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# The Guns for Hire

Private Military Companies in Nigeria and Mozambique

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## **Abstract**

This case study investigates the involvement of private military companies (PMCs) in two African conflicts. Nigeria and Mozambique hired PMCs in 2014 and 2019 respectively to combat internal insurgencies. The paper aims to answer why these countries hired PMCs and if the PMCs were successful in combating the insurgencies. For the first question, the intensity of the insurgency and the state of the armed forces (prior to the PMCs arrival) are seen as independent variables and the hiring of PMCs as the dependent variable. The second question uses competence, effectiveness and coordination with the host nations forces as independent variables, and the level of success as the dependent variable. The paper uses the concept of state capacity, in the form of military capacity, as a theoretical framework. I argue that Nigeria and Mozambique hired PMCs due to similar reasons. Both countries suffered from weak state capacity as their armed forces had been unable to defeat the insurgencies, who instead had grown and intensified. The PMCs level of success differs between the two cases. In Nigeria, the PMCs were successful in combating the insurgency, but the PMCs in Mozambique only achieved mixed results.

*Keywords: PMCs, Mercenaries, Nigeria, Mozambique, State capacity, Insurgency*

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## **Abbreviations**

ACIRC - African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises

COIN - Counterinsurgency

DAG - Dyck Advisory Group (South African PMC)

EO- Executive Outcomes (South African PMC)

FADM - Forças Armadas de Defesa de Moçambique (Mozambique's armed forces)

MNJTF - Multinational Joint Task Force

NAF - Nigerian Armed Forces

SADC - Southern African Development Community

SADF- South African Defence Force (South Africa's armed forces before 1994)

STTEP - Specialized Tasks, Training, Equipment & Protection (South African PMC)

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Soldiers of fortune

The mercenary is as old as war itself. Throughout the history of warfare, the mercenary has always been there in some way, shape or form (McFate, 2019, pp. 10-11). In Cormac McCarthy's magnum opus, the western novel *Blood Meridian*, a band of outlaws enlists as guns for hire. The year is 1849 and the governor of a Mexican state hires them to hunt down Apaches, a fierce Indian tribe that roamed in the border area and plagued northern Mexico during this time. And so they take up what has been called the world's second oldest profession and go on a violent rampage in the unforgiving desert. They fight the Apaches but they also massacre peaceful Indian tribes that happen to be in their way. In a famous passage the demonic character Judge Holden, one of the gang leaders, gives a speech where he ruminates on the nature of war. "War endures", says the Judge (McCarthy, 1985). And it appears that the mercenary endures with it.

However, throughout history the role and the manifestation of the mercenary has changed. Before the establishment of the westphalian order, it was not unusual that mercenaries made up the majority of combatants in war. This changed with the rise of national armies. Mercenaries remained, but as a supplement to the regular army. What had been a regular phenomena became irregular. Eventually, mercenaries came to be looked down upon and seen as an illegitimate force. This is reflected in the attempts to ban mercenaries in international law (McFate, 2019, pp. 10-16).

And so the shape of mercenary forces eventually changed once again. Modern mercenarism usually takes place through private military companies. The men employed in these companies do not call themselves mercenaries, but rather "private military contractors". However, they are usually seen as the modern successors to historical mercenaries, likewise the controversy and stigma around them has remained (McFate, 2019, p. 6).

The involvement of PMCs in armed conflicts is an increasing trend (McFate, 2019, p. 2). This has recently been confirmed yet again by the Wagner group's involvement in Ukraine. But the Wagner group and other PMCs are also involved in Africa. There, countries dealing with insurgencies have, in some cases, turned to PMCs for military assistance, and this

despite the controversy surrounding mercenarism (Durmaz & Abdullahi, 2022). Arguably, the international norm is that foreign involvement in stopping or containing insurgencies is legitimate when it is done by the UN, or by other countries. In light of this, it is interesting to further investigate the reasons for why countries in some cases turn to PMCs. Furthermore, it is relevant to assess whether PMCs can be successful in combating insurgencies.

## **1.2 Purpose and research questions**

The purpose of this paper is to shed light on recent PMC operations in African conflicts, investigate why some African countries hired PMCs and if the PMCs were successful. To achieve this purpose, the paper makes use of a case study and attempts to answer the following research questions:

“Why did Nigeria and Mozambique hire PMCs to combat internal insurgencies?”

“How successful were the PMCs in combating the insurgencies?”

## 2 Background: A brief history of mercenarism in Africa

### 2.1 Mercenaries

The 1960s and 1970s could be described as a golden era for mercenarism in Africa. As is well known, the Cold War combined with the decolonization process sparked many conflicts on the continent. The Congo Crisis was the first of these conflicts that saw a heavy influx of mercenaries. It was in the Congo that legendary mercenary commanders such as Bob Denard and Mike “Mad Mike” Hoare reached their fame (Schulz, 2008).

In the second phase of the crisis, “Mad Mike” Hoare was hired by the Congolese prime minister to put down two large communist inspired rebellions. Hoare raised a mercenary unit called “5 commando”, which came to play a crucial role. In modern history, this is arguably an early case of mercenaries making a major contribution in defeating a rebellion. But despite the success of the operation, the involvement of mercenaries was, as always, a controversial affair. In the book *Congo Mercenary*, Hoare recounts the events that he and his men went through in the Congo in 1964-1965, presenting a slightly more romanticized view of mercenaries. With brutal honesty he describes the violence and depravity of the campaign. The atrocities committed by the enemy against the civilian population and in some instances the atrocities committed by some of his own soldiers. But he also claims that many of his soldiers were good men. They may have been there for the money and the adventure, but they did not lack moral or compassion. And they did their duty and got the job done, the dirty work that neither the UN nor the Congolese army could do. He also emphasizes how they saved many lives when they freed civilian hostages doomed for execution (Hoare, 1967).

The Congo crisis was only the beginning and in conflicts that followed, mercenaries continued to play a big role, for example, in the Biafran War and the Angolan Civil War (Schulz, 2008). In 1975, *Soldier of Fortune Magazine* was founded. The paper proclaimed itself to be “the journal of professional adventurers”, covered mercenary activity and published recruitment ads (Alpert, 2016). At the same time, efforts were made to ban mercenarism via international law, beginning in 1977 with article 47 of additional protocol I to the Geneva convention, which attempts to define what a mercenary is. The same year, due to the heavy presence of mercenaries in Africa, the African Union also adopted a convention for the “elimination of mercenarism in Africa”. This was followed by the 1989 UN

“International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries” (OHCHR, n.d.).

