves the capacity of the bureaucracy to construct and implement policies regarding public services and regulations throughout the territory. Such capacity enables the regulation of social relations and the efficient appropriation and use of resources". This relates to implementing policies and bureaucratic processes that benefit and aid the state to be an engine for developing its whole nation and not just a select elite. It is, therefore, less likely to experience violent outbreaks due to the dissatisfaction of the populace because of bad governance. These states also encourage political participation from civil society, enabling them to take an active part in creating and adapting policies that would affect them.

States that lack administrative capacity are characterised by bad governance, poor policies and poor economies, which mainly affect citizens who do not have connections with elites. Corruption is also the order day in states that lack administrative capacity. This may lay the breeding grounds for grievances and violence and terrorist and extremist groups emerging. Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Mozambique and the CAR all have the markers of states which lack administrative capacity. These states' lack of administrative capacity contributes significantly to their fragile statehood, which will be dealt with in greater detail as this study progresses.

1.5.3 Military capacity

According to Hendrix (2010:274), military capacity is "the state's ability to deter or repel challenges to its authority with force". This is further elaborated on by Andersen *et al*. (2014:1307), who states, "capacity of the military and police to ensure public order throughout the state territory. If present, this monopoly entails that the state can wield powerful resources vis-a`-vis the society and maintain cohesion among its security forces". This means that if confronted, a state, through its security apparatus, which includes the military, can adequately face these challenges without needing to rely on external forces such as PMCs. It can restore order, peace and security within a nation's territory.

States that lack the military capacity to confront security challenges independently without the assistance of external forces are considered fragile states. Persistent violence, mass casualties, and a general lack of peace and order characterise them. Sierra Leone in the 1990s-early 2000s, Nigeria, Mozambique and the CAR militaries all have the qualities of armies lacking military capacity, exacerbating fragile statehood. This makes room for PMCs to operate.

In essence, a combination of a lack of military and administrative capacity leads to establishing or exacerbating a fragile state, which is the theory this thesis uses.

1.6 Research methodology

The qualitative desktop study method is utilised in this thesis. Teherani *et al.* (2015:669) define qualitative research as "the systematic inquiry into social phenomena in natural settings. These phenomena can include, but are not limited to, how people experience aspects of their lives, how individuals and groups behave, how organisations function and how interactions shape relationships". This definition aligns with the author's intention to analyse the behaviour of certain African governments and PMCs in conflict zones and determine whether their actions contribute to or prevent the continuation of conflicts.

Qualitative research methods are popular within the social sciences because such methods enable researchers to fully engage with the data they have obtained in a non-restrictive yet sensitive manner compared to quantitative analysis. This research methodology gives life to the research topic at hand. Qualitative research methods allow a researcher to fully explore the '*why*' behind phenomena and events (Teherani *et al.*, 2015:669). The suitability of this method makes it ideal for this thesis, which focuses on analysing *why* certain African governments enlist the services of PMCs.

The information utilised in this thesis is solely sourced from secondary materials, such as online news articles, academic journals, and scholarly publications from experts in politics, international relations, and the PMC industry.

1.6.1 Research design

The research design followed in this thesis's writing is a comparative case study design. According to Beasley and Kaarbo (1997:372), this design is the "systematic comparison of two or more data points (cases) obtained through the use of the case study method". Goodrick (2014:1) further elaborates on this design: "Comparative case studies cover two or more cases in a way that produces more generalisable knowledge about causal questions- how and why particular programmes or policies work or fail. Comparative case studies are undertaken over time and emphasise comparison within and across contexts". This thesis's case studies revolve around four countries: Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Mozambique, and the CAR. These countries have all utilised PMCs. Using a case study design, the researcher will be able to illustrate how PMCs have evolved on the continent over the years in a practical manner.

Baxter and Jack (2008) have stated that employing a case study design enables the researcher to explore the topic through more than a single lens.

Comparative case study designs enable researchers to explore case studies to emphasise their similarities and differences. As Goodrick (2014:1) puts it, "Comparative case studies involve the analysis and synthesis of the similarities, differences and patterns across two or more cases that share a common focus or goal". In this instance, the specific focus shared amongst these case studies is their use of PMCs and that they are African governments. This thesis focuses on the four PMCs: EO, STTEP, DAG and the Wagner Group. These PMCs have been chosen for this thesis because they are or have been active in African armed conflicts at one point or another. This is supported by qualitative and quantitative data, as shown in table 1. Academic scholars and the media document PMC operations across the continent, allowing for a comparative case study of similarities and differences.

1.7 Limitations and delimitations of the study

The use of the comparative case study design proved to be a double-edged sword during the writing of this thesis. Although comparative case studies are often helpful when analysing issues affecting multiple regions or countries, it can be time-consuming to interrogate data for every case study and decide on which data would be relevant to the study.

Finding one specific theory best suited for this study also proved tedious due to PMCs' multifaceted and complex nature. This proved to be the most challenging limitation of this study. This limitation was addressed with the state capacity theory, which allowed the author to use the concept of a fragile state to lay the basis of the conceptual framework for this study.

Another limitation of this thesis was finding data on PMCs and their connections to the African governments that employ them. Most of the data available on PMCs is generic and often limited. For instance, obtaining the financial records of PMCs and their clients is extremely difficult, leaving room for speculation about their financial transactions. Furthermore, it is doubtful that one would get an interview with a PMC operative due to the clandestine nature of their work. Most of the data available on PMCs are obtained by researchers and investigative journalists through interviews with potential witnesses who can share first-hand accounts of PMCs' activities and leaks from those in government. Thus, this limitation was remedied using secondary data such as published interviews, online news and academic journals.

1.8 Outline of the study

The thesis consists of six chapters.

This chapter is an introduction to this thesis and lays the foundations of how this thesis unfolds. This chapter introduces the research topic and questions this thesis will address. Two research questions are posed in this chapter: (1) *Why have certain African governments employed PMCs?* And (2) *How has the involvement of PMCs in African conflicts affected conflict outcomes?* These questions will be answered in the subsequent chapters of this study.

Chapter 2 of this thesis is dedicated to a literature review. Throughout this chapter, the author delves into relevant topics related to the primary subject matter. This chapter begins by providing literature on the genesis of modern PMCs in African conflicts and concludes by looking into the regulation of PMCs through the Montreux Document.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical and conceptual framework, focusing on state capacity and fragile state. This chapter offers a comprehensive understanding of these concepts.

Chapter 4 provides an in-depth analysis of research question 1, which thoroughly examines the motives behind employing PMCs by certain African governments.

Chapter 5 deals with the second research question presented in chapter 1, which is concerned with the conflict outcomes of PMCS in African conflicts. This chapter further discusses the political implications for African governments associating themselves with PMCs.

Chapter 6 is the final chapter of this thesis. It reflected on the research questions outlined in chapter 1 and answered in chapters 4 and 5. This chapter concludes by providing recommendations for future research around PMCs and African governments, seeing that the former is now a major player in African security.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter was the introductory chapter to the research at hand. It introduced the topic of PMCs in African conflicts and how they continue growing as an alternative security provider in many African conflicts.

This chapter laid the foundations for how this thesis will progress to answer the two research questions posed. The two research questions posed in this chapter are: why have certain African governments hired PMCs, and how has the involvement of PMCS in Africa affected conflict outcomes. The research design, which is a comparative case study design, and the

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research methodology, which is a qualitative methodology, have also been outlined in this chapter. It concludes by providing the outline of the study.

The following chapter will be the literature review of this thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

PMCs have been a subject of controversy, sparking debates among scholars such as Howe (1998), Nielsen (2016), Varin (2018) and Amoah (2023). The controversies surrounding PMCs are partly due to the nature of the operations and the lack of transparency that the industry and its clients have become synonymous with. Some scholars and media have labelled PMCs as inherently problematic due to the covert nature of their operations, leading to increased chaos in the areas where they operate. As a result, most of the population has developed hostilities towards PMCs when deployed into their communities. Recently, literature has become more balanced in its portrayal of PMCs as scholars now examine them as a whole rather than solely focusing on their shortcomings. Against this background, this chapter aims to review the literature on PMCs, particularly their evolution in Africa from the 1990s to date (2023).

2.2 The genesis of contemporary PMCs in African conflicts

Mercenaries', 'dogs of war' and 'soldiers of fortune' are standard views about PMCs as expressed by scholars such as Zarate (1998), Renou (2005), and Foaleng (2007). The profession of mercenaries and PMCs is cited as one of the oldest professions in the world by scholars such as Shearer (1998:68), who states, "Private military forces are as old as warfare itself. The ancient Chinese, Greek and Roman armies employed large numbers of mercenaries, and mercenaries comprised about half of the William the Conquerors army in the eleventh century". This shows how long this industry has existed worldwide, as it is regarded as old as warfare itself. Considering just how long the profession has existed in Africa in particular, Foaleng (2007:42) cites Kayode Fayemi (2000:7), stating, "Mercenarism is not historically new in Africa. It is as old as colonialism and dates back to the late 18th Century when many served as advance guards in the colonial scramble for Africa's trade and territories". This is evidence of how far back this industry goes in the world and African security.

PMCs and mercenaries have come to be used as interchangeable words, although the term 'mercenary' is more sinister due to the negativity that is historically associated with the word. The word 'mercenary' has become infamous and is often associated with white, violent foreign fighters who enter conflict zones for money-making, all while killing innocent civilians with careless impunity. This is illustrated by O'Brien (2000:62), who states that "the term

'mercenary' has become a pejorative one, conjuring up an image of a hardened white soldier brutally intervening in a small hitherto unknown African country for financial gain". This image was once again conjured up when STTEP, a PMC with close South African ties, was spotted in Nigeria in early 2015, with headlines such as 'Nigeria drafts in foreign mercenaries to take on Boko Haram" (Cropley & Lewis, 2015) and "South Africa's ageing white mercenaries who helped turn the tide in Boko Haram" (Smith, 2015) making international headlines. Thus, this image of mercenaries and PMCs as the same is narrated by history and widely pushed by the media.

PMCs and African governments have a long and murky history dating back to the 1960s (Ottemoeller & Uphoff, 1970; O'Brien, 2000; Tayo, 2021) due to the history of PMCs as mercenaries. This was when mercenaries reinvented themselves into PMCs and sometimes actively participated in African conflicts as part of the government's hired security apparatus. Often, the involvement of mercenaries and PMCs only exacerbated African conflicts. This was the case in Nigeria during the Biafra war, as well as in the DRC during the Katanga secession war and throughout the reign of Mobutu Sese Seko (Pillay *et al*. 2015:92). To illustrate, scholars such as Varin (2018:2), states "During the Biafra war of secession (1967–1970), white mercenaries were employed on both sides, particularly as pilots, arguably lengthening the duration of the deadly conflict", this is further backed up by Tayo (2021), who states "During Nigeria's Civil War from 1967 to 1970, using mercenaries was common practice by both the Biafran secessionist and the Nigerian military. Some scholars suggest that these mercenaries contributed to prolonging the war". This is evidence that African governments have long facilitated and sponsored PMC activities in Africa, even at the cost of their detriment.

On the exterior, African governments were meant to condemn the presence of PMCs due to their association with mercenaries. That would align with Article 47 of the Geneva Convention and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Elimination of Mercenarism Convention of 1977, which essentially ban the use of mercenaries. Foaleng (2007:3) and Gumedze (2008) cite Article 47 of the Geneva Convention, which states that a mercenary is (a) Is specifically recruited locally or abroad in order to fight in an armed conflict, (b) Does, in fact, take direct part in hostilities (c) Is motivated to take part in the hostilities essentially by the desire for private gain or on behalf of a party to the conflict material compensation (d) Is neither a national of a party to the conflict nor a resident of territory controlled by a party to the conflict (e) Is not a member of the armed forces of the said state. This is how

mercenaries may be identified according to Article 47 of the Geneva Convention (Foaleng, 2007:3; Gumedze, 2008).

Both Article 47 of the Geneva Convention and the OAU Elimination of Mercenarism condone the use of mercenaries and PMCs by extension due to the often similar and overlapping nature of their activities. However, this did not stop countries that have ratified the OAU, such as Nigeria, from employing mercenaries or PMCs (Varin, 2018; Kinsey & Krieg, 2018; Tayo, 2021). To argue that PMCs being hired by countries such as Nigeria goes against the OAU's convention, Tayo (2021) states, "Using private contractors to deliver military services goes against the African Union's Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa, which Nigeria ratified in 1986. It is also contrary to the United Nations' International Convention Against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries, which the country signed in 1990 but never ratified".

The presence of PMCs in Africa, although often shunned, is increasing. In the 1990s, when PMCs began to re-emerge as security providers, one dominant PMC was EO (Howe, 1998; Brooks, 2000). Today that number has more than doubled, with PMCs such as DAG, STTEP and the Wagner Group operating across the continent (Smith, 2015; Tayo, 2021; Bukkvoll *et al.*, 2022). Their continued presence is despite concerns raised by the media, continental bodies and civil society, which has been a concern since the inception and re-emergence of PMCs (Howe, 1998; Brooks, 2000; Smith, 2015; Tayo, 2021).

2.3 PMCs as tools of foreign policy

External foreign actors have shown a keen interest in African affairs for centuries, especially in fragile states. These actors include the US, its allies, and the USSR/Russia, as documented by Pillay *et al.* (2015) and Ethridge and Handelman (2016). Despite their contrasting political ideologies - with the USA and its allies adhering to capitalist principles and Russia operating under a communist system - their involvement in African affairs has remained a consistent trend throughout history. Africa is a continent that is naturally blessed with abundant minerals such as gold, platinum, timber, and oil, which attract foreign actors' interest. These foreign interests are significantly heightened during periods of conflict and instability. Foreign actors may sponsor African contests with financial or military aid to protect their political and economic welfare.

During the Cold War, the US, the USSR, and their allies sponsored numerous proxy wars and supported oppressive African regimes. Unfortunately, these actions resulted in increased

insecurity on the continent. Their main objective was to exert control over African resources, influence the political ideologies of African governments, and dictate the policies implemented by African states. Scholars like Afoaku (1997) and Pillay *et al.* (2015) have pointed out that the US government provided arms and financial assistance to the government of Zaire during the oppressive reign of Mobutu Sese Seko. Similar to the actions of the US and its allies, the Soviet Union also engaged in funding conflicts in Africa. One instance was their support of the Mozambican regime during the 16-year civil war through military and financial aid (Luckham, 1994; Pillay *et al*., 2015; Stronski, 2019). Foreign interest in African security has historically been significant, but the end of the Cold War marked a shift in focus. With this change, foreign interest in African security decreased, and the competition for influence on the continent between former superpowers, the USA and Russia, also diminished. As a result, their presence, particularly that of Russia, on the continent gradually declined throughout the 1990s.

Russia's reduced presence in Africa may be attributed to financial limitations, as the country had already invested significant resources to provide African nations with economic and military aid. The end of the Cold War led to the dismantlement of the Soviet Union and, therefore, meant that Russia had to focus on its domestic matters, such as rebuilding its economy and trying to regain its status as a superpower (Aras & Fidan, 2010:48). Thus, during the 1990s, Moscow had to prioritise other matters, and as a result, its focus on African affairs took a back seat. A significant change in foreign focus on African security was evident for Russia and the US. Although the US maintained its presence on the continent, it was less prominent. The situation was further aggravated by the Somalia crisis, wherein the US faced significant losses, and the 1994 Rwandan genocide, where the US, along with the UN, showed limited interest in resolving the security crises that had overwhelmed those countries (Brett *et al*., 1997; Western, 2002; McGowan *et al*., 2006; Maritz, 2012). In essence, Africa's security concerns were not given adequate consideration by foreign nations post-Cold War.

The international community essentially marginalised issues around African security post-Cold War. After the 9/11 Twin Tower bombings, the situation changed drastically. Previously overlooked countries were now considered potential terrorist havens and placed on the international radar, and African nations were not exempt from this scrutiny by the US and its allies (Carmody, 2005; Aning, 2008; Rikhotso & Wekese, 2021). Essentially, the renewed interest in African security resulted in numerous policies and programmes which were heavily militarised. Examples of these policies include the African Contingency

Training and Assistance (ACOTA), African Command (AFRICOM) and International Military Education and Training (IMET) (Rikhotso & Wekese, 2021).

In addition to following a militarised approach to African affairs, some of the programmes undertaken are done with the aid of PMCs. Aning *et al*. (2008:615) state, "In recent years, PMCs such as DynCorp, the MPRI, and the Pacific Architects Engineers (PAE) have frequently been hired to deliver different forms of US foreign military support including training under ACRI, ACOTA and GPOI programmes". For instance, in their efforts to build on capacity and re-professionalise in African militaries, the U.S. government utilised the services of the PMC, the MPRI in Nigeria (Farah, 2000; Nwakanma, 2006; Aning *et al*., 2008). According to Aning *et al*. "(2008: 618), "In Africa, most of MPRI's operations fall under the democracy and good governance programme and the Department of State and Defense contracts to provide training under US military training programmes such as ACRI and ACOTA (Volman, 2005). Outside ACOTA and ACRI, MPRI has been involved in military training programmes and what the company considers 'democracy promotion' activities in Guinea Bissau and Nigeria". Therefore, this demonstrates that US interests have been protected in Africa with a combination of US troops and PMCs such as MPRI and DynCorp.

Not only has interest in African security been reignited in the USA and its allies, but it has also been reignited in Russia. As previously stated, Russia's interest in Africa dwindled with the end of the Cold War. It no longer had the same influences and, therefore, the same interest in Africa that it had during the Cold War period. Therefore, post-Cold War and well into the 1990s, Russia was less active on the continent regarding its security than before the 1990s. However, there has been a shift in Russian interest in Africa. Often dubbed "the Return of Russia to Africa' scholars such as Stronski (2019) argue that Russia has come back in African affairs, most notably relating to African governance and security. Stronski (2019) stated,

> "After a decades-long absence, Russia is again appearing on the African continent. The Kremlin's return to Africa, which has generated considerable media, governmental, and civil society attention, draws on various tools and capabilities. Worrying patterns of stepped-up Russian activity are stirring concerns that a new wave of great-power competition in Africa is now upon us".

Among the 'variety of tools' Russia uses in Africa are PMCs, namely the Wagner Group (Stronski, 2019; Fassanotti, 2022; France 24, 2022). This is evident in the relationship

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between Russian PMCs and many African governments, to the dismay of the West. These governments have employed Russian PMCs recently, strengthening Russia's interest and presence on the continent. The Russian PMC has been spotted in Sudan, South Sudan, Nigeria, the DRC, Mali, the CAR and Mozambique, to name but a few (Fassanotti, 2022; France 24, 2022; Felbab-Brown, 2023). This is in stark contrast to the presence of Russia in African security two decades back.

Russia's and its allies' resurrection of interest in African affairs has also reignited the competition concerning African security between it and the USA. This has been highlighted by Stronski (2019), who states, "Worrying patterns of stepped-up Russian activity are stirring concerns that a new wave of great-power competition in Africa is now upon us". The case of Mozambique and the CAR best illustrates this competition, especially concerning PMCs. Before 2020, the Mozambican government had dismissed the insurgents' strength as simple criminals (Hanlon, 2021; Nhamirre, 2021; Fassanotti, 2022). Apart from concerns raised by SADC, powers like the U.S. and its allies seemingly had little regard for Mozambique. However, this would change during 2020. The rhetoric changed. As stated by Hanlon (2021:2), "From internal criminality, the description of the basis of the war changed to international Islamic terrorism. This attracted the interest of the United States (US) and European Union (EU), who see IS and Islamic fundamentalism as the new global enemy". This new description attracted the US and EU into a region that had not seen much of its attention. At the same time, Russia was already present in Mozambique. Furthermore, Hanlon (2021:2) states, "It also provided a cover for the US and France, who have important economic interests in Cabo Delgado. The US and its allies want to keep Russia and China out of Cabo Delgado. Mozambique's relatively small and local civil war has thus taken a place in global geopolitics". Therefore, it can be argued that PMCs only work to exacerbate this competition on the African continent as they are also used as a foreign policy tool.

Although foreign interest in African security dwindled in the 1990s, it has since been reignited post-9/11. With their return, these foreign actors are openly utilising PMCs such as DynCorp, MPRI, and the Wagner Group to aid them in their activities (Hanlon, 2021). This positions PMCs to be used as policy-influencing tools by these powerful states to protect their strategic interest on the continent. Therefore, it should be noted that foreign powers such as the U.S. and Russia are actively deploying their PMCs into African conflicts.

2.4 The contribution of South Africa to the PMC industry

South Africa was a significant contributor to the PMCs industry in the 1990s. Following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR, the competition for influence in African governance and security dwindled in the 1990s (Aras & Fidan, 2010:51). Although the US' presence on the continent was still a reality, it was limited and not as aggressive as it had been when the USSR was still intact when the two were vying for political influence on the continent. After the Cold War, the USA had a greater interest in other parts of the world, such as the Middle East, while the USSR bloc's collapse meant they had to focus on their domestic issues. As a result, they had little opportunity to become involved in African affairs. This left African states that had previously depended on the USA and particularly the USSR for political support and security vulnerable as they could not still contain conflicts on their own without external help. Consequently, according to Aras and Fidan (2010:51), a power vacuum was created, which was filled by China and South Africa.

Scholars such as Howe (1998), O'Brien (2000), Aras and Fidan (2010) and Varin (2018) all highlight that South Africa played an essential role in the growth of the PMC industry that exists in modern times. These scholars attribute the rise of contemporary PMCs to the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the apartheid regime in South Africa. According to scholars such as O'Brien (2000), Pillay *et al.* (2015) and Varin (2018), before reaching a political stalemate during the apartheid regime, the two major parties, the National Party (NP) and the African National Congress (ANC), had the support of the two world's superpowers, the USA and the USSR. These superpowers provided the NP government and the ANC with financial and military aid until the end of the Cold War, which contributed to the political stalemate in apartheid South Africa in the early 1990s (Shubin, 1997; Shubin, 2008; Pillay *et al*., 2015). After a prolonged stalemate, negotiations occurred between the NP regime and the ANC. This eventually led to a new and democratic political landscape in South Africa.

This new political landscape provided a new problem that could threaten the security of South Africa and Africa, which was what was to become of the apartheid regime soldiers. Many apartheid regime soldiers were racist and openly resisted peace talks and democracy (0'Brien, 2000; Pillay *et al*., 2015). This posed a threat to not only the peace talks and the democratic transition but the security of the whole African continent as the former regime soldiers were armed and knowledgeable in warfare skills, meaning that they could quickly instigate violence. Recognising the need to compromise with these soldiers, which would also guarantee their monetary protection, scholars such as O'Brien (2000) state that the ANC may

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have allowed these soldiers to form the PMC, EO. This move created employment for potentially rogue soldiers. It cemented South Africa's place in history as a contributor of modern-day PMCs, as before the creation of EO, PMCs were otherwise unpopular.

Discussing PMCs in Africa without mentioning the PMC EO is near impossible. EO, which Eeben Barlow founded, was the most influential PMC of the 1990s, having been involved in direct combat in the civil wars in Angola and Sierra Leone. EO is the blueprint for modern-day PMCs such as Academi, STTEP and DAG. Although the South African government has gone to great lengths to distance itself from the industry through the adaptation of the 1998 Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act, the country is still grappling with being associated with PMCs (Howe, 1998; O'Brien, 2000; Bosch & Maritz, 2011; Smith, 2015; Varin, 2018; Kinsey & Krieg, 2021). It is important to note that while there are no officially registered PMCs in South Africa, organisations such as DAG and STTEP employ former South African soldiers and have connections with South African people in business and elites. Eeben Barlow, for example, serves as the chairperson of STTEP (Adamo, 2020; Tayo, 2021).

Essentially, no other African country has come close to contributing to the PMC industry as South Africa has. Not only did EO originate from South Africa, but PMCs, such as DAG and STTEP, have South African operatives and are still active in African conflicts.

2.5 Strategies utilised by PMCs from the 1990s to date

The strategies used by EO and other PMCs from the 1990s are still being utilised in modern PMCs. For instance, the method used by STTEP in Nigeria could indicate that PMCs' techniques have mostly stayed the same since the 1990s. Essentially, the approach mirrors each other. As Adamo (2020:345) states, "STTEP contributed a solid counterinsurgency doctrine called 'relentless pursuit' (also utilised by EO), which consisted of confusing, dispersing, and putting pressure on the enemy through small mobile attacks, forcing it to withdraw, and then relentlessly pursuing it, thus exhausting it and facilitating its annihilation". The reason why STTEPs strategies mirror those of EO is because STTEP is essentially a rebranded EO. The two PMCs have the same founders and instructors, namely Eeben Barlow, which can explain the use of the strategies used in the 1990s.

PMCs have garnered a negative reputation over the years due to various factors, including their tactics. This has been highlighted by scholars such as Foaleng (2007) and Tayo (2021). To improve their reputation, PMCs have shifted their focus towards being seen as legitimate

security providers rather than being seen as a contributing factor to conflicts. In addition, PMCs have adapted their strategies to include non-combative methods such as offering military advice and technical support. This is a change from the traditional perception of PMCs only being involved in combat-related activities. For instance, in Mozambique, DAG's contract was to provide aerial support, logistics, military advice" (Nhamirre, 2021:4). This would give the Mozambican military the assistance it needed in a non-combative manner.

Since the 1990s, PMCs have employed a strategy of getting acquainted with the communities in which they work. They do this by interacting with the locals, learning their languages, and familiarising themselves with their way of life. This approach helps them gather intelligence that they can use in their operations. For instance, during their operations in Nigeria, STTEP operatives were able to familiarise themselves with the community.

These are some of the strategies which this study's literature was able to identify.

2.6 International control and accountability mechanisms- the Montreux Document

As previously stated, PMCs have been active in African conflicts in full force since the 1990s. This was when international control and accountability mechanisms were explicitly meant for PMCs, as businesses did not exist. Instruments such as the Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Convention on the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa of 1977 emphasised the activities of mercenaries, which at the time could be described as individuals and freelance fighters not part of any registered PMCs and thus did not abide by the international humanitarian laws and laws of the land, such as Bob Denard and Mike Hoare (OAU, 1977; Simons, 2007). The mechanisms did not apply to PMCs, as they are registered businesses. It thus became primarily the responsibility of the country where the PMCs were based to regulate them. This posed significant challenges when accusations of misconduct and abuse were made against PMCs. As a result, there was a gap in the 1990s-2000s regarding international control and accountability mechanisms that would address PMCs in their current form. This has been highlighted by scholars such as Simons (2007), Foaleng (2007) and the International Committee of the Red Cross- referred to henceforth as the ICRC (2020).

The international community banded together to address this gap to develop the Montreux Document. The ICRC (2020) describes the Montreux Document as "an intergovernmental document intended to promote respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law, especially when PMSCs [PMCs] are present. It is not legally binding as such. However,

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its rules are well established in international law and are binding to States by virtue of international treaties or customary law". The Montreux Document serves as an ethical and moral guide for countries that have signed it, outlining the rules and regulations for PMCs and their clients. It establishes boundaries and directions in prosecuting PMC operatives who abuse their power. The decision to become a signatory of the Montreux Document is optional. In 2008, the Montreux Document initially had 18 signatories. Presently, 58 countries have signed the document, such as South Africa, Ukraine, and the US (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2021). As of 2023, Russia, known for its close links with Wagner PMC, which has been extensively involved in African conflicts, has not signed the Montreux Document.

Mechanisms such as the Montreux Document are meant not only to protect innocent civilians but also to put in place platforms for perpetrators of crimes in PMCs to be held accountable for their actions. As stated in the Montreux Document, "Statement 27 explains that the superiors of PMSC personnel can be prosecuted for the most serious crimes (war crimes, torture and other crimes under international law) not only if they commit these themselves, but also if, as superiors, they fail to prevent or put an end to crimes committed by their subordinate" (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2021). However, they have not been effective in this regard, as multiple claims of abuse and flouting of international humanitarian law have been levelled against certain PMCs such as the Wagner Group and DAG.

The FDFA (2021), states, "Regardless of their support for the initiative, states are already subject to the international legal obligations contained in the Montreux Document. Most of the rules and good practices assembled in the Montreux Document derive from well-established principles of international humanitarian law and human rights law". This means that although Russia is not part of the Montreux Document signatories, their activities are still meant to be guided by it as the document itself is based on fundamental, universal humanitarian rights. However, this is not the reality, as multiple reports and investigations have revealed gross humanitarian abuses committed by groups such as Wagner, all while control mechanisms such as the Montreux Document are in place. For example, during investigations into the conduct of Wagner operatives in conflict-torn CAR, the UN and several governments have stated that the Wagner group is committing war crimes as well as crimes against humanity (ADF, 2022). "They said they had also received reports that Wagner operatives in the CAR had committed rape and sexual abuse, but survivors were "terrified" to come forward for fear of retaliation (France 24, 2021)", while the ADF (2022)

states "the US ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, said Russian mercenaries engage in human rights abuses of civilians, extract steep costs in payments and mineral concessions, and deprive local citizens of critically needed resources". Despite all these allegations and investigations, there has been little to no litigation against the Wagner Group as a PMCs operating in a conflict zone. This means that the Montreux Document has had little to no impact on the actions of PMCs, specifically those belonging to non-signatory states.

Not only are the Montreux Document's non-signatories disregarding it, but so are its signatories. Although South Africa is a signature of the Montreux Document (ICR, 2008), South African nationals have actively participated in PMCs such as DAG and STTEP which have grabbed international attention in recent years. In some instances, these nationals have been accused of committing gross atrocities in other nations, contributing to the continued instability and state fragility. For example, DAG operatives operating in Mozambique have been investigated by watchdogs such as Amnesty International, which found that the group was allegedly perpetuating indiscriminate attacks on communities as well as racial profiling during its time in Mozambique (Amnesty International, 2021; Borneo Bulletin, 2021). As stated by Turse (2021), "Fifty-three witnesses interviewed by Amnesty International claim that forces from a South African private military company, known as the Dyck Advisory Group (DAG), fired machine guns from helicopters and dropped hand grenades indiscriminately into crowds of people, failing to differentiate between civilians and military targets in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province".

Furthermore, as stated previously, an investigation by Amnesty International into the activities of PMCs in Mozambique states, "Survivors of an attack by the armed group known locally as 'Al-Shabaab' in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado told Amnesty International that white contractors were prioritised for evacuation ahead of Black locals, in disturbing testimony that points to blatant racism" (Amnesty International, 2021). Amnesty International's investigations further state, "These are alarming allegations that the rescue plan was racially segregated, with white contractors obviously receiving preferential treatment. The total lack of coordination between the Mozambique security forces and Dyck Advisory Group resulted in evacuations that were racist and must be thoroughly investigated" (Borneo Bulletin, 2021). These instances are a proper illustration of how little international control and accountability mechanisms have impacted certain PMCs as they continue to be caught in the midst of negative attention and accusations of disregarding humanitarian laws.

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There are reasons why international control and accountability mechanisms such as the Montreux Document have not effectively impacted the actions of PMCs in Africa. One of the reasons why the global control and accountability mechanisms, such as the Montreux Document, are of little effect on the activities of PMCs is that such a mechanism is not legally binding. Essentially, they can just make recommendations which PMCs, their homelands and the contracting client, in this case, the government, may choose to implement. This is despite the Montreux Document being in line with international laws.

The second reason international control and accountability mechanisms such as the Montreux Document are ineffective is that they are voluntary; not all states with active PMCs are signatories. This means states are free to join and leave such mechanisms depending on whether they agree with it, not on morality and ethics. For instance, Russia, one of the world's leading security contractors, is not a signatory to the Montreux Document, even though the Wagner group is closely associated with the Kremlin (Munday, 2021; FDFA, 2022). The CAR is also not a participant in the Montreux Document and has been flooded with the presence of the Wagner Group. As such, these countries are neither legally nor ethically bound by such international control and accountability mechanism. Although it is a fact that the Montreux Document does not bind non-signatories, these countries are still bound by international humanitarian rights. The document is simply too vague, which may provide loopholes for even participating nations and PMCs to use to their advantage. For instance, it states that serious offences may be persecuted; the question of which crimes qualify as severe offences and which do not provide loopholes for PMCs such as DAG and the allegations of racial profiling makes the Montreux Document ineffective to a certain degree.

Therefore, literature has shown that the Montreux Document in its current state is ineffective and has made little difference to the regulations of PMCs.

2.7 Concerns around African state capacity and fragile states

Although conflicts are bound to happen due to various factors such as political or religious reasons or general disgruntlement with a government, the state must address them in a justifiable manner and without excessive or brute force. This would indicate its state capacity. Lindvall and Teorell (2016:5) cite Besley and Persson, who state that state capacity is about the "capabilities that allow the state to take action". Concerning security, state capacity dictates how a state will respond to security challenges or threats against it. These threats may

come in the form of domestic terrorist groups and insurgency groups, such as in Mozambique and Nigeria, conflicting political interests, such as in Sierra Leone and CAR and other disgruntled groups who deliberately choose to perpetuate violence against the state and its civilians. Although the degrees to which conflicts may occur vary, it is up to the state through its security forces to combat them. To achieve this obligation, there has to be state capacity, particularly a strong state capacity. A state that does not have strong state capacity is either fragile or failed in more extreme cases. According to Osaghae (2010:283), fragile states are

> "Unstable and divided population, suffering from a torn social fabric, minimum social control, and pervasive strife that encourage exit from rather than loyalty to the state. Underdeveloped institutions of conflict management and resolution, including credible judicial structures, pave the way for recourse to conflict-ridden, violent, non-systemic and extra-constitutional ways to articulate grievances and seek redress".

State capacity can either bolster or weaken a state's legitimacy. In their research into state capacity and political regime stability focusing on democratic and autocratic states, Andersen *et al.* (2014:1305) found that "state capacity may stabilise democracies and autocracies alike. A capable state can, on the one hand, increase the legitimacy of democracy and the sanctity of political and civil rights and, on the other hand, help tighten an autocrat's hold on power". This is indicative that state capacity forms a central part of governing regardless of what type of controlling system it may follow, otherwise as stated by Andersen *et al*. (2014:1306) "State capacity bolsters rulers, irrespective of the regime form". Essentially, a state such as North Korea, which is autocratic, and a state such as the US, which is democratic, can maintain order and remain in power due to state capacity, although the two have different regime systems (Andersen *et al*. 2014; Song, 2018; Pew Research Centre, 2018). That is a testament to state capacity's importance between a government and its civilians.

Essentially, the relationship between the state and civilians is as much a psychological one as a legal one. If a state fails or cannot provide security for its citizens, that psychological relationship may become strained. This may result in revolts against the state in severe cases, rendering the state illegitimate and fragile. This is an issue that many African states are consumed with, which contributes to the high number of fragile states on the continent. According to data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in the 1990s, much of sub-Saharan Africa-20 out of 44 countries could be regarded as fragile (Gelbard, 2015:7). This is why programs such as ACOTA were done to address state capacity and address fragile

statehood in Africa. Fragile statehood persists in many African countries, including Nigeria, Mozambique, and the CAR, which are part of the data provided by the IMF as of 22 March 2023 (IMF, 2023).

2.8 Conclusion

PMCs have a long and murky history in African conflicts. They have long been a topic of great debate amongst scholars researching security and politics. These scholars include Howe (1998), Peter Singer, David Brooks (2000) as well as Nielsen (2016), Varin (2018) and Joshua *et al*. (2021) in recent years. Although PMCs gained popularity in the early 1990s, the industry has been around prior to that era. However, with the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the subsequent fall of apartheid South Africa, there was a shift in African security and politics which resulted in the re-emergence of the PMCs industry as a force to be reckoned with (Howe, 1998; McFate, 2019).

Although technology and weaponry have evolved, many existing PMCs use the same strategies that EO and others used in the 1990s, indicating how little the industry has evolved regarding their operations. This chapter also found that PMCs such as MPRI and the Wagner Group were also used as tools in foreign policy in African conflicts. Due to concerns around African state capacity, programs such as ACOTA have been implemented. These programs have also used PMCs in their operations.

The next chapter will deal with the theoretical and conceptual framework, which is fragile state theory.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and conceptual framework

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted that many African states lack state capacity. State capacity leads them to become fragile states. Based on the literature review, looking into fragile states and how they relate to PMCs is necessary. Hence, the fragile state theory has been selected for this purpose.

3.2 Fragile state theory

As mentioned above, state capacity is a central and crucial element a state can and should pose. States with weak capacity often classify a state as weak/fragile or failed in extreme cases. An inadequate state's capacity's consequences can create a fragile state. Fragile states can be born from the combination of weak military or coercive and ineffective administrative capacity. This is the reality in the countries which form the case studies of this paper.

The terms weak state or fragile state may be used interchangeably. Schneckener (2004:9) states, "Fragile statehood is primarily about the loss or nonexistence of the state institutions' ability to fulfil central aspects of governance. The institutions of affected states are not or can no longer provide basic services for their population". For instance, if a state's security cluster can no longer provide security that is a classic indication of fragile statehood. Reputable institutions such as the African Development Bank characterise fragile states as "Countries or situations with unique development challenges that have resulted from fragility and conflict including weak institutional capacities and poor governance, economic and geographic isolation, economic disruption, social disruption and insecurity" (FSDR/DEVINVEST, 2016). This would include countries such as Sierra Leone, parts of Nigeria, Mozambique and the CAR.

Fragile states are often unable to fulfil their security function. As a result, they are more prone to experiencing an influx of foreign actors, such as PMCs, to assist them in fulfilling this function. States, especially those classified as fragile/weak and failed, are prone to have episodes of violence due to the differences among the citizens who reside in them. However, the degree of conflicts may significantly differ. Case in point, the degree of violence in a relatively peaceful state like Ghana due to electoral disputes during 2020, which resulted in five casualties, dramatically differs from the degree of violence in CAR, where hundreds of civilians died, and thousands more became internally and externally displaced this time as a result of the 2020 elections (Bekoe & Burchard, 2021; Buchanan-Clarke, 2021).

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How a state reacts to violent conflicts is often a result of its willingness and, most importantly, its capacity to control and contain insecurity. If a state can respond swiftly and promptly to violent conflicts, it can be classified as having a strong state capacity, as illustrated in the example given in Ghana above (Bekoe & Burchard, 2021; Buchanan-Clarke, 2021). However, suppose a state is incapable or cannot intervene positively in conflicts and appears to have lost control of the situation in most cases. In that case, it has a weak and fragile state capacity. This is the case for countries such as Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Mozambique and the CAR, although the CAR is slowly edging towards becoming a failed state.

This thesis focuses on two main factors contributing to fragile states: a lack of military and administrative capacity. When these factors are combined, they can worsen the state's fragility.

3.2.1 Military capacity

Coercive capacity, or military capacity, is also known as the monopoly on violence, and it relates to the "capacity of the military and police to ensure public order throughout the state territory. If present, this monopoly entails that the state has the capability of wielding powerful resources vis-a-vis the society and of maintaining cohesion among its security forces (Andersen *et al*., 2014: 1307). This simply entails that the state security apparatus, which is made up of the police as well as the military, is both willing and able to combat violence if it does break out, primarily if it occurs on a large scale and poses a threat to the political stability of the state, as well as maintaining security in the absences of violent conflicts. They (the state security apparatus or forces) must be able to engage with those who orchestrate and take an active part in violent clashes, or other words, warmongers, insurgents and rebels alike, without further endangering the wellbeing and lives of innocent civilians that they are obligated to protect according to domestic and international laws (United Nations Human Right, 2011).

Coercive capacity is similar to what Hendrix (2010) regards as military capacity, which is "the state's ability to deter or repel challenges to its authority with force". This force relates to the activities of the security apparatus, namely the police and the national military, to contain insecurity capably. Hendrix (2010:274) goes on to place further emphasis on the military and its soldiers by default, stating, "The national military is the centrepiece of the state's repressive capabilities. Rebellion is an inherently militarised act that entails the risk of

capture, injury, imprisonment, and death, and we assume potential rebels factor the size, strength, and skill of state forces into their decision to rebel". This demonstrates that the national military is essentially the heartbeat of any state's ability to combat violent conflicts effectively. Furthermore, this illustrates that potential rebels consider the capabilities of the national army when engaging in battle with them.

It can be assumed that a national military with the correct size and possesses strength, skills and willpower would be able to deter threats and, most importantly, engage in combat activities of rebels, and the like, engage in violent conflicts. This would demonstrate that the state has military or coercive capabilities and, therefore, can contain violence as it erupts. For instance, in national elections, many African countries have a history and a trend of being marred by deadly outbursts of both pre and post-electoral violence, which often leave many states in ruins (Omotola, 2008). This is despite many of these states identifying as democratic states and vowing to uphold democratic values and principles. This trend of electoral violence again reared its ugly head in Ghana during the 2020 elections, resulting in the death of five Ghanaians (Al Jazeera, 2020; TRT World, 2020). Although Ghana is a relatively peaceful nation, the 2020 national elections were highly contested between incumbent President Nana Akufo-Addo and former President John Mahama. The two contestants had large support bases due to their respective terms in office, which meant that each side was highly invested in returning to political office. According to the Ghanaian election commission, this led to outbursts of electoral violence in more than 60 incidents, resulting in the demise of five civilians (Al Jazeera, 2020; TRT World, 2020; Bekoe & Burchard, 2021).

The electoral violence had the potential to become a hotbed for more deaths had the Ghanaian military not intervened. However, because of the coercive and military capacity, the Ghanaian army acted swiftly to curb the violence before it further engulfed the state (Bekoe & Burchard, 2021). Had the military not demonstrated its capacity, the situation may have led to even more deaths, triggering a political crisis that would have crippled the Ghanaian state. Although opponents may argue otherwise, the state security forces demonstrated that they possessed the military or coercive capacity to contain violence without the assistance of external players such as the AU or PMCs, which may indicate state capacity. This capacity is what states such as Sierra Leone, Nigeria, the CAR and Mozambique lack, as this paper will illustrate as it progresses.

3.2.2 Administrative capacity

Concerning administrative capacity, Andersen *et al*. (2014:1307) state, "Administrative effectiveness [capacity], on the other hand, involves the capacity of the bureaucracy to construct and implement policies regarding public services and regulations throughout the territory. Such capacity enables the regulation of social relations and the efficient appropriation and use of resources". This implies that those in charge of policymaking, including the government, should ensure that their decisions benefit society and promote development without intentionally or unintentionally excluding any group. Above just adopting policies, the government should ensure that it is implementing said policies and that its workforce also ensures that they are being fully implemented. This would demonstrate that the state has the administrative capacity and can meet the general public's expectations.

A state with weak administrative capacity can lay the breeding grounds for grievances amongst its citizens, which may then lead to violent conflicts and insecurity. This would test the state's military capability, further diving into a fragile state. For instance, over time, Nigerian governments have received criticism for corruption within their administrations, which has led to neglect and marginalisation of specific segments of society, especially in the northern regions of the country (Ancell & Hashimu, 2017; Obadare, 2022). This neglect and marginalisation have led to significant grievances, which contributed to the growth of terrorist groups, namely Boko Haram, spreading throughout the country (Ancell & Hashimu, 2017). Essentially, successive Nigerian governments have failed to demonstrate administrative capacity during their tenures, which accounts for the grievances that have been levelled against the state. The situation has paved the way for the growth of terrorist organisations, causing Nigeria to become a fragile state.