## **2.2 Private military companies**

The 90s brought major changes in South Africa. During previous decades, South Africa had been involved in drawn out conflicts. Namibia's war for independence from South Africa, known as the South African Border War, lasted from 1966-1989. This conflict also became intertwined with the Angolan Civil War in the 70s and 80s (Ricks, 2015). The conclusion of these conflicts and the fall of apartheid led to a downsizing of South Africa's armed forces, the SADF. Thereby, many highly trained and experienced soldiers soon found themselves without a job (Maciag, 2019, p. 61). In 1989 one such veteran, Eeben Barlow, founded what is arguably the first PMC: Executive Outcomes (EO) (ADF, 2022). EO mainly consisted of South African ex-soldiers, many of whom had served in elite units. EO is most famous for two of its operations. In the 90s, they helped Angola defeat UNITA and they also helped Sierra Leone defeat the RUF. From a military point of view, both of these operations turned out very successful (Howe, 1998, pp. 310-315). Due to increased legal regulation EO shut down in 1998 (Boutellis, 2019). However, the company left a strong network that gave rise to new PMCs based in South Africa (McFate, 2019, p. 17) (Kinsey & Krieg, 2021, p. 240).

PMCs can be defined as companies that can provide a range of military services. This can include training, various types of assistance but also direct military engagement (Palka, 2020). A distinction can be made between state sponsored PMCs and independent PMCs. As is well known, the Wagner group first and foremost works for the Kremlin and is financed by Russia. Others, such as the South African PMCs, tend to work independently of their country's government (Al Jazeera, 2020). One difference between PMCs and the mercenaries from the cold war era, like 5 commando, is that PMCs are organized as private companies and registered as such. They are a much more organized entity than the loose band of men that made up the mercenary units of old (Palka, 2020). When Hoare set out to recruit his soldiers he simply put up ads in South African papers and soon enough, a ragtag bunch of men began showing up in the Congo (Hoare, 1967 pp. 33-34). In academia there is an ongoing debate regarding distinctions between PMCs and mercenaries (McFate, 2019, p. 6). However, in the media, the terms tend to be used interchangeably. This paper is not a semantic or legal discussion on whether PMCs are mercenaries or not. To avoid any



confusion and to be more specific regarding the topic at hand, the soldiers who fight for PMCs will here be referred to as “contractors.”

### 3 Research field

The field of research regarding modern mercenaries and PMCs is not extensive. This is due to the clandestine nature of the business, making it difficult for academics and journalists alike to obtain source material (McFate, 2019, p. 26). Nevertheless, *Mercenaries and War: Understanding Private Armies Today*, by Sean McFate, offers a glimpse inside the mercenary world and is a good introduction to PMCs. McFate argues that the privatization of war is an increasing trend and he sees this as an emerging threat (McFate, 2019, pp. 41-43).

Looking back a few years, the American PMC Blackwater who operated in Iraq did receive some attention. But the world of PMCs has changed since the days of Blackwater (McFate, 2019, p. 2). Currently, the Wagner group is probably the world's most famous PMC. As has been established, however, there are other players in this game. PMCs have played a role in African conflicts since the 90s and there Wagner is a newcomer (Rampe, 2023).

Regarding PMCs in Africa, some academic attention has been directed towards EO (Maciag, 2019) (Howe, 1998) (Harding, 1997). Unsurprisingly, the field gets smaller when looking at more recent cases. STTEP:s operation in Nigeria did not go completely unnoticed, however. Kinsey & Krieg argue that STTEP was an important tool in Nigeria's struggle against Boko Haram. According to them, the case shows that states in the developing world can augment its security capabilities by greeting “security assemblages” and that PMCs can be a part of these (Kinsey & Krieg, 2021). Nielsen also acknowledges STTEP:s contribution, but argues that STTEP only worked as part of a short term tactical solution. Allegedly, the combined effort with regional partners as well as economic and social efforts was more important (Nielsen, 2016). In a study focused on why the Nigerian army has struggled to defeat Boko Haram, Oriola briefly addresses PMCs and claims that intelligence leaks and sabotage within the army were reasons for hiring them (Oriola, 2021, p. 168).

Apart from specific empirical cases, there is an academic debate surrounding the mercenary and PMC phenomenon in general. The discussion ranges between topics such as the legitimacy and transparency of PMCs and their implications for security. The sentiment tends to be mostly negative, but some have argued that PMCs can fill a security gap in fragile states (Nielsen, 2016, pp. 3-5). The success of some PMCs in combating insurgencies, and the

inefficiency of UN peacekeeping operations have been cited as examples of when PMCs can increase security (Bubna, n.d.) (Pfaff & Edward, 2019). PMCs have also been addressed in the field of international law, where they exist in a legal gray area (Rodio, 2021).

## 4 Theory and method

State capacity is a broad concept and there is no single collected theoretical framework encompassing it. State capacity can thus mean different things in different contexts. In the article *Measuring State Capacity*, Cullen S Hendrix presents an overview over different definitions of state capacity used in studies of civil war. Three main areas are identified: military capacity, bureaucratic administrative capacity and the quality and coherence of political institutions (Hendrix, 2010, p. 273). Hendrix notes that “decisions about how to best operationalize the concept of state capacity are, to a certain extent, driven by the topic that researchers are addressing...” (Hendrix, 2010, p. 274). Since the topic in this case is focused on warfare, state capacity in this case means military capacity. Specifically it can be defined as “the state’s ability to deter or repel challenges to its authority with force.” This is in line with Weber's idea of the state as a community that claims the use of force in a defined territory (Hendrix, 2010, p. 274).

Studies using state capacity as military capacity usually operationalize the concept by focusing on conventional measures of military strength, such as the size of the military and military spending (Hendrix, 2010, p. 274). As Hendrix notes, this is not unproblematic. Most important for this case is the problem of conventional measures of military capacity when assessing a state's ability to combat insurgency. Sepp has argued that in an initial stage of an insurgency, other capabilities such as law enforcement are more important than military strength. However, in a later stage of the insurgency military strength will impact the outcome (Hendrix, 2010, p. 277). This makes military strength a legitimate measure when focusing on insurgencies that have grown beyond the initial stage, which is the case for this study.

Arguably one could also add that since insurgency is an unconventional type of warfare, a particular capacity is required to repel it. Namely, the capacity to conduct counterinsurgency operations. Counterinsurgency (COIN) is a broad concept and lacks a simple definition. Nevertheless it is an important aspect in modern warfare. It can include various measures taken by government forces to defeat an irregular enemy. These measures can vary between different contexts (Ucko, 2012, pp. 68-70). As is well known, it can apart from military tactics also involve “winning the hearts and minds” of the civilian population.