The same can be said about the Mozambican government under the Frelimo, who has been accused of deliberately protecting the interest of Frelimo elites as opposed to the nation of Mozambique (Hanlon, 2021).

3.3 The link between state capacity and fragile states hiring PMCs

As previously stated, one of the state's vital responsibilities is providing physical security for its territory (McGowan *et al*., 2006). The state is expected to fulfil this security function through its security forces, mainly through its military, during violent conflicts. Although not all fragile/weak states present the same characteristics, the countries which form part of the case studies for this paper do have a similar characteristic- and that is that they have all

proven to lack the capabilities to contain the violence in their land. Failure or incompetence by the state to fulfil this responsibility may create a fragile state. As a consequence, a state may look into alternatives to fill the gap that it has supplied to, or as Bearpark and Schulz (2007:77) state, "When state capacity is lacking, and a country's legitimate security forces are unable to provide security, alternative security structures must be put in place". Patrick (2006:29) also grapples with the issue of defining weak and failing states. He explores weaknesses in the security, political, economic and social domains. In the security realm, he notes that fragile states struggle to maintain a monopoly on using force. This weakness becomes an enticement for the proliferation and growth of the private military sector. Thus, this is where PMCs enter the picture in African conflicts.

As stated in previous chapters, PMCs are "businesses that offer specialised services related to war and conflict, including combat operations, strategic planning, intelligence collection, operational and logistical support, training, procurement and maintenance (DCAF, 2006:2; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007:22), or "companies that offer support services to the armed forces of either their own or foreign country" Bearpark and Schulz (2007:76). They provide services ranging from intelligence gathering, training of militaries, as well as engaging in direct combat. Their reputation has shown that PMCs are willing and, in most cases, capable of doing what state militaries are incapable of. Kinsey & Krieg (2021:237) stated, "The more the state fails to live up to its fundamental social contractarian duty in providing human security inclusively, the less people trust its governance. In this context, non-state actors have positioned themselves as alternative security providers to a failing state". PMCs are non-state actors. This could explain what makes PMCs, such as EO, STTEP, Pilgrims Africa, DAG and the Wagner Group, attractive to fragile states such as Sierra Leone, Nigeria, the CAR and Mozambique.

The following are brief explanations of the conflicts and their connections with PMCs:

3.3.1 Sierra Leone and EO

Sierra Leone is a West African country blessed with natural resources such as gold, platinum and diamonds (Jalloh *et al*., 2013; Yumeen, 2020). Like many African counterparts, Sierra Leone has endured great violence and instability, most notably the 11 years of civil war. The civil war was triggered by political grievances and a power struggle between the RUF under the leadership of warmonger Foday Sankoh and the government of Sierra Leone (Howe, 1998; Momodu, 2017). To make matters worse, during the period that the civil war broke out

in Sierra Leone, the country was poorly administrated. It had high levels of poverty and one of the highest illiteracy rates in Africa. Due to these factors, the country qualifies as a fragile state.

The Sierra Leonian national military was poorly trained and manned for such a conflict. Soldiers were infamously referred to as 'sobels', which essentially translates to a soldier who is also a criminal (Zack-Williams, 1997; Howe, 1998). Due to these factors, the country was fragile and quickly becoming a failed state. The Sierra Leonian government desperately needed the aid of a foreign actor to capture lost ground, secure vital mining zones and restore security, as the country was too fragile to achieve this on its own. This fragility created the perfect atmosphere for PMCs, particularly EO, to approach the Sierra Leonian government, eventually being hired (Howe, 1998). The Sierra Leonian contract helped reintroduce PMCs into African conflicts and is still one of the most notable PMC deployments.

3.3.2 Nigeria and STTEP

Nigeria is a West African nation that gained independence from Britain in 1960. Often dubbed the 'Giant of Africa', Nigeria has the highest population in Africa, home to more than 2000 million inhabitants (Victor, 2017; Kinsey & Krieg, 2021). Kinsey and Krieg (2021:236) state, "The country has the highest populace in Africa. Nonetheless, this multinational, federal state has been plagued by poverty, socio-economic inequalities, political dissidence and insurgency since its independence in 1960. Nigeria has rarely been stable". The country's stability has been marred with violent conflicts and insecurity, which are still a reality recently. These include the Biafran secessionist war of 1967-1970, multiple coups, and domestic terrorism perpetuated by terrorist groups such as Boko Haram (Varin, 2018; Nwaubani, 2020; Kinsey & Krieg, 2021). This is in addition to the country having high crime rates even during periods of relative calmness.

According to the 2020 Global Terrorism Index (GTI) report, Nigeria ranked third among the most terrorised countries in the world (Olasupo, 2020). This is a testament to how rife terrorism is in Nigeria. As a result, the Nigerian security apparatus has been under strain to protect civilians. Constant periods of violence, a country engulfed in corruption and a failing security apparatus have all contributed to Nigeria becoming the fragile state it is today. As a consequence, the government has been unable to tackle insecurity effectively.

The presence of fragile statehood has forced the Nigerian government to seek the assistance of external actors, particularly after the 2014 kidnapping of the 276 Chibok schoolgirls and

the international pressure that was placed on the government to find them (Louw-Vaudran, 2014; Varin, 2018; Kinsey & Krieg, 2021). Hence, the Nigerian government hired STEEP PMCs in late 2014/ early 2015.

3.3.3 The CAR and the Wagner Group

The CAR has been independent since 1960. The country has a history of being an extremely fragile state, bordering on becoming an entirely failed state (International Crisis Group, 2007; Smith, 2013). From being the epicentre of multiple coups and violent anti-government protests to having tensions brewing due to ethnic and religious tensions, the country is one of the most conflict-ridden nations on the African continent (International Crisis Group, 2007, Smith, 2013; Dukhan, 2016; Buchanan-Clarke & Knoope, 2017; Fassanotti, 2022).

The fragility of the state has made it nearly impossible for the form to contain the instability that has long engulfed the nation. This has resulted in several interventions undertaken by bodies such as the UN, namely the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSCA) (Howard, 2019; Pecquet, 2021). In addition to the existing peace missions and the state's fragility, the government's failure to ensure security has created a market for PMCs to penetrate the CAR. The CAR is one of the African states where PMCs, specifically the Wagner Group, have been able to operate freely and without respecting international humanitarian rights. The group was first spotted in the CAR in 2018 (Fabricius, 2022)

The presence of the Wagner Group in the CAR has received widespread condemnation from the get-go. There have been accusations against the Wagner Group of aggravating a fragile state's security. This follows accounts of the Wagner Group being de facto in charge of security in the CAR and committing atrocities against civilians and the state's security forces.

3.3.4 Mozambique, the Wagner Group, DAG and Paramount Group

Mozambique is a southern African country that gained independence from Portugal in 1974. Mozambique has experienced prolonged conflicts, which have left behind trails of mass destruction. This dates back to the war for independence, which was then followed by a 16-year civil war and now to the insurgency that is mainly concentrated in the north of the country (Nhamirre, 2021; International Crisis Group, 2021; Bukkvoll *et al.*, 2022). All these conflicts have made the country qualify as highly fragile. Following a period of relative calmness, Mozambique is again experiencing insecurity due to the Islamic insurgency,

concentrated in the country's northern parts (Nhamirre, 2021; International Crisis Group, 2021).

Although the Mozambican government had initially denied the severity of the current security crisis, on its own, it proved to lack the necessary capacity to deal with the insurgency. Due to the country being a fragile state, having been so for most of its independence, it has been unable to contain this latest security crisis. Due to being a fragile state, unable to fulfil its security function, the Mozambican government has hired multiple PMCs to assist it in its security function. These PMCs include the Wagner Group in 2019, followed by the deployment of DAG and other PMCs (Fabricius, 2019; Nhamirre, 2021). Essentially, the fragile statehood of Mozambique has made it possible for these PMCs to operate.

3.4 Conclusion

States are expected to fulfil certain obligations as part of their duties. Amongst these obligations is the provision of security (McGowan *et al*., 2006). Whether a state can live up to these expectations speaks to its state capacity. As this chapter has shown, state capacity is about the ability and willingness of the state to fulfil its part of the social contract. Lindvall and Teorell (2016:5) cite Besley and Persson, who state that state capacity is about the "capabilities that allow the state to take action". State capacity may be measured by its military, coercive, and administrative capacity. Military capacity is "the state's ability to deter or repel challenges to its authority with force" (Hendrix, 2010), while administrative capacity is "the capacity of the bureaucracy to construct and implement policies regarding public services and regulations throughout the territory. Such capacity enables the regulation of social relations and the efficient appropriation and use of resources" (Andersen *et al.*, 2014:1307). The two go hand in hand and are of utmost importance for a state to be considered strong. If there is a gap between the two, the state can be classified as fragile.

The statements above demonstrate that PMCs such as EO, DAG, STTEP and the Wagner Group have taken advantage of African governments' capacities or lack thereof to provide security for their populations. This, therefore, demonstrates that not only do fragile states breed grounds for insecurity, but they also create the perfect environment for PMCs to operate and capitalise on. This is how fragile statehood links with PMCs, which this paper hopes to analyse further.

Chapter 4: Analysis of why certain African governments hire PMCs

4.1 Introduction

Despite the criticism that PMCs often face, they are still growing on the continent, with countries like Sierra Leone, Nigeria, the CAR and Mozambique contracting their service. This chapter will address the first research question posed by this thesis: Why have certain African governments employed PMCs? This is the primary question of this thesis for a few reasons: (a) it will help create an understanding of the current opinions of African governments regarding PMCs; (b) it will demonstrate that African governments are genuinely sovereign and, as such may engage with unconventional actors to combat insecurity; (c) it will illustrate why PMCs continue to grow on the continent despite the backlash that often surrounds them.

As stated, PMCs have been an attractive alternative to the traditional interventions offered by institutions such as the UN and AU. Their presence on the continent is evolving despite the controversies surrounding them, raising a vital question that needs to be addressed: ' Why have some African governments employed PMCs? This is the first significant research question presented in this thesis. Understanding and analysing the evolution of PMCs in Africa from the 1990s to the present is vital.

The following are the answers to this question.

4.2 Their military forces are weak and unprofessional as a consequence of a lack of military capacity

As previously stated, governments are tasked with various roles and responsibilities vital to the well-being of the state and its people. Paramount among these roles and responsibilities is providing security for its territory and its inhabitants from internal and external threats and violence (McGowan *et al.*, 2006; Gros, 2011; Moritz, 2013). As Moritz (2013:11) states, "In its traditional role as a guard of security, a state [government] is responsible for the protection of the national territory and state institutions". States must achieve this mandate through security forces, compromising the police and the national military. The military is the armed forces of a state that is primarily tasked with defending a country during times of heightened insecurity and conflict, for example, when a state is experiencing a violent uprising or when terrorist organisations are actively harming citizens (Lexico, 2022; Britannica Dictionary, 2022).

A critical element that enables militaries to squash insecurity and violent conflicts when it rears its ugly head is its state capacity, precisely its military capability. As stated by Hendrix (2010:247), military capacity or coercive capacity relates to "the state's ability to deter or repel challenges to its authority with force", or as Andersen *et al.* (2014: 1307) "capacity of the military and police to ensure public order throughout the state territory. If present, this monopoly entails that the state has the capability of wielding powerful resources visa-a`-visa the society and of maintaining cohesion among its security forces". This relates to whether the state, through its security apparatus or force, can contain and return public order and security if violence, whether due to terrorism, breaks out. Military capacity should also be present even if a state is relatively peaceful.

Soldiers carry out the activities of defending a state from both internal and external threats. Soldiers are enlisted to engage in groundwork or combat and defence in the military. They are trained in the skills of protection and are directly called upon by the government to be on the frontlines of conflict zones. Their responsibilities during periods of insecurity and conflict are to defend the nation's territory against threats and harm. Soldiers are meant to be neutral, meaning they should be loyal to the state and the civilians. Otherwise, governments risk using them to harm instead of protecting civilians. Civilians are protected under international humanitarian law during periods of conflict and insecurity. This means they are not to be targeted, harassed or otherwise indiscriminately attacked during clashes, especially by soldiers. This forms part of their military capacity.

Literature has shown that the issue of military capacity is one of the issues that plague many African militaries, thus contributing to fragile statehood or a failed state in more extreme cases. For instance, Somalia became a failed state in the 1990s, and its military ability was non-existent. Somalia's lack of military power only exacerbated the conflict the country was already experiencing, as the international community offered much-needed assistance. Amongst those was the USA. Aning *et al*. (2008: 614, 615) state, "In the early 1990s, the US responded to the humanitarian crisis in Somalia by deploying one of the largest forces in Africa. In 1992, President G. W. Bush launched Operation Restore Hope, which was made up of 25,000 troops. Also known as Unified Task Force (UNITAF), Operation Restore Hope comprised 24 countries with a mandate to restore security, undertake humanitarian activities and help relieve the suffering of the civilian population (Ibid.)". These interventions were followed by numerous other missions meant to address, such as those of military capacity on the continent. For instance, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) from

1999 to 2006; the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), as well as MINUSCA in the CAR, which is currently ongoing missions (Nystóm, 2015; World Peace Foundation, 2017; Pecquet, 2021; Gras, 2022).

Due to the issues of military capacity in Africa, the continent has been a theatre for regional and international peacekeeping missions, with a large chunk of peacekeeping missions taking part on the African continent. However, the capacity issue often does not solely lay at national militaries but at trusted institutions such as the UN and regional bodies such as ECOWAS and SADC. This is because, in the presence of such bodies, insecurity may go on uncontained and even worsen. Furthermore, these institutions are dogged with allegations of human rights abuses and other atrocities, such as rape, which begs whether they can restore peace and security. For instance, UN troops lacked the capacity and even the will to bring a solution to the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. This is better illustrated by Messner (2007:62), who states, "Events such as the 1994 Rwandan genocide or the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, both of which happened before the very eyes of UN peacekeepers, are a grave testimony to the severe shortcomings of UN peacekeeping capacities". Furthermore, in September 2021, UN troops in the CAR MINUSCA were accused of committing sexual crimes in the CAR. Consequently, the troops were discharged from service due to the abuse allegations (United Nations, 2021; Pecquet, 2021). The current scandals plaguing MINUSCA in the CAR, amongst other missions, is evidence that the capacities of bodies such as the UN are questionable.

Therefore, although institutions such as the UN and regional bodies have traditionally been relied on to assist African militaries, specifically those demonstrating a capacity deficit, their capacities are often questionable. This then leads scholars such as Messner (2007:62) to state, "In peace operations, private contractors [PMCs] provide services needed in military operations in a professional and efficient manner-services that the militaries themselves are lacking in capacity or will to provide".

Although controversial due to the often-covert nature of their work, PMCs have tried to re-invent themselves as legal soldiers or contractors in modern times. Much emphasis has been placed on their professional conduct in the activities that they participate in by scholars such as Douglas Brooks. Brooks (2000), a proponent of PMCs, emphasises the professionalism of modern PMCs and how they can contain insecurity as they are highly trained professionals. Essentially, some scholars, such as Brooks (2000) and Kinsey and Krieg (2021), argue that

PMCs can keep their professionalism because, as transnational actors, they are often not emotionally involved in conflicts; hence, they are aware of their duties as outlined in their contracts. The private sector is increasingly utilised to make operations more capable and cost-effective, thus reducing the required size and problems of interventions (Messner, 2007: 62). This may be a reason why some African governments employ PMCs, as will be illustrated as this section progresses.

4.2.1 Weakness in the Sierra Leonean military

When a country has a military staffed with soldiers who are inadequate or lack capacity and skills, it becomes challenging to confront and contain insecurity. These inadequacies contribute to explaining how such countries also become fragile states. This was the reality for the Sierra Leoneans and is currently the reality for the Nigerian, CAR and Mozambican military. A weak military is a military that cannot contain insecurity due to its inadequate military capacity. The presence of a weak army makes it easier for enemy forces to penetrate territories and eventually become uncontrollable, especially without external assistance. Furthermore, inadequate and unprofessional militaries/soldiers reflect poorly on governments and hinder efforts at restoring security and peace, prolonging the security crisis. The weakness and unprofessionalism of national militaries force governments to look for alternatives or boosters to their militaries. This may create a place for PMCs to be contacted. Sierra Leone, Nigeria, the CAR and Mozambique are cases that perfectly demonstrate this.

The Sierra Leonean civil war was a bloody war that broke out between 1991 and 2002, resulting in the deaths of a reported 50,000- 200,000 lives (Le Bras & Bradpiece, 2021). When the civil war broke out, Sierra Leone was already an impoverished nation with high levels of illiteracy, political intolerance and widespread tribalism, further exacerbating the conflict. The decade-long civil war that began under the government of Joseph Momoh saw many changes throughout those years due to coups and elections. The RUF rebels, under the leadership of former army corporal Foday Sankoh, had the support and backing of now-convicted warlord Charles Taylor of Liberia, who provided them with military training, shelter and arms, which put them at a better advantage than the national Sierra Leonean army itself (Le Bras & Bradpiece, 2021). The security sector in Sierra Leone was unstable when the war broke out, as the country barely had an army. The civil war was characterised by indiscriminate murders, rapes and the army's inability to fight against the rebels.

The civil war in Sierra Leone shed light on the country's military weakness and unprofessionalism, resulting in it being unable to defeat RUF rebels without external assistance. Furthermore, Hough (2006) quotes the ICG, 2001, essentially stating that the Sierra Leonean army was understaffed when the civil war broke out. Herbert Howe (1999:313) states, "The Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF) evinced many of the limitations which have encouraged the growth of private militaries. It hardly qualified as an army, despite its size of perhaps 14,000 soldiers, two-thirds of whom had been hastily recruited, and lacked basic military professionalism". The number of the military was not always at 14, 000 and due to the conflict, the government was forced to expand the military within months.

As Hough (2006:10) states,

> "In March 1991, the RUF crossed the eastern border into Sierra Leone from Liberia, terrorising civilians and taking over towns in the diamond-rich area of Kono. When the small under-trained forces of the government's RSLMF could not repel the RUF, Momoh undertook an intensive recruitment campaign, increasing his forces from 3000 to 14 000 in the space of a few months".

The hasty recruitment and enrolment of soldiers on the ground produced inexperienced and unskilled soldiers who directly confronted trained RUF rebel fighters who were also skilled in warfare. For instance, the RUF rebels, under the leadership of former army corporal Foday Sankoh, were reportedly trained in countries such as Libya, which offered strong military and guerrilla training (History.com Editors, 2012; Reuters, 2012). They had a better experience than the newly trained, as they could penetrate Sierra Leone from the Liberian border and take over diamond-mining areas such as Kono.

Some active Sierra Leonian soldiers infamously became known as 'sobels' to add to the security challenges. Howe (1998:314) best describes sobels as "soldiers during the day, rebels at night"- these were soldiers who took part in criminal activity, creating chaos for those whom they were expected to protect and often flip-flopped between the national army and being rebels with the RUF. An article by the Political Research Economy Institute (2005) states, "The poorly trained Sierra Leone Army (SLA) was unable to suppress the RUF. Largely made up of conscripts, the SLA had its discipline problems. Their soldiers, too, kidnapped women and looted towns they were supposed to protect. Some soldiers moved fluidly to join the RUF and then back again, depending on which force appeared to have the

upper hand". This further illustrates the Sierra Leone military's lack of capacity and unprofessionalism, contributing to fragile statehood.

By 1995, it became clear to the international community and the Sierra Leonean government that its military was too weak and unprofessional to fight against the rebels. This meant that external assistance was needed. Hence, the opportunity for PMCs to operate in Sierra Leone was created. This is backed up by David Francis (1999), who states, "the undisciplined, poorly trained and underpaid Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF) had earned themselves the pejorative 'Sobel' (bandit soldiers), proved largely incapable of repelling the RUF advances. Against this desperate and chaotic security situation, the NPRC government had to look for outside assistance from the private military and security companies on the international market. This, therefore, started the privatisation of security in Sierra Leone" (Francis, 1999:325).   As a result of a weak and unprofessional military, the Sierra Leonean government was forced to look into alternative and controversial ways to fight against the RUF rebels and eventually hired Gurkha Security Guards and EO in 1995.

The decision by the Valentine Strasser government to hire Gurkha Security Guards and then EO was not one made in a vacuum. It followed years of the army being unprofessional and ineffectual, which meant it could not contain the security situation alone. This is backed by an article in Global Security (2017) stating,

> "NPRC proved nearly as ineffectual as the Momoh government in repelling the RUF. More and more of the country fell to RUF fighters, so by 1995, they held much of the countryside and were on the doorstep of Freetown. The NPRC hired several hundred mercenaries from the private firm Executive Outcomes to retrieve the situation. Within a month, they had driven RUF fighters back to enclaves along Sierra Leone's borders".

Although some regarded EO as an extension of the apartheid regime, it had demonstrated professionalism in its previous contracts in Angola, which may have further attracted the Sierra Leonean government (Howe, 1998). EO, essentially having been formed out of the ashes of the apartheid regime, had highly trained soldiers, as its members were mostly made up of soldiers, unlike the Sierra Leonean soldiers, who were primarily unprofessional youths. EO soldiers were willing and capable of confronting RUF rebel forces. Unlike the Sierra Leonean 'sobels', these soldiers were not known for being weak unprofessional and susceptible to engaging in criminal activities. Given their history of being South African

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apartheid-era soldiers, they were regarded as highly professional and robust. They brought about a sense of structure and discipline lacking within the Sierra Leone military.

4.2.2 Weakness in the Nigerian military

The Nigerian military is another example of a weakened and unprofessional military that led its government to hire a PMC, specifically STTEP. Traditionally, the Nigerian military has been regarded as one of the largest and strongest militaries on the continent. Currently, the county's military ranks fourth on the continent and thirty-fifth in the world, according to data by Global Firepower (Kareem, 2022). Although this may seem like a high ranking, it has not translated into the country having high security as it is still faced with security threats in the form of Boko Haram and other terrorist groups which have been terrorising the country since 2009.