The conventional strength of the armed forces, in terms of the number of men and material does not necessarily reflect the military capacity to combat an insurgency. As is well known from history, it can be difficult to defeat a guerilla using conventional military doctrine. COIN operations thus require soldiers that are trained and equipped for this type of operation. It would therefore be necessary to assess the quality of the armed forces, and not merely the quantity, and thereby address problems that prevent the military from being an effective fighting force. Furthermore, the state of the armed forces is also related to the intensity and threat from the insurgency. In this study, factors such as these will be addressed in the assessment of the situation before the country hired PMCs. Regarding the assessment of the situation during the PMCs engagement, other variables will be used to measure the success rate of the PMCs. In a similar case study by Mateusz Maciag, which focuses on EO:s operation in Sierra Leone, variables such as competence, effectiveness and coordination with conventional forces were deemed conclusive for the success of EO:s operation (Maciag, 2019). Such factors will therefore be addressed when measuring the success of the PMCs in this study.

The study thus relies on state capacity in the form of military capacity as the overarching concept. However, I will not merely observe the size and budget of the armed forces but expand upon military capacity by assessing factors that affect the military's efficiency and its capacity to conduct COIN operations. Each case study will consist of two main parts, corresponding to the two research questions: the situation before the arrival of PMCs and the situation during the PMCs engagement in the conflict. The time period for the first part is defined by UCDPs conflict threshold and will thus stretch from when the conflict reached the threshold until the PMCs arrival. The time period for the second part is naturally defined by the time the PMCs were engaged in the country. It should also be noted that this study only focuses on PMCs whose services included direct military engagement.

The first part will rely on the following variables:

**independent variables:** *the intensity of the insurgency* (measured by geographical spread, territorial losses, casualties, number of attacks), *the state of the armed forces* (measured by addressing various problems that hampered the efficiency of the armed forces, such as

corruption, low morale, lack of ability to conduct COIN operations, lack of military aid received from other countries, etc.)

**dependent variable:** *the country hires PMCs*

The second part will rely on the following variables:

**independent variables:** *competence, efficiency, coordination with the host nations forces*

**dependent variable:** *level of success*

Methodologically, the study uses qualitative text analysis to analyze a wide range of sources which constitutes the empirical foundation of the analysis. Some quantitative factors, such as casualty figures and territorial losses are considered. But when investigating the source material, my attention has been aimed at interpreting and discerning how such factors, together with other aspects, affected the situation and what the sources themselves claim.

Finding ample information on recent PMC operations is not an easy task due to the cases being so recent and the secrecy in the PMC business. Hence, the source material consists of an array of reports, news articles, academic articles and interviews with important individuals. By using information from all these sources, a more cohesive picture of what took place during the operations have been pieced together. Despite my best efforts, there are still some information gaps, particularly regarding Mozambique. Regarding the reliability of the sources, the first hand accounts of individuals such as Eeben Barlow and Lionel Dyck are particularly interesting. Being the main leaders of the PMC operations in these two cases, their accounts constitute very valuable first hand sources. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that they are not unbiased as they have an interest in presenting themselves and their companies as favorably as possible.

The study includes a comparative element as the two cases' similarities and differences are discussed. This topic will be addressed when the two cases have first been analyzed separately. I opted for a small case study partially for practical reasons. Lack of information means that there is not an abundance of cases that can be investigated thoroughly.

That being said, it has been argued that case studies come with some advantages, for example when investigating causal mechanisms (George & Bennett, 2004, pp. 27-30). And arguably, by researching a smaller amount of cases more effort can be dedicated to understanding the complexity of each individual case. This would be applicable here. To determine reasons behind a country's decision to hire PMCs, and the success of said PMCs, it is necessary to investigate the case thoroughly due to the complexity and secrecy surrounding this topic.

Nigeria and Mozambique were mainly selected as it was not as difficult to find information here compared with other cases. For example, Mali was initially considered but was ruled out due to a lack of detailed information. But apart from this practical reason, Nigeria and Mozambique are fruitful for a comparison due to their many similarities and dissimilarities. The fact that several PMCs were involved in these cases also adds further breadth. Finally, it needs to be taken into account that cases can influence each other (George & Bennett, 2004, p. 38). For this study, this means that Mozambique's decision to hire PMCs may have been influenced by the fact that Nigeria did so a few years prior. This will be kept in mind, but it will not be discussed thoroughly since it is a speculative matter.

## **5 Analysis**

### **5.1 Nigeria**

#### **5.1.1 The situation before the arrival of PMCs**

Boko Haram began to emerge in 2002. The group has its roots in Borno state in Nigeria's extreme northeast (UCDP, n.d.). Nigeria's northern provinces are remote and impoverished and it is in these areas, particularly Borno, where the group has been the most active (Kinsey & Krieg, 2021, p. 237). Until 2009, violent incidents involving the group were relatively few. In July that year, violence erupted as the group attacked a police station. The ensuing armed confrontation between government forces and Boko Haram in Maiduguri, capital of Borno, resulted in the deaths of 1500 people. Ultimately, the leader of the group, Mohammed Yusuf was captured and executed. Following this, the fighting ceased for a year but in mid 2010 the group reemerged with Yusuf's second in command, Abubakar Shekau, in charge (Hickie, et al., 2018, p. 3).

2010 saw smaller attacks which did not reach UCDP's conflict threshold. In 2011 the violence intensified and the group also began to launch attacks outside of Borno. Notably, terrorist attacks occurred in the Nigerian capital. The government reacted to the escalating violence by strengthening the security forces in Maiduguri and president Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in the northern parts of the country. In 2012, the conflict continued to intensify, both in terms of geography and in terms of casualties. Boko Haram increased its spread outside of Borno by expanding its area of operations into other northern provinces. Attacks increased in scale and in numbers, resulting in more casualties. The government responded with military offensives, achieving some success as heavy casualties were inflicted on the insurgents (UCDP, n.d.).

In 2013, the group managed to establish control and authority over some areas in Borno. The government ramped up its military response by launching a major offensive, forcing Boko Haram to retreat. The success proved only temporary, however. In 2014, the group focused on conquering and controlling territory and made significant gains in Borno. By the end of the year an area of about the same size as Belgium had been conquered. Boko Haram consolidated its gains in the northeast and declared a caliphate (UCDP, n.d.) It was also



during this year that the group made international headlines by kidnapping over 200 schoolgirls in Chibok. (BBC, 2022). In 2014, the insurgency thus saw a high watermark in territorial expansion and there was a peak in casualties (UCDP, n.d.). Regarding military casualties in particular, it is difficult to discern any exact number of soldiers killed in action, since the government has not been completely open with these figures. Oriola claims, however, that there are strong indications of high casualties (Oriola, 2021, p. 165).