The country has a vibrant history with its military, as it is one of the top countries in Africa which has been under military rule resulting from coups. Nigeria gained independence from Britain in 1960, and what followed was the military flexing its muscles and orchestrating coups in rapid succession. The country was under military rule from 1966 to 1999 (Siollun, 2016; Joshua *et al*., 2021:182). Between 1966 and 199, the military of Nigeria orchestrated five successful coups and toppled multiple governments, including that of President Muhammadu Buhari, in 1985 (Joshua *et al*., 2021). Its military was so large and strong that the country became one of the leading peacekeeping contributors, specifically in West Africa. For instance, Nigerian soldiers were being deployed during Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) missions in countries such as Liberia and even Sierra Leone during their civil wars, for which they received high praise (Sieff, 2015). Varin (2018:149) states, "The country is one of the leading contributors to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions, having participated in over 25 operations since 1960. Nigeria has also played a key role in Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) peace operations, particularly in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire". As one of the leading contributors to ECOWAS missions, the Nigerian military has traditionally been considered the strongest military in West Africa.

Although the Nigerian national military has continued to be one of the leading contributors to peacekeeping missions, Sieff (2015) and Joshua *et al.* (2021) state that there have been drastic changes in its strength since the late 1990s and the end of military glory. According to Varin (2018) and Oriola (2021), the Nigerian military has proven to be weak, and this is why

it has been unable to defeat terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, which is evidence of its excellent fall from its former glory. The military's weakness could be attributed to low morale and widespread corruption. This follows years of alleged underfunding by the government, supposedly stealing funds and deliberately sabotaging the military to weaken it further to avoid future coups, a common practice for the military in previous years. In an article for the Washington Post, correspondent Sieff (2015) stated, "In the 1990s, the Nigerian Military was hailed for its role in peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone and Liberia. However, after military rule in this country ended in 1999, experts say that the armed forces were kept weak to prevent them from attempting coups".

The immediate ripple effect of the army being deliberately sabotaged by government officials was that it weakened its morale and performance in the long run. In an interview for Vice, Sean McFate, a former mercenary and now defence expert, states,

> "It [Nigeria] has the most powerful military in the region, and for six years, it couldn't control Boko Haram. Then, the government mercenaries did it, and within weeks, those mercenaries did it. So that suggests that mercenaries are more powerful, or at least *as* powerful as, the most powerful military in West Africa" (Bayley, 2016).

This indicates that the Nigerian army has fallen from its former glory. The weakening of the national military contributed significantly to its inability to contain Boko Harm, specifically in 2014 when the group had one of its most brazen attacks.

As a result of years of not properly investing in the military and corruption, which resulted in its weakness, the government of Goodluck was forced to employ STTEP and Conella Services Ltd to assist against Boko Harm during the latter part of his tenure. Reports suggest that PMCs remain active in Nigeria (Varin, 2018; Kinsey & Krieg, 2021).

4.2.3 Weakness in the CAR military

The CAR is yet another case of a military that cannot deal with the security challenges and has created the perfect environment for PMCs, particularly the Wagner Group, to thrive. The country is landlocked, a former French colony that gained independence in 1960. The years following her independence have been marred with great violence and insecurity, creating a fragile state in the CAR. Multiple coups have taken place in the CAR, with the first taking place early in the country's independent period in 1965, with the latest being in 2013 (International Federation for Human Rights, 2013; Lobakeng, 2016). The multiple coups only

contribute to the nation's instability and insecurity, further weakening the nation's already fragile military.

Furthermore, the CAR is one of the world's least developed and conflict-prone countries. The African American Registry article states, "Central African Republic is among the ten poorest countries in the world, with the lowest GDP per capita at purchasing power. As of 2019, according to the Human Development Index (HDI), the country had the second-lowest level of human development (only ahead of Niger), ranking 188 out of 189 countries" (The African American Registry, 2021). This is despite the country being blessed with natural minerals such as hydro power, diamonds, gold, oil, timber and uranium, making it a great interest for foreign actors (Infoplease, 2020; Doxsee *et al*., 2023). The combination of poverty with the constant and widespread insecurity has made her an easy target for countries such as China, Russia and former colonial master, France to essentially infiltrate her and meddle in her political and security affairs (Rielo, 2017; Minney *et al*., 2019; Reuters, 2021; Doxsee *et al*., 2023). Tensions in the nation are multifaceted, ranging from various issues such as ethnic tensions, electoral disputes and religious tensions between Muslim and Christian communities.

The latest ongoing civil war in the CAR broke out in 2013 due to the coup against former president François Bozizé, resulting in retaliatory attacks further fuelled by religious and ethnic differences. The latest civil war was highly violent from its inception, as scores of casualties were reported and many others displaced, with the country's army being too weak to contain the violence. For instance, from 5-6 December, 1000 people, including women and children, were killed in the nation's capital, Bangui, following attacks orchestrated by the anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka (OHCHR, 2014). These killings took place in a country with a national military, which is evidence of how weak it is as a consequence of these violent events and many others resulted in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) placing an arms embargo on the nation in 2013. The Stockholm International Peace Institute (s.a.) states, "Arms embargos are a type of sanction that can be used to coerce states and non-governmental actors to improve their behaviour in the interest of international peace and security". This, combined with the nation's essentially non-existent military and its dependent relationship with Russia, led to the hiring of the Wagner Group.

The country has one of the weakest militaries in Africa and the world; hence, it relies on external players for military assistance. Reports suggest that the Wagner Group has been a

crucial role player in the civil war in CAR since 2017 and is essentially in charge of the CAR military. As Munday (2021) stated, "Russia's operations in the CAR stem from a 2017 meeting between President Touadéra and Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov. Touadéra, facing a UN arms embargo and continual instability from rebel groups, requested military assistance from Russia, alongside training for embattled armed forces. The CAR government, in return, offered lucrative mining contracts". The assistance sent to the CAR by Russia was the deployment of the PMC, the Wagner Group, which, according to sources, has only further weakened the CAR army, further cementing the need for their assistance. As stated in an article by Picco (2022), "Since their deployment in December 2020 to support the army's counteroffensive, Russian forces have de facto assumed command of the FACA on the battlefield. Several observers described to Crisis Group the troops' growing discontent with how Wagner mercenaries humiliate and physically abuse Central African officers and soldiers". This has been met with widespread condemnation and reports of human rights abuses committed by the CAR military working together with the Wagner Group.

4.2.4 Weakness in the Mozambican military

Mozambique's military was another case study of a weak and unprofessional military, eventually leading the government to hire PMCs, particularly the Wagner Group of Russia and DAG. As Nhamirre (2021:2) states, "Militarily, Mozambique cannot apply a practical solution in Cabo Delgado. The Armed Forces for the Defence of Mozambique (FADM) suffers many political and organisational problems". Like the other case studies in this paper, Mozambique is no stranger to violence and insecurity in her land. The country was engulfed in multiple civil wars beginning in 1977, which resulted in the deaths of thousands of civilians before the current insurgency that broke out in 2017 and reached its boiling point in 2021 (Hanlon, 2021). Like the Sierra Leonean military, the Mozambican military was highly involved in the civil wars and has since been significantly weakened.

This weakness has been highlighted in a report by the International Crisis Group (2021), which states the following "The army, which significantly shrank after the 1992 peace deal ending the country's civil war, is in disrepair, a soft target for militants who have overrun many of its positions and plundered its weapons stockpiles. It is also stretched, guaranteeing security in the centre of the country. At the same time, it tries to achieve the final surrender of a residual armed faction of the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Renamo) opposition group)". Years of civil war and poor investment in the army have weakened the Mozambican national military. Consequently, it has proven to be unable to contain the current insecurity,

which is rooted in religion and other grievances, without the assistance of external parties. As a result, the government turned to the Wagner Group and, later on, DAG, with which a relationship had long been established. This is one reason why the Mozambican government hired PMCs.

The strength and professionalism of militaries/soldiers play a vital part in a country's ability to contain and combat insecurity. Some may argue that the stronger a country's military is, the more likely it will be able to manage insecurity. However, this may not always be true, as illustrated by the case of the Nigerian army. Suppose a country's military is characterised by weakness, corruption, and even regarded as 'sobels', as was the subject of Sierra Leone. In that case, it may not be able to combat insecurities alone. Therefore, some African governments have employed PMCs because their militaries or soldiers are unprofessional/weak, as illustrated.

4.3 Lack of assistance from allies/regional partners

History has shown that security crises such as religious extremism and terrorism have affected not only the states involved but also those neighbouring them and their allies. Essentially, insecurity negatively impacts the international community as it can birth adverse spill-over effects. These negative spill-over effects include famine and transnational terrorism when terrorist activities in one country spread to other countries. For instance, when Boko Haram was first introduced into the international limelight, they primarily operated in Nigeria (Abdile & Botha, 2017; Varin, 2018; Brechenmacher, 2022). However, in recent years the terrorist group has now become a problem for the majority of the ECOWAS region now operating in countries such as Chad, Niger and Cameroon (Hoinathy, 2019; Reuter, 2020; Eizenga, 2020; Brechenmacher, 2022).

In addition to transnational terrorism, which can be a spillover effect of internal insecurity, these crises often birth other spillover effects, such as both internal and external displacement of civilians. The consequences of internal and external displacement are dire, often leading to mass casualties, famine and refugee crises. Therefore, internal and external displacement can pressure neighbouring countries, former colonial states, and allies to assist those displaced. For instance, the CAR has had significant displacement challenges since the newest wave of violence was triggered in 2013. As Buchanan-Clarke (2020) stated, "Since 2013, it is estimated that of the country's population of roughly five million, about one in five people have been internally or externally displaced, thus creating the world's highest humanitarian

caseload per capita". This puts pressure on neighbouring countries, namely the DRC, the Republic of the Congo and Cameroon, regarding migration, and former colonial master France, to assist the CAR with military and humanitarian aid. This is one of the reasons why conflicts may become an international crisis, and other countries may be expected to assist during such periods.

Although it is an unfortunate reality of African history, the ties and legacies of colonialism can still be seen in many aspects of African society, which also includes reliance on allies for security, especially during periods of insecurity. This may explain why, when faced with a security crisis, some African governments seek military assistance from their former colonial masters instead of neighbouring states' aid. Essentially, governments often fail to deal with security crises independently and may request assistance. This may be requested support may come from the regional blocs that they belong to, such as ECOWAS, world bodies such as the UN, former colonial masters, or close allies, failing at which the government may choose to employ a PMC.

4.3.1 Nigeria not receiving assistance from allies

Nigeria is a West African country which falls under the ECOWAS region. Defining ECOWAS, Yabi (2010:6) states, "Established in 1975 originally as a regional organisation to essentially promote the economic integration of the fifteen Member States, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) 1 has been gradually transformed, under the pressure of political events, into an organisation also responsible for finding solutions to armed conflicts and other political crisis which were undermining peace and security within the community space". As an ECOWAS member, Nigeria can request military assistance when faced with internal insecurity that it fails to combat. However, when Boko Haram, an Islamic terrorist group originating from the northern part of the country to introduce Sharia law throughout the country, began gaining more notoriety in 2013-2014, the Nigerian government began looking for assistance from its allies, the United States of America, France and its former colonial master- Britain. This included military aid.

Although Nigeria had had mutually beneficial relationships with the USA, Israel and Britain in previous years, the country was faced with great reluctance from these allies to assist it militarily when Boko Haram was gaining momentum. This is because of the reputation of the Nigerian army, which had become tainted by controversy over the years.

The history of the Nigerian military has been marred with accusations of the military being heavy-handed and brutal against its people. In recent years, institutions such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have often accused the Nigerian military of violating human rights. In a study conducted by Temitope Oriola (2021) titled 'Nigerian Soldiers on the War against Boko Haram', Oriola (2021) states, "Amnesty International, for instance, reports that Nigeria's military forces extra judiciary killed 1,200 persons and illegally arrested 20,000 young males and 7,000 persons died due to conditions in military detention facilities", and these are just recorded estimates in recent times. Instances of human rights violations by the Nigerian government include the Biafra war which the Nigerian military engaged in a deadly civil war against their fellow countrymen of Igbo descent in the years 1967-1970 (Ottemoeller & Uphoff, 1970; Nwaubani, 2020). The military was used as an ethnic tool to commit mass ethnic cleansing against those of Igbo descent, and as a consequence, scores of Igbo civilians were annihilated by the military, which was supposed to protect them as Nigerian citizens (Ottemoeller & Uphoff, 1970; Nwaubani, 2020).

Most recently, the army has been accused of committing human rights violations in mostly the country's northern parts since 2009, when Boko Haram's attacks were first recorded. Akinwotu (2020) states, "In allegations strongly denied by the Nigerian army, victims suffered torture and years of detention without charge, trial or medical treatment, in "inhumane" conditions at three centres. One is the Giwa barracks detention centre where rights groups have for years reported endemic human rights abuses". These human rights violations are not isolated incidents, as they have been reported nationwide. Due to years of reported human rights violations and abuses, the Nigerian military has earned a bad track record regarding protecting and preserving human rights.

The Nigerian military's track record made it difficult for governments to assist them when Boko Haram was at its peak during Jonathan's government between 2013-2014, leading to the government deciding to contract STTEP and Pilgrims Africa. According to Varin (2018:147), "After spending six years politicising the threat of Boko Haram by branding it as a northern 'tool' that was being used to undermine his authority, President Jonathan finally urged his generals to find a solution. The lack of investment in the Nigerian Army and a pervasive culture of corruption meant that this solution had to come from outside the country, either Nigeria's traditional allies or the private sector". This is why the government of Nigeria initially turned to its allies and then later to PMCs, namely STTEP.

Accounts written in an article by BBC (2014) and Varin (2018) state that the Nigerian governments had sought assistance from the allies USA and UK when Boko Haram was wreaking havoc in 2013-2014. However, this assistance did not come; instead, it seemed like they were working against them. For instance, according to the BBC (2014) article and Varin (2018), former US President Barrack Obama halted the sale of much-needed weapons to Nigeria in 2014. The suspended sale of these weapons resulted from Nigeria's tainted military track record, and the US laws ban the sale of lethal weapons to countries whose military are accused of gross human rights abuses' (BBC, 2014; Varin, 2018). In his paper on PMCs in Nigeria, Antonino Adamo (2020:343) makes the following statement: "According to Siobhán O'Grady and Elias Groll (2015), an anonymous American source who spoke to Foreign Policy revealed that the mercenary intervention occurred when the United States refused to provide weapons and blocked the sale of Cobra attack helicopters from Israel to Nigeria. The United States had long refused to provide equipment to Nigeria due to human rights violations, thus triggering Nigerian complaints about the lack of resources available in the fight against Boko Haram".

"Since the failed US mission in Somalia and the genocide in Rwanda, US policy towards Africa has been centred increasingly on developing the capacities of African countries to undertake peace operations under the guise of 'African solutions to African problems' – a notion that some viewed as a convenient alibi for US inaction. Despite its renewed interest in the continent in the post-9/11, 2001 era, the US remains reluctant to deploy ground troops to Africa" (Aning, 2008:615). Looking into the performance of US troops in countries such as Somalia and even Rwanda in 1994, where they were part of the international community that stood idly by as genocide was occurring, may explain why the country is seemingly reluctant to deploy their national troops, even to their allies such as Nigeria. Furthermore, the US had made damaging claims against the Nigerian military by stating that members of Boko Haram had infiltrated the national military, which was another reason why the USA was reluctant to assist its ally (Varin, 2018). The accusation of Boko Haram members infiltrating the Nigerian army incited that by helping the Nigerian military, the US government would also be assisting Boko Haram indirectly to continue terrorising vulnerable communities. Therefore, the American government at the time did not help the Johnson administration deal decisively with Boko Haram.

In retaliation, Jonathan halted much-needed training, which supposedly strained the relationship between Jonathan's government and the US government (Varin, 2018;

Akinwotu, 2020). However, they still needed assistance in dealing with Boko Haram. Hence, they turned to STTEP for service, which was not concerned with the Nigerian military's human violation track record. Kinsey and Krieg (2021:240) state, "Nigeria's engagement with both international and regional partners was unable to deliver the necessary operational successes against Boko Haram. Consequently, the Jonathan administration was looking for a security lever that would not only complement the existing capacity and capability of the Nigerian Armed Forces but could fill the void between international and regional cooperation on one side and the national security sector response on the other—turning to the global market for force promised to provide capacity, capability and doctrine that the Nigerian security sector was lacking in its COIN struggle with Boko Haram".

Although these PMCs pride themselves in not taking contracts from illegitimate and abusive governments, STTEP took a contract with the Nigerian government, although the Nigerian army had been accused of human rights violations on numerous occasions (BBC, 2014; Varin, 2018; Akinwotu, 2020). For an ally to be willing to intervene and assist another ally, there has to be a sort of guarantee that there would be minimal to no reputational damage. This is especially true for countries such as the US and the UK, which pride themselves as beacons of democracy and the protectors of the underdog and refuse to engage with countries whose militaries are deemed to be abusive to their civilians (BBC, 2014; Varin, 2018; Adamo, 2020). Although allies have a history of helping each other out, nothing legally binds them to do so, and therefore, they may resist doing so. Thus, Nigeria is a perfect example of a lack of assistance from allies, leading a government to turn to PMCs, specifically STTEP.

4.3.2 Governments rejecting assistance from regional partners: Mozambique and SADC
Although allies and regional neighbours may offer their assistance, governments may turn them down and opt for other alternatives, such as hiring PMCs, even though it may not be a popular choice. This is what happened in Mozambique. Mozambique is a southern African country bordered by Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, the Kingdom of Eswatini and South Africa. It is part of the SADC region. SADC is a regional inter-governmental organisation or body that caters to countries in the southern parts of Africa, such as Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique. According to its website, the objectives of SADC are "to achieve economic development, peace and security, and growth, alleviate poverty, enhance the standard and quality of life of the peoples of Southern Africa, and support the socially disadvantaged through Regional Integration (SADC, 2012).

Like ECOWAS, SADC, as a regional bloc, is responsible for several functions, including strengthening regional security and providing troops on the ground where needed. They achieve this through military missions. The relationship between regional members is meant to be characterised by cooperation, which translates to member states willingly receiving assistance from one another. For instance, SADC sent troops from three SADC member states, namely Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, to the conflict-ridden Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1998, which the government of the DRC was cooperative with SADC (SADC, 2012). Essentially, when a member state of SADC needs social, economic or military assistance, it is the responsibility of the other members to provide it, as seen in cases such as in the DRC. Although SADC has been criticised by many for allegedly looking the other way on human rights abuses in countries such as Zimbabwe and being late to respond to the crisis, it raised the alarm on the situation in Mozambique, which the Mozambican government initially downplayed as a domestic issue that it could manage on its own (Mmeso, 2021; Hanlon, 2021; Nhamirre, 2021)

The Mozambican crisis, mainly in the Cabo Delgado region, has been brewing since 2017 (Nhamirre, 2021; Hanlon, 2021). However, the Mozambican government only sought military assistance with the crisis in 2019, and instead of turning to its regional organisations, it contracted PMCs, namely the Wagner group. The Mozambican government were reluctant to welcome the deployment of SADC troops onto their land and had essentially adopted a de facto policy. In line with this policy, Maputo was unwilling to receive SADC military support involving the deployment of boots on the ground despite the resurgence of attacks in Cabo Delgado and the inability of local defence and security forces to contain the growing insurgency (Nhamirre, 2021:2). Realising the regional threat posed by the insurgency in Mozambique, SADC members began advocating for intervention in Mozambique, which the Mozambican government downplayed. This is backed up by a report compiled by the International Crisis Group (2021:1) at the time, which stated, "Member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are thus pushing to make some kind of intervention in Cabo Delgado. However, Mozambican authorities are wary of allowing a heavy regional deployment they fear could lead to a messy quagmire". Thus, even though it is the responsibility of SADC to provide security assistance, it cannot forcefully impose or intervene in the matters of a member state as member states still retain their sovereignty.

Permission must be attained from the concerned country before a SADC intervention/mission can be undertaken, as SADC members are sovereign states. As sovereign members of the

SADC region, this fundamentally means that member states, such as Mozambique, can delay or reject the offers of help from SADC, which is what Mozambique initially did (Nhamirre, 2021; Mmeso, 2021). As a SADC member, Mozambique, too, could get earlier assistance, with military aid from SADC and other foreign interventions being offered to the Mozambican government since 2017 (Mmeso, 2021; Hanlon, 2021). However, according to a policy brief by Nhamirre (2021), the Mozambican government rejected earlier offers of help and opted to hire PMCs. Nhamirre (2021:5-6) states, "Mozambique initially rejected any support that would result in the deployment of troops on the ground such as a traditional peacekeeping operation, arguing that the insurgency was a domestic crisis that Mozambique could handle". This demonstrates that the Mozambican government attempted to downplay the situation in Mozambique, specifically in the Cabo Delgado region, by initially calling the Islamic insurgents 'criminals' and 'evildoers' (Hanlon, 2021; Nhamirre, 2021).

Upon realising the magnitude of the security crisis following pressure from SADC and others, the president of Mozambique turned to Russia, with whom Mozambique has a longstanding relationship. This led to the deployment of the notorious Wagner Group in 2019 (Hanlon, 2021; Nhamirre, 2021). The deployment of the Wagner Group was soon followed by the DAG in 2020 and eventually by the Dubai-based PMC group, The Paramount & Burnham Global consortium, in 2021. By opting to hire PMCs instead of accepting offers of help from SADC first, the Mozambican government was making it clear that it did not want the presence of traditional missions on their land.

The primary reason why the Mozambican government was reluctant to accept the military assistance from SADC and instead opted for PMCs is because it claimed that it wanted to protect Mozambique's sovereignty and the Mozambique government 'does not want to create a salad of interventions' (Mmeso, 2021; Nhamirre, 2021:3) This point is further emphasised by Nhamirre (2021:5-6) who goes on to state "The government stressed that the country's sovereignty was sacrosanct. It opted for using private security companies to complement the efforts of the Mozambique security forces while simultaneously requesting soft support (equipment, funds and technical assistance) from the international community". This led to the deployment of the Wagner Group soldiers in Mozambique in 2018, which DAG and the Paramount & Burnham Global consortium soldiers in Mozambique followed.

Before the Islamic insurgency in Mozambique, SADC members had not had to counter religious insurgencies until the case of Mozambique (Hanlon, 2021; Mmeso, 2021; Nhamirre,

2021). Eventually, the Mozambican government folded and allowed for a SADC intervention. However, it was still a complex process to begin as the Mozambican government was still uneasy about the presence of SADC on their land.

4.4 PMCs can be deployed more rapidly than other external military options

African conflicts have a trend of being prolonged for periods. This is the case in countries such as Nigeria, which has been marred with periods of conflict since the early years of her independence in 1960, and the CAR, which has also been marred with violence since her independence in 1960 and is still ongoing (Varin, 2018; Felbab-Brown, 2023). These are examples of how African conflicts often go on for prolonged periods. Various factors could prolong insecurity, such as the reluctance to end disputes by warring parties due to financial gain from the conflict, lack of communication between warring parties, and backtracking on mutual agreements by one warring faction, to name a few.

Although African conflicts have shown a trend of being prolonged, there are instances where these conflicts are short-lived. However, even when a battle is seemingly short-lived, it can still result in the deaths of countless people in the short timeframe it takes place. For instance, the Rwandan genocide, which took place over approximately 100 days, April 6 1994- July 22, 1994, resulted in the demise of a recorded 800,000 civilians in what could be considered a relatively short timeframe for a conflict (Aning, 2008:616). This demonstrates how precious time is when dealing with a security crisis.

Time effectiveness has thus proven to be a crucial factor when dealing with a security crisis, regardless of what may have triggered it. This is because the longer a security crisis goes on, the more damage there will be for the concerned country and its citizens regarding human collateral damage and general instability. To restore peace and security, the government, working with its military, should work promptly to restore peace and security. If the national military cannot confront violence on time, the government may look into traditional alternatives to assist in facing those challenges. These alternatives include institutions such as the AU UN and regional bodies such as ECOWAS and SADC. However, many bureaucratic tapes and channels must be addressed when a government seeks the assistance of other military options. These bureaucratic processes can prove to be time-consuming and, as such, may force a government to look into alternative military options in the form of PMCs that would not require the same amount of time or bureaucratic tapes to be deployed. Essentially, PMCs can be deployed to conflict zones quickly and without wasting too much time, unlike

the AU or the UN. This is backed up by Foaleng (2007:50), who states, "The use of military companies is considered as an alternative for peace enforcement, especially in cases where international institutions, such as the UN, the AU or sub-regional organisations, are not willing or are taking time to act and intervene to protect civilians".

PMCs work on contracts given to them by clients such as governments, which means that they are not meant to be a permanent fixture when governments contract them and, as such, often have a limited amount of time to carry out the services for which they have been employed. Although it is not always stated how long contracts are awarded to PMCs, most responsible PMCs work to achieve their mandate as fast as they can, as the PMC industry is highly competitive and having a good reputation for bringing about tangible change in conflict areas may result in the awarding of future contracts. This keeps the PMC in business and assists governments in bringing about much-needed security in their countries. In his book, Douglas Brooks (2000) argues that PMCs are time effective as they can not only end wars but also do it faster than regional blocs and international organisations such as ECOWAS and the UN (Brooks, 2000). He illustrates this point by stating, "Of all the tools currently available to end organised African violence, only PMCs are capable of quickly bringing peace to the African continent (Brooks, 2000: 3). Essentially, deploying PMCs does not require the same amount of bureaucratic approvals such as other military options.

In addition to being able to be deployed in a time-effective manner, compared to other military options, PMCs can bring about tangible results in a short period when a government has contracted them. PMCs are service providers, and like any other service provider, they are aware of the importance of customer satisfaction promptly. Their industry has become competitive since the 1990s, with the emergence of multiple PMCs, which often operate in the same conflict zones. Therefore, as the competition stiffens, they have less time to produce tangible results. Their history in African conflicts demonstrates that they can often bring about stability in less time than national militaries and inter-governmental organisations, which may be why African governments may choose to hire them. For instance, Sierra Leone and Nigeria are perfect case studies. Essentially, PMCs can bring about security faster than national militaries, which are often involved in prolonged conflicts.

Below are illustrations of how PMCs can not only be deployed to conflict zones fast but also how they bring about changes quickly.

The civil war in Sierra Leone dragged on for 12 years; Boko Haram has been terrorising Nigeria since 2009 and is still active in Nigeria as of 2023, together with new security threats such as the Fulani herdsmen; the current conflict in the CAR has been ongoing since 2013, and the conflict in northern Mozambique has been brewing since 2017, although it reached its boiling point in 2021(Brooks, 2000; Nielsen, 2016; Lobakeng, 2016; Nhamirre, 2021). These countries' governments failed to provide internal security to their citizens, making them fragile states (Gross, 2005). As such, they all needed a time-effective solution to combat their security crises, which is where PMCs fit in.

4.4.1 Effectiveness of EO in Sierra Leone

When the government of Sierra Leone hired EO in 1995, the civil war had protracted for four years, first breaking out in 1991(Howe, 1999). In those years, the RUF rebels gained ground in Sierra Leone and headed towards the nation's capital, Freetown. This essentially meant that the more time passed, the less likely there would be a solution to the problem. As stated previously, the longer a violent conflict persists, the more damage it can create to other aspects of society. For instance, the already battered economy was further devastated by the blood diamonds industry's growth, which also prolonged the civil war as warring factions were financed by these diamonds (Ford, 2012). This meant that the crisis in Sierra Leone was not only political but had now gone on to include the mining of so-called 'blood diamonds'; hence, the longer the war persisted. This also meant more civilians were at risk of being caught in the crossfires. People had already lost their lives in four years, and many more had been displaced. A fast solution was to deploy EO, seeing that the group had been able to contain the Angolan war in the previous months.

The effectiveness of EO was evident as it was able to reclaim territory and restore some sense of public order, which the Sierra Leonean military had failed to do in four years. As Howe (1998: 314) stated, "EO military progress was rapid. Once again, EO was a force multiplier that provided technical services, combat forces and limited training; 30 EO soldiers arrived in about May I995 and trained I50 government soldiers within weeks. Its first tasks were to push RUF away from Freetown, protect the Kono diamond district and open the roads to Freetown for food and fuel transport. By late January 1996, EO-backed forces had retaken the southern coastal rutile and bauxite mines, notably those belonging to Sierra Rutile and Sieromc". The gains of EO were noticeable within just under a month of the group's arrival in Sierra Leone. They backed up by Hough (2007:11), who states, "With most of its troops still in Angola, EO was able to deploy that same month and in just over a week on the ground, they managed to

expel the RUF from Freetown, pushing them 126 km back into the jungle. EO soldiers are reported to have called fighting the RUF 'child's play' after defeating a stronger guerrilla force in Angola."

The time effectiveness of PMCs in Sierra Leone may have paved the way for more African governments, such as the Nigerian government, to enlist their services.

4.4.2 Effectiveness of STTEP in Nigeria

When Boko Haram began gaining momentum in Nigeria, President Goodluck Jonathan assured Nigerians that their defeat was imminent (Varin, 2018). Months after assuring Nigerians that the end of Boko Haram was on the horizon, the terrorist group was still active and not showing any signs of slowing down anytime soon. Instead, the group became more brazen in their attacks, eventually leading to Chibok schoolgirl kidnappings on 14 April 2014, in the dead of night (Pesta, 2015; Varin, 2018). This put pressure on Jonathan's government, which was already seen as unresponsive and careless to the country's insecurity because of Boko Haram in the previous years.

This was all during the build-up to the presidential elections. Therefore, a quick solution was needed, seeing that the Nigerian security sector had failed to contain the situation over the years. Furthermore, the rapid growth of Boko Haram threatened Nigeria's security and Jonathan's presidential aspirations, who was campaigning for a second term in office during the 2016 elections. Nigerian elections are often marred with electoral violence stemming from alleged electoral fraud. Jonathan's government was greatly criticised in the upcoming 2016 elections, which was the spread and growth of Boko Harm. Having failed to contain the government, it hired PMC to act fast on the Boko Haram crisis in time for the elections. Hence, the employment of PMCs, according to Brooks (2000), can ensure security in a "remarkably short period".

When STTEP and other PMCs were hired by the Nigerian government in 2015, they could use their time effectively. For instance, as stated by Kinsey & Krieg (2021:243), "Within three months, the PMC was able to build an effective public-commercial partnership providing the Nigerian state with access to capacity, capability and norms that could not have been nurtured domestically within such a short timeframe". This is in comparison to the many years that the national Nigerian security sector has fought Boko Haram. However, the STTEPs contract was terminated after three months due to external pressure and supposed

infighting with the PMC. Kinsey and Krieg (2018:241, 242) state that regarding the termination of the STTEPs contract,

> "In April 2015, after just three months, the Jonathan government in Nigeria prematurely cancelled the contract with STTEP. According to Barlow, Western donors, most importantly the United States, had pressured Abuja to comply with the anti-mercenary norm, terminate the arrangement with the PMC, or lose foreign aid. At the same time, South Africa had directly raised the issue of STTEP with the Jonathan government over illicit transfers of cash to pay for the contractors".

Despite their termination, STTEP brought real military victories in Nigeria in their short time there. Therefore, it can be argued that one of the reasons that the Nigerian government hired PMCs is that they are often time-effective.

Violent conflicts can cripple a country and its citizens, leaving behind a trail of mass destruction. This is why when a conflict breaks out, it is up to the government and its security apparatus to bring timely solutions to the conflict to avoid prolonging it. The longer a violent conflict rages, the less likely a country will be able to salvage itself from the ashes, which may lead it to become a failed state. When a government realises that a violent conflict has become prolonged or wants to take a proactive rather than reactive position against such conflicts, it may look into alternative security providers, such as PMCs, to contract their services. This was the case in Sierra Leone, where PMCs could contain a four-year conflict within months, and in Nigeria, where PMCs saw tangible results within three months. Therefore, it can be argued that some African governments may hire notable PMCs such as EO and STTEP because they are time effective.

4.5 The cost of hiring PMCs is negotiable

Conflicts and insecurity not only put pressure on a state's military capacity, but they also are financially demanding. National defence spending's can range from millions to billions depending on the country's political landscape and overall security. Against this backdrop, departments such as Education, Social Security and Defence (which compromises the national military) take a large bulk of government budgets annually. The larger the military is, the more money is spent on it. For instance, the US military, the world's largest military, is allocated large amounts of money in the government's budget, mainly because their military participation occurs in many conflict zones. Amadeo (2020) illustrates this expense: "Estimated U.S military spending is $934 billion. It covers the period from October 1, 2020, through

September 30, 2021. Military spending is the second largest item in the federal budget after Social Security". This illustrates that defence/militaries require large amounts of money in their operations.

As expected, many African governments are forced to spend millions to billions on national militaries. This is especially true during conflict, with significant demand for security. For instance, since the 1990s, the Nigerian Defence Ministry has seen increased military spending. As illustrated by Macrotrends (2021), in 1990, the Nigerian Ministry of Defence spent $0.28B on the military, and by 2009 when Boko Haram began its terrorist activities, that figure had increased to $1.50B. By 2014-2015 following waves of attacks by Boko Haram, most noticeably the kidnapping of the Chibok girls, government spending on the national military had fully increased to $2.36B and $2.07B, respectively (Macrotrends, 2021). Although this is to be expected because of factors such as the worldwide rise in the cost of living and the weakening of the Nigerian currency (naira), the fact that over the past few decades, Nigeria has seen a spike in terrorist activities has contributed to the government spending on the military. This also demonstrates an upward trajectory in military expenditures, which strains government coffers.

Furthermore, when the conflict reaches its peak and even by the time it may conclude, it often leaves countries behind in a more financially distraught state than when the conflicts first began. This puts a lot of governments, which are already fragile states, under severe fiscal pressure, which they cannot afford. Simply put, many conflict-ridden countries are often also financially strained and extremely poor. Therefore, they can often not afford to provide the bare minimum for their citizens, let alone foot the financial bill that is inquired during violent and often prolonged conflicts. This could result in them looking into cheaper security alternatives or alternatives they may be able to negotiate with or offer other incentives to assist. This is when PMCs may become an attractive option.

PMCs are service providers, so they must also be paid for their services. Scholars such as Renou (2005) argue that the PMC industry is highly lucrative and thrives on conflicts. Providing security requires lots of money. Although this may be a controversial reason for hiring PMCs, African governments employ PMCs because the cost of hiring PMCs is negotiable. PMCs do not have a fixed price for their services, which means that the cost of hiring PMCs may vary depending on the expected benefits and other hidden costs. There are no definite figures relating to the payments of PMCs because both the governments that

employ PMCs and the PMCs themselves are not transparent with their agreements. Some may argue this is a positive aspect, while others may argue the opposite. Although PMCs are part of a multibillion-dollar industry, most of the costs of their contracts are not made known to the general public, with widespread speculations that governments that hire them negotiate with them.

The common trend among PMCs such as EO, DAG, the Wagner Group and others is that they all operate in highly naturally mineral-rich countries, even though their economies may be impoverished. This may be because the governments of such states often use this mineral wealth as payment for PMCs services.

4.5.1 Sierra Leone and EO

Since PMCs often operate in poor-conflict-torn countries in exchange for their services, they may be given contracts such as mining rights and other concessions. This is backed by Foaleng (2007:46), who states

> "In situations of civil war [insecurity], governments generally welcome the presence of multinationals when the state's natural resources can be used as the main source of revenue to fund the crisis. Governments use natural resources, be it in nature or as revenues derived from their exploitation, as a mode of payment to companies whose activities are in reality of a military nature".

This demonstrates that a financially strained state may use its minerals as payment for the services of PMCs, especially when it cannot afford to foot the bill for the services rendered by PMCs. For instance, Francis (1999), states, "In August and December 1995, EO routed the RUF from the Kono diamond mining and Sierra Rutile mining sites, respectively. Both mining sites are strategically crucial to the government regarding revenue generation and EO since its future payment depended on the security of the mining areas". This laid the foundations for allegations of mining concessions being given to the group by the government of Sierra Leone.

Adamo (2020) further states, "The 21-month-long operation cost $35 million – a high price considering that Sierra Leone's foreign trade was only worth $39 million. According to speculation, EO was paid in diamond concessions, as Branch Energy acquired the Kono diamond concessions after EO's entry into Sierra Leone. Even the International Monetary Fund approved payments to EO as part of Sierra Leone's overall budget". Despite its poor

economic standing at the time, there has been widespread speculation amongst scholars about how Sierra Leone could employ EO. Although both sides deny this, PMCs may deny receiving such deals because it makes them come across as taking advantage of conflicts. In contrast, governments may deny this because it may come across as inviting neo-colonialism.

4.5.2 Mozambique, DAG and the Wagner Group

Like in other countries where PMCs operate, the Mozambican government has not revealed DAG, Wagner and Paramount's price tags. The PMCs involved have also never disclosed the amounts of monies they received from the Mozambican government. However, studies have been made to estimate how much PMCs may have made in Mozambique, particularly DAG. Nhamirre (2021:2) states, "Details were never given on the contract between the government of Mozambique and DAG, showing a lack of transparency and accountability concerning the presence of private military companies in Mozambique. However, a study of the financial costs of the Cabo Delgado conflict found that the Mozambican government paid US$30 million to DAG from April 2020 to April 2021, when the company was helping government forces fight the insurgency". These are estimates of how much the group was paid in Mozambique.

4.5.3 The CAR and the Wagner Group

This pattern of payment negotiation has continued since the 1990s, with CAR being an example. As previously stated in this paper, the CAR is an impoverished nation, although it has great mineral wealth. These minerals include timber and gold, which have enable the deployment of Wagner Group in the country. Scholars such as Fabricius (2022) believe that the group has taped into that mineral wealth with the approval of the government for it to provide its services. As Fabricius (2022) states, "No visible contract means no evidence of legitimate pay, fuelling allegations that Wagner is being reimbursed instead with lucrative mining contracts". This is further backed up by Bax (2021), who states, "Conflict over CAR's mineral resources could also intensify amid fears that the government may compensate Wagner or associated companies by handing them control of mining zones. Wagner arrived in 2018 when the government granted gold and diamond mining licences to the Russian-owned company Lobaye Invest SARLU. The UN says the two companies are "interconnected".

These types of alleged negotiation of payment have been met with widespread criticism from both the government of the CAR as well as Russia and the Wagner group, as the group has

been allegedly taking advantage of the mineral wealth of the CAR at will. Munday (2021) stated, "Such deals resonate with the recent growth of reports and scholarly literature highlighting Russia's 'return to Africa". This return resembles the USSR's support of African regimes throughout the Cold War. As recent as 2023, reports have emerged about Wagner and its branches not only providing protection for mines in the CAR but owning them, most notoriously the Ndassima mine (Doxsee *et al*., 2023). This is part of the give-and-take payment for their services in the CAR.

What concerns Western analysts with Russia's activities is that much of this effort is expended to bolster and support existing authoritarian regimes across the non-western world. "Russian interests in the CAR seem to be both financial (acquiring access to diamonds, gold, and other mining contracts) and part of the country's wider strategy in Africa, aimed at countering American influence and gaining greater African support for Russian initiatives at the UN" (Buchanan-Clarke, 2021). These sentiments make it even more suspicious when PMCs have ties to countries like the Wagner Group. Russia does not export democracy or human rights, providing stability for the ruling regime and fulfilling other self-interests, such as gaining raw materials from recipient regimes.

War is not only costly in terms of human life, but it also has a significant impact on a state's finances. Providing security, especially during violent conflicts, is, therefore, an expensive exercise to undertake. Governments need to spend resources on their national militaries. However, they may hire PMCs when pressured into looking into alternative security providers. This is because the cost of hiring PMCs is flexible and negotiable, even though this may benefit the PMC that has been employed. Although this may be controversial, and there have been allegations that it invites neo-colonialism, it allows some governments to provide security without being pressured into giving financial payments. Therefore, this is a reason why African governments hire PMCs.

4.6 PMCs offer additional military personnel/soldiers, weapons and equipment
One of the most apparent reasons African governments employ PMCs is that PMCs such as Executive Outcomes, STTEP and DAG offer additional personnel/soldiers as well as weapons and equipment, often needed by conflict-ridden countries. History has shown that a military's ability to combat insecurity relies on its skills, weapons, and equipment. These weapons and equipment include assault rifles, helicopters, tanks and vehicles, to name but a few (Powers, 2019; Nhamirre, 2021). The more advanced and well-maintained a military's

weapons and equipment, the higher the chances it can defeat threats without needing external assistance, even from PMCs. However, some African governments, such as Nigeria, Mozambique and CAR, have been accused of deliberately underspending and syphoning out of monies intended to run their national militaries. Consequently, their militaries are left to deal with poor and often outdated military weapons and equipment (Nhamirre, 2021).

4.6.1 Nigeria, STTEP and additional weapons

The Nigerian military is one of the largest militaries on the African continent. The country has faced high insecurity throughout its history as independent, placing much pressure on the national military over the years. As one of the largest militaries on the African continent, the Nigerian military has one of the highest budgets, which is meant to be spent on paying sallies, buying and maintaining equipment. For instance, in an article looking into the national military defeat against the terrorist group Boko Haram, Sieff (2015) states the following about Nigeria's military budget "Nigeria's defence budget is more than $6 billion- among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa-, but experts say much of that is lost to corruption". Due to the corruption which has made its way into the military coffers, soldiers were not paid adequately, and the military equipment has been reported to be unmaintained and outdated, with new weapons and equipment being a rare buy (Sieff, 2015). To illustrate just how old the weapons used by the Nigerian military are, an article by PM News Editor (2019) revealed the following "Nigerian soldiers deployed to fight Boko Haram terrorists in the North-East are using outdated weapons and equipment, including Shilka artillery guns procured during the administration of the late Alhaji Shehu Shagari, president of Nigeria between 1979 and 1983" (PM News Editor, 2019). This means these weapons are close to 40 years old and are expected to be used against newer, more advanced weapons designed in the 2000s.

This illustrates how corruption has leaked into the national military, with monies meant for the military not going to it. This is backed up by Varin (2018), who claims funds have been siphoned from the military. As a result, the equipment and weapons they use are not up to standard to combat insecurity, with claims that Boko Haram terrorists had more advanced weapons than the national military itself. Reports from members of the national military and communities which Boko Haram terrorised also suggest that the military members have neglected their duties in the fight against Boko Haram. "As the Nigerian military battle Boko Haram over the past years, scores of soldiers made the decision that would put their lives in great danger- they refused to fight. It was not for lack of bravery, they said. It was a lack of

weapons" (Sieff, 2015). The argument about the Nigerian military's lack of weapons and equipment has also been backed up by Varin (2018), who states, "Nigerian soldiers have publicly complained about the lack of appropriate equipment, such as armoured vehicles, for fighting the insurgents. However, a British military trainer in Abuja said that the Nigerian Army has a lot of 'high-tech toys' but is incapable of using and maintaining them. As a result, new equipment quickly falls into disrepair and is left on the sidelines" (Varin, 2018:149).