During its fight against Boko Haram, the Nigerian army has suffered from several problems. On paper it is a force to be reckoned with. The NAF is one of Africa's largest armies and ranks at place 36 of 145 on the global firepower index (GFP, 2023) (Oriola, 2021, p. 174). Between 2009 and 2015 the NAF had around 160 000 active duty personnel and a substantial amount of the country's budget went to the armed forces (Macrotrends, 2023) (BBC, 2015). However, problems such as corruption, low payment and desertion have hampered its efficiency (Hempstead, 2015).

In Oriola's study, several issues within the NAF are identified. Since the 90s there has been a steady decrease in army professionalism. The aforementioned corruption and low morale is a significant problem. An additional problem, tied to the issue of corruption, is that of intelligence leaks. There have been instances where officers have sold intelligence to Boko Haram. Acts of sabotage have also occurred. Additionally, there has been a partial lack of equipment. Exactly how widespread this problem is does not seem perfectly clear. Oriola claims that some units suffer from this while others are well stocked on arms and ammunition (Oriola, 2021, pp. 160-164 & 166-169). In a 2015 interview, a British colonel and former military advisor to the NAF gives the impression that lack of equipment is a serious issue (BBC, 2015). The notion that equipment was an issue is also indicated by the fact that Nigeria had tried to buy equipment from the USA, the UK and South Africa but been rejected due to concerns over corruption and human rights issues (Kinsey & Krieg, 2021, pp. 239-240).

On a strategic level, the army was likely spread too thin. Nigeria is a big country, and the army is deployed in security missions in many states (Oriola, 2021, p. 154). This means that it was not necessarily a simple thing to bring in reinforcements to the north from other parts of the country. On a tactical level, the army suffered from a lack of training in COIN operations. The NAF is primarily trained to fight conventional wars or partake in

peacekeeping operations, not the type of warfare that is needed when facing an insurgency (Zenn, 2023).

This does not mean that the Nigerian army, in 2015, was completely inexperienced with such training. As a former British colony, Nigeria has had a lot of military cooperation with the UK. This training has included counterinsurgency tactics. Additionally, the USA and Russia have provided COIN training (Hickie, et al., 2018, pp. 10-11) (Kinsey & Krieg, 2021, p. 239). However, not enough of this type of training was conducted and it occurred sporadically. There was also a gap between the training and the actual implementation in the field, since the British instructors did not follow the Nigerian forces into the heat of battle. The issue of equipment is evinced once again when the NAF's capacity for COIN operations is assessed. COIN operations are not only about proper training of the troops, but also the availability of the type of equipment best suited for such operations. In 2015 and prior, the NAF had a shortage of such equipment. As mentioned, attempts had been made to acquire more equipment but without success (Kinsey & Krieg, 2021 p. 239).

Regarding aid, the South African president suggested reaching out to ACIRC for support. South Africa also offered to deploy a rapid response force. These proposals were rejected by Nigeria. Nielsen theorizes that it could be because Nigeria did not want to look weak or have foreign forces on its territory (Pfothenauer, 2016) (Nielsen, 2016, p. 2). Nigeria did reach out to its west african partners, however, and tried to utilize the MNJTF task force (Kinsey & Krieg, 2021, p. 239). The MNJTF task force consists of troops from Nigeria and other west African countries. (Hickie, et al., 2018, pp.7-8). In early 2015, the MNJTF headquarters in Baga was attacked and overrun by Boko Haram (Kinsey & Krieg, 2021, p. 239). It was shortly after this defeat that the Nigerian Army launched a major counteroffensive involving private military contractors.

### **5.1.2 PMCs**

The contractors began to arrive in Nigeria in late 2014. It was primarily two PMCs that were engaged in Nigeria: Conella Services, already established in Nigeria, and South African based STTEP. Nigeria first reached out to Conella Services, who in turn hired STTEP as a subcontractor. During the offensive, it was primarily STTEP who provided training and who

engaged Boko Haram, while Conella Services managed administrative matters. STTEP had a lot of experience and expertise in conducting COIN operations in Africa. The chairman was the aforementioned Eben Barlow, the founder and former CEO of EO (Kinsey & Krieg, 2021 pp. 239-240) (Malik, 2016). In interviews, Barlow has emphasized STTEP's experience with the African conflict environment. He has claimed that a problem with foreign military forces in African countries is that they do not understand African conflicts. STTEP, on the other hand, is a company that provides "African solutions to African problems" (Al Jazeera, 2020) (Nielsen, 2016, p. 12). Just like Barlow, many of the contractors in STTEP had served in elite units in the SADF and had fought in the Border War and in EO's operations in the 90s. Others had a background in other African militaries (Kinsey & Krieg, 2021, p. 240). Interestingly enough STTEP had also recruited former insurgents from the Border War, persons that Barlow and his comrades fought against during that time. This means that STTEP had people with experience from both sides from insurgency warfare (Murphy, 2015).

In an interview, the chairman of Connella services claims that the Nigerian army indeed suffered from a lack of training in COIN operations and that the training provided by foreign instructors had been insufficient. The contractors thus played an important role in filling this gap in Nigerian military capacity (Arise News, 2020). Barlow has given a similar version of the events, but claims that STTEP's initial mission was to rescue the Chibok girls. The 250 STTEP contractors arrived in late 2014 and began forming and training an elite unit, named the 72 mobile strike force. After approximately 5-6 weeks of training, the nature of the mission changed and they were asked to take part in the offensive against Boko Haram. The contractors and the 72 mobile strike force were then transferred to Maiduguri, where they were attached to the 7th infantry division (Al Jazeera, 2020).

During the offensive, the 72nd and the contractors worked as the division's spearhead (Al Jazeera, 2020). The contractors worked very closely with the Nigerian troops and became an integrated part of their forces. Not only did they train them prior to the mission, they also directed them in combat and took part in the fighting. The contractors were in charge of important tasks such as command, planning and communications. According to Barlow, it is essential for a PMC to work closely with local forces in order to achieve success. As a part of this strategy, STTEP also worked with the local militia, the CJTF. The CJTF provided valuable intelligence regarding Boko Haram's movements in the area. Additionally, STTEP also took measures to gain sympathy from the local population. Furthermore, STTEP had

managed to round arms exports restrictions and brought with them some equipment that the Nigerian army lacked, including armored personnel carriers and helicopters (Kinsey & Krieg, 2021, pp. 240-241). According to McFate, among the helicopters were Mi 24 Hind helicopter gunships, which were especially wanted by the Nigerian Army (Mcfate, 2019, pp. 4 & 29). The Mi 24 Hind is a Soviet helicopter particularly suited for engaging ground targets and providing fire support (Defensebridge, 2023).

During the offensive, the contractors and the 72nd used a doctrine which Barlow calls “relentless pursuit”. It is similar to the tactics used in SADF:s COIN operations in the Border War (Murphy, 2015). It also mirrors EO:s successful operations in Angola and Sierra Leone (Maciag, 2019, pp. 63-65). As the name indicates, the doctrine focuses on high maneuverability to keep pursuing the enemy day and night and never letting him get away (Murphy, 2015). For example, it can include troops using helicopters to leapfrog ahead of enemy forces and relieving the previous pursuing units (Nielsen, 2016, p. 9). It uses good coordination between different units, such as air and ground forces, and utilizes superior fire power. The enemy is thereby engaged as aggressively as possible (Murphy, 2015).

The doctrine is well suited against highly mobile insurgent forces, such as Boko Haram, who often relies on hit- and run tactics. It proved successful, as Boko Haram were not able to withstand the swiftly advancing Nigerian forces, spearheaded by the contractors and the 72nd. After three months of offensive, most of the territory seized by Boko Haram in the previous year had been reconquered (Kinsey & Krieg, 2021, pp. 240-242). This did not merely include the countryside but also towns such as Bama, Damasak and Gwoza (Hempstead, 2015). In April 2015, the contract with the PMC was ended prematurely, however (Kinsey & Krieg, 2021 p. 241). Various reasons have been ascribed for this. Apparently, there were some issues regarding payment (Malik, 2016). Barlow has also claimed that external political pressure forced the Nigerian government to terminate the contract (Al Jazeera, 2020). Since 2015, Boko Haram has still not been completely defeated, but they have also not recovered their former strength (Hickie, et al., 2018, pp. 32-33).

### 5.1.3 Assessment

It can be argued that Nigeria suffered from weak state capacity Prior to the arrival of PMCs, the Nigerian state was not able to properly repel the threat from Boko Haram. This is evidenced by the fact that the group had seized a large amount of territory and declared it a caliphate, further challenging and weakening the Nigerian state. During the years preceding the hiring of PMCs, this problem had grown, judging by the geographical spread of the insurgency, the increase in attacks and the lethality of these attacks. The NAF had tried to repel the threat, but without much success. This was due to several factors that hampered the effectiveness of the armed forces, such as: corruption, low morale, lack of equipment, intelligence leaks, sabotage and possibly that the army was spread too thin. Particularly important for this case is the army's inability to conduct COIN operations. Additionally, aid and military cooperation with other countries had been insufficient, and offers of support had been rejected. That is not to say that the NAF had been completely unsuccessful. Previous offensives had inflicted casualties on the enemy and forced the insurgents to retreat. However, these gains were only temporary and were followed by a peak in territorial losses and casualties. All these factors likely led to the decision of hiring PMCs.

Overall, the PMCs proved to be an effective tool. The contractors rich experience in conducting COIN operations in other African conflicts meant that they had a high degree of competence for the mission. In action they proved to be an effective force. Working together with the Nigerian forces, they were able to deal a significant blow to the enemy and reconquer a large amount of territory. During the offensive, they were highly coordinated with the Nigerian troops. The contractors did not simply do the job for them, but fought together with an NAF unit and trained them in a tactical doctrine that proved successful against Boko Haram. With the contractors came also the accessibility to some valuable equipment that the NAF lacked. Therefore it can be argued that the PMCs contributed to improving the NAF:s capacity for COIN operations and thereby enhanced the state capacity of Nigeria. After the offensive, the Nigerian state had regained control over territory that it had previously been forced to abandon. Given all this, it can be concluded that the PMCs achieved a high level of success.

However, it should be noted that it is difficult to determine the exact impact of the PMCs contribution. Kinsey & Krieg argue that the short lived operation makes it difficult to measure their impact in the long term (Kinsey & Krieg, 2021 pp. 242-244). It should also be kept in mind that the 2015 offensive was, partially, a joint MNJTF effort. In March, forces from neighboring Chad and Niger arrived, which also contributed to the success of the operation (Al Jazeera, 2015). Some Nigerian officers who took part in the fighting have claimed, however, that the contractors played a crucial role (Kinsey & Krieg, 2021 p. 241 & 243). For example, a senior NCO claimed that the contractors did, “the bulk of the fighting” (Al Jazeera, 2015). On behalf of the PMCs, on the other hand, the chairman of Conella services claimed that this was first and foremost a Nigerian victory (Arise News, 2020).

## **5.2 Mozambique**

### **5.2.1 The situation before the arrival of PMCs**

In October 2017, a minor insurgency broke out in Mozambique's remote northernmost province, Cabo Delgado. A previously unknown islamist group called Ansar Al Sunnah, allegedly formed in 2015, attacked a police station in Mocimboa da Praia and from thereon more attacks followed. It is worth noting that Cabo Delgado is impoverished but rich in natural resources, particularly natural gas. (UCDP, n.d.) (Zenda, 2022). During 2018, the group carried out primitive attacks, using melee weapons, and the conflict eventually reached UCDP:s threshold. 2019 saw continued escalation with an increased geographical spread of attacks within Cabo Delgado and an increase in casualties. The group also became better equipped and carried out more ambitious attacks against government positions, while previous attacks had mostly been aimed at civilian targets (UCDP, n.d.). On the 24 of July, Ansar Al Sunnah swore allegiance to IS, which was followed by further escalation (UCDP, n.d.).

The government initially responded by deploying police forces. The relationship between the armed forces (FADM) and the government is poor due to the army being seen as unreliable by the ruling FRELIMO party. This cleavage goes back to the civil war between FRELIMO and RENAMO, which ended in 1992. The peace treaty stipulated that RENAMO militants

should be integrated into the armed forces, as a result there are large RENAMO elements within the army. Divisions between the police and the army further hindered the effectiveness of the operation (UCDP, n.d.).