The Nigerian government attempted to buy arms from its Western allies, which the US government blocked in 2014. This presented a setback to the country's battle against Boko Haram, which was gaining momentum and orchestrating more atrocities in Nigeria. With the US government blocking the sale of weapons to Nigeria, the government was essentially left more vulnerable and desperately needed an alternative to provide it with much-needed armaments and equipment to fight against Boko Haram. This played a role in the government hiring STTEP in 2014.

Varin (2018:150) states, "Although the companies were officially only providing 'trainers and training' to the Nigerian forces, in practice, they also supplied badly needed equipment and air support while appearing to work closely with the officer corps, thus serving as an effective morale booster". Varin (2018) states that STTEP operatives arrived in Nigeria with their specialised equipment, including night vision and gunships. This is backed up by Kinsey and Krieg (2021:240), who states,

> "While Western donors refused to equip the Nigerian Armed Forces with additional firepower due to concerns over their human rights records, STTEP was able to procure two dozen Armoured Personnel Carriers, several helicopters and helicopter gunships through backchannels, bypassing arms export restrictions to Nigeria put in place by South Africa and other countries".

This provided the Nigerian military with the much-needed equipment when they hired STTEP. Therefore, this may be considered one of the reasons why the Nigerian government hired STTEP.

4.6.2 The Mozambican military and weapons, the Wagner Group, DAG and Paramount

The Mozambican military is one of the many African militaries challenged with facing insurgents with a lack of weapons and equipment. In contrast, the al-Shabaab insurgents

themselves seem to be heavily armed. It has been reported that the Islamic insurgents in Mozambique are heavily armed with a variety of AK, Chinese weapons, rifles, machetes, and weapons that they confiscate from the national police and military itself (Ndebele, 2021). Mozambique's government has relied on aid, including military assistance, since 2001. This means that the Mozambique military does not have the proper equipment. Hence it needs the assistance of external forces, especially when faced with insecurity.

The lack of weapons in Mozambique can be traced back to the 16-year civil war, which ended up crippling the Mozambican arms supply. As stated by Nhamirre (2021:3)

> "Militarily, Mozambique cannot apply a practical solution in Cabo Delgado. The Armed Forces for the Defence of Mozambique (FADM) suffers many political and organisational problems. Soon after the end of the 16-year civil war in 1992, the army was destroyed, and the high-quality military equipment was either sabotaged or sold by political elites. Weapons were stolen or abandoned, and for many years, successive governments failed to invest in the armed forces".

The weapons that were reportedly brought into Mozambique by the Wagner Group, DAG and the Paramount & Burnham Global consortium include three attack helicopters, drones, and weapons; 6 light helicopter gunships; 4 Gazelle helicopters, 2 Mi-24 helicopters; one reconnaissance aircraft (Mwari), 12 Marauder armoured vehicles respectively (Nhamirre, 2021: 4). These PMCs brought in these weapons and equipment to help bolster the campaign against the insurgency that was brewing in Mozambique. Therefore, the weapons brought in by the different PMCs provided Mozambique with the additional assistance that its military failed at, which is why the government hired them.

4.6.3 The CAR weapons and the Wagner Group

The CAR has poor economy has affected the running of various sectors, including its military. Furthermore, the CAR has been placed under an arms embargo since 2013. "The UNSC has imposed an arms embargo on the Central African Republic (CAR) since 2013. If approved by the relevant UN sanctions Committee, it bans all arms and related material supplies to the country except the CAR security forces. The embargo is time limited but has been extended annually" (SIPRI, 2021). This means that the government cannot legally import or buy arms that it is already weak military needs to combat insecurity without the approval of the UN, which is not always guaranteed.

The lack of weapons, combined with the fact that the CAR barely has a military, is one of the factors that led the government to hire the Wagner Group. The group has a vast military inventory, including drones, light-weight reconnaissance and surveillance UAVs, sniper rifles and warplanes, which the CAR military lacks (Nhamirre, 2021; Aksoy & Dalaa, 2021). Although it is illegal to bring weapons into the CAR because of the arms embargo placed on the nation by the UN, the Wagner Group has been getting weapons into the CAR. This is part of its mission in the country, although details around their presence in the CAR are still sketchy. Therefore, it can be said that one of the reasons why the CAR government has contracted Wagner Group is because it can bring in the weapons needed to combat the insecurity. However, this may be considered technically illegal.

Therefore, the equipment is often old and outdated and cannot be used to fight against terrorists who have developed better/more robust strategies. The equipment offered by PMCs such as is often more advanced than that of national militaries. As a result, they are ill-equipped and have to turn to PMCs for assistance. This reality forces these governments to employ PMCs with weapons and equipment to combat insecurity.

This could be credited to the lack of administrative capacity in the CAR.

4.7 Increased military personnel

Most African countries have high populations with low military personnel compared to the countries they are meant to serve. On average African militaries have less than 500 000 active personnel in their militaries, which have to ensure and defend the national territories of countries with millions of citizens. This is evident as the current largest military in Africa, the Egyptian military, currently has approximately 440 000 active personnel in a country with a total population of an estimated 105 9 million (Kandil, 2020; World Population Review, 2022). This means that the ratio of civilians to soldiers is often imbalanced, and the military is forced to defend vast areas of territories, which can result in them being outnumbered. At the time that Boko Haram was gaining momentum in Nigeria in 2013-2014, the size of the Nigerian army was approximately 162, 000 active personnel in a country with a population of 176.4 million inhabitants (Country-Economy, 2014; Macrotrends, 2022). Currently, the Nigerian army has active military personnel 223 000 off in a country of 216.1 million citizens (Macrotrends, 2022); the CAR military has approximately between 14,000-15, 000 active military personnel in a country with a recorded population of 4.9 million inhabitants

(Macrotrends, 2022; Worldometers, 2022); Mozambique has approximately 11, 000 active personnel in a land of 31.26 million inhabitants.

Furthermore, some militaries have such low numbers of personnel that they can barely be considered severe and capable militaries. This was the case with the Sierra Leonian military comprised approximately 3,000 military personnel when the civil war first broke out, which according to Herbert Howe (1998), barely constituted an army. This may create the need to expand national militaries hastily, as was the case in Sierra Leone, which had to raise its army to 14,000 military personnel quickly (Howe, 1998). A repetition of history is currently being experienced in the CAR as it has an active military force of approximately 14-15 thousand, having to serve in a country that has been constantly plunged into violence since independence (Macrotrends, 2020), as well as Mozambique which currently has approximately 11,000 active military personnel.

Recognising that their troops are outnumbered, governments may approach PMCs to act as force multipliers in conflict zones. The personnel provided by PMCs includes technical advisors and much-needed soldiers on the ground who may actively take part in combating security threats (Brooks, 2000). Although some scholars may argue that the numbers of soldiers that PMCs bring in are not so great in number and is therefore insignificant, it is still an increase in the personnel, which means that more conflict areas may be reached. The lack of transparency by both PMCs and the governments which contract their services at times makes it near impossible to know the exact details around their contracts, and this also includes details on exactly how many of their personnel they send to conflict zones.

Most of the figures that are available around issues such as the number of active personnel sent in by PMCs, such as STTEP in Nigeria, or Wagner Group in CAR, are estimated based on leaked information, reports on the ground, or eyewitness accounts by villagers or residents residing in conflict areas (Adamo, 2020). According to Global Security150-200 EO, personnel were on the ground in Sierra Leone (Global Security, 2017). 250 STTEP soldiers were reported to have been hired by the Nigerian government, this time under the Buhari administration in 2015 (Adamo, 2020:346). In the case of Mozambique, Wagner Group brought in a contingent of about 200 soldiers, followed by DAG's reported 40 soldiers (Nhamirre, 2021:4; Ndebele, 2021). The largest contingent of PMC is perhaps found in the CAR courtesy of the Wagner Group, although there are no definite figures. In an article published by the Institute of Security Studies (ISS), Peter Fabricius, states that 1200 to 2000

Wagner troops were in the CAR (Fabricius, 2022). Although these figures may not come across as too high or alarming, they may be disputed by critics as underreporting.

To combat insecurity, a state needs to have the correct numbers in their military. The smaller an army is, the less likely it is to contain insecurity. This may be because they are over-stretched and must defend large land territories. Therefore, although PMCs do not necessarily bring in large numbers of troops or personnel when contracted by African governments, the personnel they bring are why some African governments have chosen to employ their services. This is why African governments hire PMCs, as presented in this paper.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter dealt in great detail with research question 1. It found that multiple reasons may inform a particular government's decision to employ PMCs. The first is that their militaries are weak/unprofessional due to a deficit in their military capacity and due to them being fragile states. The second reason was that they either did not have assistance from the regional partners/allies or deliberately rejected their assistance (Varin, 2018; Nhamirre, 2021). This was true for Nigeria and Mozambique, respectively, as this chapter has shown. The third reason was that PMCs could be deployed more rapidly than other external military options. The case of EO in Sierra Leone and STTEP in Nigeria illustrates this well (Howe, 1998; Varin, 2018). At the same time, the fourth and fifth reasons were that the cost of hiring PMCs is negotiable and that PMCs offer additional military personnel, weapons and equipment.

The following chapter will address the second research question of this thesis and the political implications for African governments associating themselves with PMCs.

Chapter 5: Conflict outcomes and the political implications of associating with PMCs

5.1 Introduction

PMCs, when deployed, play a pivotal role in either bringing about solutions to security shortfalls or perpetuating violence. Their involvement in African conflict thus has an impact on conflict outcomes. Against the backdrop, the second research question, ' How has the involvement of PMCs in Africa affected conflict outcomes?' will be addressed in this chapter. It will do so by dividing the contributions into positive contributions, which will then be followed by the negative contributions to conflict dynamics and conflict resolution in Africa. This chapter then concludes by explaining the political implications African governments may face for hiring PMCs.

5.2 Positive outcomes surrounding the involvement of PMCs in African conflicts

Since the 1990s, PMCs operating in Africa have had a mixture of results in their operations. Although critics of PMCs such as are of the view that they are often heavy-handed. PMCs such as EO, STTEP and others are usually associated with being mercenaries or dogs of war. They also have a track record of positively contributing to conflict resolution. Despite the cloud of suspicion surrounding PMCs, their track records in some African conflicts have proven they can contribute to positive outcomes. Below are illustrations that speak to the positive effects where PMCs are concerned.

5.2.1 Positive outcomes in Sierra Leone

Prior to the arrival of EO in Sierra Leone in May of 1995, the country had been engulfed in a four-year civil war which had destabilised many aspects of society (Howe, 1998). This included the economy and vital infrastructure such as hospitals and the education sector. The country was already faced with a high illiteracy rate, with the vast majority of adults being highly illiterate, and the civil war only increased the illiteracy rate. Furthermore, political participation was greatly hampered, with the civil war still raging. This meant that although Sierra Leone was independent, civilians could not participate in activities such as voting and consultation because such democratic processes were not taking place. The lives of ordinary people were further plunged into poverty and insecurity as the civil war raged on. The nation's capital Freetown was also in danger of being captured by approaching RUF rebels who had already seized mining areas such as Kono, where economic activities were. The

country was in ruins and desperately needed additional security tools in their conflict resolution efforts, which it was hoped EO could provide.

With the arrival of EO in 1995, the PMCs brought about positive, tangible results in conflict resolution efforts. According to Adamo (2020:156), the appearance of Executive Outcomes in Sierra Leone was meant to create an environment for four things, namely: "i) secure Freetown; ii) regain control of the US-owned Sierra Rutile mine (generating revenue for the government and helping to guarantee payment to EO); iii) destroy the RUF's headquarters; and iv) clear the remaining areas". The group had just served in the Angolan civil war, where they had contributed to conflict resolution efforts, and there was hope that they would be able to do the same in Sierra Leone too. While active in Sierra Leone, the group was able to bring about tangible results which impacted positively on conflict dynamics and conflict resolution. Hough (2005:11) states,

> "EO served as a force multiplier for the Kamajors and leveraged their knowledge of the local jungle, which surpassed that of the more urban RUF, as well as the intelligence they were able to gather from the local population. Using counterinsurgency tactics they had employed under the SADF, EO efficiently secured Freetown, regained control of the diamond mines, destroyed the RUF headquarters and cleared areas of RUF occupation in a series of five major offensives from May 1995 to October 1996".

One of the most important and positive contributions that EO could make in Sierra Leone was creating a conducive environment for the 1996 elections. Thus promoting democratic practices in Sierra Leone. "Executive Outcomes' victory allowed Sierra Leone to hold elections in March 1996 for a civilian government whose president, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, signed a peace accord with the weakened RUF in late 1996. Under the deal, Kabbah ended Executive Outcomes' contract in 1997" (Rupert, 1999). They achieved this by insisting on the democratisation process to begin, which led up to the eventual 1996 elections (Howe, 1998:314). This is backed up by Hough (2005:11), who states, "EO's intervention weakened the RUF's military position, compelling Sankoh to negotiate and sign a peace agreement with the government in November 1996".

EO further created the stability necessary for the country to hold democratic elections at which Joseph Kabbah was elected (Hough, 2005: 11), although this proved to be a short-lived victory. As Francis (1999) stated, "There is no denying the strategic impact of EO'S

operation in Sierra Leone. According to David Shearer, 'There is a clear link between the outcome of EO'S military operations and the RUF'S willingness to negotiate. Military successes against the RUF made elections possible; most of the one million people displaced by the fighting could return to their homes". This positively impacted and contributed to conflict resolution, although RUF rebels would backtrack on it within four months (Brooks, 2000). The positive contribution of EO was also praised by the government of Sierra Leone at the time, as stated by Francis (1999),

> "As far as the beleaguered government of Sierra Leone was concerned, EO was a positive security provider. In the words of Brigadier Julius Maada Bio-the military leader who ousted Captain Strasser in a palace coup in January 1996-EO 'did a positive job ... We didn't consider them as mercenaries but as people bringing in some sanity.' This view is further confirmed by the civilian president, Tejan Kabbah, who said that EO 'came at the right time, they provided a good service ... we appreciate that".

Although the positive contribution of EO in Sierra Leone was essentially short-lived, the group itself had played its part in conflict resolution. EO achieved its goals by securing the nation's capital Freetown and other towns which had fallen into RUF control from the rebel RUF forces. They weakened the RUF rebels in combat, eventually leading to the signing of the 1996 Abidjan Peace Accord and elections (Howe, 1998; Rupert, 1999; Hough, 2005). This was achieved within a few months, which the national army and ECOMOG struggled to achieve. This is how EO, the primary PMC in Sierra Leone at the time, positively impacted conflict dynamics and resolution. EO's positive impacts on conflict dynamics and resolution may have also opened the floodgates for more PMCs to continue operating in Africa since the 1990s.

5.2.2 Positive outcomes in Nigeria

Nigeria's history of violent conflicts and insecurity is nearly as old as her independence, from overcoming secessionist wars in the country's southern parts to the multiple coup d'état that have plunged the country into insecurity. The Nigerian military has always been at the forefront of these conflicts. Despite its reputation for committing human rights abuses and other atrocities, it has always kept its reputation as one of the strongest and largest militaries on the African continent (Oluwole, 2022). The country itself has been regarded as the 'giant of Africa', so when Boko Haram began its terror spree, many, including the Nigerian

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government, expected the Nigerian army to squash the new threat quickly. However, this was far from reality, and Boko Haram only became a more significant threat to the security of Nigeria and the ECOWAS region. Following the kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls, immense pressure was placed on the Nigerian government to find the Chibok girls and a solution that would bring about stability in the region. This is where the PMCs, namely Cornella Services and especially STTEP, came into the picture.

The Jonathan government contracted the services of STTEP and Cornella Services Ltd towards the end of his tenure in 2015. When describing the contracts of Cornella Services Ltd and STTEP, Kinsey and Krieg (2021) state the following: "The South Africans were employed in a training capacity but also ended up supporting the operations on the ground: 'Their mission was to train a mobile strike force with its own organic air support, intelligence, communications, logistics, and other relevant combat support elements … to rescue the Chibok school girls kidnapped by Boko Haram". STTEP saw significant gains within that period, positively impacting conflict dynamics and resolution. Prior to the arrival of Cornella Services Ltd and STTEP in Nigeria, multiple media and eyewitness reports reported that Nigerian soldiers were absconding from their duties, which meant that communities were left more vulnerable to attacks from Boko Haram (Sieff, 2015; Varin, 2018; PM News Editor, 2019). This impacted negatively on the conflict dynamics and resolution as Boko Haram insurgents seemed to have the upper hand in the conflict and continued terrorising communities due in part to the weakened morale of the Nigerian army.

With the arrival of PMCs, specifically STTEP, there began to be a shift in soldiers' morale, which positively impacted the conflict dynamics and resolution. As stated by Varin (2018: 151-152), "The presence of mercenaries – with their reputed expertise in bush war and counterinsurgency, and their supply of modern weaponry and air support – boosted the morale and performance of the Nigerian troops, and equally played on the psychology of the militants, who were finding that the tables had turned". This is further backed up by Kinsey and Krieg (2021:) who states "The outcome-oriented approach taken by STTEP ensured that contractors were accepting reasonable operational risks in embedding with local forces, thus giving Nigerian uniformed personnel the confidence and morale boost that was required to apply the training to operations involving high levels of combat stress". This is one way that PMCs positively impacted conflict dynamics and conflict resolution.

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Besides bringing about a morale booster to Nigerian troops, which positively impacted conflict resolution efforts, the PMCs also provided technical support which significantly aided the Nigerian government. As stated by Adamo (2020:346),

> "As for the military results of the intervention, mercenaries reportedly changed the momentum of the military effort. The 72 Mobile Strike Force, after training, retook the town of Mafa; the 7th Infantry Division occupied the town shortly thereafter, and the 72 Mobile Strike Force returned to Maiduguri. In mid-April 2015, the Nigerian government claimed that the forces had recaptured 10 of 14 local governments in the previous three weeks".

STTEP, working with the Nigerian national army, was essentially able to claim large portions of territory back from Boko Haram, which positively contributed to the conflict dynamics and conflict resolution at the time. "Looking at Boko Haram in 2015 as an insurgency group, territory seized from the group and held by the assemblage of national and commercial forces is an important metric. Within three months, STTEP and the NAF had seized the territory of the size of Belgium, using an integrated operational approach Barlow describes as "relentless pursuit". NAF commanders involved in the operation unanimously agree that STTEP's training, equipment, force integration and direction made swift operational successes possible, adding to the capacity, capability and norms of the Nigerian military (Kinsey & Krieg, 2021). These were all positive conflict outcomes involving PMCs.

5.3 Negative outcomes surrounding the involvement of PMCs in African conflicts

Since the 1990s, PMCs have had positive and negative results in their operations. Although modern-day PMCs such as STTEP and DAG pride themselves in respecting human rights and only conducting legal activities sanctioned by the government that has employed them, there are still instances where their presence has been highly criticised and marred with indiscriminate violence. This is a cause of great concern to reputable humanitarian institutions such as Amnesty International, who often write damning reports on PMCs and their operations. These reports and other accounts, which will be discussed as this section progresses, clearly indicate how although PMCs can positively impact conflict dynamics and conflict resolution as analysed above, they can also negatively impact conflict dynamics and conflict resolution in Africa at the same time. Particular attention in this part of this paper will be on Mozambique, and the CAR, both of whom have employed the Wagner Group and

DAG at one point or another, and the CAR is reportedly still hiring the Wagner Group as of 2023.

5.3.1 Negative outcomes in the CAR- the Wagner Group

As mentioned in this paper, the CAR has consistently been among African soil's most insecure and poorest nations. Violent national conflicts date back to her independence and have been sporadic since then. The latest round of disputes in the CAR was sparked in 2013, with scores of casualties and thousands more displaced. Due to the newest security round, the UNSC has placed an arms embargo on the nation, renewed annually since 2014 (SIPRI, 2021). Desperate to cling to power amid the insecurity, president Touadéra of the CAR invited the Russian PMC, Wagner group into CAR, which has been a heavily criticised decision. The presence of Wagner was first reported in 2017 and has been ongoing as of 2022 amid the ongoing violence (Fabricius, 2021; France 24, 2021). Although both the government and the Wagner Group have not been transparent on the nature of Wagner's operations in the CAR, the group is believed to be providing training to the military and combat services in the country.

The Wagner Group's presence in the CAR has been mostly met with criticism and condemnation, which implies that they negatively impact the conflict dynamics and conflict resolution in the CAR. This is evident by the multiple reports by reputable human rights watchdog Amnesty International and investigations by organisations such as the UN. Their accounts flagged the atrocities supposedly committed by the Wagner Groups operatives in the CAR, including sexual exploitations and crime. This is reported in an article by the BBC (2021) "Wagner operatives, as well as government forces, have raped and robbed unarmed civilians in the country's rural areas, the UN and the French say".

In a report in August about human rights abuses in the CAR, the UN documented more than 500 incidents in the year from July 2020. Among those were extrajudicial killings, torture and sexual violence". All this is in addition to the reports from witnesses on the grounds in the CAR. For instance, a report by Fassanotti (2022) found that "The Russian Security Company has been accused of perpetrating severe human rights violations and harassing peacekeepers, journalist, aid workers and minorities". The presence of the Wagner Group in the CAR has further strained the CAR's relationship with the European Union, which also provided much-needed military assistance to the country. The article by Fasanotti (2021) states, "Wagner's presence puts the CAR government at odds with the United Nations and Western

governments, which increasingly demand that the CAR ends its dealings with the Russian company or risk its assistance. In December [2021], the European Union suspended its military training mission to the country". This negatively contributes to conflict resolution efforts, as the country loses the additional support required to contain the current insecurity.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) is one of the watchdog organisations which has been raising the alarm on Russia's and the Wagner Group's deadly involvement in the conflict in CAR. The fact that the group is also closely associated with the Kremlin further makes it an unwelcome security provider to those who oppose the Kremlin. As stated by Buchanan-Clarke (2021),

> "In recent years, Russia has stepped up efforts to support Touadéra's government through the Wagner Group: a private security company closely connected to the Kremlin and often used by the Russian state as a proxy force when plausible deniability is necessary. The head of the Wagner Group in the CAR was appointed national security adviser, affords President Touadéra personal protection services, and provides some training to FACA".