As a result of the government's lack of trust in the FADM, it has not been an effective fighting force. It has been underfunded, ill equipped and suffered from low morale, corruption and manpower shortage (Kruger & Martin, 2013). After the end of the civil war much of the high quality equipment was either sabotaged or sold by political elites (Nhamirre, 2021, p. 3). According to some estimates, merely 10% of FADM:s equipment was serviceable in 2013 (Kruger & Martin, 2013). It appears that not much had improved at the outbreak of the insurgency (Nhamirre, 2021, p. 3). Currently Mozambique's military strength ranks 112 of 145 in the global firepower index. At the outbreak of the insurgency, the army had a strength of around 11 000 men (Macrotrends, 2023). Mozambique used to receive military support from the Soviet Union, but that ended with the collapse in 1991. Being a former Portuguese colony, Portugal has provided some training and support to Mozambique (Kruger & Martin, 2013). A security brief did, however, unsurprisingly observe that the armed forces were not all prepared to combat an insurgency (Morrison, 2021).

Generally, Mozambique has been very reluctant towards foreign intervention (Smith, 2021). Following the escalation of the insurgency several countries offered support, which was rejected (Nhamirre, 2021, p. 3). As a member of the SADC, Mozambique could also have turned to them for support. SADC has a mandate to organize peacekeeping operations in the region and have done so in the past, for example in the DRC (Buosotti & Coimbra, 2023, pp. 3-4). Various reasons have been ascribed to Mozambique's reluctance to seek support from its regional partners. Issues of corruption, where parts of the political elite in Mozambique benefited from the war economy and drug trafficking in Cabo Delgado, may have played a part (ISS, 2021). Other aspects are the SADC:s general inefficiency as an organization and the strained relations between Mozambique and other states in the organization (Buosotti & Coimbra, 2023 pp. 3-4). Furthermore, Mozambique considered foreign intervention as undermining sovereignty, and maintained that Mozambique could handle the insurgency on their own (Nhamirre, 2021, pp. 5-6).

### 5.2.2 PMCs

The first PMC to arrive in Mozambique was the Russian Wagner group. In August 2019, president Filip Nyusi traveled to Russia where he met with Vladimir Putin and in September Wagner forces were deployed in Mozambique (Nhamirre, 2021, p. 3). Other PMCs, such as South African based OAM and Blackhawk, were also considered. Unlike the Wagner group these companies had experience operating in the region, but in the end the Wagner group was awarded the contract (Sauer, 2019). The Wagner forces consisted of around 200 men and they brought with them at least three attack helicopters and some drones (Nhamirre, 2021, p. 4).

Wagners operation proved short-lived, as they pulled out in November the same year (Nhamirre, 2021, p. 3). During the short deployment not much was achieved, the Wagner group suffered casualties and there were disagreements with the Mozambican forces. Ambushes were frequent and the terrain favored the insurgents. The thick undergrowth meant that much of Wagner's advanced equipment could not be used effectively. In October at least seven contractors were killed. Many attributed Wagner's failure to their lack of experience with the type of primitive "Bush War " often waged in the African conflict environment (Sauer, 2019).

Furthermore, the coordination with the Mozambican forces was poor. The Wagner group wanted to bomb targets which they had identified as insurgent bases, a plan that was rejected by Mozambican commanders. The confusion caused by this may have led to further casualties for the Wagner group (Nhamirre, 2021, p. 3). After several failed military operations, the Wagner soldiers and their Mozambican counterparts almost stopped going on patrols together (Sauer, 2019). After Wagner's departure, the situation continued to escalate as the insurgents made more gains. More attacks were made against urban centers and security forces and the conflict reached a peak in intensity in 2020. In March and April that year the insurgents launched coordinated offensives against district capitals and temporarily seized Mocimboa Da Praia, Quissanga and Muidumbe (UCDP, n.d.).

The next PMC that arrived was the South African based Dyck Advisory Group (DAG). The company was led by Lionel Dyck, a retired Zimbabwean army colonel and a veteran of the Rhodesian Bush War (France24, 2021). Dyck had previous experience from Mozambique as



he had operated there in the 80s, when he had helped the government fight RENAMO (Nhamirre, 2021, p. 3). His company was originally founded as a demining and anti poaching company and had conducted anti poaching operations in Mozambique in 2013 (France24, 2021) (Simonson, 2021). Apart from Dycks personal military experience, it is difficult to assess the competence of the other contractors. Due to the company's South African roots it is not unlikely that the company recruited from the same pool as other South African PMCs, the old network left by Executive Outcomes. When interviewed in a podcast, Eeben Barlow confirmed that some contractors from STTEP had indeed been recruited by DAG to fight in Mozambique (The Team House, 2020).

There are conflicting sources regarding when DAG arrived in Mozambique. According to Lionel Dyck, operations began in September 2019 ( Martin, 2022). However, other sources claim that DAG did not arrive until April 2020. If that is correct, there was a period from November 2019 to April 2020 when there were no PMCs engaged in Mozambique (Nhamirre, 2021, p. 4). According to France24, Mozambique's government first asked DAG to support them against the insurgency for a few weeks in September 2019 and then contacted them again in February 2020 (France24, 2021). It is possible that DAG may have been involved for only a brief period before showing up again for a longer contract. In any case not much information is available regarding any operations before April 2020.

In April, DAG set up a base of operations in Pemba, the capital of Cabo Delgado, and immediately began engaging the insurgents (Nhamirre, 2021, pp. 3-4 ). At that time insurgent forces were advancing on the city (UCDP, n.d). DAG had brought with them six civilian helicopters, which they swiftly rebuilt for military purposes (Nhamirre, 2021, pp. 3-4). In the ensuing battle, DAG:s helicopters successfully provided air support for the Mozambican ground troops and the insurgent forces were driven back (UCDP, n.d.) (Zitamar News, 2020). Shortly after DAG:s arrival, there were reports of at least 129 insurgents killed in action (Zenda, 2022). DAG also suffered some losses, as one helicopter was shot down by the enemy. In June, they also lost a reconnaissance microlight (Simonson , 2021).

During DAG:s operations, they only provided air support. Using Pemba as their base, they launched air attacks on insurgent bases and supported troops on the ground (France24). Their outfit was small, consisting of merely 40 contractors and the aforementioned aircraft (Nhamirre, 2021, p. 4). Despite their small size, several sources claim that the air support

provided by DAG played an important role in combating the insurgency (UCDP, n.d.) (Zenda, 2022) (Simonson, 2021) (Zitamar News, 2020). After the contract was finished, Dyck himself maintained that their support was vital for the survival of Cabo Delgado before the intervention of foreign troops, since they managed to keep the insurgents at bay for a year (Martin, 2022). It could also be argued that they achieved a lot considering the small size of their force. At the same time, DAGs operation was not enough to contain the insurgency (Nhamirre, 2021. p. 4). DAG:s operation also suffered from a couple of limitations. Their improvised helicopter gunships were not equipped to operate during night time and furthermore, required regular refueling stops at the base in Pemba. Apart from the fighting outside of Pemba at the beginning of the deployment, the main conflict zone was located some 185 km north. This meant that the range of DAG:s operations became limited (Simonson, 2021). Another problem was poor coordination with the ground forces. After having raided enemy bases from the air, Dyck claimed that they were not cleared by the ground troops (France24, 2021).