HRW (2021) has stated that "Russian Wagner Group mercenaries have been abusing and killing civilians in the Central African Republic (CAR) since 2019". Citing an example of one of the multiple atrocities allegedly committed by the Wagner Group reported in an HRW report, Ritchie (2022) states "One of the atrocities alleged in a report involved the killing of at least 13 unarmed men near the town of Bossangoa in western CAR. The alleged incident occurred on July 21, 2021, when Russian-speaking forces set up a roadblock, "stopped the men, beat and shot them dead, and then put at least eight of the bodies in a shallow hole next to the road"—such incidents only fuel insecurity, further complicating the conflict dynamics and resolution efforts because of a PMC.

The security crisis in CAR is also religious, as it is political and ethical. This is evident as groups have emerged, namely the Séléka, which represents the extremist Muslim population and the anti-Balaka, which means a vigilante group who are predominately Christian and in direct combat with Séléka fighters (OHCHR, 2014). The Wagner Group forces have been accused of deliberately targeting Muslims in their operations, which can only worsen the already deadly tensions between the Christians and the Muslims. When reporting on the

attacks by the Wagner group on Muslim believers, Fabricius (2021) states, "The International Crisis Group and Africa Confidential say they have targeted not only members of the Fulani and Gbaya ethnic groups- Bozizé is a member of the latter- but also Muslims in general. (Some of the rebel groups in the CPC alliance predominantly profess that faith)". In an incident report by the UN on the targeting of Muslims by the Wagner Group, Walsh (2021) states the following "Russian mercenaries deployed in one of Africa's most fragile countries killed civilians, looted homes and shot dead worshippers at a mosque during a major military operation earlier this year [2021]". As religion is one of the driving forces of the violence in the CAR, when a PMC such as Wagner uses it to perpetuate violence against one group, the Muslims in this case, it only alienates and aggravates that group and further complicates conflict dynamics. Such incidents show how the Wagner Group negatively impacts CAR's conflict dynamics and resolution.

5.3.2 Negative outcomes of PMCs in Mozambique- the Wagner Group and DAG
The conflict in Mozambique has created the perfect environment for multiple PMCs to penetrate its security sector, often negatively impacting conflict dynamics and resolution. Among the various PMCs that were active in Mozambique were the Wagner Group and, later on, DAG, both of whom have been alleged to have committed human rights violations in Mozambique (Turse, 2021; Amnesty International, 2021; VOA News, 2021). As the first PMC to arrive in Mozambique, the Wagner Group was expected to bring about tangible results in the conflicting regions in Mozambique.

According to Nhamirre (2021:4), the group's contract was to "Fight insurgents in Cabo Delgado and provide special operation combat techniques," which they failed to do over time. Instead, the group was caught up in deadly encounters with the insurgents, resulting in them existing in Mozambique under a cloud of darkness. Wagner operatives began to abandon and retreat from conflict zones well into their contracts, as stated by Fabricius (2019) in an article for the Daily Maverick "Soldiers of the Russian private military company Wagner have retreated to Mozambique's port city of Nacala, after taking a beating in recent battles with jihadist extremists". This was essentially the beginning of the end for Wagner in Mozambique, as the group could not contribute to tangible security outcomes. Their operations reportedly resulted in the deaths of their contractors, according to Nhamirre (2019) and Fabricius (2019). "Security experts say 11 Russian soldiers have been killed over the last weeks, several of them beheaded in fighting in Mozambique's northern-most Cabo Delgado

province. The soldiers had rushed into battle without proper intelligence, training, preparation or knowledge of the terrain and, as a result, had suffered quite heavy casualties. Apart from the 11 killed, 25 had been injured (Fabricius, 2019). These were just the recorded figures, meaning they could be over-reported or underreported.

Essentially rather than the group containing the security crisis, they only added to it. This is evident through the reported lack of trust between the group and the army, as stated by Fabricius (2019) "The Wagner soldiers had also suffered a surprise attack when insurgents entered their camp dressed in the uniforms of the Mozambican army. This caused deep distrust by Wagner of the national army and prompted the Russians to stop doing joint patrols with Mozambican soldiers" (Fabricius, 2019) and the killings of their soldiers. Furthermore, the group and the national Mozambican army could not agree on how to go about military operations. Nhamirre (2021) cites the following example "The Wagner soldiers wanted to bomb the locations identified as insurgent bases while their Mozambican counterparts rejected this plan. The following confusion likely contributed to about a dozen casualties in the Russian ranks". The lack of agreement negatively contributed towards conflict resolution. In addition, although the group had come into Mozambique with specialised weapons such as that were meant to contribute positively to their military operations, these weapons proved to be essentially ineffective in the Mozambican landscape, as states Fabricius (2019), "the terrain comprised mainly dense and impenetrable undergrowth which neutralised the advantage of helicopters and electronic surveillance".

Therefore, the attacks, combined with the lack of coordination between the Wagner Group and the Mozambican national military, can be argued to have negatively impacted Mozambique's conflict dynamics and resolution.

The departure of the Wagner Group was soon followed by the arrival of DAG in April 2020 (Nhamirre, 2021). Unlike the Wagner Group, whose contract was meant to "Fight insurgents in Cabo Delgado and provide special operation combat techniques, DAG's contract was reportedly to "provide aerial support, logistics, military advice" (Nhamirre, 2021:4). This essentially meant that the group was only expected to provide support and non-combative service. Hence no civilians were ever meant to be physically harmed by DAG. Although the group was initially credited with positively impacting conflict resolution after having rescued civilians during the Palma attacks, more reports and investigations have since come out,

resulting in the activities of the group beginning to be questioned (Nhamirre, 2021; Amnesty International, 2021; VOA News, 2021).

Their contract also caused internal conflicts among government departments due to differences in the strategies they wanted to implement. This was highlighted in an article by Hanlon (2021:5), which states, "The Interior Ministry contracted the Wagner Group and then the DAG. There have been major conflicts between the Defence Force and the Ministry of the Interior as a result. For example, the army refused to cooperate with the Wagner Group. There is a critical strategic difference between the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence". This demonstrates that the Wagner Group created tensions amongst government departments meant to work together. Hanlon (2021:5) states, "The Interior Ministry believes the riot police can bring the insurgents under control relatively quickly with more outside support, including more air cover and spot provided by the DAG, better equipment, and more training. The Defence Ministry has a long-term strategy based on building a much larger modern military force, with substantial increases in equipment and training from outside" (Hanlon, 2021:5). This could also explain the short-lived contract of Wagner Group, as there was a breach in communication between the PMCs and the stakeholder departments.

Like other PMCs such as the Wagner Group, international watchdog institutions, namely Amnesty International, have scrutinised DAG's activities following the Palma attacks; Amnesty International has conducted multiple interviews and investigations into the acts of conflicting parties involved in the conflict, including DAG. These investigations revealed alleged attacks by DAG against the Islamic insurgents and ordinary civilians. According to the interviews conducted by Amnesty International and reported on by Turse (2021), multiple eyewitnesses reported on claims that DAG forces had used their equipment to indiscriminately commit violent attacks on communities, which resulted in the demise and injuries of numerous innocent civilians. As stated by Turse (2021), "Fifty-three witnesses interviewed by Amnesty International claim that forces from a South African private military company, known as the Dyck Advisory Group (DAG), fired machine guns from helicopters and dropped hand grenades indiscriminately into crowds of people, failing to differentiate between civilians and military targets in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province". The report by Amnesty International goes on to state "Two helicopters came, one shooting down bombs. One of the groups [of civilians] that was running raised their hands, and they were not shot. But another group with the bandits did not raise their hands, and they were shot" (Amnesty

International, 2021; Turse, 2021). These accounts show that although the group was not meant to participate in combat but only to provide support services, it disregarded these expectations, leading to a violent outcome. This exemplifies how PMCs can negatively impact African conflict dynamics and conflict resolution.

In addition to the accusation against DAG of indiscriminate killings, the group has also been accused of racism and racial profiling against Africans. These allegations have been widespread among institutions such as Amnesty International and the media. Instances of the racist behaviours shown by DAG were reported during the 2021 Palma attacks. DAG operatives reportedly prioritised white lives over African lives when Islamic insurgents were perpetuating an active attack in a region where the population is predominately African. Amnesty International states, "Survivors of an attack by the armed group known locally as 'Al-Shabaab' in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado told Amnesty International that white contractors were prioritised for evacuation ahead of Black locals, in disturbing testimony that points to blatant racism". An article by VOA News (2021) states

> "Amnesty International charges that the Dyck Advisory Group gave preference to whites over Blacks when evacuating people at the Amarula Hotel. Amnesty International alleged that the extremist government security forces and the Dyck Advisory Group unlawfully killed hundreds of civilians in Cabo Delgado. Amnesty called for an urgent investigation into these killings, saying they may amount to war crimes".

Racial profiling only worsened matters for innocent civilians, negatively impacting conflict dynamics and resolution.

DAG reportedly prioritising white lives negatively impacts the country's conflict dynamics and resolution. This is because all lives are meant to be priorities during conflict resolution efforts, which, although DAG was not contracted to ensure, they were hired to create an environment to enable it essentially. This section has evaluated the adverse conflict outcomes that PMCs such as the Wagner Group and DAG have had in African conflicts.

5.4 The political implications of African governments hiring PMCs
This part of this thesis will address the political implications of certain African governments associating themselves with PMCs. There is a particular focus on STTEP, DAG, and the Wagner Group PMCs, which have a negative reputation globally. Therefore, their engagements with certain African governments leave these governments between a rock and

a hard place. This thesis found two significant implications when African governments associate themselves with certain PMCs: political isolation and policy uncertainty.

5.4.1 Political isolation

As stated above, one of the significant political implications that can befall a government for employing a PMC is political isolation. Isolationism is a political philosophy based on the values of state neutrality and not getting involved in the domestic affairs of other states and their policies (Urbatsch, 2010; Blower, 2014). If a state violates these principles, it may face political isolation as a consequence. Political isolation occurs when a state or a government participates in an action deemed inappropriate, unethical or simply wrong by their peers. These include instances of supporting militia or rebel groups and adopting certain ideologies such as communism and the adoption of specific policies. For example, the US and its allies have isolated the Russian and Cuban governments for many years due to their communist ideologies (Pillay *et al*., 2016). Some consequences of political isolation are sanctions and withdrawal of aid and support, be it financial, political or military. With African governments, political isolation can occur due to various issues, such as the persistence of conflicts and wars and the implementation of specific laws and policies, such as expropriating land without compensation. A particular example of this controversial policy implementation can be seen in former Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe's decision to expropriate land from white farmers and landowners without compensation (Shaw, 2003; Adekoye, 2019). This action caused significant outrage across the international community and resulted in economic and political sanctions against Zimbabwe. History has proven that sanctions not only punish the guilty but also have detrimental effects on innocent civilians, as demonstrated by the situation in Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, this situation has only worsened the country's political instability and poverty, which continues to affect many Zimbabweans both within the country and in the diaspora (Adekoye, 2019; Nyoka, 2023). This is but one example of the harsh consequences of a country being a political pariah.

The use of PMCs, including those with unethical and immoral reputations like DAG and the Wagner Group, can contribute to political isolation. According to the literature review in chapter 2 of this thesis, PMCs have been employed by various organisations and powerful nations like the US to aid in African conflicts. For example, in the early 2000s, the US government utilised PMC MPRI to re-professionalize the Nigerian military as part of a plan to build state capacity in fragile states (Aning *et al*., 2007; International Crisis Group, 2016). The Nigerian government reportedly spent around $8 million on the contract (Aning *et al*.,

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2007; International Crisis Group, 2016). Furthermore, other American PMCs, such as Academi, are believed to be operating in Africa, although not much attention has been given to them. This illustrates that powerful nations like the US are willing to allow PMCs to operate in Africa if it serves their interests.

The actions of PMC operatives, not part of US or UN-sanctioned missions and who have ties to Russia or old South Africa, often provoke outrage from the international community, as demonstrated in this thesis. The portrayal of certain PMCs in the media is often negative, contributing to negative public perceptions and outrage when their activities are brought to light. For instance, Al Jazeera published an article with the headline 'White hands': the rise of private armies in African conflicts (Abdullahi & Durmaz, 2022), while the Daily Maverick ran a piece titled 'Wagner's dubious operatics in the CAR and beyond' by Peter Fabricius (2022) about PMCs in Africa. Such headlines reinforce the idea that these PMCs are 'mercenaries' and 'dogs of war' which can adversely affect both the PMC and the government that hired them.

A government's connection to a PMC can lead to political isolation and loss of support from allies due to negative media coverage and international pressure. This was evident in the situation involving former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, the US government, and STTEP. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, during the height of Boko Haram's power in 2014, the Nigerian government, led by former President Goodluck Jonathan, requested support from their US allies. However, this request was denied for several reasons, including persistent corruption and the deteriorating reputation of the Nigerian military (Varin, 2018). Out of desperation to bring the situation under control fast, the Jonathan administration turned to the PMC STTEP to bring in their military operatives to assist in the crisis. The decision to make that move was not well-received by the US and played a significant role in terminating the contract between STTEP and the Nigerian government, which lasted only three months (Varin, 2018; Kinsey & Krieg, 2021). This contract, compounded with other factors such as the continued insecurity in the country's northern parts and rampant corruption that had been decades in the making, led Goodluck Jonathan and his government to be isolated from their former US allies. As a result, Jonathan did not receive the political backing of his former allies, which may have significantly contributed to his government's inability to secure a second term in office and the ushering in of the Buhari administration, which was initially anti-PMC. Essentially, the Jonathan administration lost its allies' political

support, which negatively impacted its prospects of gaining a second term in office, as compared to Buhari, who was openly against the employment of PMCs.

Another example of political isolation may be found in the CAR, where the Wagner Group has de facto been in charge of the country's military and security since 2018. Due to its participation in conflict-torn zones such as the CAR, the Wagner Group, alongside its leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, has been sanctioned by the US and the EU (Fabricius, 2022; Pecquet, 2023; Psaledakis & Holland, 2023). These sanctions essentially mean that Wagner Group's presence and operations in countries such as the CAR are illegal, and as such, the CAR is enriching a PMC that is not meant to operate on its land with its mineral wealth. As this study has found, the Wagner Group and its branches have connections with mineral points of interest which they have been providing security for in the CAR. These include the Ndassima mine, a lucrative diamond and gold mine (Grimaldi & Talley, 2023; Doxsee *et al*., 2023). Prior to the Wagner Group's arrival in the CAR, the country already had a complicated relationship with the international community due to ongoing conflicts on their land. An arms embargo was imposed on the CAR to prevent the warring factions from obtaining weapons that could be used without discrimination. The MINUSCA also seemed to yield little results as the conflicts still raged on. So when the CAR government opened their borders to Wagner, most of the international community did not welcome this move.

The relationship between the Wagner Group and the CAR has only further isolated the CAR government from the international community, justifying the need to renew the arms embargo against the state. Allegations of rapes and other gross atrocities have been levelled against Wagner during its time in the CAR, which could mean that the government of the CAR is actively sponsoring a terrorist organisation masked as a PMC to operate on their land (Burke & Harding, 2021; Carter & Patta, 2023). This has led to CAR and the Wagner Group becoming political pariahs.

The current political isolation challenges the international community to unite and find practical solutions for the ongoing conflict in the CAR. In essence, geopolitical tensions hinder cooperation, resulting in a lack of peaceful resolutions. While the international community and African states fail to find friendly solutions for the CAR, innocent civilians continue to be caught in the crossfires and forced into refugee camps in neighbouring countries. However, the continued presence of the Wagner Group and possibly other PMCs in the future who are either being used as tools of foreign policy by their home states or

PMCs who are simply driven by a profit motive will only continue to keep the CAR politically isolated from meaningful conflict resolution mechanism, perpetuating the cycle of political instability and violence.

Therefore, this study has found that the association of African governments with PMCs can lead to political isolation, negatively impacting a government's political aspirations. For example, President Goodluck Jonathan could not secure a second term in office due to losing support from the West, partly due to hiring PMCs. In more severe cases, like in the CAR's relationship with Wagner, political isolation can have dire consequences on innocent civilians, hindering progress towards conflict resolution.

5.4.2 Policy uncertainty and tensions

Another significant political consequence of the African government's ties with PMCs is the presence of policy uncertainty and tension. Tensions can either be within the state itself or between two states. Policies are intended plans of action and agreements which a government may implement. They are meant to serve the entire population of the state and not just a select few (Ethridge & Handelman, 2016). Policies are crucial in guiding significant activities, including allocating mineral resources and using public funds collected through taxes. Unfortunately, history has seen external players like Russia, the USA, and France deliberately influence African policies through state connections in their favour, often leaving African states vulnerable and exacerbating fragile statehood.

In politics and international relations, bilateral policies, which are policies implemented between two states, are standard practices because we live in a global village. These policies strengthen ties between two nations, although one party often benefits more than the other. An example of a bilateral approach is the French Legion, which allows France to deploy its troops to its former colonies, such as Mali and the CAR, during conflict and insecurity (Amoah, 2023). According to Amoah (2023), the policy's objective is for France to provide security for its former colonies while protecting their assets and interests on African soil. However, there has been an exodus of French troops from African soil and their replacement with the PMC Wagner. Wagner is directly linked to the Kremlin, a foe of France, a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) (Rumer, 2018). As not only a founder but a current member of NATO, France and Russia's interests and policy objectives clash; therefore, Russia replacing France with its PMCs is a direct provocation and competition to France's influence in the CAR and other Francophone nations (Smirnova, 2022).

Although French troops have been leaving the CAR, France still has its vested interests in the CAR and may not wholly leave the CAR despite their proclamations. This means powerful external parties are vying for policy and political influence in the CAR: France, Russia and the Wagner Group. This creates confusion and tension on which policies the CAR implements, seeing that multiple external actors have their own agendas.

The CAR has developed a highly dependent relationship between Russia and the Wagner Group since they arrived in the CAR in 2018. This relationship has essentially led to the Wagner Group de facto being in charge of the CAR, demonstrating more influence than the defence ministry in the CAR. This means that the group is a major key role player in policy and decision-making, especially regarding security and the use of the mineral wealth of the CAR. Russia has essentially been using the Wagner Group as a tool in foreign policy. Therefore, maintaining Wagner's presence in the CAR has been of utmost importance for Russia, even if it exacerbates its fragile statehood. However, the relationship between the Kremlin and Wagner has since soured following the attempted coup against Vladimir Putin in June 2023 (Felbab-Brown, 2023; Lieven, 2023). This has significant political implications for Wagner and the Kremlin and the states that employ their services, including the CAR. Because the Wagner Group is a foreign policy tool for the Russian state, its top leaders have valuable intelligence on the CAR. So when they fall out, this may put them in a position to exert power and influence against their former allies, which throws Africa into the spanner of a grab for power between business elites and politicians. Essentially, the coup attempt exposed Putin, and the African states, which rely on both Russia and the Wagner Group, such as the CAR, to being exploited by these business elites who came to the CAR through Russia. This could worsen an already fragile state.

The coup attempt demonstrated that there are so many moving parts of PMCs and that if these parts fall out with each other, there may be ripple effects that may be far-reaching. This adds a new dynamic between the African governments which employ PMCs and the PMCs. The aftermath of the coup attempt on the Wagner Group's operations in Africa remains uncertain, which has caused confusion and uncertainty for countries that have relied on them. Only time will tell whether these countries will have to continue working with the Wagner Group in its current state or seek out another PMC controlled by the Kremlin. This creates an environment for policy uncertainty and tension in the CAR, which will most likely exacerbate fragile statehood.

Tensions may be created between two nations if PMCs overstep their boundaries or deliberately operate against their homeland's laws and policies. As this thesis has shown in the literature review of chapter 2, South Africa was a leading contributor to the PMC industry, being the homeland of the now-defunct EO. Some scholars believed that the ANC government had allowed for the EO activities in the early 1990s assist did not want the potential of former apartheid-era soldiers derailing the democratisation in South Africa (Howe, 1998; Varin, 2018). The EO was widely successful in its operations. However, their success clouds the new South African government and its policy. This was as the South Africans were often found in other African conflicts. The 1998 Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act to regulate PMC activity from South Africa to counter this.

However, banning EO and the heavy regulation of the PMC industry has not deterred South African individuals and citizens from participating in PMC activities. It is known that individuals such as Eeben Barlow have reinvented EO into STTEP and joined in combat in African states such as Nigeria (Ptotenhauer, 2016; Varin, 2018). Although the South African government is technically meant to prosecute its citizens for these activities, as of 2023, it has not taken action against them like it is legally obligated to do. This is because South Africa is a signatory of the Montreux Document and regulates its citizens from participating in PMC activities. This could create tensions between the South African government and their African counterparts. For instance, when STTEP operatives, which are mainly South Africans, were exposed in Nigeria, then Minister of Defence and Military Veterans of South Africa, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula, vowed that persecutions would follow (Ptotenhauer, 2016; Varin, 2018). This has yet to materialise. Fortunately, the South African government has an otherwise friendly relationship with Nigeria, so the matter was not pursued. However, had it been another African country which did not appreciate PMCs on their land, it could have become a tense situation between the two nations.

As this study has found, it is possible to argue that a government may implement specific policies to align with its agenda. As governments change, so do the policies of the state. For example, Jonathan's government recognised the need to employ STTEP, while Buhari assured the public that his government would not engage with PMCs (Varin, 2018; Kinsey & Krieg, 2021). This was one of the policy differences between the two states. It made Buhari a viable option and satisfied his Western allies, who were not fond of Goodluck Jonathan. However, in 2022, the Buhari administration reportedly considered inviting PMCs back into Nigeria as the country's security crisis continued, which would have contradicted his policy

of not engaging with PMCs (Varin, 2018). Although the Buhari administration decided without engaging with PMCs publicly like Goodluck Jonathan, his ministers entertained the idea of bringing in a PMC to assist with the fight against Boko Haram and other groups like the Fulani Herdsmen, which had since gained territory in Nigeria, presented a policy shift in Nigeria under the Buhari administration.

Policies are meant to be cohesive and encourage cooperation between all government departments. However, as this thesis discovered, hiring PMCs can create policy uncertainty between different government departments of the same country. The primary example of this is Mozambique. When the Mozambican government first rejected the assistance of SADC, this was part of its policy of not accepting external aid to prevent the conflict from turning into an 'intervention salad' (Nhamirre, 2021). However, realising they were getting knee-deep into the conflict in the northern region, Mozambique turned to the Russian government. Doing so essentially went against their policy of not inviting other countries to assist them during their security crisis.

The Mozambican government had initially expected the Russian government to deploy its troops, but the Wagner Group troops were deployed instead. This could be considered the Russian government not respecting Mozambique's sovereignty and policies. The failures by Wagner then led Mozambique into another PMC, DAG—however, this created tension amongst the different government departments, which had envisioned different responses to the ongoing conflict. As stated by Hanlon (2021:5), "The Interior Ministry contracted the Wagner Group and then the DAG. There have been major conflicts between the Defence Force and the Ministry of the Interior as a result. For example, the army refused to cooperate with the Wagner Group. There is a critical strategic difference between the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence". This can be considered policy uncertainty and tension between the two departments, which are expected to work in unison to confront a common threat: the insurgency in the northern parts of the country. This uncertainty and tension also explain why the Wagner group performed so severely in Mozambique.

Therefore, this study found that one of the political implications for African governments hiring PMCs is policy uncertainty and tension.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the second research question outlined in chapter 1 of this thesis. Furthermore, it analysed the political implications that may befall African governments

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should they hire PMCs. This chapter found that although the former tends to outweigh the latter, there are both negatives and positives. Examples include EO in Sierra Leone and STTEP in Nigeria, while the negatives can be found in Mozambique and the CAR. This chapter addressed the political implications for African governments hiring PMCs: political isolation, policy uncertainty, and tension. Therefore, it is up to the government to determine whether these risks are worth it compared to the gains.

Chapter 6: Reflecting on research questions, the alternative solutions, summary of key findings and recommendations for further research.

6.1 Introduction

The provision of security and protection against both internal and external threats is the responsibility of the state. However, certain governments have been unable to do impart to a lack of state capacity, as this study has shown. This has proven to create a security vacuum that attracts the attention of key role players such as PMCs such as the Wagner Group, STTEP and DAG. Although much of the conversation around PMCs is often met with criticism in part due to their lack of transparency and sometimes accountability in the operations on the African continent, their deployment does contribute to conflict dynamics and conflict resolution in African conflicts, be it in a positive or negative light as the previous chapter of this study has shown.

It is, therefore, against this background that this chapter is the final chapter of this thesis. It begins by reflecting on the two research questions in chapter one of this study. These research questions were dealt with in chapters four and five, respectively. This chapter then offers alternative solutions to African governments relying on PMCs. A summary of the critical findings then follows this. Finally, this chapter concludes by providing recommendations for further research on PMCs in the African context.

6.2 Reflecting on the research questions

This thesis posed two research questions that it hoped would help create a better understanding of the evolution of PMCs within African governments since the 1990s. These questions were posed in chapter one of this thesis, as it was the chapter which laid the foundations of how this thesis would be tackled. The primary research question of this thesis was 'Why have certain African governments employed PMCs'. The emphasis on certain African governments is because, although data proves that these companies are becoming more popular across the continent, not all African governments facing insecurity challenges have employed PMCs. Therefore, it would have been careless to use a blanket approach to decide that hiring PMCs is the response that every African government makes. This research question was then followed by the second one, which posed the question, 'How has the involvement of PMCs in African conflicts affected conflict outcomes?'

'Why have certain African governments employed PMCs?' was selected as the primary research question because it allowed the researcher to analyse why sure. Due to the complex nature of PMCs, it is crucial to look into their activities through multiple lenses to avoid limiting one's knowledge on this topic. With that noted, this research question found that there are five reasons why certain African governments hire PMCs. The first is that their militaries are weak and unprofessional. This reason is linked to the lack of military capacity discussed earlier in chapter three. The other grounds that this thesis argued as reasons, why certain African governments hire PMCs were a lack of assistance from regional partners/allies; PMCs can be deployed more rapidly than other external military options; the cost of hiring PMCs is negotiable, and PMCs offer additional personal/soldiers, weapons and equipment.

This research question showed much work to be done within African militaries. Otherwise, the continent will continue to see an upwards trajectory in the presence of PMCs in African conflicts.

Chapter five of this thesis addressed the second research question. It uncovered that PMCs can either contribute positives or negatives towards conflict outcomes. The contribution towards outcomes regarding PMCs in African conflicts has been mixed. In the case of Sierra Leone and Nigeria, EO and STTEP were able to regain lost territory, encourage an environment for democratic elections, and provide much-needed security for the areas they were deployed to. This study considers this a positive outcome and contribution towards conflict resolution, although these gains were short-lived because of the political interferences. Therefore, they are an unsustainable security solution. However, the Wagner Group and DAG's contribution has been utterly dismal in Mozambique and the CAR. In these countries, these PMCs have been accused of human rights violations, killing with impunity, racism, and escalating religious tensions. This is considered a negative contribution and outcome and overshadows other PMCs' positive contributions elsewhere on the continent. No legal persecution of those linked to either PMC has been undertaken (2023). This adds to the importance that the AU creates stricter guidelines for PMCs operating in African conflicts, which will be legally binding to all parties involved.

Answering these research questions clarified why PMCs are evolving into major players in African security.

6.3 Problem identification in the case studies

This section will summarise the common problems between the case studies which this thesis has found. These problems have weakened the security apparatuses of the states analysed in this thesis, hence exacerbating fragile statehood. These problems have also made it easier for PMCs to present themselves as alternative security providers. Suggestions are also provided for how these issues may be solved.

6.3.1 Corruption within militaries

This study has found a significant challenge as a leading factor in creating fragile states and a lack of military capacity: corruption, which is linked with a lack of administrative capacity. Corruption is like cancer that spreads to destroy the whole body and functions of the state, including providing security and the military. Corruption within the Sierra Leonian military was so rife that military men earned themselves the infamous nickname 'sobels'. Alarms have been raised about corruption in the Nigerian and Mozambique military for years prior to the existence of terrorist groups such as Boko Haram and al-Shabaab; while the CAR military is also plagued with corruption. Nothing tangible has been done to address this; it has only worsened as the years have progressed.

The consequences of corruption within the military have become almost impossible to conceal, especially for a country as powerful as Nigeria. These include the syphoning out of monies dedicated to the military, underpaying military men who are active on the ground and army men acting with brute force and impunity against nationals of their nations because they know that little to no accountability mechanisms exist in the military because of widespread corruption (Varin, 2018). As a result, countries claiming to champion the cause of human rights attempt to distance themselves from them, creating a marketplace for PMCs to penetrate. Corruption within militaries is crippling their capabilities to perform their functions, which may result in the need to hire PMCs. Thus, if African governments are to become more proactive in their security and less reliant on PMCs, they have to address corruption within their militaries from the ground up.

Because corruption is often deep-rooted in government, civil society members such as religious organisations, business leaders, and the general public should actively participate since corruption within the military is often overlooked. This will show their governments that they are knowledgeable about the state of security in their lands. The creation of oversight organisations that are independent of the government and are dedicated to

countering corruption within the military must be implemented. Furthermore, stricter laws created and adopted with civil society's participation in military affairs should be enforced. This may encourage accountability as well as act as a deterrent against corruption as well as for those working in the military. This way, the military's capacity can be rebuilt, preventing the need to employ PMCs.

6.3.2 A lack of dialogue between conflicted parties

Conflict in Africa does not occur in a vacuum, as there are often early warning signs that violence is about to happen. Violent conflicts and insecurity are often a resort that disgruntled members of society and terrorist groups choose, especially when they feel like their grievances are not being heard. For instance, the Mozambican government had earlier dismissed the insurgents as criminals. This meant that they did not take them as a serious threat and failed to recognise the need to engage with them on a diplomatic platform. Like al-Shabaab, Boko Haram was also not taken as a serious threat in its earlier days by the Nigerian government.

Although challenging, this can be remedied by engaging in meaningful dialogue before disgruntlement or grievances escalate into violence or armed conflict. Dialogues can also be used as a tool to de-escalate violence, which has the potential of becoming uncontrollable without external assistance from parties such as PMCs. These dialogues can be held with the assistance of a third party through imbizos or communal meetings, which are part of African culture. Religious and traditional leaders, whose opinions are often held in high esteem by communities, can also be approached to help facilitate these dialogues. Their contribution may lead to solutions that could nib violence in the bid. This type of conflict resolution approach presents an opportunity for all conflicting parties to air their grievances, which may lead to all parties reaching a compromise. This may prevent or contain unnecessary bloodshed if it has already begun.

Essentially, African states must prioritise dialogue, especially at the inception of violence. In that case, they may be able to contain violence before it becomes widespread, leading to the need to hire PMCs. This way, a practical solution which suits all parties involved may be found without further aggravating them by involving external actors, particularly PMCs, whose presence may only further alienate them. Thus, engaging in meaningful dialogue is integral to finding solutions to conflicts and limiting the prospects of governments engaging in the services of PMCs.

6.3.3 The AU's stance on PMCs is too vague

Like its predecessor, the OAU, the AU is concerned with African security and is expected to be a leader in African affairs. The AU has made many strides since its inception. However, it has failed to address or modify the OAU's elimination of Mercenarism in Africa. This, therefore, creates uncertainty about its stance on the current participation of PMCs in African conflicts (PSC Report, 2021; Tessema, 2022). The current stance of the AU on mercenaries and PMCs is presumably based on the OAU, which essentially means that the AU and its member states also shun these companies. However, this is not always the case for member states, such as Nigeria, who ratified the OAU's elimination of Mercenarism in Africa but have also employed the services of PMCs. This suggests that some AU members do not take the organisation's stance on PMCs seriously.

Although debates on PMCs have taken place among the member states of the AU, no binding policy has been introduced by the AU on this issue. This means that individual states have had to address the matter independently without guidance from the AU. This is a significant shortcoming of the AU, established in 2002 to replace the OAU. The lack of a clear policy on PMCs has created a policy gap that is both outdated and insufficient, particularly given that PMCs are no longer just 'mercenaries'. They are now registered and licensed businesses that require similar business models to those used by multinational corporations like Coca-Cola and Unilever in Africa.

To rectify this gap, the AU should take a stricter and more precise stance on PMCs to avoid having these private contractors overrun the continent's security. This could be achieved through the AU introducing an African alternative to the Montreux Document. African governments should create this alternative and their citizens who live these experiences input and understand the uniqueness and urgency of African conflicts. Unlike the Montreux Document, this alternative should be legally binding to every African state and PMCs.

By creating an African alternative to the Montreux Document, the AU would ensure that if PMCs participate in African conflicts, they do so within the ambient of the law. Furthermore, this type of accountability mechanism will prevent PMCs from acting with impunity, reducing the acts of human rights violations that have been levelled against PMCs since the 1990s.

6.3.4 Regional blocs and allies do not act appropriately when conflicts erupt

As this study has shown in previous chapters, African conflicts are often prolonged. This is one of the factors that contribute to the African crisis' being prolonged is the inability or lack of political willingness to address these crises promptly' or by simply dismissing it as 'criminals' or 'evil' like the Mozambican government did with al-Shabaab (Nhamirre, 2021). This gives them the platform to gain momentum and become even more significant security threats due to the lack of timely intervention. The longer a conflict rages, the higher the human cost will be incurred and the more difficult it becomes to contain.

As such, it is of utmost importance for African regional bodies, such as the AU, SADC or ECOWAS, to act effectively while respecting the sovereignty of the state involved in the conflicts, which they often do not. They should not have to wait for countries to be knee-in-deep into disputes to act as expected. This is important because of the spill-over effects of interstate violence, including forced migration and even spreading this violence across neighbouring states. For instance, due to ongoing violence in the CAR, thousands of citizens have been internally and externally displaced (Caparini, 2022). This puts pressure on its regional body Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), to which the CAR belongs. Thus, to avoid these scenarios and the potential of these states turning to PMCs which could further escalate tensions, regional bodies should act promptly at the sign of insecurity, all while respecting the sovereignty of the state involved.

Regional bodies acting promptly may be able to contain it before it becomes too intense, thus reducing the chances of a government turning to PMCs. Unfortunately, the responses led by regional bodies have been slow compared to PMCs. Granted that they are respecting the sovereignty of the states in question, they should act promptly that is not delayed by all the unnecessary bureaucratic red-tapes often associated with regional bodies. These bureaucratic red tapes are not there when dealing with PMCs which adds to their attractiveness for certain African governments. Therefore, the often time-consuming bureaucratic red tapes need to be minimised if African governments are to resist the temptation of simply hiring PMCs which can be deployed rapidly.

6.3.5 A lack of proper military equipment/weapons and their maintenance

In chapter four of this study, a lack of proper military equipment and weapons was why found to be one of the reasons why certain African governments hired PMCs. This was the case in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Mozambique, and the CAR. This study found that their

military equipment and weapons are often outdated. In addition to being outdated, they are often not kept in good quality condition. Furthermore, having to use these weapons may often be discouraging to military men, and thus they may abandon their operations. For instance, in chapter four of this study, an example was given about how military operatives abandoned their duty posts in Nigeria because of a lack of military weapons (Sieff, 2015). This is compared to the often sophisticated and modern weapons these terrorist and rebel groups often have (Kone', 2020). The lack of proper military equipment and weapons can be attributed to a lack of administrative capacity, which all the case studies discussed in this thesis lack.

Although most of these groups can grow in number due to sympathisers and grievances on the ground, another factor makes them able to carry out their activities. That factor is sponsors often back that terrorist and extremist groups, be they anonymously or not. These sponsors are usually business elites, competing politicians or even transnational sponsors. In the Sierra Leonean case, Charles Taylor, a Liberian, sponsored the RUF with funds from illegal activities such as the mining of blood diamonds. Through his sponsorship, the RUF was able to weapons that they used to wreak havoc in Sierra Leone (Gberie, 2014). There have been allegations in Nigeria that politicians and networks across ten countries have sponsored Boko Haram. In 2022, six individuals, including Abdurrahman Ado Musa and Bashir Ali Yusuf, were convicted and subsequently sanctioned for supporting Boko Haram (Attah, 2019; Odunsi, 2022). It appears that certain groups, such as RUF during the 1990s-2000s and Boko Haram, have the capability to obtain modern weapons through their sponsors, which grants them an advantage over the national military forces.

The lack of proper military equipment and weapons weakens military morale and their performance as a result. This makes them appear inadequate for combat and creates a market for PMCs such as the Wagner Group to penetrate African conflicts as they often have sophisticated weapons and equipment. For instance, according to Nhamirre (2021:4), the weapons that were reportedly brought into Mozambique by the Wagner Group, DAG and the Paramount & Burnham Global consortium include three attack helicopters, drones, weapons; 6 light helicopter gunships; 4 Gazelle helicopters, 2 Mi-24 helicopters, one reconnaissance aircraft (Mwari), 12 Marauder armoured vehicles respectively. These are weapons and equipment that the Mozambican military, like many African militaries, lack which encourages their governments to hire PMCs. Thus, this study recommends that governments

invest in their military's weapons and equipment, encouraging them to be active and reducing the likelihood of a government employing PMCs.

6.3.6 Limited the number of military operatives

A major factor that played a role in countries such as Sierra Leone and the CAR in employing PMCs was/is the size of the military. This is due to a lack of both administrative and military capacity. As a result, rebel forces often outnumber their militaries. Therefore, hiring PMCs could increase these numbers, although not so significantly. For instance, EO brought 150-200 troops into Sierra Leone, with approximately 14 000 troops expected to serve the nation (Howe, 1998; Global Security, 2017). The most significant numbers of PMC operatives are currently found in the CAR, with estimates ranging from 1200-2000 (Fabricius, 2022).

In order to avoid the need to employ PMCs, African governments should increase the size of their militaries, especially those with relatively small militaries like Sierra Leone and the CAR. Increasing the number of militaries would make a government less likely to employ PMCs because they would have the numbers needed to form a strong military. This would also create employment for the youth, which may prevent disgruntlement over unemployment which could lead to unrest and violence. Furthermore, increasing the military would relieve the burden of being overworked and overstretched and ensure that more remote areas are reached as soon as conflict irrupts. Thus, by increasing the size of the military to suit the size of the entire population, a government would increase its ratio capacity and ensure that insecurity is addressed promptly.

6.4 Summary of the key findings of this study

This study has analysed the evolution of PMCs in African conflicts since the 1990s. These companies were once considered taboo due to their similarities with mercenaries and destabilising African governments, which discouraged African governments from employing their services. However, this has changed significantly since the 2010s. African governments have been contracting PMCs to use their capabilities to contain violence and insecurity. This indicates that these companies have evolved from pariahs in the security industry to leading competitors to traditionally more accepted security providers such as UN and AU missions.

This study has argued that other than governments hiring PMCs because of their ability to win wars and contain insecurity. They also hire these companies due to a lack of state capacity resulting in fragile statehood. State capacity, as this study has shown, relates to the power and capabilities of a state to use its resources constructively. It can be measured

through administrative or military capacity, which is the military's ability to deter and confront violence. The absence of either or both renders fragile states with the following qualities, poor governance, forced migrations, widespread poverty and consistent insecurity. The CAR, Nigeria, Mozambique and Sierra Leone all have/had the qualities of fragile states.

Many factors create a fragile state that cannot address insecurity, with corruption being one of them. Corruption can cripple vital government functions, such as providing essential healthcare, infrastructure, and security services. Corruption within the military often results in monies being syphoned out and inadequate investment in much-needed military weapons. Furthermore, the psyche of those in the militaries may be negatively impacted by ongoing corruption, as they may be underpaid, and their expectations to serve their nations may be overstretched. These are all consequences of corruption which can weaken even the most potent military, such as the Nigerian military. Corruption within militaries stems from the topple commanders to military personnel who form part of the ground forces. It is a top-down crisis that needs to be addressed to build on state and military capacity, thus limiting the chances of African governments turning to PMCs.

The regional bodies, particularly the AU, which are responsible for security on the continent, should take a leading role in holding PMCs accountable for their activities. Apart from the Montreux Document and laws adopted by individual states, there are no clear policies in place by the AU in its current form regarding PMCs which this study could identify. Essentially, there is a vacuum regarding the AU's response to PMCs operating on the continent, which could encourage these businesses since there are few legally binding accountability mechanisms. Therefore, it is a recommendation that the AU needs to fill that vacuum and take its place as a leader on the continent, all while respecting the sovereignty of individual states. By so doing, PMC activity on the continent will be closely guarded, thus deterring them from acting with impunity in African conflicts. This would protect innocent civilians from being by PMCs while offering revenues in the unfortunate event that PMCs act with impunity against civilians.

Furthermore, regional bodies and allies should be able to be deployed rapidly. This study found that PMCs can be deployed more rapidly than external actors, such as the AU or ECOWAS. The frustration of going through the bureaucratic hops associated with bodies such as ECOWAS, the AU and allies in general further contributes to governments turning to PMCs which can be easily deployed without the time-consuming bureaucratic processes. This

was the reality for the Nigerian government under President Jonathan and STTEP. Therefore, to avoid the reality of future African conflicts being overrun by PMCs, the bureaucratic processes should be reviewed to determine how they can be reduced and how regional bodies themselves can be deployed more rapidly.

The weapons and equipment at PMCs' disposal are one factor which this study found attracts certain African governments to PMCs. By taking a more proactive role in ensuring that their militaries have the proper up-to-date equipment and weapons, which are also well maintained, they could boost their military morale, therefore, enabling them to execute their duties as expected without having to employ PMCs. A significant overhaul must be done within African militaries to avoid a dependent relationship on PMCs. This would require a deal of political willingness to (re)build on state capacity and create strong and not fragile states.

6.5 Recommendations for further research

African governments have employed PMCs to intervene in conflicts where they lack the capacity and sometimes the willingness to do so. As this study has found, corruption is a significant factor that has destroyed the state's ability to address issues such as conflict. Rampant corruption runs within many African states, including Sierra Leone, Nigeria, the CAR and Mozambique. Therefore, this study would recommend further research into how corruption in militaries encourages hiring PMCs.

This thesis suggests researching PMCs' advertising methods and elites' role in their hiring process. As legitimate businesses, PMCs aim to attract more clients, and advertising plays a crucial role in achieving this goal. To accomplish this research, interviews may be conducted with current or past employees of PMCs, with a focus on the financial and marketing departments. The objective is to bridge the gap in the existing literature on how PMCs promote their services to potential clients.

As the thesis concludes, a crucial avenue for further research is to explore whether hiring PMCs can be classified as a form of state-sponsored terrorism. The study highlights that PMCs can have positive and negative consequences, but the adverse outcomes tend to surpass the benefits as human life is irreplaceable. Troubling accusations have been made against PMCs such as DAG and Wagner, stating that their techniques mirror those used by terrorist groups like al-Shabaab. These allegations are especially concerning, considering states invite

PMCs to operate within their territories. Therefore, it is essential to investigate if the involvement of PMCs in conflicts can be regarded as a form of state-sponsored terrorism.

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