After the battle of Pemba, DAG took part in recapturing Macomia and Moicomba Da Praia (Zitamar News, 2020). In July, their contract was renewed (Simonson, 2021). In August, Mocimboa Da Praia was lost yet again to insurgent forces, which then occupied the town until August next year. Previously, the insurgents had only seized larger towns temporarily, before retreating into the bush (UCDP, n.d.). Dyck has claimed that they could have retaken the city if only the Mozambican ground forces would have been willing to go in and attack together with his airborne contractors (Martin, 2022). During the latter half of 2020, not much seems to be known about DAG:s operations. This period partially coincides with Mozambique's wet season, which likely had an impact on the fighting. In an interview, Dyck himself referred to the dry season as “the fighting season” indicating that larger operations mostly took place during the dry months (Zimlive, 2021).

In March 2021, Amnesty International released a report accusing DAG of having committed war crimes. Allegedly, DAG:s helicopters had at some occasions fired indiscriminately at people on the ground, causing civilian casualties (Amnesty International, 2021). Shortly afterwards Mozambique announced that they would not renew the contract (Zenda, 2022). Before departing, DAG took part in a final battle. In March 2021 the insurgents attacked and overran the city of Palma (UCDP, n.d.). During the attack, many civilians were massacred by the insurgents. DAG used their helicopters to evacuate people, while at the same time

engaging the insurgents. Yet again, coordination with the army was lacking, as their forces in the area mainly focused on protecting the gas facilities outside the city (Zimbabwe News Now, 2021).

In April 2021, DAG:s contract ended and their forces withdrew from Mozambique. At the same time Mozambique's attitude towards foreign intervention had begun to change, after long negotiations with SADC and Rwanda. In July 2021, troops from Rwanda began to arrive and in August, a joint force from SADC also entered Mozambique. Mozambique also began to receive training and equipment from several other countries. After this combined effort, the tide began to turn and much territory was reconquered (Nhamirre, 2021 pp. 4-8).

### **5.2.3 Assessment**

From the start of the insurgency to the arrival of the PMCs, Mozambique proved unable to stop the insurgency. Instead it gradually intensified. This can be explained by Mozambique's weak state capacity, reflected by the inefficiency of their armed forces. Not only were the armed forces lacking the numbers, they were also not functioning due to corruption, poor morale, underfunding and a lack of equipment. What particularly stands out in this case, and likely is a part of the reason for these problems, was the government's great mistrust of their armed forces. These factors ruled out the armed forces as a viable option for combating the insurgency, making it necessary to receive outside help. The government was, however, quite unwilling to turn to other countries and instead opted for PMCs.

Overall the PMCs achieved mixed results. The competence of the Wagner group can be questioned, due to their lack of experience with these types of conflicts. They were not able to combat the insurgents effectively, and suffered casualties on their own part. Furthermore, coordination with the host nations forces was poor. This led to the failure of the Wagner group's operation. DAG, on the other hand, proved more successful. However, if the allegations of war crimes are true, DAG:s competence can also be questioned. Overall, DAGs competence is difficult to assess since originally, they were a demining and anti poaching company. At the same time the head of the operations, Lionel Dyck, had military experience from fighting in previous counterinsurgency campaigns, such as in the Rhodesian Bush War.

There are also indications that some of DAG:s contractors in Mozambique had previously worked for STTEP.

It can be argued that DAG offered an efficient short term success. They were able to swiftly step in and aid the Mozambican forces in a critical moment, when Pemba itself was under threat. Overall, their air support made an important contribution. At the same time, DAG was not enough to contain the insurgency or turning the tide. The insurgents were still able to keep the initiative and launch larger attacks, seizing Mocoimba Da Praia and attacking Palma despite DAG:s presence. DAG:s efficiency was also hampered by technical and tactical limitations. From what can be discerned from Dycks comments, coordination with the Mozambican ground forces was at times quite poor. It could also be argued that DAG made less of an impact due the small size of their force. It appears on the other hand, that they did a lot with what little they had. Overall, Dag was somewhat successful. According to Dyck, they were even vital for the survival of Cabo Delgado before the arrival of the foreign troops. But ultimately, it was the intervention of Rwandan and SADC forces that turned the tide against the insurgents.

## 6 Comparative discussion

The two cases share many similarities. Both countries suffered from several problems that weakened their armed forces. Some of these problems were shared, such as corruption, low morale, lack of equipment and the inability to conduct COIN operations. Because of such problems, neither state could repel or deter challenges to its authority with force. Both states thus suffered from weak state capacity. This allowed the insurgencies to grow and intensify. In both cases, the insurgency also emerged in a remote impoverished region.

However, when looking into the details of the cases, several differences stand out. One aspect that stands out is that of time. Nigeria had waged a long war against Boko Haram before turning to PMCs for support, while Mozambique hired their first PMC only one year after reaching the conflict threshold. There may be several reasons for this. Arguably, Cabo Delgado was more economically important for Mozambique, due to the large gas deposits, than Borno was for Nigeria. This may have created further incentive for Mozambique to look for quick solutions. In Nigeria's case, it appears that it was not until Boko Haram had seized a large amount of territory, declared it a caliphate and also begun making incursions outside their traditional area of operations that the Nigerian state deemed it necessary to seek outside help.

Another potential reason for the difference in time, and a major difference in itself, is the difference in army strength between the two countries. Both suffered from several problems, but the NAF was still a force to be reckoned with. The FADM on the other hand, was small and barely functioning. What stands out in the case of Mozambique is the lack of trust in the army. The military can, after all, only be seen as increasing state capacity if it works for the state. To work effectively for the state, the army needs to be trusted by its government. It is clear that in Mozambique, the government did not trust the army to deal with the insurgency to begin with. This made it a smaller step for Mozambique to reach out to PMCs. Nigeria also had some reasons to distrust their armed forces, due to intelligence leaks and sabotage. This may have played a part in Nigeria's decision, as Oriola noted, but the issue of trust was not on the same level as in Mozambique. This is evidenced by the fact that the government had not been hesitant to use the army for security related tasks. Unlike

Mozambique the army also received a significant part of the budget and had conducted operations against the insurgents before the arrival of the PMCs, albeit with mixed results.

Another interesting factor is the similar attitude towards foreign intervention. Accepting help from the outside is, after all, a question that concerns sovereignty and legitimacy. As Nielsen suggested, accepting foreign intervention comes with the cost of looking weak and having a foreign force operating in one's territory. Both countries' reluctance towards foreign intervention likely played a part in the preference to turn to PMCs. This issue touches upon a discussion concerning how the state legitimacy and sovereignty is affected by hiring PMCs versus help from other states. This is a broad discussion and I will only address it briefly.

It can of course be asserted that turning to PMCs undermines the state's legitimacy. On the other hand it could be argued that this applies to any other party, regardless of whether it is another country, the UN or a PMC. The underlying reason and the problematic implications for the state's legitimacy remains the same: the state does not have the capacity to deal with an internal threat without help from the outside. The question that then arises is: who are you going to call? Which outside actor works best for enhancing state capacity? To a large extent this is probably contextual. However, it can perhaps be argued that PMCs, in some cases, offer a better solution.

Arguably, a state has more control over PMCs, or at least perceives it that way. The relation between a state and a PMC is that of a customer and client. It is not the same relation between the state and the armed forces of another country. The armed forces of another country do not answer to the government in the host country, their loyalty lies to their own government. The same applies to a UN peacekeeping force, who ultimately answers to the UN command. The government in the host country cannot simply order such forces to attack and destroy the insurgents. PMCs are of course said to have economic interests, but likewise other states have their own interests. Any outside aid does not likely come from pure good will, but from the interests of the giver. Given this, it may be easier to understand why Nigeria and Mozambique opted for PMCs when it was clear that their own forces were incapable of dealing with an internal threat.

Regarding the outcomes of the PMC operations, more differences stand out. Overall, Nigeria's employment of PMCs turned out to be quite a successful move, at least in the short

term. Mozambique on the other hand, achieved mixed results by hiring PMCs. Unlike Nigeria, the PMCs active in the country were not part of a coordinated effort. The PMCs ran their own operations to some degree, not coordinating properly with the Mozambican forces. Nigeria's PMCs appears to have been part of a full fledged COIN offensive that they had taken time to prepare. Ground troops and air forces were working in concert and the strategy also included civilians and the local militia.

DAG, on the other hand, rushed into the heat of battle as soon as they arrived in Pemba. This was of course necessary, due to the precarious situation that was unfolding, but it gave them little time to prepare and strategize. Overall Mozambique's PMC operations appear as sporadic reactions rather than actions towards the insurgents. Another key difference between the cases is of course the difference between the PMCs hired by Nigeria and Mozambique respectively. While Nigeria relied on a PMC with much experience and competence in the African conflict environment, Mozambique first turned to Wagner. A decision that did not contribute to defeating the insurgency. DAG had some experience on the other hand, but their team was very small and suffered from some limitations. They played an important part, but it was the arrival of foreign troops that turned the tide. Finally, when comparing the cases it also needs to be kept in mind that Nigeria's decision may have influenced Mozambique. However, on that matter we can only speculate.

## 7 Conclusion

Nigeria and Mozambique hired PMCs due to similar reasons. Both faced an insurgency which they had proved unable to defeat because of their weak state capacity. Their armed forces suffered from several problems that hampered their efficiency. When examining the cases more in depth, there are of course differences in details and context. One key difference is the army strength when comparing Nigeria and Mozambique. An important takeaway from this is that regardless of whether a country's military is strong or weak on paper, it is the actual capacity that determines whether it proves capable of fulfilling its tasks, such as defeating an insurgency. In these cases both countries' armed forces lacked the capacity to conduct COIN operations. In Nigeria, this was more of a specific skill that was lacking, while in Mozambique this was due to the armed forces not functioning in general. Overall, there were many similarities between the situations that preceded the hiring of PMCs. The intensity of the insurgency and the state of the armed forces thus influenced the decision in a similar manner in both cases.

In Nigeria's case the PMCs operation was successful. The competence, efficiency and good coordination with Nigerian forces that STTEP demonstrated, was an important contribution to the success of the offensive. In Mozambique, the variables played out differently. The Wagner group was neither competent, efficient nor well coordinated with the Mozambican forces. This led to an unsuccessful operation. DAG proved more successful, but not successful enough to turn the tide of the conflict.

Concerning the research field, the study has some implications for the wider discussions surrounding PMCs. The Nigerian case demonstrates that a PMC can be an effective tool to combat an insurgency. This has been demonstrated previously by EO:s operations in Angola and Sierra Leone. The more recent Nigerian case shows that this still can prove true and adds to the list of successful PMC operations. Therefore it can indeed be argued that PMCs can fill a significant security gap in weak states and thereby enhance state capacity. Mozambique's case demonstrates on the other hand, that PMCs are not always a perfect solution, or a solution at all for that matter. This depends on the context and more importantly on which PMC one hires.



The fact that STTEP made an important contribution to Nigeria's 2015 offensive is in line with previous observations. If and how PMCs contribute to success in the long term is a more elusive subject however, which possibly could be further discussed in future research. As Kinsey & Krieg noted in this case, it can be difficult to measure a PMCs long term impact. Nielsen, for his part, argued that STTEP was merely a short term tactical solution. I would argue that if the host nations forces are trained in a successful doctrine (which they were in Nigeria's case) and this doctrine is continued to be practiced after the PMC departure, they could have a more long term contribution to security. This is, of course, speaking from a strictly military point of view. When solving the root causes of an insurgency other measures, such as political and social efforts would likely be required.

Although not the subject of the paper itself, the result nevertheless tangents the debate regarding legitimacy. STTEP's well organized operation and close coordination with their Nigerian clients goes against the old fear of "mercenaries going rouge." The allegations of war crimes committed by contractors in Mozambique, shows a more problematic side, however. War crimes are of course nothing unique to contractors, but arguably the lack of transparency becomes greater when private armies are engaged in battle compared with national armies or peacekeeping forces. The pros and cons with PMCs versus "legitimate" forces is a debate that is bound to continue and which ties in to broader subjects, such as the inefficiency of UN peacekeeping operations. Just as the mercenary units of the "golden era" of mercenarism sparked these questions, they continue to be raised by modern PMCs. If one is to believe Sean McFate, mercenary activity will only increase in the future. Perhaps then, we stand before a new "golden era" of mercenarism, this time in the form of PMCs. It appears clear that PMCs, regardless of what one thinks of them, constitute an alternative to "legitimate" forces. And when the UN fails, it is difficult to blame countries for seeking out other alternatives when these alternatives offer executive solutions. Just as war itself, it appears then that PMCs will endure.

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